



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Tongass National Forest  
Alaska Region

648 Mission Street  
Ketchikan, AK 99901  
907-225-3101

File Code: 2630  
Date: June 10, 2020

Don Hernandez, Chairman  
1011 E. Tudor Road, MS121  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

RECEIVED

JUN 17 2020

Dear Chairman Hernandez,

I would like to thank you, and the members of the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council), for your hard work and enduring dedication towards addressing the needs of rural subsistence users on the Tongass National Forest. I specifically appreciate the work that has been undertaken by the Work Group of the Council and your service as a member of the Prince of Wales Island Deer Summit Steering Committee.

As you are aware, deer are an extremely important species for residents of Southeast Alaska and hold substantial subsistence, ecological, and economic importance. That is why concerns over declining deer populations and harvest rates are of high importance to me. I fully support interested parties meeting to better understand the issues surrounding deer management on Prince of Wales Island and working together to find solutions that promote healthier deer populations.

The Deer Summit Steering Committee has consisted of members from the USDA Forest Service, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tribal organizations, municipal governments, The Nature Conservancy, university researchers, community members and hunters. To date, these members have identified two primary objectives for the proposed summit:


- 1.a Bring together scientists, land and wildlife managers, hunters, and most importantly - POWa community members - to learn more about forest habitat; predator influence; and how harvesta influences deer populations.a
- 2.a Identify objectives and opportunities with all stakeholders that support long-term healthy deera populations and POW community members' interests.a

I look forward to the steering committee balancing the issues related to deer habitat, predation and harvest. The effort by the Council in 2006 which produced the Unit 2 Deer Planning Process report will provide a good foundation for this effort. Input by the Council and its Work Group will be critical in identifying outcomes that directly relate to improving management of all resources on Prince of Wales Island.

Given public health concerns, with the Covid-19 pandemic, it is unlikely that the Deer Summit will be held this year; but I do support working towards planning a summit in the spring of 2021 while abiding by any health mandates that may be in effect at that time. Additionally, the USDA Forest Service will pursue funding to contribute to this effort as appropriate.

The USDA Forest Service will be represented in this effort by Craig District Ranger, Scot Shuler. He may be contacted at 907-826-1600 or [scot.shuler@usda.gov](mailto:scot.shuler@usda.gov).

Sincerely,

  
M. EARL STEWART  
Forest Supervisor, Tongass NF

cc: Scot Shuler, Terry Suminski, Darin Watschke





THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

## Department of Fish and Game

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER  
Headquarters Office

1255 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
P.O. Box 115526  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-5526  
Main: 907.465.6136  
Fax: 907.465.2332

June 22, 2020

Don Hernandez, Chairman  
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council  
1011 East Tudor Road, MS121  
Anchorage, AK 99503

Dear Chairman Hernandez,

Thank you for your letter of May 21<sup>st</sup> expressing concern over an apparent decline in the Game Management Unit 2 deer population observed by residents and asking ADF&G to partner with the Forest Service to fund and organize a facilitated discussion of the deer population status, habitat, and management in Unit 2. ADF&G manages deer and other game, including wolves and black bears, with the goal of providing sustainably harvestable populations for the benefit of all Alaskans. We recognize the importance the Unit 2 deer population has for residents of Unit 2 and elsewhere. As such, my staff and I look forward to engaging with the Southeast RAC, the Tongass National Forest, and others in developing the scope, goals, and budget for a second Unit 2 deer summit.

Unfortunately, our ability to financially support a deer summit is uncertain. Closing spring 2020 nonresident bear hunts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a substantial decline in the Division of Wildlife Conservation's (DWC) anticipated revenue from the sale of licenses and big game tags. Uncertainty over whether nonresident hunters will travel to Alaska for fall 2020 hunts creates additional doubt. The current funding shortfall required DWC to reduce its FY2021 budget. More reductions may be necessary in FY2021 and FY2022. ADF&G's leadership is working to mitigate this issue, but I want to clarify that a lack of financial backing should not be mistaken for a lack of interest or support.

Although we may not be able to contribute funding, the DWC's managers and researchers can contribute toward planning a deer summit and provide presentations on management and research findings since the previous deer summit. Please use Tom Schumacher, Southeast Regional Supervisor for the DWC, as your primary ADF&G contact, [tom.schumacher@alaska.gov](mailto:tom.schumacher@alaska.gov) or 465-4359. Thanks again for inviting ADF&G's participation. We look forward to working with the Forest Service, the RAC, and other interested parties.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Lang".

Doug Vincent-Lang  
Commissioner

cc: Eddie Grasser, ADF&G/DWC, Director, Anchorage  
Ryan Scott, ADF&G/DWC, Asst. Director, Juneau  
Tom Schumacher, ADF&G/DWC, Regional Supervisor, Douglas  
Dave Schmidt, USFS, Regional Forester, Juneau  
Earl Stewart, USFS, Tongass National Forest, Supervisor, Ketchikan  
Scot Shuler, USFS, Tongass National Forest, Ranger, Craig