



March 17, 2020

USDA Office of Inspector General
Attn: Phyllis K. Fong, Inspector General
Room 117-W Jamie Whitten Building
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Inspector General Fong,

Beginning with a letter sent to US Forest Service Chief Victoria Christiansen in November of 2018, the Petersburg Borough Assembly has been requesting information and results from a USFS internal audit of the Alaska Regional timber program performed by the Forest Service Audit and Assurance Branch. The formal audit was requested by National Forest System Associate Deputy Chief Christopher B. French in April of 2018 and stems from the *2016 Washington Office Activity Review of Timber Sale Administration, Sale Preparation, Stewardship Contracting, NEPA and Timber Theft Prevention, Region 10*, which identified numerous weaknesses related to internal forest management procedures regarding timber sales in our area (specifically the Tonka and Big Thorne Integrated Resource Timber Contracts).

After a follow up email dated January 14, 2019 and an additional letter to USFS Chief Christiansen dated April 16, 2019, Chief Christiansen replied in May of 2019 stating the team of internal auditors had visited Alaska and were preparing a comprehensive program review of the timber program. She assured that the USFS would review the results and make changes if warranted and stated she would share actions aimed to address any findings identified by the audit with us.

Since the May 8, 2019 letter from Chief Christiansen, no other correspondence on this subject has been received by the Petersburg Borough. It is difficult not to feel as if we are being ignored.

Due to the lack of response from the USFS on this important matter, the Petersburg Borough Assembly respectfully requests your office conduct an independent review of the Tonka and Big Thorne Integrated Resource Timber Contract sales in order to determine (1) the amount of money the USFS should have collected from the timber contracts, (2) why those funds were not collected, if that is what the audit finds, and (3) the amount of money that should have been available for restoration and stewardship projects. Further, if your audit finds misadministration of the contracts, we request you work with Alaska Senators Murkowski and Sullivan and Alaska Representative Young to ensure the local communities affected receive the moneys they should rightfully have received through the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act and the National Forest Receipt Program had the timber contracts been properly administered and executed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Borough Administration
PO Box 329, Petersburg, AK 99833 – Phone (907) 772-4425 Fax (907)772-3759
www.petersburgak.gov

Sincerely,

Mark Jensen
Mayor

Attachments:

November 6, 2018 Letter from Petersburg Borough Assembly to USFS Chief Christiansen
January 14, 2019 Email from Petersburg Clerk Thompson to USFS Chief Christiansen
April 16, 2019 Letter from Petersburg Borough Assembly to USFS Chief Christiansen
May 8, 2019 Letter from USFS Chief Christiansen to Petersburg Borough Mayor Jensen

Cc: Honorable Senator Murkowski
Honorable Senator Sullivan
Honorable Representative Young
USFS Chief Christiansen
USFS Associate Deputy Chief French
Alaska Region 10 Forester Schmid