



David Coil, PhD, Director<sup>1</sup>, Elizabeth Lester PhD<sup>2</sup>, Bretwood "Hig" Higman, PhD,  
Executive Director<sup>3</sup>  
contact@groundtruthtrekking.org

Last Modified: 2nd May 2014

Alaska includes over 126 million acres of forests. The majority (90%) of this acreage is part of the circumpolar boreal forests ecosystem, the largest intact terrestrial biome in the world. These fire-dependant sub-arctic boreal forests of the interior thrive on the extreme summer-to-winter oscillations in temperature and daylight.

Further south, the dense temperate rainforests of southern coastal Alaska form a separate biome, hosting massive trees and complex ecosystems. While comprising only 10% of Alaska's forest acreage, these cool rainforests host both the majority of Alaska's marketable timber, and much of the world's remaining temperate rainforest old growth. One, the **Tongass National Forest**, is the largest temperate rainforest in the world.

#### Forestry Articles

- [Forestry Management in Alaska](#)
- [Logging in the Tongass](#)
- [Loss-Selling in Alaska](#)
- [Temperate Rainforests of the Northern Pacific Coast](#)
- [Wildfire in Alaska](#)

Journey on the Wild Coast



*Looking up into the trees*

Climate change, invasive species, and pest infestation are all major challenges facing the state's forests. Alaska's forests are considered to be very sensitive to climate change, the effects of which have already been observed. The U.S. Forest Service has identified these three issues as its top concerns in Alaska.

All told, less than one-third of Alaska is forested. The remaining two-thirds of the state is dominated by tundra, scrub, muskeg, swamp, snow, rock, and ice.

#### Forests as Part of Alaskan Life

More than three-quarters of Alaskans live in or near forests. Many Alaskans living **subsistence lifestyles** depend on the forests for part of their basic needs for food, fuel and shelter. Forests provide economic and ecosystem benefits to all of Alaska, such as spawning habitat for salmon. Forests are also an important economic resource for a number of communities associated with the commercial timber harvest. However, the timber industry in Alaska has been **in decline for over 20 years**, and several mills have recently closed.

Alaska's forests provide for subsistence hunting and lifestyles, regulate water quality (including for Alaska's immense anadromous salmon fisheries), and provide wildlife habitat. Although the global significance of Alaska's timber is minor, the state's timberland provides materials for subsistence and local

construction, and Alaska timber is exported in limited quantities. Economically, **forest management**, wildland firefighting, and tourism are all major industrial contributions to Alaska with close ties to the state's forestland.

Date Created: 29th June 2010

<sup>1</sup>David Coil, PhD, Director;

<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth Lester PhD;

<sup>3</sup>Bretwood "Hig" Higman, PhD, Executive Director; contact@groundtruthtrekking.org

