

The Logger, the Salmon Fisherman, and the Kayaker: Assessing Collaborative Natural Resource Management in the Tongass National Forest

The Collaboration "Movement"

"Collaboratives seek to meld the nature together with economy and community, and see the separation of humans from nature as an impossible task"

Collaborative Natural Resource Management

- Emerged from the frustrations with traditional environmental planning and management
- Multiparty projects, programs or decision-making committees that use participatory approach, emphasize the importance of place
- Argued to be well-suited to resolve the complex nature of public land conflicts



The Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska. Shogren 2016

TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST

"At roughly 17 million acres, the Tongass is the largest and perhaps the most controversial national forest in the country"

- Largest remaining intact temperate rainforest in the world, long history of old-growth logging
- **January '13:** the USDA Secretary, mandated the Tongass expedited the transition from old-growth to young-growth timber base timeline
- **January '14:** the TAC was chartered to advise Vilsack and the USFS on how to best meet 10-15 year timeframe

Research Scope & Thesis Statement

I assessed how collaborative approaches might resolve U.S. public land management conflicts, through specific examination of the Tongass Advisory Committee (TAC). I found, while collaborative natural resource management catalyzed critical conversations across historically polarized arenas, the TAC's structural limitations ultimately explain how and why the committee reached consensus but also explain lingering tensions.



The above photos represent two common narratives used to frame environmental conflict in the Tongass. To some this landscape represents "old-growth's last stand," drawing on the Alaska's last frontier narrative. Whereas, others see themselves as stewards of the land by harvesting timber, which provides local economic and social stability.

Guiding Question: How might regional and distant interests be reconciled on public lands?

Focus Question: What did the TAC accomplish?

Methodologies:

1. Interviews with members of the TAC
2. Content analysis of the TAC's drafting materials
3. News analysis of articles reporting on the TAC's work

FINDINGS

"Yes, there was consensus, but in my mind that was the only success of the TAC, not the ongoing larger picture that had been envisioned [for] the TAC [which was] that it would start ongoing cooperative decisions that would help heal, where you had all sides working together"

-Carol Rushmore
 Wrangell Director of Economic Development

"The proposal "will result in the bankruptcy and the closing of all major timber operators on the Tongass"

-Eric Nichols
 Evergreen Timber

"The 15-year transition from old to new growth stalls urgent climate change protections"

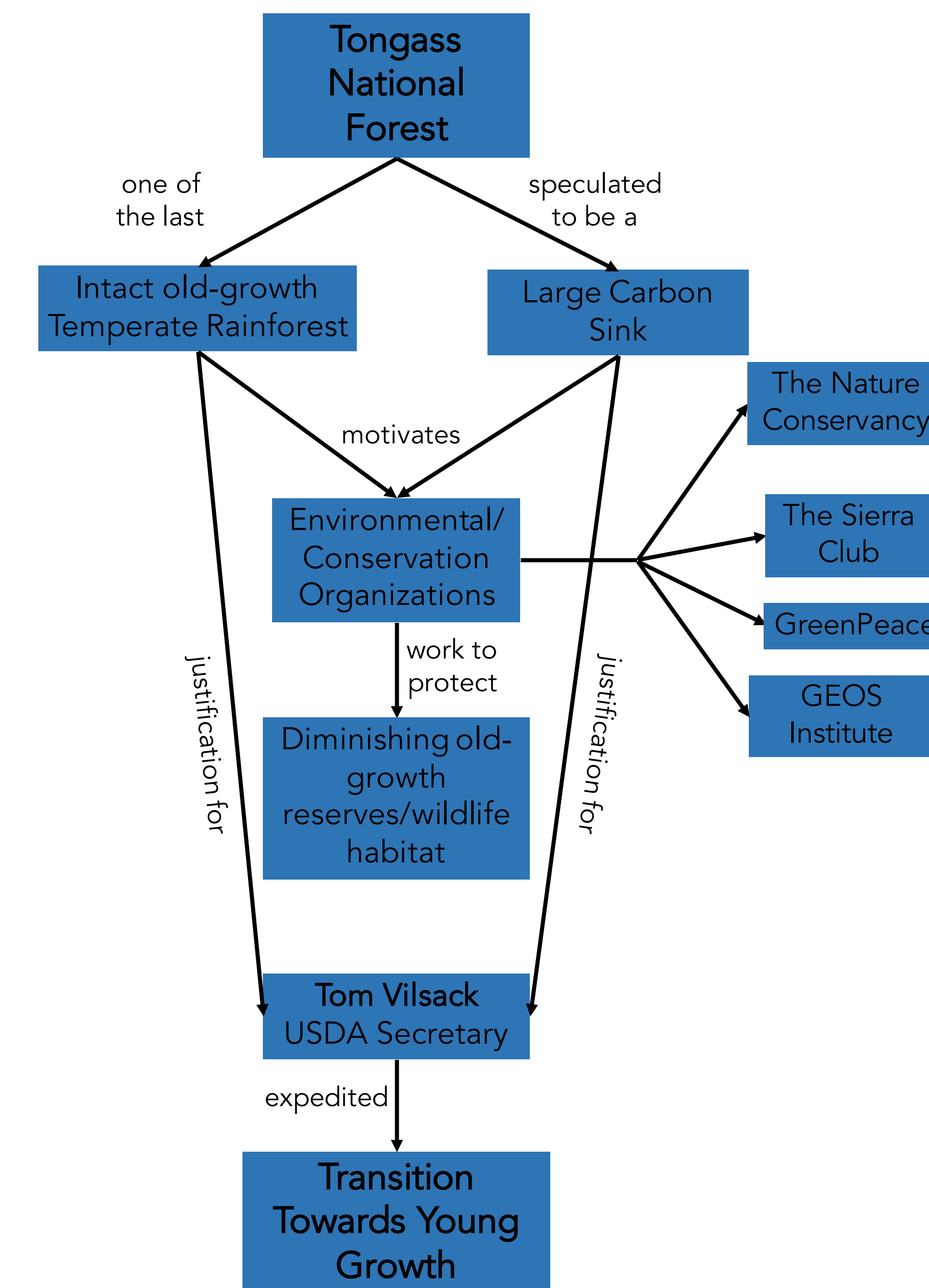
-Dominick Dellasala
 GEOS Institute

"This plan amendment has the support of thousands of Alaskans that understand it's far past time we move beyond the conflict and controversy of timber management on the Tongass and recognize the great value our largest national forest provides for fishing and tourism. This is a huge step in the right direction for sustainable and economically-sensible management of the Tongass"

-Austin Williams
 Trout Unlimited

IMPLICATIONS

- Even though the TAC came to consensus, some stakeholders were more satisfied than others
- The TAC's structural limitations—specifically the 10-15 year transition—determined the final recommendations and therefore dictated which stakeholders were more content than others
- Collaboration works best for those who are most politically aligned with the cause



CONCLUSIONS

- Despite the promise and praise for collaboration, the TAC reveals certain limitations: that such methodologies can be short sided
- What will the impacts of transitioning towards more service-based economy have on Southeast communities?
- Though the TAC had clumsy like qualities, perhaps it was not clumsy enough?

References

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