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CONTACT: [Robert Dillon](tel:202.224.6977) 202.224.6977  
[Michael Tadeo](tel:202.224.5810) 202.224.5810

## **Sen. Murkowski Welcomes New Tongass National Forest Supervisor to Alaska**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, today released the following statement on the recent announcement of Earl Stewart to be the new supervisor for the Tongass National Forest.

“I look forward to meeting with Mr. Stewart to discuss the importance of the 17-million acre Tongass National Forest to Southeast Alaska’s economy. The Tongass covers nearly all of Southeast, so it’s imperative that those responsible for its management understand that there is no other economic driver of comparable size in the region,” Murkowski said. “This is also a critical time for the regional economy as this administration moves forward on its plans to transition to second-growth on the Tongass. Every effort must be made to keep alive what little of the timber industry remains.”

Stewart will replace Forrest Cole, who announced his retirement in January. Stewart, who is currently supervisor of the Coconino National Forest in Arizona, is expected to start work in Ketchikan in early May.

“The Tongass is important to many different groups. Tourism and fishing are part of that but they alone can’t sustain our communities. The responsible development of natural resources, including timber, mining, and renewable energy, are all important to Southeast’s economy,” said Murkowski, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. “It’s my hope that Mr. Stewart will quickly come to grasp the unique challenges facing the many communities that are literally surrounded by the Tongass and how dependent they are on the forest and its resources.”

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