

**Testimony of Becky Knight  
for the Petersburg, Alaska Borough Assembly Meeting  
February 8, 2021**

Hello Mayor and Assembly Members,

The following is related to the Mayor's Report acknowledging the recent Forest Service timber program audit.

On Nov. 6, 2018—**over two years ago**—the Petersburg Borough Assembly wrote the Chief of the Forest Service requesting information regarding the 2016 Washington Office Activity Review of Timber Sale Administration, Sale Preparation, Stewardship Contracting, NEPA, and Timber Theft Prevention. The Tonka and Big Thorne Sales were the subjects of the Activity Review. As the Borough wrote “there may be an internal, on-going investigation,” and they requested “receiving any information related to followup actions by the Forest Service.”

As related to part of the Activity Review, it was estimated, that the Tonka sale resulted in a loss of \$2 Million dollars worth of unrealized restoration jobs. These are jobs that could go a long way in our current Covid environment. The Tonka sale was not addressed in the recent audit.

Despite several prompts for acknowledgement from the FS of that letter by our Borough Clerk, it took until May 8, 2019—six months—to receive an uninspired letter of apology from FS Chief Christiansen for her late reply letter, along with a promise to disclose the results of an internal audit of the two sales when available.

Finally, with no further correspondence or report supplied to the Borough, on March 17, 2020 the Borough Assembly wrote to Alice Fong, Inspector General for the Agriculture Dept. requesting, among other important related items, an internal review of the two timber sales. Again—no response was received to my knowledge. I do not understand the unprofessional failure of several government agencies to even respond to a simple letter in a timely manner—or at all.

What this kicking-the-can-down-the-road amounts to is a continued, major cover up. The recently released timber sale audit by the Forest Service does not adequately address the serious problems cited in the Activity Review nor does it address Tonka. Moreover, it was “final” in August 2019 but it took until last week to be made public, and begs the question, why so long?

Can you please tell me whether you received a copy of this audit from the FS or from a public website or elsewhere?

I request that your body, at a minimum, write a letter to the OIG asking for a specific response to your November 6, 2018 correspondence.

Perhaps a Congressional investigation is what will finally stop the stonewalling and shake the truth loose.

Trust in government accountability is long overdue.

Sincerely,

*Rebecca Knight*

Becky (Rebecca) Knight