

State of Alaska  
Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Forestry  
Northern Southeast Area

**FOREST LAND USE PLAN**  
**PRELIMINARY DECISION**

for the

**NSE 1475 - 13 MILE BENCH Timber Sales**

February **2012**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Purpose:

The purpose of this Forest Land Use Plan (FLUP) is to provide sufficient information for reviewers to ensure that the best interest of the state will be served by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Forestry (DOF), Northern Southeast Area, which is offering for sale an estimated 800 thousand board feet (MBF) of timber. The estimated volume consists of spruce and hemlock sawlog and utility log volume. The timber will be sold in multiple small sales over a three to five-year period by negotiated sales to purchasers that will process as much of the timber in state as economically possible.

This timber will be harvested using a clear-cut harvest silvicultural system. The harvest area totals approximately 40 acres. The individual sale contracts will be for a maximum of one year in length.

The public is invited to comment on any aspect of these timber sales with regards to the AS 38.05.035 decision. Comments should be mailed to the Division of Forestry, P.O. Box 263, Haines, Alaska 99827. Comments must be received at the Division of Forestry no later than **March 30, 2012** in order to be considered in the Final Decision of whether the sale(s) will be held in whole or in part. To be eligible to appeal the final decision, a person must have provided written comment by March 30, 2012.

### B. Five-Year Forest Management Schedule:

This sale area is listed in the current Five-Year Forest Management Schedule (FYFMS) for 2010 -2014 under year 2010.

### C. Location:

This timber sale area is located on a bench at approximately 500 foot elevation above Mile 13.2 on the Haines Highway (see attached map). The legal description of this proposed action is as follows: Within portions of SE ¼ Section 25, NE ¼ Section 36, T29S R57E, Copper River Meridian. The portion of the sale within Section 36 is within the boundaries of the Haines State Forest Resource Management Area. The portion within Section 25 is within both the Haines State Forest Resources Management Area and on state selected tentatively approved land. These sales are located within the Haines Borough and are outside the boundaries of the City of Haines Coastal Management Program. The regional native corporation is the Sealaska Native Corporation and Klukwan is the local native village corporation. Klukwan is the nearest community, and is located about eight miles northwest of the sale. The sale area can be found on the United States Geological Service 1:63,360 Quadrangle map titled Skagway B-2.

D Title, Classification and Other Active or Pending Interests:

The sale area is located on School Trust Lands within the Haines State Forest and on general grant lands that are both within and outside the Haines State Forest. The portion of this land within the Haines State Forest is subject to the Haines State Forest Management Plan (HSFMP). This sale lies within Subunit 7a of Management Unit 7, Haines Highway, of the HSFMP. Subunit 7a is classified Resource Management Land. Management guidelines state that land along the Haines Highway be managed to maintain its scenic qualities. This action is consistent with the guidelines established in the HSFMP.

E. Objectives:

1. To follow DNR's constitutional mandate to encourage the development of the State's renewable resources, making them available for maximum use consistent with the public interest. Sustain and promote a healthy, long-term timber industry in the state, through providing a secure source of timber for harvest that produces raw materials for local manufacturing plants (e.g., mills) while protecting other resources such as fish and wildlife.
2. To help the States economy by providing royalties to the state in the form of stumpage receipts, as well as contributions to local economies through wages, purchases, jobs and business.
3. To improve forest growth and vigor by harvesting and replacing mature and spruce beetle impacted stands with new healthy regenerating stands, while protecting and maintaining other resource values. The actions authorized under this decision will follow the constitutional mandate of sustained yield and shall adhere to multiple use management as described in the HSFMP

II. **LEGAL AUTHORITY**

The department is taking this action under the authority of AS 38.05.035(e) (Best Interest Finding); AS 38.05.110-120; 11 AAC 71 (Timber Sale Statutes and Regulations); AS 41.17.010-.950 and 11 AAC 95 (Forest Resources and Practices Statutes and Regulations);

III. **ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD**

Timber Sale File NSE-1475 and the Haines State Forest Management Plan constitute the administrative record for this finding.

IV. **DISCUSSION OF ISSUES**

A. BACKGROUND

Topography: The sale area is situated on a bench at about 500 foot elevation above Mile 13 on the Haines Highway. This area generally faces southwest.

Soils: Soils in the sale bench area are classified as a Kupreanof – Foad complex. The Kupreanof-Foad Complex soil types are characterized by a shallow organic layer of approximately 2 inches. Soil depth is moderately deep (20-40") to very deep (40-60") and well drained. The mineral surface is silt loam with the subsoil a gravelly sandy loam. The substratum is a very cobbly sandy loam. The access road will cross soils classified as Nataga-Cryorthents association. These soil types are characterized by a surface layer covered with a mat of partially decomposed organic matter. The mineral surface layer is gravelly sandy loam and the underlying material is very cobbly loamy sand and extremely cobbly loamy sand to a depth of 60 inches or more.

No caves or cave features were found during the review of the sale area.

Water bodies: Thirteen mile creek (ADF&G # 115-32-10250-2040) flows near where the access road will take off from the Haines Highway. The access road will leave the highway near the turnout by this creek. There are other small creeks crossing the bench of the sale area and these will be protected by forest practice best management practices. These practices include falling trees away from and not skidding trees across the creeks unless the banks of the creek are stabilized through log culverts or other method. .

Stand Conditions: The existing stand is a Sitka spruce-western hemlock stand with some black cottonwood and hardwoods mixed in. The stand is predominantly an even-age 200 year old stand. The understory consists of shrub species such as devils club, blueberry, rusty menziesia and other smaller shrubs and forbs. Comments were made during the FYFMS review that this area contained a high number of Calypso Orchids on the hillside that the access/skid road will traverse. These plants are noted for being sensitive to disturbance. They are found in many parts of the Haines State Forest and are not considered rare or endangered in the forest. The access road will occupy a small part of this area and is not expected to significantly disturb these plants on the hillside.

Wildlife: There was evidence of moose and bear use of the area. In addition to moose and bear, the area may support the following species of wildlife; marten, lynx, wolverine, wolf, porcupine, squirrel, various birds and other small woods mammals. There is no evidence of high-density bear use within this proposed area. There are no known raptor nests within the proposed sale area. The area that the spur road traverses through has been identified as important winter range for moose and the bench harvest area is within the area identified as a winter concentration area for goats in the HSFMP. A field review and discussions with Fish & Game identified that the steep terrain above the proposed harvest area does get utilized by goats but that the actual harvest area does not. Goats may cross the harvest area but likely don't spend much time there. Fish & Game requested that harvest operations not occur continually for long periods without breaks in operation or quiet times during periods when snow pushes the goats down in elevation.

They are sensitive to continual disturbance during those times when their energy reserves are low.

Recreation: There is a trail that goes up to an unauthorized cabin about 1500 feet elevation. The logging should not impact the trail or its use. The access road may intersect the trail but should not have significant impacts on the use of the trail. The trail will be rerouted if there are any problems with the use. There are no airplane access points within the proposed sale area. There are no known commercial recreation operations that use the sale area. All terrain vehicle (ATV) use was not observed in the area.

Cultural: A cultural site was discovered near the access road to the timber sale area. A survey was completed by an archaeologist and it was determined that the access road and timber sale would not impact the cultural resources of that site. Should other cultural and/or paleontological resources be inadvertently discovered during activities of the timber sale, these sites shall be protected from disturbance accordingly and the Office of History and Archaeology will be contacted immediately so that compliance with state laws governing cultural resources may begin.

Under the Alaska Historic Preservation Act (41.35.200), all burials on state land are protected. If burials or human remains are found, all land altering activities that would disturb the burial or remains shall cease and measures will be taken to protect it in place. The Office of History and Archaeology and a law enforcement officer will be notified immediately to ensure that proper procedures for dealing with human remains are followed.

Scenic: The harvest area will not be visible from the Haines Highway.

Land Use: There are presently no other permitted land uses in the proposed area. No agricultural use or grazing is known to occur. Traditional use areas may exist but the sale will not adversely impact these uses. The affected watersheds will continue to be managed according to the land use designation found in the HSFMP.

Current Land Use: Currently, the public lands adjacent to this proposed sale area are being managed for resource management and general use.

Transportation: Main access to the sale area is by the Haines Highway to 13.2 mile. A spur road or skid road will be constructed to get the timber to the highway as part of the timber sale.

## B. EFFECTS ON WILDLIFE

The effects of the proposed timber sale on wildlife will vary depending on species. Harvesting activities may displace animals temporarily. Species that prefer early succession vegetation will likely benefit for a period of time. Non-winter browse

production may be increased for a period of years after harvest from the increased heat and sunlight that the openings will provide. Early succession vegetation is valuable for moose browse in summer and low-snow winters. As the new stand develops, in 30 to 40 years spruce and hemlock will occupy the site, shading out some portion of the understory so the initial benefits of increased browse production may be reduced. This area is on the upper edge of an area identified as important moose winter range in the HSFMP. It is not known how much reoccurring use this area gets from moose during deep snow winters. The size of the proposed harvest area overall is small relative to the identified moose winter range in the HSFMP. In consultation with ADFG, the DOF has determined that the impact on moose will not be significant.

This area is also on the lower end of an area identified as important mountain goat winter range. The harvest area is on a flat bench with some steep ground above the unit and cliff features, commonly associated with goat habitat, adjacent to the harvest area. Although goats may occasionally travel through the proposed unit area, no mountain goat sign was seen during the field design of the unit. Potential impacts to goats in this lowest portion of their identified range will be mitigated by requiring harvest operations to primarily occur between the months of May and October. Winter harvest operation should be intermittent with days of operation followed by an equivalent number of days with no operation allowed. Consecutive days of operation may not exceed 5 working days. These restrictions were developed with consideration of information provided by ADFG and in consultation with the area wildlife managers.

Impacts on the bear population are anticipated to be low as well. Bears may benefit from the increase in early succession vegetation following timber harvest as well. Wintertime forage and shelter is not a major concern for bears due to hibernation. Their welfare is traditionally most threatened by habitat conversion and improved hunter access. There is a limited potential for impact to the population through habitat conversion. Logging is expected to have few direct long term impacts on the wildlife populations of the area.

#### C. EFFECTS ON FISHERIES

The proposed harvest is anticipated to have minimal impacts on fisheries. The 13-mile creek, an anadromous stream, flows near the access road. ADF&G Habitat has been consulted on the location of the access road. The timber sale is anticipated to have a minimal impact on water quality, due to sale design and implementation of the Alaska Forest Resource Practices Act Best Management Practices during operations. There are only small intermittent streams in the actual harvest areas.

#### D. EFFECTS ON SUBSISTENCE

The subject area has not been designated as a subsistence zone. This action is anticipated to have no deleterious effects on subsistence activities.

E. EFFECTS ON RECREATION

DNR expects some recreation uses occur in the sale area. Hunting and berry picking may occur in the sale area. The harvesting may encourage berry growth for a number of years following clear cutting. Most of the hunting that occurs here is likely goat hunters traveling through the area to access the goats higher on the mountain. The harvest should have no impact on this use particularly if the hunters use the existing trail for access.

F. SUSTAINED YIELD/ALLOWABLE CUT

The Forest Resources and Practices Act (AS 41.17.060 (c)) and Article VII Section 4 of the State Constitution require that State Forest land be managed on a sustained yield basis. Sustained yield has been defined in the Forest Resources and Practices Act AS 41.17.950(15):

"Sustained Yield" means the achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high level of annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of forestland and water without significant impairment of the productivity of the land and water, but does not require that timber be harvested in a non-declining yield basis over a rotation period.

This sale will contribute to the allowable harvest volume. The allowable harvest for the Haines State Forest has been determined to be 58.8 million board feet (MMBF) per decade. Over the past decade, from January 1, 2002 through December 31, 2011, 6.287 MMBF of timber have been harvested from the Haines State Forest or about 11% of the allowable harvest.

G. REGENERATION

The sale area will be harvested in a few small sale entries using a clear-cut harvest silvicultural system. The total clear-cut harvest unit will be 40 acres in size. Residual hemlock in the understory is expected to respond to the increased heat and sunlight and to add to the future stand density. To ensure timely regeneration, the State may plant Sitka spruce in the harvest area. It is expected that the species composition of the future stand will contain a mix of hemlock and spruce.

H. HARVEST METHODS

The silvicultural prescription is clear-cutting. Harvesting will be a combination of track and skidder equipment. There should be sufficient soil disturbance to make a good seed bed for natural regeneration. These harvest methods in the past have provided excellent scarification of the soils which create a good seed bed for natural regeneration.

I. EROSION



Two types of soil erosion concerns are- surface erosion and mass wasting of soil and debris. Surface erosion is primarily caused by road construction. Surface erosion will be minimized by strict adherence to the contract guidelines and Forest Resources and Practices Act standards.

With regard to mass wasting and debris avalanches, such events normally occur on slopes over 66 percent (66%). All of the slopes in the harvest area are less than 66%. Harvesting may be suspended during periods of saturated soil conditions to assure there is not excessive and detrimental soil disturbance.

J. EFFECTS ON MINING

There is currently no known mining activity in the harvest area itself.

K. MATERIAL SOURCES

All roads will be spur or skid roads utilizing material from within the road clearing limits. If material sources are required they will be identified during construction and approved by the DOF.

L. ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Besides generating an estimated \$20,000.00 in royalties to the State, the proposed sales will create economic benefits in Haines and possibly other parts of Alaska. The total economic impact of these sales to the statewide economy is estimated to be \$120,000. The Haines business community will receive direct economic benefits from providing support services for the operators such as fuel, food, housing, medical and miscellaneous supplies. The residents of Haines will receive an indirect benefit through taxes paid to the borough by the operator, the employees, and their families during the course of the timber harvest operations.

The timber sale will have an effect on local employment by generating an estimated two-to-six jobs directly associated with each timber sale. The sales are expected to benefit the local economy by providing much-needed jobs and forest products for local consumption. The sale of this timber is designed to be used to maintain a steady supply of timber to the existing mills in Haines.

V. MARKET CONDITIONS

The economic conditions in the general vicinity of this proposed sale are poor. The current local economy is based on fishing, tourism, government, and some small logging operations. The local large sawmill has been closed since April of 1991. Several small mobile dimension sawmills exist in the valley and have purchased or manufactured much of the timber sales of this size over the past few years. A log home builder in Whitehorse

had purchased houselogs from the area but went out of business a few years ago. Some of the workers in that business still purchase small quantities of house logs.

At present, there is a fair demand for local forest products. The local market includes domestic sawlogs, houselogs, and firewood. Domestic sawlogs typically are used by local sawmills. The overall export market is generally poor at the present time. These sales will be sold to local operators who primarily purchase timber for use in the valley. The low-grade logs not fitting the need of the sawmills are anticipated to be sold as firewood as the demand for heating wood is strong. The demand from the local and export markets are expected to remain the same over the length of these proposed timber sales.

## VI. **OPTIONS**

After a review of the material and information discussed above, the following alternatives should be considered:

1. To continue the sale as proposed.
2. To modify the sale by making it larger or smaller.
3. Defer the sale offering.
4. Not offer the sale.

A discussion of the four alternatives follows:

1. This alternative meets the objectives of the Five-Year Forest Management Schedule and DNR's constitutional mandate. It also meets the silvicultural objective of improving forest vigor, provides a source of logs for the timber industry, and creates jobs for the local Haines area.
2. The sale size was selected to provide a logical series of small operator sales to offset the cost of constructing the access roads into the sale. Increasing the sale size is not practical due to the location of the timber in the area. Decreasing the size of the unit would increase logging costs or leave timber that would be more difficult to harvest in the future. This sale is of an adequate size to cover the mobilization costs to operate from the area road system. This sale area was designed to balance and maintain other resource values as well as provide economic benefits to the Haines Area.
3. Deferring harvest to a later date would fail to meet many of the objectives of the sale. One of the main objectives is to make state-owned timber consistently available to the local timber industry.
4. This alternative would result in not meeting any of the objectives outlined for this management action. Utilization of the forest resource would not be achieved and

there would be no contribution to the state and local economy, and there would be no restoration of forest health. Regeneration in the proposed sale area would be delayed.

**VII. PRELIMINARY FINDING AND DECISION**

The purpose of this decision is to determine if the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry, shall make available timber located in portions of Sections 25 & 36, T29S R57E, Copper River Meridian.

After due consideration of all pertinent information and alternatives, I have reached the following Preliminary Decision: To offer the sales as proposed in Alternative 1.

In addition, I find that this preliminary decision satisfies the objective as stated in this document and it is in the best interest of the state to proceed with this action.

*Roy M Josephson*

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Roy Josephson  
Northern Southeast Area Forester

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2/28/2012  
Date

## **STATUTES AND REGULATIONS**

AS 38.04.065 Land Use Planning and Classification  
AS 38.04.910 (5) Definitions – Multiple Use  
AS 38.05.035 Powers and Duties of the Director [includes best interest findings]  
AS 38.05.112 Forest Land Use Plan  
AS 38.05.113 Five-year Schedule of Timber Sales  
AS 38.05.115 Limitations and Conditions of Negotiated Timber Sales.  
AS 38.05.123 Negotiated timber sales for local manufacture of wood products  
AS 38.05.945 Public Notice  
AS 41.17 Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act  
11 AAC 71 Timber and Material Sales  
11 AAC 95 Forest Resources and Practices Regulations  
33 CFR 323.4(a)(1),(6) Permits for Discharge of Dredged or Fill Material into Waters of the United States. (Discharges not requiring permits)

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State of Alaska, Superior Court. Third Judicial District at Anchorage. 1997. *Decision and Order – Alaska Sportfishing Assoc. et al. v. Thomas H. Boutin*. Case No. 3AN-94-08606 CI.  
[Describes court case on ACMP compliance, sustained yield, multiple use, cumulative impacts, and

best interest findings on state timber sales.]  
USDA Fish and Wildlife Service. *Eagle Tree maps*.



Proposed Timber Sale  
Section 25 and 36, T29S, R57E, C.R.M.  
13 mile Haines Highway  
Skagway B2 Quadrangle



C029S057E25

C029S058E30

C029S057E36

C029S058E31

C030S058E06

**Legend**

- 13\_Mile\_Proposed\_Road
- 13\_Mile\_Stream
- Unit\_Area
- private1

