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Comments of P.O.W. Landscape Analysis

To Supervisor Earl Stewart, Dear Sir

Background

My name is Joseph D Sebastian, my family and myself lived in Point Baker from May 1978 to Sept 2003. We still retain our Pt. Baker house and use it as a summertime home base as commercial fisherman. Depending on the season, we may range in our boat F/V Alta E, to Icy Strait, Neets Bay, Noyes Island, Cape Muzon, or Port Alexander. This knowledge of places and landscapes and people gives one a firm outlook and insight to what has happened in SE Alaska during the last 40 years and even before statehood.

Our time in Point Baker, 25 years, we lived by salmon trolling and halibut long lining and subsistence gathering of deer, fish, berries and gardens while also buying food in bulk to carry one thru the winters when stormy weather made the area even more remote than it already is.

During this space of time, the pulp mills monopoly on federal lands, the Tongass Reform Act, which my wife and I participated in, the collapse of the pulp mills, the endless propping up of the timber industry, and now the whole round log export of Tongass trees by both Native corporations and Viking Lumber and Alcan, and Mental Health Lands, University Lands and state forest lands, has led us to a place of tough choices and few viable options to restructure a workable future for residents of POW and surrounding islands and communities.

Sealaska and the above mentioned land grant interests are still engaged in massive clearcut deforestation and round log export. What is the USFS going to do with Federal public lands to balance out the forest so people and communities can still engage in local, small scale industries and have enough wildlife habitats to support subsistence based dependent communities into the future.

I Importance of Fish and Wildlife Habitats.

The Forest Service I[rsquo]m sorry to say has been a long term villain in the deliberate mismanagement of fish and wildlife habitats in favor of the timber industry. Important wildlife data and statistics were skewed, cooked, submerged and dropped so as not to disturb an almost perverted push of clearcutting, roading and timber first priorities. It amazing that anything is left at all given the scale of corruption and mismanagement.

If you examine to current population of the island, deer meat, fish, make up a huge portion and dependency of many of the residents diets. Add high food prices, high freight prices, and lack of sustainable workforce options, wild foods are more important than ever, and popular during good times and bad.

Given all of this recognition, only paltry efforts have been made to protect, restore or enhance deer habitat. No unified effort or long term vision of protection of wildlife habitats has taken place or even to be an idea worthy enough to be considered, never mind carried out. Any landscape protections that have taken place, ANILCA, TTRA, OGMR, or any others have only been haphazard efforts to protect places, or blocks of land in one piece. For example, Calder/Holbrook, 64000 acres, or Noyes Baker Lulu Is. at 75,000 acres. Road closures help wildlife recover.

No focused effort has been made to protect or sustain deer habitats to enable local populations to have a area where a deer might thrive and in the end contribute to the local resident subsistence dependencies. The past USFS viable deer models were exposed to be fake in a 2011 deer model lawsuit brought by Larry Edwards of Sitka. Its time to change the timber first dynamic into wildlife habitat first. Healthy wildlife mean healthy people.

## Part II Fish Streams

A number sticks in my mind, 2400 [red pipes] in the Tongass. I do not know how many red pipes are on POW Is, but I bet its 1500 or so, with 4500 miles of logging roads, maybe more.

It should be a high priority to fix and restore these streams flows and culverts to allow fish travel to spawning sites. This can help provide local employment and begin to restore a sad area of shame to the USFS. Fishing is the #1 industry in Alaska while logging is less than one percent. Yet valuable fishery resources are suffering harm and further damaging stocks stat we all depend on. Its so stupid as to be unbelievable, except its too true. Further, stricter regulations should be in place to prevent future culvert instalations from going bad and turning damaging, to smolt and fish spawning.

## III Steelhead Streams

While steelhead fishing is so popular as to lead to overfishing and stream damage, all steelhead streams should be catalogued and restrictions that allow only a small portion of the streams should be open to fishing so to protect stream bank and spawning habitat areas from trampling, overuse, or destruction.

## IV Climate Change [ndash] Global Warming. (see attachments)

This is a bad one, every year is hotter than the last. It is time to start protecting lands and forests lands as [carbon sinks], clearcutting old growth has to end now. Old growth trees are the ones that absorb carbon from the atmosphere. These are really the only natural allies in carbon absorbtion we have in the natural world. Young second growth stands do not absorb carbon on the same scale, and clearcuts add massive amounts of carbon over the first twenty years. Intact landscapes have a greater chance of surviving climate change and the roadless policy is a valid tool to protect these large blocks of land.

Is this clear enough? Specific enough. Whats it going to take to get ready for whats already happening. Politicians act like nothing has changed. Hello, the sky is falling.

## IV Climate Change, Continued

Up to now, nothing has been done in regard to protecting forests and forest lands, both for climate change carbon sinks, and wildlife habitats and add blocks of natural old growth lands in a effort to prepare for the changes that are taking place. This needs to be addressed in the landscape analysis now taking place, to omit it, or mention it without doing anything that is meaningful or substantive, would be \*\*\*\*\*. And really, the time for \*\*\*\*\* is over. Show some guts, science, and backbone and do something that won't look weak minded and foolish 30 years from now in 2047. The time for pretending this is not happening is over. All the communities on POW is are ocean and saltwater dependent. The Sept 2016 National Geographic Magazine has a indepth article about the [blob] off the Pacific coast. Rising ocean temperatures, and add ocean acidification to the list could wreak havoc on fishing dependent communities both off POW and the

Region. Significant steps need to be taken to shore up land based protections, both for intact, protected wildlife habitats and fish stream restoration. Nobody really knows what is going to happen but now is the perfect time to effect road closures to back country or high country alpine and reduce road access to habitat areas in order to build up existing wildlife communities of deer bear and other wildlife groups. I know the USFS does not excel in forward thinking or preparation, preferring to wait till all the horses have left the barn before closing the door, but the changing weather patterns and temperatures do not lie. These changing statistics are not just SE Alaska, but worldwide. Every month is the warmest on record, every year is the warmest on record. POW needs to get it[rsquo]s house in order, recognize the integral relationship and human dependency of its wildlife and take steps to protect this important and vital subsistence/wildlife resource into the future.

#### V The #20 Road.

In the middle 1990[rsquo]s, Pt Baker residents sued the USFS over a 42 MMBF log sale on N. POW because L.P. wanted to drive a spur road over a series of humps, to California Bay/ Pt Colpoys. We settled the suit with no more roads or spurs north of the #20 road, from Salmon Bay to Labouchere Bay. The idea then and now, was to protect flat lowland (muskeg mostly) forest areas as now roaded because they were vital and important deer habitats. We felt that we needed the trees to balance the muskegs and many of these [ldquo]beach access areas[rdquo] by skiff were age old Pt Baker hunting grounds. Why ruin a good thing with a sale that would harm the balance. Viewed from the air or ground, the humps contained the timber and (in my experience) acted as deer apartment houses, the deer roosted on top of the humps with many points of access or escape from predators and then ranged in & thru out the muskeg portions grazing and feeding. If the humps were clearcut, the whole balance was destroyed. I[rsquo]ve seen the relationship with my own eyes and am sure what I both knew and saw to be true.

So, no further roads, north of the #20 road from Salmon Bay to Labouchere Bay. Lets protect these important hunting grounds. Also there may be requested road closures south of the #20 road on N POW by residents of Pt Baker & Pt Protection. But I[rsquo]m not up to speed on just what or where at this time. North Prince of Wales VCU[rsquo]s 528, 527, 529, 530, 534.1, 5342, 5330, will have to be closely examined to determine where and what road closures will be the most effective towards protecting wildlife. Each fall a nonstop hunting war on deer by hunters from all over SE AK takes place along the #20 road and its spur roads. It about time the USFS recognize and manage this area for what it really is, a bread basket of deer and deer availability that attracts hundreds if not thousands of people to hunt these. Lets try protecting the golden goose instead of further destroying it.

#### VI Labouchere Bay

Over the last 25 years, or since the L.P. log camp pulled out, there have been a series of half baked, greed induced ideas, schemes, plans to develop Lab Bay.

First it was a whole new town like all the rest on the island, ex-logging camps now a town. The two villages already had sore noses over the logging camp, and all their bad behaviour. How about the largest recorded (152 dead eagles!) bald eagle massacre in the United States in 1987 at the Lab Bay dump as an example. Plus many many more.

Then there was a church camp plan, that was a close one. Then a land sale, proposed, but never happened due to major opposition from the 2 villages.

Every major promoter with a quick buck bilko plan wanted in there. Next tho was (VCU 531) Sealaska, now that they have a big chunk of volume 6 & 7 trees down in Calder Bay, they might want to glom on to Lab Bay for various reasons. Plus the nefarious plans keep hatching, everybody wants to select timber lands on N POW, & Lab Bay for a log dump/camp. It does not end, they keep coming, Mental Health, University, Native Corps (Sealaska) and even the state of Alaska. All looking to own and possess Lab Bay & N. POW. It[rsquo]s crazy.

The 2 villages do not want any development of Lab Bay, or selection of N. POW lands off the #20 road in all the VCU[rsquo]s from Lab Bay to Salmon Bay Lake. We want those VCUs to remain federal public lands.

Also, the Calder Bay road is only less than a mile on a steep slope, from being connected to the back road into Lab Bay. This road should never be connected. Never. Sealaska must be contained in Calder Bay,

they have a deep water port access there, is land road access, we do not want them or any one else in Lab Bay. LP was enough.

This is something that the USFS can do right.

Please get this stuff right. Right? Right! No Lab Bay development

## VII Keep the Wild, Wild

While talking with a oldtime POW Is. resident (since 1946), she stressed that she was worried that the once [ldquo]wild[rdquo] island was becoming less and less wild until finally it was only an odd patch of trees in between clear cuts. I think she has a valid point, and at this turn of time, it would be a great/last opportunity to focus on how to keep the wild, wild.

Perhaps a overview of all wild blocks of land on the greater POW Island and islands and determine the ratio of different lands types, uses.

For example, the Perue Peaks area on N. POW is x-number of acres, by adding road closures to the area (leading into the area) the wild area could be expanded into a larger non-road (at least closed) habitat area. This adding of buffer areas to existing roadless, TTRA, ANILCA and other blocks of wild land could boost and add both to the wild but also to the habitat for deer and other creatures. If some measures are not taken soon to uphold and actively protect POW[rsquo]s wild land, it will all be frittered away little by little until it is gone, or sterile oasis[rsquo]s in a sea of clearcuts.

[rsquo]m sure there are other ideas out there to conserve our wild places, but the more cars, people, tourists, hunters, family[rsquo]s, on the island, the more pressure is put on the existing wild land base and wildlife resources. This issue should be addressed in full and come under protecting the golden goose, subsistence, global warming, carbon retention and bread basket landscapes. Also, roads are the single biggest threat to the wild, closing roads, or road removal is a step in the right direction. If fishing fails, deer meat will be more important than ever.

## VIII Review

Manage VCU[rsquo]s 528, 527, 529, 530, 534.1, 534.2, 533 as major deer wildlife habitats. Take steps to close roads, cease or minimize clearcutting or tree cutting priority in these VCU[rsquo]s.

No new roads or spur roads north of the 20 road on N. POW from Salmon Bay to Lab Bay.

Retain the above VCU[rsquo]s in the Federal land base of Tongass National Forest. Allow no carpet baggers to select these lands or privityze these VCU[rsquo]s.

Retain Labrouchere Bay as it is, no new log camps, LTFs, bunkhouses, church camps, state land disposals, new towns, ect. Keep it to serve as Pt Protections, Pt. Bakers road hub.

No road connection between Calder Bay Sealaska, into Lab Bays back door on the backside (east) of Calder Mnt. Keep that back door closed forever!

Expand Memorial Beach by adding the last patch of old growth forest east to Alder Creek and make a trail thru the woods that loops back to Memorial Beach. This is a well used and visited public area that should be expanded. It[rsquo]s the last beach old growth on that shore.

Develop new way to build on already large blocks of protected landscapes, such as roadless areas, TTRA lands, ANILCA lands or other large LUD II landscapes in order to have study areas of climate change of natural areas and modified landscapes both. Meeting climate change is going to be a major job for the USFS. And provide protected expanded deer habitat areas and zones at same time.

Make carbon maps of the POW Forest[rsquo]s and start using carbon retention or carbon release as a new measurement scale. That determines whether development takes place. Serious measures need to be taken to begin to meet climate change head on. Natural, unmodified landscapes have the best chance to

respond to climate change conditions.

The USFS already knows this, now is time to rechart a course that fosters wildlife habitats and conservation so the human need can be met on into the future. Further waste of time is sure disaster.

#### IV The Failure of Fishing [ndash] what would happen

The oceans are changing, there is no longer any question about it.

The year 2016 was a perfect example. While the weather has never been great in SE Alaska, now [ldquo]weather events[rdquo] storm warnings, winds to 70 knots, or even 100 knots are not uncommon.

This year at Noyes Island (where I[rsquo]ve fished since 1978) the NW 25 to 30+ blew so long it made all the normal fishing spots unfishable and off limits.

I was told the fish were 20 to 30 miles offshore along with acres of auklets, the usuall feed bird of the area. There were zero auklets around Noyes, or only a very small handful.

The seiners had a good season forecast, but it did not show up and many had poor and short seasons. One seiner I know, said he made his payment, and his fuel & grocery, but that was it.

The wife of a seiner I know, I asked her how bad was it? She said, usually (her husband) we end up arguing about money by the end of Nov., this year we started to argue about money in August.

As of today, the local shipwrights, metel welders & smiths, have almost no work around town. People do not repair improve or fix boats if theres no money.

A lot of people had bad seasons, or poor seasons. My own just barely OK, but we worked really twice as hard to get it.

So, when thing[rsquo]s get tight, people seek to find more subsistence foods. Which is #1 in demand? Deer meat! People want deer meat. You can get by with deer meat. This is not going to change goddamn it. Its time you start to seriously plan for the increase in consumption and need and dependence.

#### Addendems

- 1) Climate Change. Juneau Empire 2-19-2016. [ldquo]From Rock to Forest, Southeast[rsquo]s carbon sink[rdquo] by Mary Martin. 2 pages
- 2) [ldquo]Why Forests need to be enlisted in climate change actions[rdquo] by Dominick DellaSala Sept. 27 2013 3 pages
- 3) Juneau Empire [ldquo]Alaska[rsquo]s Timber Industry[rdquo] 4-6-16 1 page Larry West.
- 4) Letter to Editor Petersburg Pilot [ldquo]Sealaska has shamed themselves[rdquo] by Joe Sebastian Nov 19 2016