



# City and Borough of Sitka

100 Lincoln Street • Sitka, Alaska 99835

MEMO TO: Jim Dinley, Municipal Administrator  
Mayor and Assembly

FROM: Marlene Campbell, Government Relations Director

SUBJECT: Disposal of the U.S. Forest Service's Sitka Ranger Vessel

About a month ago I learned from several concerned Sitkans about the Tongass Leadership Team's decision to get rid of the Sitka Ranger boat and not base a large vessel in Sitka. I contacted Carol Goularte, Sitka District Ranger, to inquire about these assumptions. She confirmed "Unfortunately a tough decision had to be made last week and the Tongass will be recommending to the Regional Office, Regional Forester, that we dispose of 1 boat, most likely it will be the Sitka Ranger Boat because of the high deferred maintenance costs."

Her explanation of how this came about: "This past 8 years have shown a significant decrease in the use of Ranger Boats by employees due to decline in budgets and increased daily cost. In 2002 our 3 Ranger Boats were used about 250 days annually (540 days). In 2009 the Sitka Ranger Boat was parked at the dock because it had the most deferred maintenance (over 100k) and the overall use on the Tongass for Ranger boats had declined. The Tongass and Chugach Ranger Boats are in fairly good shape and were operated in 2009 for a little over 100 days. Because of the high daily cost of the Ranger Boats, employees have been using float planes or our regular boat fleet to get their work done. On an average (last 8 years) the Sitka Ranger District utilized the ranger boats for about 3 trips a year for outfitter and guide monitoring, deer pellet surveys and subsistence monitoring. Granted if we had more money we would gladly use the Ranger boat more for trips all summer long monitoring recreation and other resources."

At a Forest Service meeting last week, Forest Service staff expressed their frustration with the Forest Service charging so much for use of the Sitka Ranger that staff could no longer use it and the plan to dispose of the boat. There are many unmet needs that can't be met by the small day-boat Forest Service vessels and very costly aircraft. A further issue is that not maintaining or using the Sitka Ranger resulted in very low use records and need for major maintenance, which were used as justification to remove it. These problems should have been resolved years ago, and adequate budget made available to return this vessel to full service.

The plan is to keep the two other Ranger boats in operation in their respective areas but sell the Sitka Ranger and contract for a vessel if required once or twice a year. This would be totally inadequate for managing the vast Central Tongass area. Sitka's losing the vessel, the Captain's position, and the budget to maintain and operate it further reduce Sitka's Forest Service presence. This resolution supports reconsideration of the Tongass Leadership Team's recommendation to dispose of the Sitka Ranger boat. The final decision will be made by the Alaska Regional Forester.