

collection of information is necessary for the stated purposes and the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical or scientific utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

#### Use of Comment

All comments received in response to this notice, including name and address when provided, will become a matter of public record. Comments will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval.

Dated: August 4, 1999.

**Arthur Bryant,**

*Acting Associate Deputy Chief, National Forest System.*

[FR Doc. 99-20842 Filed 8-11-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-P

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### Information Collection; Request for Comments; Improve Management of the Tongass National Forest and Service to Local, Regional, and National Customers

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Forest Service announces its intention to establish a new information collection. The new collection will provide information that will help Forest Service personnel identify and meet the needs of people who use, visit, or benefit in other ways from the Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska. Respondents will be chosen from three different groups of customers: southeast Alaska residents; southeast Alaska visitors; and the general public.

**DATES:** Comments must be received in writing on or before October 12, 1999.

**ADDRESSES:** All comments should be addressed to: Robert F. Schroeder, Forestry Sciences Lab, Forest Service,

USDA, 2770 Sherwood Lane, Suite 2A, Juneau, AK 99801.

Comments also may be submitted via facsimile to (907) 586-7848 or by email to [rschroeder/r10@fs.fed.us](mailto:rschroeder/r10@fs.fed.us).

The public may inspect comments received at the Office of the Forestry Sciences Lab, Forest Service, USDA, 2770 Sherwood Lane, Suite 2A, Juneau, Alaska. Visitors are asked to call (907) 586-8811, extension 240, to facilitate entrance into the building.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Robert F. Schroeder, Forestry Sciences Lab, at (907) 586-8811, extension 240.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

#### Background

The Tongass National Forest encompasses nearly 85 percent of the land in southeast Alaska, and activities conducted on the Forest form the basis for the regional economy. Commercial fishing, timber production, mineral extraction, and the quickly growing tourism industry depend on the renewable and non-renewable natural resources of this National Forest. The Forest Service completed a revision of the Tongass Land Management Plan in 1997 and published a revised Record of Decision in the **Federal Register** on May 11, 1999 (64 FR 25274). The Tongass Land Management Plan and Record of Decision will serve as a blueprint for how the Forest Service will manage the Tongass National Forest over the next 10 to 15 years.

While revising the Tongass Land Management Plan in 1997, the Forest Service identified critical information needs. Some of these information needs were associated with the human component of Tongass National Forest ecosystems, that is the people and social systems that benefit from these ecosystems.

The collected data, while addressing the human component, will provide the Forest Service with a better understanding of how forest management practices influence community well-being and social change within the southeast Alaska geographic area and will help the agency meet the needs of three groups of diverse customers: residents of southeast Alaska who are affected by forest management actions on a day-to-day basis, people from outside the southeast Alaska geographic area who visit the Tongass National Forest, and people who may never visit the Tongass National Forest yet believe they benefit because it exists.

The agency will gain a better understanding of the demands the public makes on the Tongass National

Forest programs and services, how well information about agency programs and services are communicated to the public, and how well the agency meets the needs and expectations of the three identified groups of people.

Forest Service personnel from the Pacific Northwest Research Station Forestry Sciences Lab in Juneau, Alaska, will work in cooperation with University of Alaska research staff to design, administer, and evaluate these surveys. Interviewers will conduct most surveys by telephone. Mail-back questionnaires and face-to-face interviews will be used to reach people who do not have telephones.

People from each of the three identified groups will be asked to respond to questions that include their perceptions of how the Tongass National Forest is managed by the agency, their preferences for how this National Forest should be managed, their perceptions of Tongass National Forest ecosystems, their past and planned visits to the Tongass National Forest, their use of the forest's resources, their vision of the forest of the future, their household and community economic dependence on the forest, and their attitudes and values concerning timber management.

The information collection is comprised of three closely related surveys: The Tongass Southeast Alaska Resident Survey, The Tongass Visitor Survey, and The Tongass National Public Survey. A description of each survey form follows.

#### Description of Information Collection

The following describes the new information collection:

**Title:** The Tongass Southeast Alaska Resident Survey.

**OMB Number:** New.

**Expiration Date of Approval:** New.

**Type of Request:** This is a new information collection requirement and has not received approval from the Office of Management and Budget.

**Abstract:** The Forest Service conducted a survey in 1979 to assess the interaction of the southeast Alaska residents with the Tongass National Forest. This survey also included the perceptions these residents had of the Tongass as a natural resource. The 1979 survey provided the most recent comprehensive information on southeast Alaska residents' subsistence and recreational use of the Tongass, their attitudes and values concerning the Tongass National Forest, their interest in the development of a regional timber economy, and their perceptions of Forest Service land management practices. This important benchmark

survey is now 20 years old and may not be an accurate reflection of the views, perceptions, and activities of current southeast Alaska residents.

This new information collection will provide current data and identify issues that have become important to the southeast Alaska residents in the intervening years. Respondents also will be asked questions that relate to issues that were not important at the time of the 1979 survey. These issues include large scale timber harvesting on national forest and private lands, a large increase in tourist use of the forest, expansion of tourist use into back-country areas, economic restructuring of the area that is moving away from timber, mining, and commercial fishing toward tourism and service industries, and an increasing resident and visitor population competing for limited fish and wildlife resources.

Forest Service personnel and University of Alaska research staff will conduct a random sample survey of southeast Alaska residents, primarily through telephone interviews.

Data gathered in this information collection are not available from other sources.

*Estimated Burden per Respondent:* 30 minutes.

*Type of Respondents:* Individuals from southeast Alaska.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 1600.

*Estimated Number of Responses per Respondents:* 1.

*Estimated Total Burden on Respondents:* 800 hours.

#### **Description of Information Collection**

The following describes the new information collection:

*Title:* The Tongass Visitor Survey.

*OMB Number:* New.

*Expiration Date of Approval:* New.

*Type of Request:* This is a new information collection requirement and has not received approval from the Office of Management and Budget.

*Abstract:* In 1979, the Forest Service conducted a survey of cruise ship passengers visiting southeast Alaska as a companion study to the 1979 Alaska Public Survey. In the intervening years, tourism has increased in southeast Alaska, with approximately 1 million visitors expected in 1999.

The Forest Service is the primary land manager in the southeast Alaska area. The tourist industry has become a dominant economic and social force within this area, and the tourist experience has become a more important concern of the agency's management of the Tongass National Forest.

Visitors are drawn to the scenic attractions on the Tongass National Forest that include the tidewater and other glaciers; the wilderness, wildlife, and whales; the Native cultures and colorful history; and excellent sport fishing opportunities. Cruise ship visitors comprise a large majority of the total visitor population to southeast Alaska. However, independent travelers are becoming a larger segment of the tourist population.

This information collection will help Forest Service personnel evaluate a visitor's interaction with the Tongass National Forest, the perceptions visitors have regarding the Forest Service's land management practices of these natural resources, the role the Tongass National Forest plays in attracting visitors to southeast Alaska, and how the agency's land management practices add to or detract from visitors' experiences.

This information collection will be accomplished through interviews with tourists visiting southeast Alaska. Forest Service personnel in cooperation with university research staff will collect information through telephone interviews, mail-back questionnaires, and face-to-face interviews. Forest Service personnel will compare the data from this collection to the study conducted in 1979.

Data gathered in this information collection are not available from other sources.

*Estimated Burden per Respondent:* 30 minutes.

*Type of Respondents:* Individuals from the main market segments of southeast Alaska pleasure visitor populations.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 1,500.

*Estimated Number of Responses per Respondents:* 1.

*Estimated Total Burden on Respondents:* 750 hours.

#### **Description of Information Collection**

The following describes the new information collection:

*Title:* Tongass National Public Survey.

*OMB Number:* New.

*Expiration Date of Approval:* New.

*Type of Request:* This is a new information collection requirement and has not received approval from the Office of Management and Budget.

*Abstract:* The Tongass National Public Survey will provide a method of collecting information to learn if people in the United States outside Alaska are aware of the existence of the Tongass National Forest and, of those who are aware, how they perceive the benefits of this Forest. Respondents will be non-Alaskan residents of the United States.

Forest Service personnel will work cooperatively with university staff and professional contractors to ask respondents questions that include their knowledge about the Tongass National Forest, their past or planned visits to the forest, the benefits they believe they obtain or receive from this National Forest, and their perceptions of the agency's management of this Forest. Researchers will conduct a telephone survey of people who live in the United States outside of Alaska.

Data gathered in this information collection are not available from other sources.

*Estimated Burden per Respondent:* 30 minutes.

*Type of Respondents:* Individuals from the national public.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 1,200.

*Estimated Number of Responses per Respondents:* 1.

*Estimated Total Burden on Respondents:* 600 hours.

#### **Comments Are Invited**

The agency invites comments on the following: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the stated purposes and the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical or scientific utility; (b) the accuracy of the estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including the use of automated, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

#### **Use of Comments**

All comments received in response to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval. Those who submit comments should be aware that all comments, including names and addresses when provided, are placed in the record and are available for public inspection.

Dated August 4, 1999.

**Robert Lewis, Jr.,**

*Deputy Chief for Research and Development.*  
[FR Doc. 99-20843 Filed 8-11-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-P