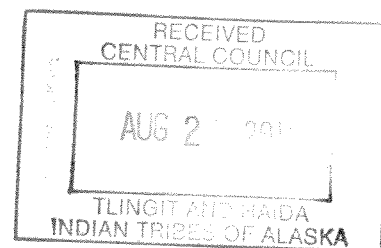




United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250



AUG 16 2011

Mr. Edward K. Thomas  
President  
Central Council  
Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska  
Andrew P. Hope Building  
320 West Willoughby Avenue, Suite 300  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1726

Dear President Thomas:

Thank you for your letters of May 4 and May 6, 2011, regarding the Adopted Tribal Assembly resolutions that resulted from the annual Tribal Assembly in Juneau, Alaska, from April 13 through April 16, 2011. I apologize for the delayed response.

I appreciate the intertwining interests, responsibilities, and opportunities that the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska shares with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and USDA's Forest Service in particular.

The resolutions (11-02, 11-14, 11-16, 11-19, and 11-57) addressing matters of health and welfare of your Tribal citizens, which you forwarded in your letters, are thoughtful and far reaching.

I appreciate that you are working with Forest Service Alaska Regional Forester Beth Pendleton in addressing several of these matters, including providing information about the Forest Service's Subsistence Management Program budget, accomplishments relating to the Subsistence Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program, and opportunities to expand the utilization of traditional ecological knowledge. USDA is committed to regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with Tribal officials in policy decisions that have Tribal implications. I encourage you to continue that dialogue and partnership. Enclosed is a briefing paper in response to these resolutions.

If you have additional questions, please have your staff contact Forest Service Office of Tribal Relations Director Fred Clark at (202) 205-1514, [fclark@fs.fed.us](mailto:fclark@fs.fed.us), or Alaska Regional Forester Beth Pendleton at (907) 586-8663, [bpendleton@fs.fed.us](mailto:bpendleton@fs.fed.us).

Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary

Enclosure

## **Forest Service Response to Adopted Tribal Assembly Resolutions**

August, 2011

### *TA11-02: In Support of Reconsideration of Saxman Rural Subsistence Community Status*

The Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska's recommendation in this resolution is directed toward Alaska's Congressional Delegation, Alaska State Legislators, and the city council of Saxman. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a seat on the Federal Subsistence Board, so if the groups to whom you have made this recommendation direct comments or requests to the Federal Subsistence Board, the USDA member will certainly be attentive.

### *TA11-14: Request to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to Undertake Informal Discussions and/or Consultation on Administrative Policy Issues as a Part of the Federal Review of the Implementation of Title VIII of ANILCA*

USDA's Forest Service will initiate discussions with the Council regarding this resolution, with involvement by USDA's Office of Tribal Relations (OTR). The Forest Service and OTR will work with our counterparts in the U.S. Department of the Interior to further address issues within our joint purview.

### *TA11-16: Federal Subsistence Review-Organization, Regulatory, Law Enforcement and Budgets*

The discussions relating to TA/11-14 are related to this resolution, and so the Forest Service and OTR will include these issues in the discussions. The budget constraints on the Federal government are causing reductions across many important and even essential programs. How those reductions will affect the operation of the Federal Subsistence Program in Southeast Alaska is unknown.

### *TA11-19: A Resolution Supporting the Reauthorization and Extension of the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act*

President Barack Obama's fiscal year 2012 budget proposes to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, extending for 5 more years the enhanced payments to States to ease the transition to the reduced amount of the 25-percent payments for public roads and schools. I recognize the economic difficulties rural communities have experienced in recent years. At the same time, I understand the need to manage the Federal budget thoughtfully and deliberately for deficit reduction. We have testified before Congress that we would like to work with Congress to develop a proposal that addresses both concerns.

### *TA11-57: Roadless Rule and Tongass Hydro*

The Tongass National Forest's status with respect to the Roadless Rule is now comparable to that of the other forests and regions within the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit and New Mexico. That is, the Tongass is simultaneously subject to Judge Laporte's 2006 reinstatement of the 2001 Rule and

Judge Brimmer's order that set aside and established a nationwide permanent injunction against the 2001 Rule.

USDA recognizes the importance of hydroelectric projects located on the Tongass National Forest to local communities in Southeast Alaska. The Forest Service will provide, through the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, an updated briefing on flexibilities within the connections between the Rule and how to harmonize the interests of the Rule with the need for hydroelectric projects in Southeast Alaska.

The Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) is managed through the Rural Business Cooperative Service and provides grants and loan guarantees for renewable energy and energy efficiency in rural America. Tribes can apply to the REAP Energy Audit and Renewable Energy Development Assistance Grant Program.