



USDA Forest Service, Alaska Region
2021 Subsistence Program
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2021 Subsistence Program in Brief

The management of National Forest lands for subsistence uses plays a vital role in sustaining the health of rural Alaskan communities by ensuring that healthy fish and wildlife populations are available to provide a reliable food supply for residents. The Federal Subsistence Management Program (Program) plays an important role in maintaining employment in rural Alaska where opportunities are limited, as well.

The Forest Service supports the subsistence way of life in rural communities by implementing critical monitoring and management activities using funds specifically allocated toward subsistence uses on National Forest lands. In FY 2021, USDA Alaska Region Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service personnel in the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) analyzed 9 wildlife regulatory management proposals in the Southeast Region and 27 in the Southcentral Region to determine wildlife population trends and appropriate harvest levels, and to determine appropriate management actions to provide for the continuation of subsistence uses on the National Forests in Alaska. Forest Service staff also analyzed 2 Wildlife Closure Reviews for the Southeast Region and provided input for additional wildlife regulatory proposals on other Federal public lands across Alaska.

Through delegated authority from the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB), Forest Service in-season managers implemented 7 Special Actions on the Tongass National Forest (NF) to conserve subsistence resources on National Forest System lands in 2021. Three of these in-season actions were for wildlife (mountain goat) and 4 for fish (3 salmon and 1 Eulachon). No Special Actions were implemented on the Chugach NF in FY 2021. At the State level, the Forest Service Interagency Staff Committee member helped evaluate several additional Emergency Special Action Requests to address immediate conservation and subsistence use issues for fish and wildlife. The Forest Service Regional Advisory Council Coordinator will have facilitated 4 Council meetings by the end of FY 2021, 2 each for the Southeast and Southcentral Regional Advisory Councils, when the fall meetings are completed.

In FY 2021, Tongass NF staff oversaw 8 Sockeye Salmon stock assessment projects and 1 Eulachon monitoring project through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP). Also through the FRMP, the Tongass NF partnered with 5 Tribal groups and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and supported 16 local jobs with tribal organizations in rural communities. Approximately \$1,172,553 in Forest Service funding was

distributed across the Tongass and Chugach National Forests for subsistence projects in 2021. In addition, the Forest Service provided \$465,523 in subsistence support to OSM. Notably, the Chugach NF completed year 6, the final year, of a black bear monitoring project in partnership with the ADF&G. The last bears were radio-collared in 2018 and will drop and be picked up this fall. Data analysis and report writing will begin this fall. In combination, both National Forests completed 26 deer surveys, and 6 population surveys for moose and mountain goats. Monitoring was implemented primarily through contracts and agreements. Forest Service research and inventory and monitoring projects continue to be vital to effectively manage subsistence resources and uses, while providing for conservation of harvested species.

In partnership with the Department of the Interior, the Forest Service continued to contribute to and work cooperatively within the Alaska Federal Subsistence Management Program. Activities included annual rulemaking, fish and wildlife monitoring, law enforcement and education, employment, and capacity building. The Forest Service regularly consulted with Alaska Tribes and Native Corporations to comply with presidential and secretarial policy direction and to be respectful of the current and historical role of Native Alaskans and other Federally qualified rural subsistence users while managing for customary and traditional subsistence uses.

FY 2021 Subsistence Budget

Chugach NF Subsistence Projects (2018)	\$95,000
Tongass NF Subsistence Projects (2018)	\$680,589
New 2020 Subsistence (FRMP) Projects	\$396,964
FS Regional Office Subsistence Support to OSM	\$465,523
Law Enforcement	\$50,000
Regional Office Overhead	\$6,500
Staff Salaries	\$1,216,961
Travel	\$134,800
Total Subsistence Budget	\$3,047,140

2021 Subsistence Program Details

The President’s Budget proposed for management of National Forest Lands in Alaska for Subsistence was essentially the same as the enacted Congressional Budget in FY 2021. However, because of Budget Modernization within USDA, the budget allocation process changed, and staff salaries were put under a separate funding code. The total Subsistence budget for FY 2021 was nearly \$3,050,000 (see table above). The subsistence operating budget (total budget minus salaries and travel) for FY 2021 was approximately \$1,300,000,

which included \$205,000 in Prior Year funds. An estimated \$1,216,961 was spent supporting salaries for 46 Forest Service personnel that conducted subsistence-related work in FY 2021.

Forest Service Subsistence funding enabled the Forest Service to continue to meet its responsibilities under the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), as well as provide vital employment in isolated rural communities where opportunities are often limited. The current level of funding also enabled the Forest Service to continue to hire approximately 30 to 40 seasonal employees to collect fish and wildlife population data. The information is used to set annual harvest levels and is essential for keeping fish and wildlife populations healthy and productive.

The Forest Service continued to use funds from the Congressional line-item for Subsistence (Budget Code SMSM) to manage the Alaska Region Subsistence Management Program, including for Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) projects and activities in FY 2021. Approximately \$1,172,553 from SMSM was provided to the Tongass and Chugach National Forests, primarily for FRMP project funding. This funding will continue to support ongoing FRMP projects in 2022, as well. On the Chugach NF, \$75,000 was allocated to monitor black bear, deer, moose, and mountain goat populations. Additional funding in the amount of \$30,000 was allocated to restore salmon runs on Resurrection River and to hire an SCA intern to conduct subsistence fisheries monitoring activities. The majority of the Tongass NF subsistence funding went toward FRMP projects; though, deer, moose and mountain goat surveys were also funded with SMSM dollars.

In FY 2021, \$465,523 was included in the Forest Service Regional Office allocation to fund an Interagency Agreement (IA) with OSM to support the Southeast and Southcentral Regional Advisory Councils, pay OSM Anthropology staff to review and analyze wildlife and fisheries proposals, Closure Reviews and Special Action Requests. In addition, \$50,000 of SMSM funds was again allocated to supplement Law Enforcement (LE) within the Alaska Region Forest Service. No funds are currently available for a Wildlife Resource Monitoring Program; though, funds are spent for wildlife monitoring within each National Forest unit's allocation, as noted above. For example, SMSM funds were used to monitor black bear on the Chugach NF in cooperation with the ADF&G.

Forest Service Subsistence Program Cumulative Accomplishments

To date, on lands managed by the USDA Forest Service in Alaska (Southeast and Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils), \$30,600,000 has been invested to complete over 90 projects through the FRMP program. One new FRMP project was funded by OSM in the Southeast in 2020.

Nearly \$17 million of the total has been paid through direct contracts to Tribal governments performing this work. At its peak, the Forest Service supported over 65 local jobs in rural Alaska directly from FRMP funding. For comparison, in 2019 the FRMP supported 30 jobs; in 2020 the program supported 22 jobs; and in 2021 the program again supported another 22 jobs in rural Alaskan communities, many of which have chronically high unemployment rates.

Forest Service subsistence resource monitoring projects provide valuable information and help build collaborative relationships with other Federal, State and Tribal partners. Forest Service involvement in the FRMP has also helped to build capacity in local Tribal governments involved in increasingly complicated and labor intensive scientific research, inventory and monitoring projects and Traditional Ecological Knowledge studies. This work has helped Tribal organizations effectively participate in regulatory decision-making by the State and Federal governments regarding wildlife and fisheries issues.