

Recreation & Tourism

HSF RMA MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT 2025

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FORESTRY & FIRE PROTECTION



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Agenda

- Framing the discussion
- Group Expectations
- Group discussion
- Identify next steps

Project Background

The Haines State Forest (HSF) Resource Management Area (RMA) planning team has received feedback requesting information about the directives and circumstances leading to the changes the Division of Forestry & Fire Protection (DFFP, the Division) has proposed in this management plan amendment. Since 2014, the Division has received consistent direction across administrations to take actions in support of the statewide timber industry. In the Northern Southeast Area, including the HSF RMA, direction has been focused on contributing to the timber industry by managing the Haines State Forest RMA according to its purpose as described in Alaska Statute (AS 41.15.300) and according to the principles of multiple use that apply to all state-owned lands.

While the timing of this management plan amendment is connected to the passage of legislation requiring carbon offsets to be addressed in state forest management plans, the Division received additional direction late in 2024 to include the long-standing directive to support Alaska's timber industry by updating policy that had previously prohibited timber harvest on Habitat and Recreation classified units of the Haines State Forest RMA. The primary classifications for these lands will remain Habitat or Recreation, respectively, and any forest management activities proposed in those areas in the future would be required to reflect those primary classifications.

The scoping period is intended to provide members of the public and interest groups such as this one with an opportunity to weigh in on how the directives received by the Division should be implemented. We acknowledge that this change in management approach is a big departure from the way the HSF RMA has been managed for decades and with that in mind, one goal for this meeting is to provide a discussion opportunity that's focused on questions and topics that the Division is able to reflect in the management policy that will be distributed for public review in the next phase of the planning process. Considering this background on the proposed changes to the management framework, the DFFP would like to invite this group to discuss what it would look like to include timber harvest and other forest management activities in the balanced management of multiple uses allowed on lands with primary classifications of Habitat and Recreation.

Purpose: To provide recreation and tourism groups local to the area an opportunity to contribute considerations and recommendations regarding the management of forest resources within the Haines State Forest Resource Management Area. To include this perspective in the development of a management plan draft prior to the public review period.

Expected outcome: A summary of recommendations and considerations related to forest management within the HSF RMA boundary from the perspective of the local recreation and tourism users. This discussion is intended to capture the perspective of recreation and tourism entities in the area regarding the management of land and resources, and values and uses that are important to this group and your constituents.

Topic: Haines State Forest Management Plan amendment. What solutions or concepts can facilitate the co-existence of forestry activities and other uses within the Haines State Forest RMA?

Rules of Engagement

- The moderator will guide the discussion but refrain from participating.
- Everyone is encouraged to participate. Once you have shared, wait for two others to contribute before weighing in again.
- The discussion stays focused on the issue at hand (forest management policy within Haines State Forest RMA).
- Maintain an atmosphere for discussion and analysis of our options. This is a discussion, not a debate.
- Ask questions to gain understanding/clarity.
- Give constructive feedback. We are here to talk about ideas, not people.
- We will work together toward describing balanced resource management within the Haines State Forest Resource Management Area.
- We may not make it through all the discussion questions today. Is the group open to following up virtually?

Discussion Questions

1. **Introductions:** What is your name, and what is one thing you're hoping to accomplish in this discussion today?
 - a. Greg Schlacter: Fly fishing company, interested in more information
 - b. Eben Sargent: recreational user, board member of Haines Huts and Trails; would like to see the state prioritize economic contributions of rec infrastructure to local communities, Similar to economic contributions of resource extraction
 - c. Nate Arrants: Haines huts and Trails; would like to see State DFFP and DNR prioritize recreation; see support of those activities on similar levels to other priorities

- d. Andy Hedden: Owner of Haines Rafting Company, Express the desire to see forestry prioritize rec use and habitat over timber harvest
 - e. Zach Tarelton: Hunting/fishing guide, biologist, recreation user; Interested to hear potential impacts more thoroughly explained for rec users and wildlife resource, both pros and cons
 - f. Sean Gaffney: AK mountain guides; wishes to see state forest provide all possible support to recreation uses in the area.
2. **Identify Impacts:** How are public and commercial recreation in the area impacted by forest management activities?
- a. Generally recreation activities are a by-product of forest management. Believe there should be more proactive management toward recreation activities. Incorporate more recreation-related input in forest management design. Interested in seeing economic reports. Subsidized forestry infrastructure development should include input from recreation users. Rec users should be able to contribute to decisions on how tax money is used to subsidize forestry related infrastructure
 - b. Planning capacity: desire for more communication from the state at front end of planning process. Recommend highlighting the perspectives of members of this group. Desire for planning process to support the recreation/business perspective as a driving force in planning and decision-making; Desire to see planning capacity reflect primary business makeup in the local economy (tourism). Desire to hear why a mtn bike park, for example, or other recreation infrastructure on some proposed sale areas would be thought less economically productive than a timber sale. Why is our state serving out-of-state timber operators over local recreation operators?
 - c. Traditional uses described in statute: how is that information gathered and catalogued and how is that used in the planning process? And what value is prescribed to that use in statute? How are all the various uses permitted in this area weighed as DFFP makes planning decisions?
 - d. Commercial salmon stocks are declining across the state. Forest management activities impact salmon habitat. Nearly a decade since the last king salmon derby; forestry management has direct impacts to commercial, sport, subsistence fishermen
 - e. Planning process should be associated with the state forest: manage that process to best support tourism and recreation.
3. **Considerations:** What resources, uses, or areas would you like the Division to consider as updates to the management policy are developed?
- a. There are a lot of areas designated forestry that should be designated wildlife habitat or recreation to reflect the current uses of those sites. Calling those sites forestry does not reflect multiple use mandate of the [Haines State] forest itself. Chilkat Ridge should be listed as a wildlife habitat area because of its importance to recreation users and commercial businesses that rely on the wildlife that lives there.

- b. Support of Mt. Ripinski non-motorized area
 - c. Recommend mechanism to allow organizations to clear old logging roads for ski trail use. Desire to see increased language in the plan to differentiate between motorized and non-motorized uses. Frustration that this differentiation is not currently part of the management framework
 - d. Community is comfortable with some level of logging that may preclude other uses. Desire to see similar standards held for recreation-related developments: A site developed for recreation might preclude some other uses. In this plan it seems like we are taking some areas that were designated for recreation and “un-designating” them. Concern that recreation or visual values in sites like Chilkat Ridge would be impacted by timber harvest and mechanisms to prevent those impacts are not identified in the management plan. There seems to be a premise to the state that the community should “take it on the chin” for economic development when a timber harvest is proposed, but the attitude is not the same when talking about a ski trail or other rec/aesthetic values.
 - e. Question: how does the decision-making process for land classification take place? When and why was that decided? Desire for planning effort to look at current classifications revisit them with consideration of the current resources on the landscape.
 - f. Considerations: DFFP acknowledged the magnitude of redesigning policy to include timber harvest in recreation and wildlife habitat areas; desire that the uses and insight that have been developed in the last 20 years of management be included in policy development for plan amendment. Desire to see carry-over of current recreation-related priorities
 - g. Confirm statement above. This idea is connected to traditional use, should be a priority as stated in statute.
4. **Recommendations:** What does it look like for forest management activities to be conducted in HSR RMA in a way that includes meeting the needs of public and commercial recreation users in the area?
- a. Begin with planning process with timeline predicated by the amount of time it takes to create an effective plan. Perception that this planning effort is directly from the governor. Considers current planning process to be disingenuous and predicated by timeline of current administration.
 - b. Perception that staff have not been given agency to identify a planning process that’s reflective of local needs
 - c. Referenced from 2002 HSF Management plan, “The need for trail maintenance or upgrades and/or the development of new trail routes will be evaluated in the Five-Year Forest Management Schedule. The Schedule will identify the location and type of improvement and will provide budget details.” To date, small list provided for opportunities for trail development. The Five Year Forest Management Schedule has not been following the language from the Forest Management Plan. Perception that the original plan had good intentions, but they have not been followed through. Desire to see

inclusion of recreation planning and budgeting information in five-year management schedule, coordinated with DPOR. Desire to see more allocation of staff time and funding towards creating those opportunities and ideally providing funding. Even if funding is not provided for projects, if planning and budgeting has been done by DOF and DPOR, local non-profits can apply for funding with that information.

- d. What would be the process to receive funding for a recreation-related project? Why would the existing funding related to the state forest not be useable for recreation uses?
- e. Desire to see forestry-related funding support recreation, traditional uses, subsistence, etc. related management for multiple uses according to the Haines State Forest definition in statute. Frustration that DFFP could continue to operate at a loss while other industries that exist in the area are required to produce their own funding for development.
- f. Desire to see management plan acknowledge critical value of riparian zones to salmon species among many other fish and wildlife species. Recommend higher level of scrutiny of forest management practices in riparian areas.
- g. From economic perspective, recommend emphasis on recreation operations (generating millions of dollars in tax receipts for borough and community) as opposed to prioritizing out-of-state businesses to export timber. Referenced a quote from local logger that the timber opportunities in the Chilkat valley are “located on the moon” Look at other economic opportunities for the Chilkat Valley.
- h. Management plan should contain clear guardrails that establish timber harvest as a secondary use in areas designated for habitat or recreation
- i. Recommend addition of buffer areas, limits on scale of harvest, method limitations, seasonal limitation, to timber harvests planned in recreation or habitat designated units. demonstrate net public benefit of planned activities. Plan should contain checks/mechanisms for accountability
- j. Permitting: difficult as a non-profit to be required to jump through same permitting hoops as other activities with greater impacts. Recommend lower bonding requirements for public use cabins.
- k. Recommend bonding pool for recreation developments, or lower bonding requirements. Mine expansion bond was cheaper than the Tukga Hut (public use cabin) bond.
- l. Approach some timber sales (small scale) prioritizing local production of value-added products, focus on small local operators. New small sales should be designed to create opportunities for infrastructure or new recreational developments.
- m. Recommend intentionally designing roads to support other uses. Design timber sales to support those uses.

Next Steps

If we could not address all the questions in this outline today, the Division will coordinate a follow-up meeting, provided the group agrees to do so. If members of this group would like to share additional information that was not captured by this discussion opportunity, please feel free to share those comments in writing by email to dnr.dof.haines@alaska.gov or by mail to:

Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection
ATTN: Forest Planning
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A date has not yet been established for release of the plan draft for public review. At the time the plan draft is available for public review, the Division will accept comments in response to the draft plan and public meetings will be scheduled in the communities of Haines and Klukwan.

In the meantime, more information is available on the project webpage:
<https://forestry.alaska.gov/HSFamendment/>

Please share your comments or questions with the planning team by sending a message to: dnr.dof.haines@alaska.gov