

# Alaskans invited to participate in forest meeting

Juneau - Southeast Alaska will be involved in and represented at the Seventh American Forest Congress which will convene in Washington, D.C. in February 1996.

The 1996 Congress, as with previous ones, will help set national policies for future generations. The six preceding Forest Congresses (1882-1975) have convened at critical times to help resolve important forest-related issues. The objective of the Congress is to develop a common vision and a set of principles regarding forest resources, as well as to set forth the first steps toward achieving them for the next generation or more.

"We're at a historic juncture, at an urgent time for America's forests," said John Gordon, a professor at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and an organizer of the event.

People representing a wide variety of interests are being invited to participate. In Alaska they will work toward consensus that will reflect the culture, economic, eco-

logical values of Alaskans. The results will be provided to the national Congress for consideration in its discussions for the nation. The Alaska meetings are among fifty to sixty roundtables being conducted throughout the United States in preparation for the February Congress. A few have already been held, but most will take place this fall and in early 1996.

"We want to hear from the American people and not just listen to our own constituencies," said Frances Beinecke of the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group.

As conflicts over logging and forest management grow, leaders of both sides say they do not want to leave solutions to the U.S. Congress.

More than 200 non-profit organizations, for-profit businesses, government agencies, and colleges and universities are involved. Sponsors include such diverse groups as the Society of American Foresters, Society for

Range Management, Wilderness Society, Natural Resources Defense Council, Izaak Walton League, National Woodland Owners Association, and the Weyerhaeuser Corporation.

Key to the Forest Congress and related meetings is the intent to address a vision for the long-term future, to look beyond current con-

troversies and to consider what forests will look like, what they will provide, and how they will be managed and used. The total process represents a new non-political way of working together to resolve issues - built on trust, collaboration, involvement, consensus. Focus will be on points of agreement rather than disagreement.

For local information: Ketchikan: Marieke Nordlinger, 225-6191; Petersburg: Patricia Grantham, 772-3871; Sitka: Robert Smith, 747-3605; Wrangell: Keene Kohrt, 874-2323; Anchorage: Dan Ketchum, 269-8466; Fairbanks: Tony Gasbarro, 474-5139; and in Juneau: Mary Pat Murphy, 463-3861.