



**Cluster Information**

Cluster:	Visitor Products
Goal:	To create private-public partnerships as a catalyst for job creation and business growth in Southeast Alaska.
Chair:	Kirby Day, Director of Shore Operations, Princess Cruises

**Meetings Held Since Last Update**

Date:	Purpose:	Attendees:
3/21/13	Monthly Teleconference	Bill Tremblay, Carol Rushmore, Darrin Kelly, Faith Duncan, Hans vonRekowski, Jeff Morehouse, Jennifer Berger, Jeremy Gieser, John Blanchard, John Neary, Kelli Dindinger Grummett, Kirby Day, Laurie Cooper, Milton Fusselman, Odin Brudie, Shawn Blumenshine
2/12/13	Innovation Summit Breakout Session	Bill Hagevig, Bill Tremblay, Bob Janes, Carol Rushmore, Caryl McConkie, Drew Green, Dru Garson, Greg Schlachter, Hans vonRekowski, Jamey Cagle, Jeff Morehouse, Jennifer Berger, Jeremy Gieser, Jill Ramiel, John Blanchard, John Neary, Kelli Dindinger Grummett, Kendra Huffine, Kirby Day, Kristine Harder, Laurie Cooper, Lynn Humphrey, Marti Marshall, Nikki Hinds, Nikki Powis, Odin Brudie, Shawn Blumenshine

**Initiative Activity Update**

Initiative 1:	<b>Develop Land and Water Trails and Support Facilities</b>
Champion:	Jeremy Gieser, Gastineau Guiding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion at the March call-in focused on developing comments to submit to the Forest Plan 5-year Review. Comments will be submitted about shifting LUD boundaries to accommodate infrastructure near Wilderness areas. Odin volunteered to work with Jeremy to draft a comment letter that will mention types of improvements and long distance trail opportunities.</li> <li>• The initiative team still plans to bring water-based commercial operators together with a FS</li> </ul>	

Southeast Cluster Initiative  
 Monthly Status Report  
 February/March 2013



team for discussions on infrastructure for commercial use in the Tongass.

**Initiative 2: Increase Guided Access to Land**

Champion: John McConnochie

- The Forest Service will renew the 15,400 additional temporary use days allocated last year, but they will not offer any additional new access this year. However, the use will be less restrictive. Operators can use the service days without restriction to off peak times. This year, the decision to offer the increased allocation again was made in February. It was requested that next year the additional use impacts be evaluated by October, so additional use days can be allocated in the Fall rather than in the Spring.

**Initiative 3: Promote Multi-Community and Regional Visitor Packages**

Champion: Vacant

- This initiative is on hold.

**Initiative 4: Strengthen Accountability for Tongass Recreation Fees**

Champion: Bob Janes

- While funds for enhancement were distributed entirely through a competitive process in past years, beginning in 2013, the Fee Board decided to distribute half of the enhancement funds (\$350,000) using a non-competitive formula. Juneau's non-competitive allocation will be used for seasonal and special uses staffing, guide training and wilderness BMP.

**Initiative 5: Tourism Course Integration with Existing UAS Degree Programs**

Champion: Kelli Grummett

- The UAS survey is about to wrap up. Preliminary responses are positive. Kelli will review the results with UAS to make a go or no go decision on the program. Industry members requested collateral from UAS to put in employee lounges for programs currently available.

**Draft Initiatives: #6 Changing Local Perceptions on the Value of Tourism; #7 Marketing the Uniqueness of the Southeast Region; #8 Regional Transportation Packages & Partnerships to Reduce Cost**

- No activity.

Other Informational items

- At the Innovation Summit held in February, Dru Garson, Tourism Development Specialist with DCCED, presented the findings from the state-wide tourism workforce development survey conducted this past fall. The report is available at <http://alaskapartnership.org/visitor-industry-survey/>. The report itself can be printed from here: <http://alaskapartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Alaska-Forward-Visitor-Industry-Survey-Final-Copy.pdf>.
- The Tongass National Forest Service (TNF) 5-Year review of the 2008 *Tongass National Forest*

Southeast Cluster Initiative  
Monthly Status Report  
February/March 2013



*Land and Resource Management Plan* has been extended. Comments can be submitted online at [www.tnf-5yearreview.com](http://www.tnf-5yearreview.com). The public comment period is now open through June 30, 2013. This document revision will set the stage for how the Tongass will be managed going into the future, including what areas are available for tourism.

- The deadline to renew the REA is September 14, 2014. Any letters written need to explain how it benefits the community economically and mention successes. Miles Baker on Senator Murkowski's staff will be invited to update the cluster on the status of the bill.
- MGRA commercial use plan RFP solicitation is out. Contract will be awarded by mid-April. The NEPA analysis will determine the visitor capacity of the area and set commercial use allocations. Contractor will do extensive outreach to public for comments. A question was asked as to whether the new plan will have adaptive flexibility written into it to take into account future developments, as the plan may be around 15-20 years? Yes, the document will spell out limiting factors for commercial use so that if limiting factor doesn't exist anymore, allocations can be revised without a document revision.

### Next steps

Next Visitor Products teleconference will be in the Fall.