

Cowper tells Senate panel not to change funding for Tongass



WASHINGTON, D.C. — Gov. Steve Cowper recently urged the Senate Energy Committee to refrain from suspending or changing funding for the management of the Tongass National Forest until a thorough review of the program can be completed.

The committee is considering a proposal to alter the accounting formula for the fund, which provides about \$45 million a year to the Forest Service in Southeast Alaska. The fund was created in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980.

"The fund was a critical element of compromise," wrote Cowper. "The proposed change in the accounting process would alter one side of the compromise. This result would be the equivalent of amending ANILCA without even holding a hearing."

Cowper acknowledged that manage-

ment of the Tongass — the country's largest national forest — faces "many problems." He suggested that the committee hold off any ANILCA-related action until the General Accounting Office completed its analysis of the Forest Service's implementation of the act and until hearings on the issue are held in Southeast and in Washington, D.C.

He also reminded the committee that the Tongass Land Management Plan will be revised in 1989.

In the past, Cowper has opposed drastic changes in the supply fund because of the severe economic impact on communities with timber enterprises.

The Energy Commission is likely to consider the Tongass issue in an effort to reduce spending for federal programs within its jurisdiction.