



# USDA Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy Initial Investment Projects

March 2022

## **TRIBAL AND INDIGENOUS INTERESTS**

### **Sharing Our Knowledge Conference – Wrangell Cooperative Association, \$60,000**

- This symposium will bring together Alaska Native and First Nations traditional knowledge bearers, elders, and fluent speakers of indigenous languages with artists, academics, researchers, students, and other learners. Subjects presented will include language retention, linguistics, archaeology, art and music, Alaska Native history, museum studies, cultural anthropology, indigenous law and clan protocols, fisheries, and traditional ecological knowledge.

### **Indigenous Heritage and Place Names in the Juneau Trail System – Sealaska Heritage and Trail Mix, Inc., \$440,000**

- Sealaska and Trail Mix Inc. will work together to evaluate current indigenous heritage signage and follow up with planning, research, design, and installation of 200 indigenous heritage place name and interpretive signs along trails in Juneau. Overall, the project goal is to focus initially on the Juneau area then expand efforts to include additional Southeast communities.

### **Alaska Youth Stewards – Central Council Tlingit Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, \$750,000**

- Tlingit & Haida Tribes will work with the Southeast Sustainable Partnership to transition the Alaska Youth Stewards program to their Native Lands and Resources Department. This program will support and encourage youth to participate in decision making processes that have potential or direct effect on traditional ways of life.

### **Wildland Fire Program – Central Council Tlingit Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, \$525,000**

- Tlingit and Haida Tribes will plan and develop a wildfire program in partnership with the USDA Forest Service. Funding will support an 18-to-20-member Type 2 Wildland Fire Handcrew. This will be the first Native Wildland Fire Program in Southeast Alaska. As part of team duties, personnel will deploy to fire response situations throughout the United States, furthering Wildland Fire team-member's certifications and field experience.

### **Cultural Use of Forest Resources Tribal Validation Crew – Organized Village of Kasaan, \$50,000**

- This investment will fund a tribal field crew deployed using Survey123mobile GIS software to document culturally significant cedar trees and compile data that can be used to ensure ecologically sustainable cultural/artisanal use. This effort represents work in the spirit of shared stewardship of culturally critical resources.

### **Cultural Interpretive Training – Central Council Tlingit Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, \$500,000**

- Tlingit & Haida Tribal leadership will work in partnership with the USDA Forest Service to develop and implement a comprehensive cultural interpretive training program grounded in local indigenous knowledge, approaches, and teachings.

## **COMMUNITY CAPACITY**

### **Indigenous Youth Stewardship & Workforce Development Program – Sitka Trail Works, \$100,000**

- In partnership with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Sitka Trail Works will run a pilot summer youth program aimed at fostering an indigenous land stewardship ethic in young Sitkans and growing the workforce pipeline to USDA agencies. The program will include natural resource management training and incorporate indigenous cultural stewardship values, intended to strengthen a sense of identity and attachment to place in young Tribal citizens.

### **Sharing Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy Successes – Sitka Conservation Society, \$150,000**

- This investment focuses on creating stories and content for social media and external communications to highlight SASS work. Sitka Conservation Society will engage the public, highlight programs and accomplishments, opportunities, and celebrate successes. They will collaborate on storytelling and mapping of SASS programs and how communities benefit from these USDA investments.

### **Mariculture Processing Facility – Southeast Conference, \$500,000\***

- This USDA Rural Development investment will help the regional economic development organization the Southeast Conference create a blueprint for a mariculture (seaweed and other sea products) processing facility on Prince of Wales Island. The proposed maritime processing center will support aquatic farming of kelp, seaweed, and shellfish. Co-op members will be able to handle, store, freeze, pack, process, label and load their harvest safely and cost-effectively.

### **Value Added Products – Sea to Shore Seafood, \$250,000\***

- As part of the Value-Added Producer Grant program, USDA is investing \$250,000 in Sea to Shore Seafood, a small fishing operation in Petersburg, Alaska. This investment will be used to process salmon and distribute products into new markets. It also will improve sales while remaining committed to sustainable, traceable fishing.

### **Jobs for Alaskans – Spruce Root, \$740,000\***

- As part of the Rural Innovation Stronger Economy Grant program, USDA is investing \$740,000 in Spruce Root, a branch of the regional tribal corporation Sealaska. Spruce Root provides local entrepreneurs access to business development and financial resources in the form of loan capital, business coaching, workshops, and competitions. The investment is already being used to identify and create jobs, then train Alaskans to fill those jobs by making connections between tribal villages and the industry clusters that show potential for growth in Southeast Alaska.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Angoon Danger Point Trail – Kootznoowoo, Inc., \$340,000**

- This project will extend the current Danger Point Trail in Angoon, by enhancing an existing undeveloped path from the Angoon cemetery to Danger Point Peninsula, and the Danger Point Lighthouse Reserve. The completion of this trail will allow for safer, easier interaction with the natural environment for both recreational and educational purposes. This trail is especially important to the community because it would allow elders and young people to interact with nature together and help convey traditional knowledge and values to the next generation.

### **Bear Viewings and Canoe Route on Admiralty Island - Kootznoowoo, Inc., \$125,000**

- This project initiate planning for a new bear viewing area on or near Admiralty Island. Bear viewing is a high demand visitor activity that is currently limited in Southeast Alaska. The Pack Creek Bear Viewing Area in Seymour Canal is the only reliable place for the public to see bears. That area is at capacity and a new bear viewing site will provide opportunities for the public to experience Admiralty's unique bear habitat, create employment, and contribute to the sustainable economic development in the native village of Angoon.

### **Southeast Alaska Water Trail – Sitka Trail Works, \$42,000**

- This investment consists of planning, design, and National Environmental Policy Act review for a Southeast Alaska Water Trail. Southeast Alaska is a kayaking mecca and Sitka Sound is a crown jewel among the Region. Tiny islands with cozy beaches surrounded by kelp forests and volcanic rock are stunning attractions that imbue a sense of awe in those lucky enough to visit. Despite the proximity to downtown Sitka, human-powered water recreation is an uncommon visitor activity because little infrastructure currently exists. Need for this project was first identified in the Sitka Outdoor Recreation Action Plan drafted in 2012.

### **Regional Biomass Strategy and Pellet Mill – Southeast Conference, \$1,000,000**

- Utilization of woody biomass for thermal energy (heat) creates local employment, utilizes local resources, and develops local infrastructure. Smaller pellet mills are increasingly common in the lower United States in areas where there is not a large resource or a small local demand and promise to be a good fit for Southeast Alaska communities. These smaller, containerized, easy to install and operate, pellet mills utilize locally available resources ranging from pallets, coffee grounds, cardboard, and construction debris. This investment will allow Southeast Conference to facilitate the purchase and installation of a small pellet plant in partnership as a demonstration project for other communities in Southeast Alaska.

### **Sitka Sound Coastal Trail – Sitka Trail Works, \$80,000**

- Sitka Trail Works and Sitka Conservation Society will work together to develop the 20-mile Sitka Sound Coastal Trail, an ocean-front cabin, and trail network located 16 miles south of Sitka. The route offers a unique coastal hiking experience with multi-day opportunities that traverse coastal forest, muskeg, lake shore, and the rugged coastline. Phase 1 of this project will focus on planning, public engagement, and design.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **Local Climate Monitoring with Regional Implications – Hoonah Indian Association, \$75,000**

- This project will establish a real-time network for snow monitoring in seven watersheds and manual monitoring of snowpack in Hoonah's municipal watershed. The project will inform understanding of changing climate trends and how to mitigate impacts from low snowpack on municipal water supply and fish. Methods and data will be shared with the public and other communities to advance efforts in snow modeling and climate analyses in the region.

### **Engaging Tribal and Community Partners in Salmon Habitat Restoration in the Margaret Creek Watershed, Tongass National Forest – Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition, \$80,000**

- The Ketchikan Indian Community, Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition, and USDA Forest Service are partnering to restore habitat for four species of salmon, trout, and char in Margaret Creek on the Tongass National Forest. This project will restore fish habitat by constructing log jams and thinning floodplain forest to accelerate recovery of old-growth forest conditions, while building relationships between agency and community interests that will foster watershed stewardship. This proposal will build on the broader Margaret Creek Restoration Project enabling the Ketchikan Indian Community to hire and train a tribal work crew to conduct stream restoration and riparian forest enhancement activities.

### **Skanaxheen Restoration Project and Kake Area Restoration Opportunities – Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition, \$505,000**

- The USDA Forest Service and Southeast Watershed Coalition are partnering to restore stream function, fish habitat, and floodplain wetlands in Skanaxheen and Shorty Creek on Kuiu Island. This investment will support the Skanaxheen Creek restoration and provide resources for additional stewardship activities being planned on Kuiu and Kupreanof Island near the community of Kake.

**Trout Creek Restoration Project and Training for Tribal Work Crew – Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition, \$40,000**

- Trout Creek is a small anadromous fish stream on Kosciusko Island impacted by logging in the riparian area. A partnership consisting of the Klawock Cooperative Association, Prince of Wales Tribal Conservation District, Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition, and the USDA Forest Service (Craig Ranger District) will restore instream habitat by adding woody debris using hand tool methods. Further, the project will provide hands-on training for the Klawock Watershed Work Crew.

**Klawock Indigenous Steward Partnership – Shaan-Seet, Inc., \$400,000**

- This investment bolsters the existing partnership between the Klawock Cooperative Association, Prince of Wales Tribal Conservation District, Klawock Heenya Corporation, Shaan Seet Corporation, and Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition as they work together to implement the Klawock Sockeye Salmon Action Plan. A tribal work crew operated in 2020 and 2021 to survey salmon streams, thin riparian forest for stream health and wildlife habitat, and restore logged over sockeye salmon streams through the addition of large woody debris. This investment will continue this work into subsequent years.

**All Landowners Group & Young-growth Working Forest Analysis – Alaska Division of Forestry, \$275,000**

- The over-arching goal of this collaborative effort is to help achieve a diverse and stable young-growth forest industry in the region of southeast Alaska. The purpose of this agreement is to facilitate continuing cooperation between the Alaska Forest Association (AFA) and the Tongass National Forest to advance information and technology about a young-growth forest products industry and help ensure a successful transition to young-growth forest management that sustains the industry and bolsters local economies in southeast Alaska.

**Tongass Transition Collaborative Facilitation Support – Alaska Division of Forestry, \$200,000**

- This investment will assist in reconvening and supporting the Tongass Transition Collaborative. By fostering collaboration between Tribes, the timber industry, Tongass National Forest user groups, conservation organizations, and USDA Forest Service staff, this investment will facilitate an all-lands approach towards shared stewardship across the region.

**The Teqe'heit Stewardship Program – Prince of Wales Tribal Conservation District, \$500,000**

- This investment will fund a forest stewardship work crew with a youth program component. Projects will include riparian habitat improvement, compost/mulch projects, provision of cultural wood to the Indigenous community, renewable energy research, and a recreation & trails program. A multi-generational approach will help sustain this program over time, starting in one community and expanding to include three additional communities within five years.

**Cooperative Development, Planning, and Implementation of Watershed Restoration Projects in Southeast Alaska – National Forest Foundation, \$1,000,000**

- This investment will support on the ground implementation of watershed restoration projects including young growth forest management, habitat improvements, cultural resource protection and related projects. These activities will build capacity in Southeast Alaska on and off National Forest System lands to support diverse economies, enhance community resilience, and conserve natural resources in Southeast Alaska.

*\*These projects are aligned with the SASS goals but were not submitted as SASS community proposals.*