

Tom Tidwell
Chief of the Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave
Washington, D.C. 20250-0003

December 1, 2011

Dear Mr. Tidwell:

I bought my first fishing boat because I thought fishing in the summers would be a good way to pay for college. I didn't think I'd keep fishing after graduation, but, 11 years later, that's what I'm doing. Salmon fishing funded my education and now it's allowing me to make a living in my hometown of Sitka, Alaska as a 2nd generation fisherman.

At this point, it's not my intention to ever stop fishing. I have made a large investment in a freezer troller which allows me to produce a higher quality product, stay out fishing longer periods of time, and allows me the opportunity to find more value added markets. Needless-to-say, after this investment, I'm counting on a healthy salmon fishery to pay off my debts and provide a secure income for years to come. I'm counting on the Forest Service to make a similar scale investment as mine in Salmon habitat and watersheds on the Tongass so that I can count on the fisheries 30 years from now.

Our fisheries are well-managed in Alaska, and I'm optimistic about the future of the salmon fishery. There will always be threats, such as climate change and diseases carried by farmed stock, but a lot can be done to strengthen the fishery as well. One way is through stream restoration projects that improve Coho Salmon Habitat.

Improving a single stream not only leads to larger catches but can also extend the fishing season. Additionally, having more productive streams insures that even in a bad year there will be some streams with good runs. I encourage the Forest Service to continue to fund restoration projects. When a stream is restored, fishermen can benefit from that stream for decades to come, and, in turn, local economies benefit for decades too. That is assuring to young fishermen like myself who plan to be living in Southeast Alaska for a long time.

I appreciate that the Forest Service has made stream restoration a priority in the recent past, and I hope you recognize that there is still a lot of work to do.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely:

Matt Lawrie
Matt.thusela@gmail.com