



USDA Forest Service, Alaska Region
2023 Subsistence Program
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2023 Subsistence Program

The management of National Forest lands for subsistence uses plays a vital role in sustaining the health of rural Alaskan communities by ensuring that healthy fish and wildlife populations are available to provide a reliable food supply for residents. The Federal Subsistence Management Program (Program) plays an important role in maintaining employment in rural Alaska where opportunities are limited, as well.

The Forest Service supports the subsistence way of life in rural communities by implementing critical monitoring and management activities using funds specifically allocated toward subsistence uses on National Forest lands.

In partnership with the Department of the Interior, the Forest Service continued to contribute to and work cooperatively within the Alaska Federal Subsistence Management Program. Activities included annual rulemaking, fish and wildlife monitoring, law enforcement and education, employment, and capacity building. The Forest Service regularly consulted with Alaska Tribes and Native Corporations to comply with presidential and secretarial policy direction and to be respectful of the current and historical role of Native Alaskans and other Federally qualified rural subsistence users, while managing for customary and traditional subsistence uses.

FY 2023 Subsistence Budget

The USDA Alaska Region Forest Service Subsistence Budget is a line item in the United States Congressional Budget and the FY 2023 subsistence budget remained unchanged from previous years at \$1,099,000. This does not include the cost of salaries and travel, which are paid out of a separate fund code. Salaries and travel related to subsistence work are again estimated to cost \$1.2 million for approximately 45 Forest Service personnel that conducted subsistence-related work in FY 2023.

Subsistence funding enabled the Forest Service to continue to meet its responsibilities under the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), as well as provide vital employment in isolated rural communities. Using subsistence operations base funding, Forest Service personnel collected fish and wildlife population data and harvest information essential for keeping fish and wildlife

populations healthy and productive and ensure the continuation of subsistence uses by Alaska rural residents.

In FY 2023, \$878,397 of the Forest Service Subsistence budget was used to implement 7 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) projects on the Tongass National Forest (Southeast Region) (Table 1.). In addition, the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) continued to fund the *Copper River Chinook Salmon In-river Abundance* FRMP project in the Southcentral Region in FY 2023 for \$215,000.

Table 1. FY 2023 Alaska Region 10 Forest Service Subsistence Budget*

Chugach Subsistence Operations	\$30,390
Tongass Subsistence Operations	\$18,954
2023 Tongass FRMP Projects	\$878,397
Sitka Conservation Society (Tongass \$24,000; RO \$24,000)	\$48,000
R10 Fleet	\$38,223
R10 Multi-funded	\$1,671
Subsistence Support to OSM	\$0
Law Enforcement	\$50,000
Regional Office subsistence supplies	\$5,000
Total Forest Service Subsistence Budget	\$1,070,635

*Forest Service Salaries are paid from a different cost code

In contrast to the FRMP, there is no official Subsistence Wildlife Resource Monitoring Program; although, each Forest spends subsistence base funds to monitor wildlife populations important for subsistence. On the Chugach National Forest, \$30,390 went toward monitoring black bear, deer, moose, and mountain goat populations. On the Tongass National Forest, \$18,954 went toward additional fleet costs, district field supplies and a Unit 5 mountain goat survey. In addition, \$48,000 helped fund the Sitka Conservation Society work with youth.

Because more subsistence funds went toward FRMP projects again in FY 2023, no funds were provided to OSM to support the Southeast and Southcentral Regional Advisory Councils through our existing Interagency Agreement (IA). Nevertheless, OSM Anthropology and Biology staff continued to help Forest Service staff review and analyze wildlife and fisheries proposals, Closure Reviews, and Special Action Requests. As in previous years, \$50,000 of subsistence funds was again allocated to supplement Law Enforcement (LE) within the Alaska Region Forest Service.

Forest Service Subsistence Program Cumulative Accomplishments

Since 2000, on lands managed by the USDA Forest Service in Alaska (Southeast and

Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils), when the FRMP program was started, approximately \$43 million has been invested in completing 132 FRMP projects. In FY 2022, 7 new FRMP projects were started in the Southeast Region and 1 new project was funded in the Southcentral Region. These are the same projects that were funded in FY 2023. New FRMP projects are expected to be implemented beginning in FY 2024.

Forest Service subsistence resource monitoring provides valuable information and helps build collaborative relationships with other Federal, State and Tribal partners. Forest Service involvement in the FRMP helps build capacity in local Tribal governments involved in scientific research, inventory and monitoring projects, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge studies. This work has helped Tribal organizations effectively participate in regulatory decision-making for wildlife and fisheries resources by State and Federal governments.

Forest Service Subsistence Program Staffing

Both Subsistence Program Coordinator positions were filled since the previous reporting period. Rob Cross, who is based in Petersburg, was selected to be the Tongass Subsistence Program Coordinator and Andrew Sanders, based in Cordova, was selected to be the Chugach Subsistence Program Coordinator. We lost Jessica Gill as the Council Coordinator for the Southcentral Regional Advisory Council to a Canadian. (She left to get married.) Nissa Pilcher at OSM is acting for the Southcentral Regional Advisory Council for the time being.

Other Forest Service staff that help the Forest Service subsistence program regularly include:

- Ashley Bolwerk (Fish biologist Seward Ranger District)
- Cody Mosley (Wildlife Biologist Seward Ranger District)
- Kevin Kocarek (Fish Biologist Wrangell Ranger District)
- Susan Oehlers (Wildlife Biologist Yakutat Ranger District)