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State Land Management: Haines State Forest Resource Management Area

INTRODUCTION

The Haines State Forest Resource Management Area encompasses historical communities of the Tlingit, specifically the Chilkat and Chilkoot people.

The Chilkat and Chilkoot communities were established on these lands before the inclusion of this area within the Territory of the United States, and subsequently the State of Alaska. Historical evidence suggests that this area supported a population of as many as five thousand people during this period.

The government of the State of Alaska adopted a Constitutional mandate to protect the traditional use of public lands in part to recognize and value the subsistence resource use by the Indigenous people across the State of Alaska. The State, with the classification of these lands for public use, provides for sustainable resource use for all Alaskans, including future generations of Alaskans. The direction for the perpetual use of renewable resources on public lands is found in Alaska Statute and Regulations to ensure the Constitutional mandate is maintained. The following State Land Management policy is developed for that purpose, principally.

Chapter 1

ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE OF THE HAINES STATE FOREST

On July 1, 1982, Alaska took the first step in the development of a system of State-owned lands legislatively dedicated to the multiple use management of forest resources. Alaska Statutes (AS) 41.15.300—41.15.330 established the Haines State Forest Resource Management Area (HSFRMA), the Haines State Forest (Forest) and AS 41.21.610—41.21.630 established the Alaska Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve (Preserve). These statutes delegate management authority to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) respective of the resources found in the two distinct management areas. DNR assigns management of the Forest to the Division of Forestry & Fire Protection (DFFP) and the management of the Preserve to the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR). This legislation was the result of cooperation among diverse interest groups; local, regional, and national, demonstrating a balanced managing strategy for public land resources in the area.

1 The legislative intent in establishing the Forest states:

2 *"The primary purposes for the establishment of the Haines State Forest Resource*
3 *Management Area are the utilization, perpetuation, conservation, and protection of the*
4 *land and water, including, but not limited to, the use of renewable and nonrenewable*
5 *resources through multiple-use management, and the continuation of other beneficial*
6 *uses, including traditional uses and other recreational activities" (AS 41.15.300).*

7 Creation of the Forest also reflects legislative intent dedicating state land to long-term
8 management by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the benefit of the public.

9 Map 1-1 depicts the boundary of the Forest, the boundary of the Preserve, and the
10 generalized land status of the planning area.

11 **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STATE FOREST PLAN AND CHILKAT BALD EAGLE**
12 **PRESERVE PLAN**

13 The legislature intended the Forest to include timber harvest, subsistence, recreation,
14 mining, traditional uses, fish and wildlife habitat conservation, tourism, and other uses.
15 The type, intensity, and location of these uses was, under AS 38.04.005, to be derived
16 from a planning process that would determine a balance of these uses. Most importantly,
17 the Forest was to be managed for 'multiple uses'. Multiple use management could include
18 a mix of those uses identified under AS 41.17.230 and varying levels of use. Renewable
19 resources must be managed according to the sustained yield principles of AS 41.17.

20 The Preserve in contrast has an 'exclusive use' management intent described in statute. Its
21 management focuses on the protection of bald eagles and their associated habitat, as well
22 as the spawning and rearing areas of the anadromous streams that provide food for the
23 bald eagle population. The traditional way of life of the Chilkat Valley communities is
24 recognized as an important value and its continuation is included in the management of
25 the Preserve. The Preserve must also be managed according to AS 41.21.027(g), which
26 provides that commercial activity within the Preserve is prohibited except for guided
27 tours and those activities that secure a non-competitive commercial use permit. The focus
28 of Preserve management, then, is to be one of habitat protection and the maintenance of
29 traditional ways of life rather than multiple use. Uses are therefore more limited in type
30 and often of lesser intensity than those within the Forest.

31 This distinction between multiple use and exclusive use was intended by the Legislature.
32 According to AS 41.21.610(c):

33 *"Accordingly, the establishment of the Alaska Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve and the*
34 *Haines State Forest Resource Management Area under AS 41.15.305 is determined to*

1 *represent a proper balance between the preservation of state public domain land and*
2 *water for bald eagle preserve purposes and state public domain land and water more*
3 *appropriate for multiple use."*

4 **DESCRIPTION AND ORGANIZATION**

5 The Haines State Forest Management Plan (Forest Plan) is for those lands designated by
6 AS 41.15.305 in 1982 as the Haines State Forest Resource Management Area. The Forest
7 Plan identifies the resource uses that management of the Haines State Forest (HSF) will
8 specifically consider and the policies that will be followed when those uses occur. Since
9 the Forest Plan is designed to promote multiple resource use, it establishes policy to
10 allow various uses to occur with consideration of the differing resources present. In this
11 way the Forest Plan provides comprehensive management direction for the Forest.

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**Map 1-1: Boundary of Haines State Forest & Generalized
Land Status**

Please click the map link to view Map 1-1

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1 This plan is divided into four chapters:

2 *Chapter 1* provides a description of the planning area, the purpose and use of the plan,
3 and the relationship to other plans in the area.

4 *Chapter 2* contains the goals and management guidelines describing how public
5 resources will be managed broadly across the Forest.

6 *Chapter 3* presents the specific management policy for each of the Forest's nine
7 management units. In each management unit there is a statement of management intent, a
8 listing of the guidelines that apply to that unit, and any other management direction that is
9 appropriate to that unit.

10 Each of the nine management areas has been depicted on Unit Plan Maps. These maps
11 identify the boundary of the management unit as well as the internal boundaries of any
12 subunit. Subunits within management units were created to delineate differences in
13 management intent within a unit and communicate the management direction more
14 effectively.

15 *Chapter 4* explains land use designation and land classification, how the plan will be
16 implemented, how the plan can be modified, and provides definitions of terms used
17 throughout the plan.

18 *Appendices* provide detailed information on applicable management agreements, mineral
19 orders, special use designations, and include the administrative decisions for this plan.

20 **PLANNING AREA**

21 The legislature established the HSFRMA to provide for the use of State public resources
22 along with the preservation of public resources specific to the Chilkat Valley. The
23 planning area contains approximately 330,000 acres of land and water in which DNR
24 manages the Forest (260,000 acres) for public use of resources and the Preserve (40,900
25 acres) for the preservation of specific wildlife habitat, excluding inholdings (29,100
26 acres) which represent land under other legal ownership. The excluded inholdings are
27 private lands, pending native allotments, land managed by other agencies, land owned by
28 the Haines Borough, and the Haines Highway corridor, AK Route 7. The Forest and the
29 adjoining Preserve contain a wide variety of terrain and habitats. The Forest borders on
30 upper Chilkoot, Lutak, and Chilkat inlets and includes some of the watersheds of several
31 major mainland river systems. These include portions of the Tsirku, Klehini, Kelsall,
32 Takhin, and Kicking Horse Rivers, all of which are major tributaries to the Chilkat River.
33 The Forest also encompasses portions of the Chilkoot and Ferebee Rivers and their
34 watersheds.

1 The Chilkat River Valley is the largest drainage in the planning area. It begins in a region
2 of glaciers and ice fields located on the Alaska-Canada border approximately 38 miles
3 north-northwest of the community of Haines. The Chilkat River is characterized by a
4 broad floodplain composed of deep deposits of sand, silt, and gravel alluvium, primarily
5 of glacial origin. The river is braided with numerous channels, gravel bars, and islands
6 covered with stands of willow and cottonwood containing scattered Sitka Spruce and
7 Western Hemlock trees. The Ferebee River flows southeast from the Ferebee Glacier,
8 twelve miles to Taiyasanka Harbor. The Chilkoot River flows southeast from its glacial
9 source approximately 17 miles before entering Chilkoot Lake. Chilkoot Lake is 3.5 miles
10 long and one mile wide. From Chilkoot Lake the river flows a short distance to Lutak
11 Inlet. The Chilkoot and Ferebee Rivers have no major tributaries.

12 The Chilkat River forms extensive tide flats near its mouth and similarly, tide flats can be
13 found at the mouth of the Chilkoot River at the head of Lutak Inlet in the intertidal zone.

14 The topography of the area is rugged, as part of the Coastal Mountain System. Elevations
15 range from sea level to over 7,000 feet, with many peaks between 5,000 and 6,000 feet.
16 The mountains influence the Forest climate by trapping moisture contributing to the
17 numerous glaciers and ice fields at higher elevations. Large freshwater tributaries flow
18 into the major rivers creating the ecological conditions supporting the forest resources
19 within the HSFRMA.

20 **RELATIONSHIP OF THIS PLAN TO OTHER DNR PLANS**

21 The Northern Southeast Area Plan (2002) and the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve Plan
22 (2002, Preserve Plan) affect and are directly related to the Forest Plan. The integration
23 between the Forest Plan and the Preserve Plan is directed in State Statute and can also be
24 demonstrated by the shared recreational use patterns overlapping the Preserve and Forest.
25 The long stretches of border shared by the Forest and Preserve, the streams that flow
26 from one management area to the other, the migration of fish and wildlife across
27 management boundaries, and the necessary access routes that connect these areas all
28 benefit from coordinated planning.

29 **NORTHERN SOUTHEAST AREA PLAN**

30 The Northern Southeast Area Plan (NSEAP) covers those areas of state-owned and state-
31 selected land outside the Forest and the Preserve. The NSEAP covers large areas
32 generally east, west, and northwest of the HSFRMA. Most of the land adjacent to the
33 Klehini River is state owned, but the remaining alpine upland areas are federally owned.
34 The State of Alaska has selected the remaining portions of federal land in the Haines and

1 Skagway areas, and the process of federal land transfer to the State is ongoing with most
2 of the selected land identified as Tentatively Approved for transfer to the State.

3 The purpose of an area plan is to provide guidance to DNR in decision-making on land
4 and resources. Land use designations indicate general management direction for specific
5 areas, while management intent and guideline statements provide more detail for land and
6 resource management.

7 Within the Haines planning unit of the NSEAP, land classifications were established for
8 all state-owned lands not within the Forest or Preserve, including Federal lands under
9 selection by the State. These lands were designated ‘General Use’ due to the very large
10 size of the units, their relative remoteness and inaccessibility, mountainous terrain, and
11 the absence of clear economic trends. The tidelands and submerged lands adjoining the
12 Forest were also given designations in the NSEAP. A 'Habitat' designation was applied to
13 the Lower Chilkat River and to important estuarine areas, and the 'Recreation–
14 Undeveloped' designation was applied to areas that contain important recreation and
15 scenic resources. These designations were converted to land classifications in Land
16 Classification Order SE 01-02 contained in the NSEAP. This order, and the
17 accompanying plan maps, should be consulted for specific classifications on general state
18 lands managed under the NSEAP. NSEAP policy applies only to those lands identified
19 under that planning document located outside of the HSRMA. Therefore, NSEAP policy
20 does not apply to the state lands managed by DFFP as the HSF.

21 CHILKAT BALD EAGLE PRESERVE

22 The Preserve Plan provides guidance for management by the DNR DPOR on land within
23 the Preserve. The Preserve occupies a substantial portion of the drainage of the Chilkat
24 River and portions of the Klehini, Tsirku and the Chilkoot Rivers. The “Council
25 Grounds” are within the Chilkat River Critical Habitat Area, AS 16.20.585, and this area
26 is within the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game
27 (ADFG) is responsible for managing the Council Grounds, the main area of bald eagle
28 use and public viewing within the Preserve.

29 The Preserve Plan does not contain land use classifications like the NSEAP or the Forest
30 Plan. Management direction in the Preserve Plan relates to specific management policy
31 provided for the eight major planning units within the Preserve. The management intent
32 in the Preserve Plan is to protect the bald eagle population and anadromous fish streams,
33 while providing for traditional uses and other activities within the Preserve that are
34 consistent with the statutory purposes of the area.

1 **FIVE YEAR SCHEDULE OF TIMBER SALES**

2 The Department of Natural Resources prepares a Five-Year Sale Schedule (Schedule)
3 biennially. The Schedule provides "a timeline that identifies timber sales, their amounts
4 and their locations..." according to (AS 38.05.113(a)). One purpose of the Schedule is to
5 "provide the public and the forest products industry with a basis to comment on future
6 timber sale offerings" for the subsequent five-year period.

7 Draft Schedules are published for public, industry, and agency review prior to adoption.
8 The Schedule complies with statute requirements for the public notice of timber sales
9 while providing the public an opportunity to contribute to the implementation of the
10 Forest Plan. The Schedule is a general public scoping document and is not a DFFP
11 decision document.

12 **RESEARCH – RECREATION, LAND STATUS, HABITAT AND WILDLIFE, AND**
13 **FORESTRY RESOURCES**

14 Since the preparation of the initial Haines State Forest Plan in the mid-1980's, various
15 reports and studies of recreation, land status, habitat, and timber resources have been
16 prepared.

17 **RECREATION**

18 To better gauge recreation uses in the Haines area, the DNR conducted a Community
19 Resident Survey (2001). It identified the principal recreation areas and their uses, areas
20 where commercial recreation was viewed as intrusive to Haines residents, and the
21 perceived severity of that intrusion. The survey covered the northeast part of Southeast
22 Alaska, with Haines and Skagway as subunits. The state also prepared a Commercial
23 Recreation Provider Survey (2001) that gathered information about charter and tour
24 operations, and about lodges that provided commercial recreation services. This survey
25 covered Southeast Alaska, with Haines and Skagway as subunits. It identified the
26 geographic patterns, activities, and intensity of commercial recreation uses, and helped
27 assess the nature of this activity locally. Together, these two studies show where local
28 recreation and commercial recreation overlap in the Haines-Skagway areas. Because of
29 the importance of the Community Resident Survey to the understanding of recreation
30 patterns and the attitude toward commercial recreation expressed in this survey, both the
31 survey questions and survey results are contained in Appendix J. This research was used
32 to create the Special Use Designation (SUD) governing commercial recreation use in the
33 Forest and amend the Forest Plan in 2002.

1 The DFFP continues to review available commercial recreation use collected by DPOR
2 and DMLW to assess impacts on other Forest resources from this use.

3 LAND STATUS

4 The legislation creating the Forest and the Preserve established an external boundary and
5 excluded private land, land managed by the University of Alaska, land selected by the
6 Haines Borough, Mental Health Trust land, AK route 7 highway corridor managed by the
7 Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), and land affected by
8 Native allotment selection within this boundary, as well as land held by the Federal
9 Government. Some changes in land status normally occur over time across the various
10 ownerships. Disposal of lands by either the University of Alaska or the Mental Health
11 Trust authority transferring title to private ownership, release of federally withheld lands
12 to the State under the historic selection process, and transfer of title to Native Allotees are
13 typical actions during the life of a plan. Updates to the Forest Plan land status maps have
14 been included in this amendment to provide accurate current data over the planning
15 period for this policy document. See Plan Maps for management units (Chapter 3, Map 3-
16 1) and the nine unit maps depicting the subunits, if present, within management units
17 (also in Chapter 3).

18 It is state policy to preclude conveyances of land from Legislatively Designated Areas,
19 which include state forests and parks.

20 HABITAT AND WILDLIFE

21 The initial Forest Plan process included research on locations of important wildlife,
22 fisheries, and habitat. Prior to the 2002 Forest Plan amendment the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
23 Service and the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation prepared information from
24 their studies on trumpeter swans and bald eagles within the Chilkat Valley, respectively.
25 Research included the effects of non-motorized boat operations on bald eagles and
26 population surveys on trumpeter swans. The ADFG updates information on the location
27 of sensitive rearing and spawning areas of anadromous streams annually. This
28 information incorporates the results of fisheries and habitat research conducted over the
29 last 35 years. ADFG also updates information on the distribution of moose populations.
30 Information on winter and summer goat habitat has been provided by ADFG. This
31 information has been presented in maps of sensitive wildlife and fisheries species and
32 habitats. See Plan Maps 1-2(A, B, C).

Map 1-2-A: Winter Goat Habitat & Anadromous Streams

Please click on the map link to view Map 1-2

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Map 1-2-B: Goat Kidding Habitat & Anadromous Streams

Please click on the map link to view Map 1-2-B

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**Map 1-2-C: Brown Bear Denning Habitat & Anadromous
Streams**

Please click on the map link to view Map 1-2-C

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1 **FOREST TIMBER MANAGEMENT**

2 Prior to the adoption of the initial Forest Plan in 1986, the DFFP prepared two
3 comprehensive forest inventory projects collecting data on the mature stands of timber
4 found in the Forest. The first inventory was completed collaboratively with the USFS in
5 1965 and the second in 1985 by DFFP. In 2012 the DFFP completed the third
6 comprehensive inventory of the mature forest type within the Forest and began work to
7 analyze forest growth with this data. In 2018 an inventory of the regenerating forest type,
8 a forested area previously harvested and currently composed of immature trees with a
9 minimum volume of growth for measurement, was completed by DFFP with the data
10 contributing to the first growth analysis using regional growth modeling. The results of
11 the growth analysis, the determination of sustained yield in the 2025 Inventory Report,
12 were used in the timber management strategies in this plan (see Chapter 2, Forest
13 Resources). The DFFP, using updated ownership and land status plats, determined the
14 existing forest base managed by DFFP and the timber base acres¹. Mental Health Trust
15 land and University of Alaska grant land, which were included in the timber base acres in
16 the original management plan in 1986, were not included in the identification of the
17 timber base acres or land managed by DFFP in the 2002 amendment and they are
18 excluded in this Forest Plan.

19 **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

20 The Forest Plan establishes DNR policy for the management of land and resources in the
21 Forest, specifically the land managed by the DFFP within the HSFRMA. All DNR
22 decisions, including timber sales, road building, mineral leasing, land classifications,
23 approval of commercial recreational activities, and other actions on state land shall
24 comply with the provisions of this plan.

25 Chapter 4, Implementation, includes description of implementation techniques that will
26 be used to carry out some of the plan's recommendations. The appendices contain the
27 specific implementation orders and agreements². They also include descriptions of plan
28 amendment procedures and establish agency responsibilities for plan implementation for
29 both the Division of Mining, Land, and Water and the Division of Forestry & Fire
30 Protection.

¹ The “timber base acres” represent the Forest area containing commercial timber for harvest. See Chapter 2 “Forest Timber Resources” for detailed description of these acres.

² See appendices for the following: Land Classification Order, Leasehold Location Order, Mineral Closing Order and Administrative Decision, Management Agreement, and Special Use Designations.

MODIFICATION OF THE PLAN

The land use designations, the policies, and the management guidelines of this plan may be changed if conditions warrant. The plan can be updated to address changes in State statute affecting the Haines State Forest Resource Management Area and DNR management direction of Forest resources. State agencies assigned a collaborative role in managing the important resources of the Forest with DFFP, (ADFG, DMLW, and DPOR), as well as the public, may propose changes to DFFP initiating the Forest Plan review process and possible amendment. Forest Plan amendment can address new information and changing conditions regarding State resource management strategy. The Division of Forestry & Fire Protection conducts regular reviews of the Forest Plan during the process of executing projects, creating decision documents, and each time the Five-Year Sale Schedule of Timber Sales is produced. These Forest Plan reviews include other agencies and the public. Modification of the plan or exceptions to its provisions and minor modifications may be proposed through the process outlined in Chapter 4 of this plan.

PREVIOUS FOREST PLANS AND CHANGES IN THIS AMENDMENT

BACKGROUND

The original Forest Plan was adopted in 1986 following public and agency discussion and compromise decisions. The resulting planning document determined the management method for the State public resources of the Forest distributing primary resource use distinctly across the planning area by unit and subunit. The Forest Plan was fundamentally based on previous area management plans created for State land and resource management in the upper Lynn Canal; however, the initial Forest Plan development and framing was directed by the legislation creating the Forest and the Preserve specifically.

In 2002 the Forest Plan was amended to include commercial recreation management policy in the Forest, which had been absent from the original planning document. The creation of a “Special Use Designation” was required and can be found in Appendix E. Other changes present in the 2002 Forest Plan amendment included the adoption of a “Non-motorized Use” area in the Forest, the update of land status data within the HSRMA, and the removal of University Land Grant and Mental Health Trust Authority lands from acreage available for timber harvest managed by DFFP. The removal of those acres affected the availability of commercial timber volume, and the annual allowable timber harvest (or AAC) in the Forest was updated in the 2002 amendment. In the absence of additional inventory data in 2002, the sustained yield timber harvest calculations were again based on the volume estimates used in the previous Forest Plan.

1 CHANGES IN THIS AMENDMENT

2 This Forest Plan amendment addresses the inclusion of commercial forest resources
3 across the Forest in the timber harvest program, aligning resource use in the forest with
4 the establishing statute language. In 2023 the State legislature established a carbon offset
5 program authorizing DNR to conduct carbon offset projects on State Lands, including
6 State Forests, AS 38.95.400-499. This Forest Plan includes policy language providing for
7 carbon offset projects in the Forest.

8 Administrative changes to the document for clarity, consistency, and technical accuracy,
9 including the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) determination, have been included in this
10 amendment. The changes in this amendment are summarized:

- 11 1. Chapter 2 contains the policy language applying the adoption of the Carbon
12 Offset Regulations to the management of the Haines State Forest.
- 13 2. The commercial timber available for harvest has been identified in all land
14 designations in the Forest. Previously, the Forest Plan limited resource use by land
15 use designation of a unit or subunit. This Forest Plan provides for multiple
16 resource uses across all units in the Forest. See Chapter 2 for general goals and
17 guidelines and Chapter 3 for specific unit policy by designation.
- 18 3. Removal of the unauthorized and unregulated Special Use Designation 106939
19 “Commercial Helicopter Operations”. This SUD was included in the previous
20 Forest Plan prior to completing the authorization process. The final decision made
21 by the administration to withhold authorization for the SUD followed the plan
22 adopted by the Commissioner at that time. A special note to inform users of this
23 fact was then amended to the adopted plan, however the appendices and specific
24 references to the SUD remained in and throughout the policy document. This
25 administrative action provides clarity on DFFP management authority under
26 Statute and prevents misinterpretation of that authority by other agencies,
27 governments, and the public.
- 28 4. The annual allowable timber harvest volume, also referred to as the AAC, has
29 been updated based on the sustained yield determination in the 2025 inventory
30 report. Inventory work planned in the 2002 Forest Plan has been completed and
31 the data collected was applied to the current calculation of tree growth in the
32 Forest. The application of a regional forest growth simulation model has increased
33 the accuracy of the estimate for the sustained yield of timber in the Forest and is
34 discussed in Chapter 2, Forest Timber Resources section.

- 1 **5.** The Five-Year Forest Management Schedule has been amended to the Five-Year
2 Schedule of Timber Sales. This change provides consistency with statutory
3 requirements to produce the schedule, similarly across all state forests.

- 4 **6.** Inclusion of policy language addressing the public process for recreation
5 development in the Forest can be found in Chapter 2, Recreation section.

- 6 **7.** Inclusion of language specifying the policy for tree removal limitations during
7 public trail construction under the “Generally Allowed Uses” without a permit is
8 found in Chapter 2, Recreation section, subsection Trails.

- 9 **8.** Material Sales are allowed in Subunit 7a.

- 10 **9.** Herbicides may be used in limited applications to address the spread of invasive
11 species, Chapter 2 Forest Protection.

- 12 **10.** Management Subunit 3d is renamed. Previously identified as “Klehini River”, it is
13 now identified as “Klehini River Flood Plain”.

- 14 **11.** Management Subunit 4b is renamed. Previously identified as “North Takhin”, it is
15 now identified as “Chilkat Ridge”.

- 16 **12.** Management Subunit 4d is renamed. Previously identified as “Chilkat Lake
17 Recreation”, it is now identified as “Chilkat Lake Cove”.

- 18 **13.** Two appendices were added to this plan: a bibliography and a record of the maps
19 that were published in the 2002 version of the HSRMA management plan.