



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:
4/26/13	Monthly Teleconference	Bill Tremblay, Bob Janes, Hans vonRekowski, Jeff Morehouse, Jeremy Gieser, John Blanchard, Kirby Day, Marti Marshall, Milton Fusselman

Initiative Activity Update

Initiative 1: **Develop Land and Water Trails and Support Facilities**
 Champion: Jeremy Gieser, Gastineau Guiding

- Jeremy Gieser is developing comments to submit to the Forest Plan 5-year Review on behalf of the Visitor Products Trails initiative group. He would like to see the Forest Service coordinate with other agencies so that land and sea use regulations are better coordinated. He also would like to see the plan become more supportive of sustainable tourism. The current plan is mostly written with the timber industry in mind. He would like to have other tourism and recreation operators contribute to the comment letter. He has provided these links to background information and to specific pages that are most pertinent to tourism issues. Send your comments to Jeremy or directly to the Forest Supervisor. Responses are due by June 8th.

About the 5 Year Review:
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/tongass/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5402695>

FAQ's regarding the 5 Year Review:
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/tongass/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5402776>

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Standards & Guidelines specific to Recreation & Tourism (see chapter 4-43):

https://fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5367422.pdf

LUD Map: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5415146.pdf

How to comment: <http://tnf-5yearreview.com/>

Initiative 2: Increase Guided Access to Land

Champion: John McConnochie

- The 15,400 additional temporary use days were taken again this year, and there was more demand than could be met. The Visitor Products group requested that the Forest Service make a decision on offering the additional days for 2014 by November of 2013. The FS will look at options, such as a lottery, for opening the additional days to everyone.
- The evaluation team will wrap up analyzing responses to the RFP for the MGRA Commercial Use Plan next week. They will forward a recommendation to the contracting manager who will make the decision.
- There was discussion on putting links to outfitter/guide websites on the USFS Tongass website. The Forest Service will look into using outfitter/guide fees to move this along next year.

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

- This initiative is now focused on working to bring attention to the importance of reauthorizing the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA). If the act sunsets, the fees will continue to be collected but they will not return to the site of collection, resulting in reduced funding for the Tongass. Bob presented a draft letter of support directed to our Washington delegation. The initiative team is going to request letters of support from as many groups as possible, requesting that letters be written to our delegation to support the act.

Initiative 5: Tourism Course Integration with Existing UAS Degree Programs

Champion: Kelli Grummett

- The UAS Tourism Program survey wrapped up with 172 responses. 40% of the respondents indicated an interest in a career in tourism, and 40% more were still undecided. Close to 22% of respondents were moderately to extremely interested in the proposed UAS two year tourism emphasis program. Over 60% of respondents would be more interested in the program if the academic calendar did not interfere with the tourism season, guaranteed seasonal employment were available, and tuition assistance were available. When responses only from Alaska residents were tabulated, 36 percent of that group were moderately to

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extremely interested in the UAS program. Kelli and John Blanchard will get together over the summer to review the results and make a decision on the program. If it moves forward, UAS will hire a part-time director with a tourism background to coordinate the program.

- A request was made to UAS for marketing/recruitment brochures that tourism businesses could place in their employee break rooms this summer. John will provide material to Kirby for distribution.

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. Teleconferences held this year with other communities did not result in initiative activity. Discussion focused on whether a cluster lead in each community would be a solution.

Other Informational items

- The Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center is looking to increase fees from \$3 to \$5 and expanding the coverage area to a broader interpretive site rather than just the building, which would include the rest rooms, the pavilion and other areas covered by staffing.

Next steps

- Next Visitor Products teleconference will be in the Fall.