

## **Final Minutes: Board of Forestry Teleconference Meeting**

**Tuesday, December 8, 2020: 8am – 5:00pm**

**Call to Order and Roll Call.** Chris Maisch, State Forester, called the meeting to order from Fairbanks at 8:03. No teleconference sites were connected, because everyone called in from their own home or office. The public notice included connection information for anyone to call in or connect to the WebEx teleconference.

Present: **Chris Stark, Denise Herzog, Bill Morris, Will Putman** (Fairbanks), **Nathan Lojewski** (Anchorage), **Eric Nichols** (Ketchikan), **Chris Beck** (Anchorage) and **Mark Vinsel** (Washington). A quorum was established.

Also present telephonically:

- **Anchorage:** Alison Arians (minutes), Ben Mulligan (ADFG Habitat), Michael Shephard (USFS), Scott Graziano (ADFG Habitat), Brent Goodrum (Deputy Commissioner, DNR), Mark Cahur (USFS)  
**Fairbanks:** Jeremy Douse (DOF), Jim Durst (retired ADFG), Matt Stevens (DOF), Tom Paragi (ADFG Wildlife Conservation), Todd Nichols (ADFG Habitat), Eve Karczmarczyk (FNSB Lands), Rich Ackerman (FNSB Lands),
- **Soldotna:** Hans Rinke (DOF)
- **Ketchikan:** Greg Staunton (DOF), Paul Slenkamp (MHT)
- **Juneau:** Jon Wendel (DEC), Dave Schmid (USFS), Kate Kanouse (ADFG Habitat), Joel Nudelman (DOF), Dylan Krull (ADFG Habitat), Sally Schlichting (SEACC)
- **Palmer:** Norm McDonald (DOF), Trevor Dobell (DOF Stewardship), Stephen Nickel (DOF)
- **Other call-in locations, or unknown:** Tim Dabney (DOF); Mark Minnillo (Habitat ADFG), Chris Tcimpidis (NRCS), Evan Fritz (ADFG Habitat), Jim Eleazer (DOF), Carolyn Weisan (sp?), Casey Boesflug (BLM Fuels Coordinator), Julia Nave (Nature Conservancy), Jen Leahy (Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership), Kelsey Dean, Katie Riley (Sitka Conservation Society)

**Public Meeting Notice.** The meeting was noticed by issuing a press release (handout in packet), emailing announcements to interested parties, and posting a notice on the state's Online Public Notice System and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) website.

**Approval of agenda.** The agenda was approved with one change: Nathan Lojewski suggested we put EFF and Hazard fuel topics together. Mark Vinsel made the motion to approve and Chris Beck seconded it.

**Approval of Minutes.** By unanimous consent, the Board reviewed and approved the August 25, 2020 minutes with no corrections. Mark Vinsel made a motion to approve, Chris Beck seconded. Unanimous approval.

### **Announcements.**

None.

### **Funding, legislation, and regulations**

Agency budgets and legislation

**Ben Mulligan, ADF&G.** Deputy Commissioner of ADFG and provides Habitat section oversight. In the process of upgrading our lead admin to take care of Habitat section if Ben is pulled away. Governor's budget comes out 12/15, and the process is confidential until that happens.

**Jon Wendel, DEC.** DOW. Budget still up in the air. Everyone working from home. Lots of money but maybe in the wrong pots. Usually have a good travel budget, but we didn't get to use it this year. OMB has tightened the reins for moving funding around, and we are discussing what we'll need for next year. Changing duties for upcoming budget cycle. DEC took an aggressive stance on having people working from home: 85% of staff at home. Telework agreements have been extended, lots of virtual inspections, cutting down on travel.

**Chris Maisch, DOF.** Budget due 12/15 from administration. Can't talk a lot about details yet. Generally: DOF probably will have a flat budget, regular operating \$ for FY22. Bright spot: last year included a \$5 million appropriation which is good for 5 years, and can be extended beyond that. This funding is to stand up a fuels hazard risk reduction program—you can read my remarks in the Board packet about the program, and the projects we have already slated in the Minutes from the last meeting. We didn't have enough receipt authority in the past for taking in federal funds, but the legislative audit committee expanded our receipt authority to \$7.5 million from our initial \$1.5. The previous amount was not nearly enough, and created problems for what federal money we were bringing in. Federal programs require state match, but it can be hard money or in-kind match. There will continue to be interest in that topic. In-kind match is not a problem, but need to explain it to the legislature each time, to make sure they understand. Our program on the federal side is significant. Will now be much more efficient in how we manage those funds.

Last year during the appropriation process, the legislature asked that we show how we would make that fuels program sustainable. We have presented many ideas on how to do that, and once budget is public, we'll share those.

**Tier 3 Waters. Jon Wendel, DEC.** At the last meeting, I brought up legislative efforts for nominating Tier 3 waters. Generally, Tier 3 water is a designation that's assigned to a class of water. 3 levels of water for antidegradation. 1) not meeting WQ standards (could be natural, like glacial flour, or human pollution). 2) all levels being met. 3) special class of water that deserves extra protection, e.g. in a national park or state wildlife refuge, etc. Nomination info came out in November 2018. The current nomination process in Alaska: proposing legislation to make a designation, and goes through legislature as a bill. Once it's designated, no increase allowed from existing discharges, although there can be short-term exceptions. A designation is likely an appropriation. Legislature hasn't clearly delineated that authority—whether a Tier 3 can be decided by DEC or whether it needs to be a legislative decision is still sitting with legislature. Bill may be picked up in 2021. No clear directive on how the designation will work. Currently there are 5 Tier 3 nominations:

Chandalar River — Venetie  
Yakutat Forelands — Yakutat  
Koktuli River — Dillingham  
Chilkat River — Haines  
Draanjik (Black) River – Fort Yukon (Eastern Yukon)

Mark Vinsel: There was a lawsuit long ago because we didn't have a plan for nominating. Are we clear of that lawsuit now?

Wendel: Not sure about this—but we do have a process. Some bills are forthcoming that may make it more clear on designation.

Bill Morris: Are the existing nominations available for people to look at online?

Wendel: Not sure if the packet is online—would have to check with permitting section about what would be publicly available. I don't think it is posted.

Lojewski: Could there be a forestry activities on Tier 3?

Wendel: It would depend on what impacts you're having with storm water discharges. You could get a short-term exception for some activities. Could probably accomplish road construction.

Chris Stark: Yakutat Forelands: is this riparian habitat?

Wendel: It's a wetland complex.

Chris Stark: Appropriation? Does that mean takings? Is a part of that a decision for a nomination?

Wendel: For designating a Tier 3 water, currently, the actual designation authority is with the legislature, but some groups want that to rest with the DEC. DEC can't classify a water now. A lot of waters are classified as Tier 2. To elevate it to a Tier 3, a body has to make a ruling to approve it. DEC currently doesn't have that authority—it has to be a legislative bill. In the future, DEC could make that determination if the legislature decides that.

Chris Maisch: What is the nexus between Tier 3, wetlands, and Army Corps permit, and forestry's silvicultural exemption?

Wendel: Not sure about ACOE. Tier 3 waters is a requirement of the Clean Water Act, and DEC has primacy. Part of that requires the state to have an information process. Nationwide, other states have more established procedures.

Maisch: This forest road exemption is really important—we need to keep an eye on this.

Chris Stark: What is the definition of a water body?

Wendel: I could look that up.

Stark: Yes, please.

Eric Nichols: Are these waters needing to be under some kind of a threat? Is there already degradation? What if it's on USFS land? There's no development there anyway. Why do those waters need more protection?

Wendel: According to regularations, they are waters of outstanding recreational or ecological significance. It's not a designation you'd give to an impaired water. (That would be Tier 1.)

Mark Vinsel: 1) There is still an argument to be made that the state constitution has already appropriated all of the waters of the state for the public benefit. I think the mere classification as a Tier 3 to allow no further degradation just affirms the current situation, and only means that something that wants to develop could not be allowed to happen and pollute the river. 2) I've only ever seen applications for Tier 3 designations that were trying to block development. For example, mining the sands in Yakutat forelands. That's not very far from the Situk River, and it's an international resource. People come from all over the world to fish there, and it's still in good shape. I think some of the motivations are suspect for these classifications. Also not sure if only a legislative action could make a Tier 3.

Wendel: Some people believe that the legislature should have the final say; some believe that DEC should decide this. Some are more pro-development, some more conservation-minded. Not a lot of progress because of this difference of opinion in who gets the authority. Hopefully it will get picked back up in 2021 and we'll see where it goes from there. Permitting supervisor will be able to answer these questions.

**Funding for Hazard Fuel Reduction program. Chris Maisch, DOF.** See paper in packet. Multi-faceted approach. Building and constructing new fuel breaks for those communities that need them. CWPPs would be done by every community that are in fire danger to engage with local communities and the public. We bring them

in to the process of a fire-adapted community. Evacuation planning and evacuation centers. Shows where we need to do additional projects and fuel breaks, defensible space, maintaining ingress and egress for communities, and fuels treatments along highways. Cost share program is currently administered through stewardship program. People are helping us by preparing their property for fire. Firewise programs. Prevention program: 2 years ago we revamped the prevention statutes—we now have a bail schedule with ticketing for minor offenses. Main goal is education, not penalties, but we have that tool. Spruce the Moose is the new mascot, and will be used in school programs. Enforcement when needed, suppression when needed. We help with better public safety and reduce the impacts on the GF. Fuel breaks have shown to be helpful in keeping a disaster from happening. Fuel breaks can help fire from entering a community. See the McKinley Fire video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=no8dvnjbdHY&feature=youtu.be>

Also, we've worked with many agencies on a new wildland fire publication. See the document at the end of the minutes.

Will Putman: CWPP idea for more communities is a great idea—we need to do CWPP process **before** fuels mitigation. Sometimes the collaboration is tricky, and it can be a challenge to get everyone on the same page. It's difficult even in very small communities. I encourage you not to forget the off-road communities. We have a tendency to forget them. Please remember those places that are only accessible by boat or plane. Would the funding work for federal protection zones?

Chris Maisch: Yes, that would work. We would want to work with federal agencies and coordinate with them. Need to make sure we are working together.

Putman: I think there will be some real efforts from the federal side, as well. I know a challenge of a state program will be the lack of staff in many of those communities. It'll be good to leverage organizations like TCC who can work with the tribes, and tapping into some existing community planning programs.

Maisch: Definitely a piece of the program that will be important: developing partnerships. Contract crews will also be important parts of the program.

Nathan: Agree with Will—you only have 2 projects off the road system—one was in McGrath and one a dump fire area. There is a real need for fuel breaks around villages, where there is nowhere for them to go other than a river or airstrip. I have some ideas, and would be happy to help in a collaborative group.

Maisch: We haven't allocated all the funds yet—our priority is to maintain existing fuel breaks, then there are still lots of funds that haven't been allocated yet. The list in the packet was just our previous projects already in the pipeline.

Casey Boesflug: We are raising up the AWFCG group—collaboration and planning and coordination there. Other agencies are also beefing up their fuels programs, as well. Will work together in the near future.

Maisch: Good point.

**Negotiated sales and FLUP appeals update. Chris Maisch, DOF.** Working on making the FLUP a non-appealable process. Bill number was HB219, SB160. 2 hearings on House side. Last session ended mostly on budget items. Expects to be reintroduced this session. FLUPs in 5-year batches; limiting FLUPs to be part of the process, but not appealable. New criteria: six things to be considered if it will be offered as a negotiated sale: best interest (BIF), local timber markets, specialized markets, underutilized timber, economic constraints, other benefits to state and local economy. Moves all negotiated timber authority to one section. Also conforming statements.

Chris Stark: How far did this get?

Maisch: introduced in both houses, one further hearing. Didn't get that far; it still had a long way to go. It didn't pass out of any committees. Only had 2 hearings in its first referral. Hearings were in February.

**EFF non-emergency work for hazard fuel reduction. Chris Maisch, DOF.** Simple change. We are allowed to use EFF for non-emergency work—fire suppression, fuels. But we can't use GF funds to pay them, which makes it impossible for them to work. In theory, if it's going to be paid with federal funds, we are asking for that permission. Zero fiscal note.

Nathan: This is very important, and I would like to add this to our annual report letter.

Chris Maisch: It may be premature to put it in the letter today, but we will see what is introduced during the session. EFF crew count has declined dramatically. We were only able to put together 4 EFF crews to go to L48. Partly because of COVID, but in a slow fire year, we rarely use EFFs. We could use them for fuels work, guarantee work whether or not it's a busy fire season or not. Would like to offer additional training for them for saw work. Rebuilding capacity.

### **Roadless Rule**

**USFS final FEIS: Alternative 6, full exemption. Chris Maisch, DOF.** Not too much to update. Final FEIS published, recorded decision. 30-day waiting period concluded. Exemption for the Tongass is back in place. Some things are still potentially in play—potential for Congressional Review Act to apply to this rule. Control of the Senate will determine whether that will come up to make changes to this rule. Waiting for Senate races in Georgia. Federal government can review this if it's close to the end of a session. It's very political. Will keep an eye on this. So far no litigation filed.

**State's challenge to Roadless Rule in court. Mary Gramling, LAW.** Represent State of Alaska with litigation on Roadless Rule. Case is before DC Circuit. State filed a complaint 10 years ago challenging the 2001 Roadless Rule on a number of different grounds. Case proceeded through DC Districts—procedural challenges. For the last 2 years, case has been stayed before the Court of Appeals because of the rule-making process that has just been completed. Court's order when they granted the stay was for us to give 90-day status updates, and once the final agency action was completed, within 30 days after that, parties would file motions about the future of the case. The State's status reports: opposed the stay, wanted a decision. The 30-day deadline to file future motions on the case was November 30. The State was prepared to file something, but federal government's council and the environmental group weren't prepared, and requested a 2-week extension. We will wait for all the motions to be on the same timeline. On December 14<sup>th</sup>, all will be turned in. The state will continue to ask for the decision, even though the rule-making is done. We'll see some more procedural filings probably. Will have some more updates at the next board meetings. Oral argument won't be right away.

Chris Stark: Who are the specific environmental groups?

Mary: Long list of interveners.

The following parties intervened on behalf of the federal defendant appellees: Southeast Alaska, Conservation Council, The Alaska Center, The Boat Company, Tongass Conservation Society, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, Natural Resources Defense Council, Greenpeace, Inc., Defenders of Wildlife, and Center for Biological Diversity.

The following parties intervened on behalf of the State of Alaska plaintiff appellant: Alaska Forest Association, Southeast Conference, Southeast Alaska Power Agency, Alaska Electric Light & Power Co., Inc., Alaska Power & Telephone, Alaska Miners Association, Citizen's Pro Road, Alaska Marine Lines, Inc., American Exploration & Mining Association, Durette Const. Company, Inc., First Things First Foundation, Ketchikan Gateway Borough, Southeast Stevedoring Corp., Chris Gerondale, Southeast Roadbuilders, Inc., Hyak Mining Co., Inside Passage Electric Cooperative, & City of Craig.

Stark: Now the public is after you again: how long before you're actually going to be able to get into these roaded areas?

Maisch: Still a process to follow to request an activity. Would have to go through regular process, including NEPA. Could ask Dave Schmid later in the meeting when we talk about collaborative projects. Will be quite some time.

Stark: A year or two at the earliest?

Maisch: Yes.

Eric Nichols: There is nothing in the 5-year plan now for the Tongass.

Maisch: May update it, but harvest would still be a long time away.

## **Annual Report**

**Alison Arians.** In response to request from the BOF in August, providing as much information about the annual report as possible at this time.

**2020 FRPA compliance monitoring up to Q3. Joel Nudelman, DOF.** More detail in the Spring with the full compliance data. Numbers are just the first 3 quarters of the CY. Each region and area. Region I: 39 DPOs in the first 3 quarters. More than we had all last year. A few more since September 30. Numbers will go up. 9541 acres notified—almost double what we had all of last year. Road miles—61 miles of road. 50 miles last year. Active on inspections for the year. State land—8 inspections. COVID case load was low in SE, and we could travel. Different situation on Kodiak—no inspections there. Held one FRPA training for an ADFG group and Jon Wendel. We did that right before shutdown in March. Didn't do any operator training because not allowed to have large groups of people, but was able to work with individual operators.

Region II: not much activity. Region III. One notification came in for Galena in September. More inspections than all of last year. One training session; wetter summer than last year. We will see at the next meeting how the BMPs worked out.

**Timber sale totals for FY20. Joel Nudelman, DOF.** See handout. Will be higher next year with Bayview Sale—14 million BF. Number of sales where harvest occurred—incorrect. 4 sales in SE, 4 in NSE, etc. Some corrections needed. 25 sales total. 78 active sales. Personal use sales, GNA sales. Kosciusko. Beach log sales, MHT & UA Lands.

Stark: Hard to read the handout—printed out very small. Could you explain the disparity in stumpage rates?

Nudelman: All the sales have a different stumpage rate depending on species, product, market, conditions of the sales. Always variable.

Stark: Understand different values. Who is making the determination/guidance? Is there some kind of guidance for this?

Maisch: All these sales are appraised prior to sale, taking into account the items that Joel mentioned. Some areas include lots of roads that need to be constructed, which means that the stumpage rates are much lower, because it's an asset for us to have those roads. Some species command a high price. Some over-the-counter sales are sold for fuel wood, haven't been sold for a long time—they sell just over base rates, which is the cost that it takes us to lay out the sale. Almost all of these sales are done with our .123 sales, which means competition sets the price.

Joel will send out an updated copy, can forward to the Board. Also, see the updated copy at the end of these Minutes.

## **Planned FY21 timber sales. Jeremy Douse & Hans Rinke, DOF.**

Jeremy Douse, Northern Regional Forester:

FYSTS

- One document for the region
- Develop another FYSTS in 2022

- Public facing web app that displays FYSTS timber sale boundaries.

2020 Timber Sale Auction in Fbx/Delta.

35 active timber sale contracts.

13 sales sold for total near \$50,000.

- Sales that are far out are not certain, and if one doesn't work out, we can shuffle them around in case one doesn't work out.
- We have an auction coming up. Because of COVID, going to sealed bid auctions. Volume looks quite high for Fairbanks Year 2, but it's mainly the Galena biomass sale.
- Last year auction was in Delta, so more focus this year is on Fairbanks.
- Logging road status web app.

Chris Beck: Could you explain how Chris Maisch's change in public review process would affect these sales?

Maisch: three planning documents: 1) FYSTS for public and potential purchasers. Year 1 and 2 are pretty certain, further out are more prospective. Not linear—could change sales around. 2) BIF: best interest of the state to sell the sale. Usually more public comments on lands outside state forests. 3) FLUP can be concurrent with BIF or after. Most sales are concurrent. New legislation would make the appeal only on the BIF.

Jeremy: We get more comments from agencies than public. Sometimes sales that are farther out get moved up if another doesn't work out.

Stark: TVSF CAC goes through all those FYSTS at least once. The most controversial sale was on State Forest land—Surprise Side. I have always thought that was a good learning tool for the Division of Forestry and how we do things with the public.

Hans Rinke: Coastal Region Forester. In the Mat-Su and Kenai, most forest management activities are on General Use land. We reach out to the user groups who use those lands, which is a time-consuming process. It's an extra step to notify them. We also use a regional approach to FYSTS, doing Mat-Su and Kenai in one step. SE is broken out into NSE and SSE. This past summer, FYSTS went out. In most of SC, flat line spruce beetle infestation. No flights this year because of COVID, but from 2016-2019, mapped 1.4 million acres. Probably 600,000 acres infested. Forest management activities are focused on Willer-Kash and Houston vicinities for 2021. Kenai Peninsula also has spruce beetle activity. Most coming up will be in Ninilchik and Anchor Point. Focusing on salvage sales.

SE: In 2010 and 2011, State Forest created. Most of our activities have been on SF lands. 2021: Edna Bay Parlay timber sale, BIF completed, will be offered early in 2021. Also in FYSTS (last summer), Hecata and Whale Pass. Public meetings scheduled. 2015 had lots of budget cuts. We lost foresters then, and are still working to try and rebuild, filling some positions, but staffing has been very difficult in the coastal region, retaining foresters in our ranks. Personal use: mainly due to conditions (low snowpack and frozen ground), strong showing in firewood cutting ranks. Several large fires. State Forest Road app gives transparency to public.

**Forest Action Plan update. Ashley List, DOF. PPT. Final plan due Dec 31.**

The Division of Forestry reviews and comments on a wide range of state and federal agency land-use plans to help ensure the division and the public have continued access to forest resources on state lands. In addition, DOF works to encourage the salvage of timber when forested land is cleared for rights-of-way or other purposes and provides stipulations for protecting forest health.

A new Alaska Forest Action Plan was completed in 2020. The first Forest Action Plan was completed in 2010 and revised in 2016. A full revision every 10 years is required by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act, as amended by the 2008 Farm Bill, for continued federal funding of cooperative forestry and cooperative fire programs. The 2020 Alaska Forest Action Plan provides a statewide, all lands assessment of forest conditions and

trends, identifies threats to forest resources, sets forward a strategy to address those threats, and delineates the priority landscape on which to focus that strategy. This effort pulled together DOF staff and other key stakeholders to develop an Alaska-focused strategy to meet the national state and private forestry priorities to conserve working forest landscapes, protect forests from harm, and enhance public benefits from trees and forests. The 2020 Forest Action Plan is a way for DOF, in cooperation with stakeholders, to prioritize where and how to apply strategies that will make the most of the funding available to address forest issues. The 2020 strategies were developed with cross-program and cross-boundary efforts in mind.

If Board members have any comments/suggestions, they are welcome. Please let me know if you'd like a copy of the draft.

Nathan Lojewski: Does Stewardship map include Native Corporation land?

Ashley: Yes, all corporation lands. Doesn't include allotments or non-forested lands.

Chris Beck: I'd like to look more closely and how it impacts recreational dimensions. If there is a window to discuss—would like to do that.

Ashley: That would be great. Happy to include more information

Chris Stark: Please send a plan to every Board member. [*Done. Alison added more Recreation information based on the work the BOF has been doing, and the letter we wrote supporting the Alaska Trails Initiative.*]

## **COVID & Wildland Fire**

### **DOF COVID mitigation. Alison Arians, DOF.**

The COVID Response group published the 13<sup>th</sup> version of [DOF's COVID-19 Handbook](#) online last week, including updates to the inter-state and intra-state travel sections to comply with the Governor's November 16<sup>th</sup> Health Orders. Other additions from the CDC include wearing the proper mask type. DOF's travel protocol document was also updated on the [COVID Response website](#).

This week we'll be working on Version 14, because of the recent CDC changes to quarantine length that have been adopted by Alaska DHSS:

#### **How long to quarantine**

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a 14-day quarantine period is still the safest quarantine duration; however, based on emerging science, CDC has issued updated guidance to provide two acceptable alternatives to shorten the quarantine period.

- If testing is available, you may be able to end your quarantine after 7 days of quarantine, on the 8th day. You can take a COVID-19 test within 48 hours prior when you hope to end your quarantine (on day 6 or 7). You must continue to quarantine until your test comes back negative, which may be longer than 7 days. Even if your test is negative and you end quarantine, you must continue to wear a mask when around others and monitor for symptoms for the full 14 days. If you develop any symptoms or your test result is positive, you must self-isolate.
- If testing is not readily available, quarantine for a full 10 days after you were exposed. You may end your quarantine on day 11 if you do not develop symptoms. You must continue to wear a mask when around others and monitor for symptoms for the full 14 days. Self-isolate if you develop symptoms and get tested.

Most DOF staff are working from home, if possible, to reduce the possible spread of COVID. We continue to wear masks and wash our hands often... all the things you all are doing, as well.

Maisch: Working on this since March. Has been held up by other Depts and Divisions.



**COVID and L48 Fires: lessons learned. Norm McDonald, DOF.** This discussion was deferred until a later meeting to make up some time.

### **10:45 Public Comment**

Katie Riley: Sitka Conservation Society. Activities: We have a contract with the City of Sitka to use CARES funding for transitional rural employment. We are committed to sustainable employment. Started an employment conservation corps: trails maintenance, cabin maintenance, etc. Support YG transition. Trail system is a 17-mile hut-to-hut system with local wood and local cabin kits. Also working with Sitka High School students—garden sheds, bike shelters and selling locally. Also working on lumber drying shed to increase supply of local building materials. There has been a significant increase in barge shipping costs. We encourage the State to working on developing YG markets. Would like State to invest in multi-use investments like recreation.

### **Forest Management**

**Mental Health Trust exchange update & forestry activity. Paul Slenkamp, MHT.** MHT remains quite busy in forest management throughout the state. No active sales in northern region, but we monitor activities. Fuel reduction sale in Kenai Peninsula. Some small active sales in Gustavus & Hollis. Completed Icy Bay sale, 3-year process for fiber. Kasaan sale with Viking is ongoing. To date: 25 million board feet. Primary source of Viking wood. Sale is an exchange of OG timber with Naukati. Completed 2 phases of land exchange. Phase 2A, Viking operating there for 2 years. Getting ready to advertise Shelter Cove old growth just outside of Ketchikan. Some of the sale will include bridge upgrading. Land exchange: will complete in March/April. Hopefully will have it done in 4 years, though it was supposed to be done in 2. Waiting on an appraisal: value for value exchange. 21,000 acres of federal land, and 18,000 acres of MHT land. Actual makeup of exchange will be determined by like values. Most of the MHT lands are located in communities. Idea was to preserve lands around communities, giving them MHT lands than can be used by MHT beneficiaries. Working on land status, hazmat, etc. Imperative that this exchange is completed on schedule to provide wood.

Vinsel: Landslides in Haines and also in Juneau. It was the Mitkof area that led BOF into slope stability discussions. Any holdings affected by slides?

Slenkamp: Hasn't been any slides in Petersburg. Did have a small slough in Wrangell that came down, but it was very small, with negligible property damage. Ketchikan has had a lot of issues with stairs. Shelter Cove Road has had some issues, but not a lot of damage.

Stark: Critical part of the supply chain. Is this primarily going to export, dimensional lumber? Where is the market for your future?

Slenkamp: It's varied. Significant portion is being harvested on Naukati is manufactured in Klawock, then goes to multiple destinations. Cedar is going south. Spruce is primarily manufactured, and much of it is being exported, also for musical instruments. Chinese market for low-diameter materials, hemlock market in L48 is strong. Purchasers are the ones who determine the marketplace. MHT focuses on maximizing return, not focus on markets. Now we have a diversified market.

**Good Neighbor Authority Update: Kosciusko Sale. Paul Slenkamp/Chris Maisch.** Paul: MHT lead for contract administration. 3 year sale, since 2017. Just reached the milestone of after 2 years of layout, we have gotten all 12 units approved. Required a lot of fieldwork and collaboration between multiple agencies. One of the things that allowed this sale to get on the market quickly was the purchaser layout—but that was quite challenging because the layout was done by the purchaser, then approved by the State of Alaska, but the environmental assessment and NEPA was done by federal agency. Federal landowner has the ultimate say on whether the harvest prescription is compliant. In order to be compliant, multiple disciplines were involved—hydrologists, geologists, biologists, silviculturists, stream set-asides, forest plans, different policies. Long period of time, but finally getting this done. Between tariffs and COVID, it's been complicated. 2 of 12 units have been harvested. Still some road to be reopened. Environmental restoration piece will have to be re-advertised—2 red culverts that will need to be repaired.

Maisch: Agree with effort with all cooperators to work through that. Weekly calls. Good to be operating more normally on that sale.

Stark: Profitable sale. How does that fit with paying for the red pipes? Environmental work? This is being characterized as our way forward with the federal government, but we haven't gotten the numbers for the restoration work.

Slenkamp: USFS project has multiple aspects to it. Originally, the stumpage was more, which would have covered the extensive restoration work, but the stumpage is still returning a positive stumpage, but not to the extent as was initially proposed.

Maisch: Market for this wood was the China market. Tariff was an unusual event—some reappraisals done. Other restoration work is all driven by a funding source, usually not forestry funds. When we can do any restoration work on the back of a timber sale, that's a bonus.

Stark: Portfolio going forward, going into good markets. Has something in the market changed? Are we going to run into asking price vs. sale price going forward?

Maisch: Markets are always changing. USFS can't offer a deficit sale. Under GNA, this is first YG sale. The first purchase price was much higher. Tariff made a big difference. Hopefully we can resolve differences with China in the future.

Vinsel: Markets conversation—in the fish business, holding on to fish is expensive. Is lumber in SE Alaska a perishable commodity? Maybe cedar can hold up—but with SE weather, would be difficult. Probably businesses don't have the capital to hold on to a resource until it's more profitable. Could that timber last?

Maisch: Cedars will hold better than spruce or hemlock. Different strategies. Better to leave it on the stump. Industry has shifted toward more profitable species.

Eric Nichols: Once we cut that tree, if we put it in the water, we only have 3 months. Very perishable. If you're going to hold it, it must be on the stump. Can't hold it on the stump forever, though, because of contractual deadlines. Red pipes and additional work on the timber sale had nothing to do with this timber sale. We upgraded the bridges within the timber sale. Other activities were outside the timber sale boundary. The timber shouldn't have to support doing additional work if it's outside the timber sale area.

**Vallenar road contract, upgrades planned. Hans Rinke/Greg Staunton, DOF.** Greg Staunton: Original goal of appropriation was to access forestry or public land that was isolated on Gravina Island. 8 miles of secondary forest road. In 2018, it was completed. There was a contingency reserve that we didn't use—we had discussions with DOT and others, applied for residual funds to improve driveability of the road. Couldn't do this until beginning of 2020. There was an engineering process to prioritize goals. Awarded a construction contract, started in October 2020. Slightly delayed because of wildfire activity in the L48 that delayed culvert shipping. Should be complete this week. Worked on vertical and horizontal alignments. Added pullouts to allow vehicles to pass, also allowed lowboys to use curves for safety. Good project—has taken a while, but good to get it done finally.

**Bay View Timber Sale. Hans Rinke/Greg Staunton, DOF.** Hans Rinke: Update on process with Bay View. On POW Island, adjacent to Thorne Bay. Classification is an important piece. Part of the sale is on Settlement classified land. In late November, the RFP went out. Sale is 574 acres, about 14.5 million board feet. RFP closes December 30.

Stark: This was the sale that local folks were not very happy with, correct? Can you tell us about this?

Hans: We had a series of public meetings, listening sessions during scoping and decision-making. Made some changes to the sale to address some of the issues.

Maisch: BIF was appealed, Commissioner denied the appeal. See chart in packet.

## **Challenge Cost Share FY15**

**Summary of overall work completed. Michael Shephard, USFS.** After USFS Plan signed, CCS plan was to help USFS access lands. DOF had to put in matching money—substantial funds, lots of work. Tongass

Advisory Recommendation was used to put up priorities. Workforce development—technicians learning skills in forestry. Lots of them gained jobs through Division of Forestry. Assistance to TRAYLS program in Kake.

### **Collaborative work with State of Alaska to Aid in Implementation of Young Growth Transition for Southeast Alaska**

#### **Agreement Snapshot:**

Initial agreement: signed (06/15):	\$4,000,000
Modification: Added funds (08/16):	\$ 300,000
Modification: Added funds (03/17)	
for inventory work on state & private lands	\$ 800,000
Modification: Funds specific to OG inventory (08/17)	<u>\$ 200,000</u>
	\$5,300,000
**Outside of CCS Agreement with partners – LiDAR (Spring 2017)	\$ 915,000

Provided directly to USGS (Additional 300K from NRCS; 327k from USGS, Sealaska, & TNC)

[Additional federal ‘year-end’ \$ expanded the extent of this effort further in 2018 and 2019]

#### **Task 1: Improve and Expand Timber & Resource Inventory Data on the Tongass National Forest:**

1. In **2016**:
  - a) 11,000 acres of Young Growth inventoried (SOA crews)
  - b) ~11,000 acres of Old Growth timber were surveyed (FS crews)
  - c) Minimal acreage of 40-54 yrs Young growth inventoried (Contract via Haa Ani)
2. In **2017**:
  - a) 13,000 acres of Young Growth inventoried (SOA crews)
  - b) Old Growth surveyed
    - i. ~ 4,600 acres was be surveyed by Haa Ani via subcontract with SOA
    - ii. Additional OG inventory - via FS crews (with help from AFA via this agreement).
  - c) ~12,500 acres Young growth (40-54 yr old cohort) completed; a few areas finished in 2018.
3. In **2018**:
  - a) 6,500 acres of Young Growth (55+) were inventoried in 2018 on the north Tongass.
  - b) Dropped ~1200 plots due to access and terrain issues and other logistic challenges.
  - c) Ground Control for additions to LiDAR completed with TNC.
  - d) Modeling forest inventory structure to best use LiDAR data (in 2018): Funded at 65,000.
4. In **2019**:
  - a) Timber type mapping and sampling occurred on state forest land in southern SE.
  - b) Information was used to improve the annual allowable cut
  - c) FRESH-deer model expansion using data from inventory stands (Terra Verde 2020).
5. In **2020**:
  - a) Analysis and summary of the YG timber base for the Tongass (Terra Verde 2020).
  - b) Volume Flow over time analysis still needs to be done – “Widespread availability of stands reaching the 2-log Rule will begin occurring in denser geographic concentrations in 2030.”

## **Task 2 All Lands/All Hands Southeast Alaska-wide Engagement:**

1. Via the Alaska Department of Commerce, hired a community catalyst to advance workforce development within the region (2017-2018).
2. Biomass boiler tech training on Prince of Wales Island
3. TRAYLS project (youth from Kake etc.); with assistance from Tongass Transition Collaborative.
4. Infrastructure inventory work completed by SOA. Facilitated cooperative planning discussions in the All-Lands meeting, facilitated through the agreement with the AFA and then the University.
5. Supported scholarship programs at University of Alaska Southeast.
6. Improve Infrastructure Across Land Ownerships to Provide Access to and Improve the Economic Feasibility of Young Growth Management. Products for all five working Circles will be available for review in April 2017
7. Work Force Academies have been completed for four years. Provided training and then many of the attendees were hired via this or related efforts.
8. Agreement with the Meridian Institute assists with numerous elements: assisting with the initial funding of the Tongass Transition Collaborative; the October 2019 Young Growth Symposium; Pre-commercial thinning data consolidation and task-force recommendations (with Spruce Root)

Maisch. Working on next CCS projects now.

## **Young Growth Inventory key findings, tools. Brian Kleinhenz, Terra Verde.**

### Key Findings

- An estimate of the extent and character of the gross young-growth timber base across the entire Forest.
- A preliminary, map-based estimate of falldownpercentage in young-growth timber stands.
- An estimate of the extent of the net young-growth timber base that will be managed for future timber production.
- A projection of the potential future flow of young-growth timber volume over time.

### Tools

- Forest-wide young-growth timber type (stand) mapping.
- Forest-wide young-growth timber stand database contained in Forest Projection System (FPS) software. FPS software was developed by the Forest Biometrics Research Institute (FBRI). More information about FBRI and FPS software can be found on the web at: <https://fbrinstitute.org/>.
- Forest-wide growth and yield modelling (using FPS) of young-growth timber stands, including net harvestable acreage estimates based on Forest Service corporate GIS layers.
- GIS time-lapse map tool showing predicted young-growth timber volume flow over time across all areas of the Forest.
- An estimate of the extent and character of the gross young-growth timber base across the entire Forest.
- A preliminary, map-based estimate of falldownpercentage in young-growth timber stands.
- An estimate of the extent of the net young-growth timber base that will be managed for future timber production .
  - Average, Overall Falldown percentage of 40%
  - Stand by stand Falldown percentages were applied based on site specific conditions detailed in the best Forestwide GIS Layers
  - This method predicted more fall down than the method that was used in the Forest Plan

Graphed: A projection of the potential future flow of young-growth timber volume over time.

### Tools

- Forest-wide young-growth timber type (stand) mapping.
- Forest-wide young-growth timber stand database contained in Forest Projection System (FPS) software.

- Forest-wide growth and yield modelling (using FPS) of young-growth timber stands, including net harvestable acreage estimates based on Forest Service corporate GIS layers.
- GIS time-lapse map tool showing predicted young-growth timber volume flow over time across all areas of the Forest
- Find more information at: [forestry.alaska.gov/tongas\\_yg.htm](http://forestry.alaska.gov/tongas_yg.htm)

Chris Maisch: This came out of Tongass Advisory Committee

Stark: Are all the roads on there? Elevations?

Kleinhenz: Updated inventory of trees that are available. Other efforts going on.

Chris Beck: Is there a match between the wall of wood supply and finite demand?

Maisch: Demand on chart is artificial—we think we could do more than we are currently allowed.

Nichols: Your numbers are quite a bit different—31% falldown in administrative limits, if you include acres in non-development LUDs.

Kleinhenz: Did our best to represent what would be available for timber harvest—land use designations, stream buffers, operability constraints, etc. Looking at pool of available timber.

Nichols: We have a different number—40%.

Maisch: Lots of discussions between Sheila and Brian.

Sheila Spores (Tongass staff officer for forest management): There are a lot of reasons. Difference in acres is the addition of Cube Cove. That adds some acres. In the falldown, a few different ways. If USFS can harvest in the beach, from 200 ft to 1000ft, the USFS counts that as suitable. Brian's work applied the standards and guides before calling it suitable. 30 acres suitable vs. 100 acres suitable.

Eric Nichols: Have never found anyplace we can actually do that—need to talk with your biologists. Even though it's in a monument, will that be harvestable?

Kleinhenz: Those get noted out.

Eric Nichols: Is the future of Cube Cove non-development or development?

Spores: That will stay in wilderness.

Eric Nichols: Growth model. As we get into lower site indices, how confident are we in the growth model?

Kleinhenz: Still a lot of work to do on this. Site index is mapped down to 5 acres.

Eric Nichols: Without a plan amendment or a new plan, there's no way the industry can use this wall of wood.

Now we are limited to 2015 plan. We are limited right now with maximum allowable cut. Are they going to do a new plan? Or stay at 14 million feet?

Spores: Under the 2012 planning rule, had to have a projected timber sale quantity, and when we looked at ecological capacity, we have 91 million BF that we could go up to, but in the plan, what we called transition was 41. No limitations.

Eric Nichols: There has to be a certainty of what is available when. We can't even get close to 41 million. There will have to be some certainty to put investment into the Tongass.

Chris Beck: Can someone address the big issue of supply of commercial timber over the next 5, 10, 15 years before young growth becomes viable? How much, where etc.?

Maisch: That is the tricky question. USFS working on this, but their project on POW didn't survive the court challenge. They are looking at different options.

Spores: We don't have solid answers—we lost in court in the Spring, which hurts our volume cleared on the forest. Now instead of having a one-project approach, we have 3: Ketchikan in Shelter Cove, central Tongass with Mitkof, and then 2 projects working through NEPA clearance. Once they are cleared, we have a plan to offer from 41-60 million BF a year in the next 5 years. With Roadless Rule and changing administrations, we look at the 5-year plan very often.

Maisch: Other dynamic is with the MHT exchange. That will also be wood that will help with the transition. State has stepped up our program, and we are using a team approach. Will take all the parties to maintain the approach and the industry.

[unknown questioner—Andy?]: How much does the YG volume outlined in this model depend on the the successful implementation of a PCT (precommercial thinning) program ?

Spores: Precommercial thinning—based on what we had in the forest plan, the 2-log model, would be for rotation. If a stand was precommercially thinned, would transition at least 10 years sooner and sometimes 20 years. For transition, PCT is critical.

Maisch: Also training local workforce. Big effort there. Through forest stewardship program. Record-setting year for stewardship plans. Village corps can also be a part of this solution.

Nathan Lojewski: A lot of village and native corporations are doing carbon credits.

Maisch: For Sealaska, the wood enrolled in carbon credit program is not actively managed forestlands.

Kleinhenz: Participation in carbon credits doesn't prohibit harvest—just means that you have to harvest at a sustainable level. Encourages sustainable forest management. They retain rights to harvest, just as they did before participation in the program.

Maisch: Still a lot of work to be done, but it is a big deal to get this done.

**Aurora Energy LLC's firewood kiln. Rob Brown/Chad Schumacher, Aurora Energy.** General Manager. Previously with Superior Pellet Mills. New company from June 2020 to develop and build a firewood kiln. Will help to reduce burning wet firewood that contributes to air pollution in Fairbanks. Community advisory group recommended that a kiln be built using existing heat from Usibelli. Bring biomass co-firing energy generation—energy and heat for all operations. Superior Pellet Mills has been around since 2010, was acquired by Aurora Energy, along with all the employees to keep expertise and procurement experience, etc. 2020 was a record production for wood pellets and compressed logs. Grew 20% and 50% respectively, market-driven. Double production values but still forecasting that we will run out of wood by the end of February. Exciting to see the growth. Looking at how to increase production schedules in future.

Michael Shephard: What do you attribute this increase to?

Chad Schumacher: Never promoted the compressed logs—needed to grow our pellet production. When Aurora came in, they made some operational changes that allowed the marketing to be effective.

Schumacher: How to develop a market for additional steam dependence in downtown. Works with our sister company, Aurora Energy. Have a direct line for steam across the river. Taking whole trees from DOF birch timber sales, over-the-counter sales. Birch dependence, we will see a change in direction for what Superior is requesting. Still looking at pulp grade spruce for pellets. Annual demand for pellets will be about 250 truckloads a year. Firewood will be about 500 truckloads of birch. Improving our versatility about what timber sales we can get into. Mixed species stands will be more useful for us, where before, we could only use spruce for pellets.

Kiln is a steam coil with 7 fans. Closed loop system—capturing as much heat as possible. Cycle time is about 72 hours in zero degrees to get below 20% moisture range. During the fall, we could do 48 cords in 48 hours. Exciting to see how well the kiln system has performed. Lose a little efficiency in the cold weather, but are extending the drying time into the winter.

Benefits of kiln-dried wood: guaranteed low moisture, lower emissions. Free of bugs and fungus, mold, dirt. Consistent raw material—improves home heating.

Kiln site is right downtown near FNSB office building. Kiln #2 is a goal. If we can meet our production needs, we will look to adding a 2<sup>nd</sup> kiln. We will be able to be more efficient in cycle times. Will double/quadruple raw material needs.

Will likely see an increase of 300% for pellet fuels for next year, harvesting and procuring spruce component. Would like to have all-season access to pulp-grade spruce. Best way to make that happen would be mixed-species sales—birch and spruce will now be economic.

Nathan Lojewski: You're using waste heat off the power plant. Are there other uses for that heat?

Schumacher: Steam system has always been in place—large % of downtown is using that.

Will Putman: Superior Pellets has had issues with drop in other fuel prices, difficulty with birch. Could this be characterized as a saving of Superior Pellets?

Schumacher: Yes. Compressed log line, etc., but without the opportunities here with the kiln, not sure if the pellet mill would have been around this year.

Putman: Appears to be a win-win

Schumacher: Absolutely. Has kept the same employees. Tremendous benefits. Much better livelihood for everyone involved.

Michael Shephard: Cogeneration with coal?

Schumacher: We've pursued over the last few years—5 years ago USFS put together a trial burn with wood chips to cofire with coal. Superior Pellets and Aurora did a similar test last winter—wood chips and coal at 15% rate. Looking more at emissions and efficiency gain. Biggest disadvantage is that wood chips are more expensive than coal. Financial benefits from emissions and energy efficiency. It's a realistic option. One thing we are already doing is taking the sawdust left over from making firewood to blend it with the coal. Not a big volume, but we're burning it.

Shephard: How much firewood will saturate the Fairbanks market?

Schumacher: We don't have the intent of wiping out existing loggers. Fairbanks market today—virtually no one has dry wood available for the market today. Anyone trying to burn wood today can't get wood unless they planned a year or two ago. Want to encourage current industry and help bridge this gap.

Maisch: Cost?

Chad: 20-mile radius of the kiln delivered is \$395 a cord, available with limited options for self-loading, \$350 per cord. Sales have been quite robust. We have a waiting list of 170 customers today.

Stark: Go back to Will's suggestion that wood is mighty scarce in the area. Work together to set up timber harvests where the big guy (Chad now) can help the smaller guys. Make the sales accessing the areas and creating infrastructure.

Maisch: A profitable industry is really helpful to everyone in creating roads. Biggest issue here is air quality. Not many people here fill their woodshed 2 years ahead. Room for everyone to participate. Makes use of birch, which is really helpful. We have a lot of those sales available. Sub-sawtimber is really great to sell to these processes.

What kind of commercial firewood equipment are you using?

Chad: Multi-tec is our processor. Big circular saw that chops them up. 23" maximum diameter. Fills up a basket of firewood quickly.

Tom Paragi: Glad to hear you can deal with mixed species. What about fuels reduction—can you use black spruce?

Chad: We go to a 3-4" top for the pellets. We can grind that material, but it comes down to the harvest economics. Feller-buncher in black spruce takes too long to get enough wood out. There's definitely a way to use it—if the harvest could be done. For birch, we wouldn't want to go smaller than 6-7" range.

**Stewardship agreement: State/USDA. Chris Maisch, DOF/David Schmid, USFS.** Shared stewardship. State and USFS have a long history of working together—forest health, GNA, incidents, etc. 2018: Shared stewardship framework across land ownership boundaries, nationwide. We are neighbors in the states—how do we share priorities, formalize cooperation that we've had. Part of that is in MOUs and other agreements across the country. About half the states have signed. Those are mostly at the Governor level, some with regional forester and state foresters. Payoffs: those states that have been able to come to a mutual agreement have been able to get some of the competitive funding. Big dividends in the west and further. Asked Chris, talking for some time about this. Draft shared stewardship agreement—would really document much of what we're already doing and future opportunities. Would like feedback and would like to work on this with the state. Might help us in the new administration.

Maisch: Didn't jump right on board because we already had so many of things already under way, with Roadless Rulemaking, Challenge Cost Shares, GNAs—already doing a good job with this. It might be beneficial to both parties to put this down in writing, especially as my retirement approaches. New State Forest Action Plan could help some of our priorities. Curious what Board of Forestry thinks.

Nathan Lojewski: Formalization of what's already occurring, help apply for grants?

Schmid: Incentives for fuels—with competitive edge that would have helped get funding.

Chris Beck: Help with transitions?

Maisch: Lots of different options—current industry needing investment, etc. Quite a range of possibilities. Mutual interest and need. Shared stewardship doesn't just have to be DOF and USFS. Could include ADFG, recreation. Whole range of things for mutual interests.

Schmid: Only scratched the surface with Good Neighbor Authority.

Slenkamp: Will help with consistency and interpretations on YG projects.

Beck: Working on a regional trails partnership project. One theme that has come up is roads. How do you find money to maintain, restore roads. Maybe recreation funding could help with multiple opportunities.

Stark: Also supports this strategy for environmental groups.

Maisch: This is similar to what Katie said in the public comment for Sitka Conservation Society.

**Tongass Plan Amendment Review. David Schmid.** Process: Always robust conversation on land management in the Tongass. We do have two National forests—also the Chugach plan. We just revised that plan. When the Roadless Rule was finalized, it directed an administrative change to the 2016 plan, which modified the timber land suitability index. Where Roadless piece was lifted, under the plan would have been suitable. Expect that very soon. When we push the button, it will likely make headlines, but it's a fairly simple process. Not a review decision process. That is happening and will change the plan. Amended the plan with a karst amendment. More of a technical correction and limits in YG. Not a single objection to that. Process with the plan—no NEPA undertaking. Process to do that. What comes next:

Forest monitoring and evaluation program. Includes biennial reports. Includes reviews that will be conducted at 5 & 10 years. 2021: 5<sup>th</sup> year of implementing the plan. Going to be preparing for that review. Not so prescriptive.

We have begun the transition to Biden administration. My goal is that the pendulum doesn't swing too hard, like usual in Alaska. Better off often to amend the plan rather than launching on another revision.

Maisch: Tongass Transition Collaborative might be a good group for this.

Eric Nichols: Any read on who the assistant secretary will be?

Schmid: No. Not sure. Robert Bonney was last undersecretary and is leading the transition. He is from the Obama administration.

**Great American Outdoors Act. Danielle Okst, Chris Beck.** Danielle from Council of Western State Foresters. Associate Policy and Grants Director. GAOA. Legislative history; signed into law on August 4<sup>th</sup>. Restore our Parks Act, and Land and Water Conservation Fund (offshore energy funds). \$900 million deposited annually. Federal land acquisition and state recreation projects. Forest Legacy Program—encourages privately owned land to stay in forest land. National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund. Deferred maintenance needs. Until 2025, up to \$9.5billion to federal agencies.

- Up to \$9.5B over the next five years
  - 70% for the National Park Service
  - 15% for the USDA Forest Service
  - 5% for the US Fish and Wildlife Service
  - 5% for the Bureau of Land Management
  - 5% for the Bureau of Indian Education
- At least 65% of the money from the Legacy Restoration Fund must be spent on non-transportation projects
  - Non-roads side focusing on public facing/visitor experience
  - For the up to 35% funding for transportation, the focus will be on connecting recreation and on improving access for active management and wildfires
- Projects analyzed based on seven criteria:



- Reduce deferred maintenance
  - Promote management of America’s forests
  - Improve visitor experience
  - Contribute to rural economic development
  - Improve visitor access
  - Ensure health and safety
  - Leverage partner contributions and resources
- Deferred Maintenance Project List: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/GAOA-DM-Project-List-11092020.pdf>

**Implementation Update**

- Priority list for FY2021 deferred maintenance projects delivered to Congress on November 2
  - WFLC State Forester Dialogue November 10
- Emphasized the need to communicate with Regional Foresters and Forest Supervisors to discuss priorities  
 A success measuring dashboard is being developed for deferred maintenance projects
- LWCF FY2022 projects are due to from the USDA Forest Service to OMB by early December
  - State Forester LWCF/FLP working group

Trails, facilities, roads, bridges, transportation and parking, fire and management access.

Implementation: discussions ongoing. States communicating with USFS to discuss priorities. Working on dashboard for deferred maintenance, job creation, etc. Working with Forest Legacy to set up a state forester committee.

Maisch: lots of opportunities for shared stewardship for applications here.

**“Unclogging the Federal Outdoor Recreation Pipelines” Chris Beck:** At the far end of the pipeline, in the LWCF are opportunities for this grant funding. Trails initiative presentation. Policies: maximize use of recreation funds. We have a clog in the funding pipeline problem because we don’t have 50% match. DPOR administers it. Alaska had access to \$1-2 million, and the next years will be \$3.5million. Sad story is that we have not had enough receipt authority, for lack of \$75,000 on an administrative position. We were the only state to leave this money on the table. Federal solutions: some questions about reducing match requirement, simplifying the solutions. In state solutions, we need to find the administrative costs and the matching funds. We are working with stakeholders to make a better process.

State has to update the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). This hasn’t been a very thoughtful plan in the past—but we need to work in partnership with people and identify high-priority projects so that they are shovel-ready. Working to come up with a summary of all this information, inform the legislature, but mostly trying to avoid leaving money on the table. Working with legislators and Governor. Some of challenges in Alaska. Relevance to DOF: Rosie Creek illustration—can get money that can be used for access. Win-win. Retain roads for future timber use and use them for recreation. Lots of overlap in interests. Isolated forest road system in SE.

Maisch: When you talk with Ashley—talk to her about the SCORP. FWS does an Action Plan, as well. We should be cross-referencing them. Definitely overlap and work together.

Beck: For Danielle, it’s a complicated subject—breaks into many subjects. Did what I say make sense?

Okst: Yes. Getting those dollars to the ground is a major issue.

Stark: History of this fund includes Dingle's name. Does this take money from sports gear or off-shore funds? Is that part of the North Slope funds? Outside 3-mile limit?

Okst: Not sure exactly where this off-shore drilling is from.

Maisch: No, it's different than Dingle-Johnson funds—not taking away from that or Pittman-Robertson funds.

Stark: State of Alaska benefited from offshore wells. Is this new money, or permanentizing old funds?

Beck: The program has existed for quite a while; it's not PR or DJ. This is through a slice of the revenue from federal off-shore drilling. It's been dedicated for decades, but in previous times had to go through Congress for approval. This summer the more conservative members of Congress released some authorities without intervening legislation. Not sure if the intent will be realized. But it means that \$900 million is fixed to LWCF. But other members of Congress went along with it—gave up some of their authority to dedicate the funds.

Maisch: State is still most intent on getting public land into private hands. Legislature is not excited about doing the Legacy program—a few projects here in Alaska. Used to be administered by DPOR, but they don't want to anymore. It can be a philosophical problem with the Alaska legislature, but can be used for infrastructure, not just acquisition of land.

## **Hiring a new State Forester**

**Overview of Fire program. Norm McDonald, DOF.** [See PPT online.] Chief of Fire. In September 2005, Chris Maisch began as State Forester. Presenting this overview to help BOF find Chris's replacement. Looking at resources and fire. Challenges and turnover. Wants to give people a refresh on the fire side of the house. Review our mission, show what challenges a new director will face.

Norm started with DOF in 1989 right after high school. Been involved in 3 once-in-lifetime fires. Big Lake, Sockeye Fire, and McKinley fire. State forester will be coming into dedicated group: mission is clear. Providing a safe and cost-effective, efficient fire protection. Our values in Alaska are homes, not just timber. All-risk response through a state declaration. We get involved in a little of everything; for example, COVID response. Overall, our goal is to protect human life and safety. Includes lands under agreement.

We are one of 3 protection agencies that includes AFS and USFS. Includes DOI agencies. BLM, DNR, USFS, NPS, BIA, FWS. We deal with all the lands south of the protection line. Reimbursement process. Guiding document is the Alaska interagency fire management plan. I have worked in many states—this structure works so much better than in other states. Firefighter public safety. Promotes consistent responses. Identifies how we will respond—critical, full, modified response. Statewide plan. Will provide this to potential candidates. Worthwhile document to review. State protection—we are in the roaded system. Highlighted areas are where the humans are. Limited protection doesn't mean we just let it burn—there are lodges, mines, etc. also at risk.

Protection areas: initial attack areas. Geographically separated. As of 2015, SW/Mat-Su areas combined. Very different areas. Urban interface—we are the face of fire in Alaska. USFS and AFS also have responsibilities, but we are the ones answering questions from the public. Political interest, media in Anchorage and Fairbanks. Lots of questions. Fire stats: starts and endings are getting earlier and later. Growing season/fire season has increased by 40 days. Fighting fires at the end of November in Alaska. Rolling average has almost doubled. Ignitions are 80% human caused.

Budget side of it—fire program has suppression and preparedness funds. 2019 still calculating. Providing protection for an area that big, we are challenged. Last year we were an exporter of firefighters to L48, but in 2019 we brought in over 7000 firefighters and Canada. We are international and interstate. We have a huge logistics program. 6 area dispatch offices, 2 warehouses, public information center that works with AFS. Incident

Management Team takes over from Initial Attack teams to free them up. Used IC Type II organization for McKinley team. Provide all-risk teams, earthquake, flooding, Hurricane Katrina, 9-11. Teams support Alaska, but can be exported as needed. Sponsors 182 firefighters, training and qualifications.

Challenges: Recruitment and retention—vacancies; budget reductions; decreased EFF capacity; increased costs for aviation, etc. Climate change—longer seasons, WUI expansion—homes are going into unsafe areas, difficult to protect, like McKinley fire. Not everyone is willing to have this lifestyle. AFS also losing capacity (smokejumpers reduced—IA program.) Facilities are also a problem. Bases are old and out of date. Maintenance needs to be addressed on these facilities. Upgrades for Fairbanks, but not an appetite to replace govt facilities. Now needing to bring firefighters on in March, and still some working in December in L48.

#### Environmental Challenges:

- Recruitment and Retention – Vacancies
- Contractual Costs - Aviation
- Decreased Federal Capacity
- Non-wildfire Incident Response – All Risk-FEMA
- Facilities Replacement & Maintenance – Many 1960s era BLM
- Carbon Credits
- Reliance on Technology
- Climate Change

#### Economic & Political Challenges

- People moving into remote areas
- Land ownership changes
- Populated areas/human- caused fires
- Variety of values at risk
- Changes in policies and priorities
- Budget cuts

Protection policies vary for agencies

Strategies for meeting the challenges:

- Build capacity through new positions
- Look for statewide efficiencies in Forestry dispatch organization
- Implement state supported fuels program with recovered funds
- Continue crew programs - excellent building blocks for new fire leaders
- Use General Funds from Alaska State Legislature for fuels projects

Crew programs—the backbone of our fire program.

**Overview of cooperative USFS/DOF projects. David Schmid, USFS.** Already covered many of these programs. GNAs, we've just scratched the surface. Western Bark Beetle Initiative. Joint Chiefs Land Partnership. Challenge Cost Share Grants. Happy to help with selection committee. Alison knows how to contact Dave. Looks forward to continue to work together.

**DOF preparation. Alison Ariens, DOF.** Chief of Fire Norm McDonald and both Regional Foresters, Hans Rinke and Jeremy Douse have joined me to prepare for the hiring process.

- draft list of interview questions
- suggested answers to the questions, for the Board to consider.
- Screening document drafted.

Would like approval for committee's role of screening and scoring applications for fire and resources experience before forwarding to BOF committee, then whole Board.

Must wait for official retirement date before posting the job advertisement on NeoGov (State of Alaska job posting). However, Hans suggested we could put out an informal solicitation similar to those in the federal system, where we are "anticipating a vacancy" in the next 6 months, for example. This information could be widely broadcast, and interested people could contact me, and I could let them know when the position was open for applications.

**BOF process. Chris Maisch, Alison Ariens, DOF.**

Had proposed that the commissioner solicit and consider the recommendation of AMAC coordinators rather than the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association, but Norm McDonald recently told me that there is a fire chief in the Fire Chiefs Association who will be the AWFCG (Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group). We recommend that Corri and Brent speak with that person when the time comes.

Maisch: Will get a firm date from Chris soon.

**DNR Commissioner & Deputy Commissioner comments. Corri Feige, Brent Goodrum, DNR.** Brent Goodrum: Deputy Commissioner. Corri Feige in another meeting, but wanted to discuss our expectations. Thank Chris for his service. Chris is the only one still here in senior membership team since I joined in 2011. He was a regional forester before State Forester.

My perspective: a strong knowledge of forestry development and management, wildland fire management. Works well with federal government. State Forester will need to understand budget—lots of federal money and state requirements. How you build your budget, and how you defend it in the legislature. Need to effectively carry legislation. You might not be the best person to carry it, so you identify that person and support them. Need to work with Governor's office, and other members of the legislature, budget committee. State Forester needs to work with industry, and have a good relationship with Board of Forestry. Leadership and outward, to other organizations inward. Ambassadors and mentors and leaders. Tall order to fill, in seeking to fill this position. We have been fortunate to have Chris. It's been a real pleasure.

Stark: Chris's career—you've put us in a terrible position. Sounds like we need 4 people? I heard it from fire, knowledge of history. How big is the pool? Is there someone out there?

Maisch: State forester pool is probably not a deep one—lots of people that will aspire to it, but might not have the traits you're looking for. Turnover rate has drastically increased over my career. Potentially some will have experience, have become more political. Ours here in Alaska is treated more as a professional career. Might want to mention to people that it's more a professional class position—historically not so political.

Stark: Are we asking too much? It's really a huge task.

Maisch: You will have a good pool. I will do a lot of outreach to get the word out.

Brent: Of all the directors, state forester position does have some staying power. Would be in the best interest of the state to keep someone on. Alaska is a special place. Think we will attract highly qualified candidates. Great people, and great mission. Lots of things align to make it an attractive position.

Mark Vinsel: Sometimes DOF has to work in an emergency response situation. I've never seen Chris refuse help when needed. Have there been situations when someone has needed a response but you couldn't help because of limitations?

Norm McDonald: We do support a lot of different agencies, but we have our own staffing levels before we release people on other projects. All-risk is part of IM team—available for all risk. Hurricanes and floods. Primary mission is fire, but we support other projects. COVID, Haines, etc. It's a small state, and we are all hands on deck until they get the resources they need.

Maisch: Times that we've had to say no have centered around a big fire season—measuring risk and developed priorities through the AMAC group. Tough phone calls. Also, when budgets get cut. 36 employees had to get cut. McGrath, Haines. Explaining that was tough—not operating the way we used to, focus on core mission. Our employees are focused on missions. Not easy.

Nathan Lojewski: State's not able to advertise until you've left? Tim Dabney and Norm will help in the interim?

Arians: We can advertise as soon as Chris gives us a date.

Maisch: Will send an email to Brent tomorrow about a date.

Stark: That would be good to know.

Denise: If the process takes a bit longer than anticipated, would we hire an interim director?

Maisch: That would be the acting director. Could extend as needed.

**Screening Team:** Who is interested in being on the screening committee with a chair?

Bill Morris.

Denise Herzog.

Will Putman. [term not renewed by Governor]

Chris Beck. [term not renewed by Governor]

Eric Nichols.

Nathan Lojewski.

Alison will be facilitator, group can assign someone as Chair as needed.

## **Annual Report**

**Schedule for submitting report.** At the last meeting, Board members wanted to get the BOF Annual Report prepared as soon as possible, and some work done on the letter at this meeting, which we thought would be Chris's last. This is why we've had reports on compliance monitoring up to Q3 at this meeting. Chris and the Board also expressed interest in getting the BOF Annual Report to the Legislature as soon as possible. I would like to discuss some timing issues. We can't actually get the information for the annual report until the end of December—there are still inspections taking place, and I can't get a report from ADFG and DEC until usually some time in late January. In order to prepare the information for the Board and then get it to in a timely fashion to you in a packet, plus the public notice required, means that a February meeting is pushing it. At that meeting, we generally come up with topics for the Board's letter, then I draft it, and it goes to you for review.

If you would like this letter from the Board to get to the Legislature early in the session, it doesn't really make sense to wait until after we have all the compliance information to begin drafting it.

Might be a good idea to change to reporting by Fiscal Year, instead of calendar year. Out of time to discuss it, but need to discuss with Mark Minnillo, Joel Nudelman, others in ADFG, etc.

## **Topics for letter to the Governor.**

Hazard fuels—committee.

Beck: Fierce and difficult session. Would be good to have a first draft as a board sooner.

EFF \$\$

Nathan: Waiting on data. We could put that together now. Board letter could get started earlier. Need to have a longer discussion on this.

\*\*Alison will get draft out, send it by an email. Will schedule meeting by phone if needed.

## **Wrap-up**

**Spring meeting date and agenda items.**

Replace the state forester,

Recreation topics

Nexus between Tier 3, wetlands, and Army Corps permit, and forestry's silvicultural exemption?

COVID lessons learned?

Changing annual report period.

Interviews will take daylong meetings. Heavier commitment.

Next meeting date: February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Tuesday.

**Board comments.**

Chris Maisch: thank you for Solo stove. Elected SAF incoming vice president, then president the year after. Will have some ability to keep focus at the national level.

Mark Vinsel: Fishing net—Alaskan wood, also safe for rules for fishing Outside. Thanks for being a good public servant.

Chris Beck: thanks to Chris—glad to have recreation interacting with forestry.

Denise Herzog: Thanks for the meeting. Will be big shoes to fill. Great presentations.

Eric Nichols: You've made yourself available—thanks so much. Appreciate your dedication to try and keep the industry alive. The fight is not over. Wish you luck in your retirement.

Bill Morris: Thanks for the good information. Congratulations. Like the beard. Pleasure to work with you for 15 years. We'll be filling your PCN but will not be replacing you. Even if they make it 15 years, they won't bring as much to the position.

Will Putman: A particularly interesting meeting—Tongass YG, Chad's presentation. Known Chris for a long time—hired with TCC, then worked with you. Those were some fun years. Attribute I admire most is your ability to interact with people in positive ways. I won't be able to avoid looking for positive attributes in the people we are interviewing. It's been a real pleasure.

Nathan: Not much to say—lots of good information exchanged. Newest member on the board. I've been home alone with the kids all day and I've been telling them I'm talking with Santa, so they'd better behave.

Stark: Beard's gotta go. I would like to say to Eric—spot on. We need a candidate who understands what we need for the industry. Retirement story—timeline: I'll see you shortly.

Marty Freeman: Board meeting in 1990s—Jeff Jahnke and Marty discussed who would be RF, when Chris was on the Board of Forestry. Wish you all the best.

Maisch: To the Board: thanks for asking the questions. You have a good perspective. You ask the hard questions when you need to—we all care about Alaska and its citizens and working on making it a better place. Norm and Tim to help with that.

Alison: Chris can come to our next fieldtrip.

**4:58 Adjourn**