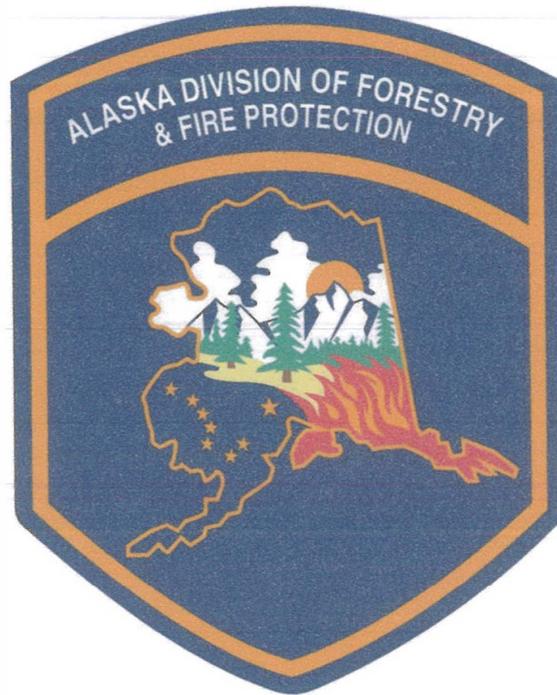


**STATE OF ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF FORESTRY & FIRE PROTECTION**



FAIRBANKS-DELTA AREA

**FINAL BEST INTEREST FINDING AND
DECISION FOR
3 LONG TERM NEGOTIATED TIMBER SALES
NC-1971-F, NC-1972-F, NC1973-F**

APRIL2024

Abbreviations

AAC	Annual allowable cut
AAC	Alaska Administrative Code
ADEC	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
ADNR	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
BIF	Best interest finding
CCF	Hundred cubic feet
CWPP	Community Wildfire Protection Plan
DMLW	Division of Mining, Land and Water
DOF	Division of Forestry & Fire Protection
FLUP	Forest Land Use Plan
FNSB	Fairbanks North Star Borough
FRPA	Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act
FYSTS	Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales
MBF	Thousand board feet
OHA	Office of History and Archeology
ROW	Right-of-way
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
TVSF	Tanana Valley State Forest

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I. PROPOSED ACTION

DOF is proposing to offer for sale approximately 4,000 acres (+ - %15) of spruce sawlogs and birch fuelwood from across State of Alaska lands within the Fairbanks management area. DOF would negotiate with Aurora Energy Solutions, Jack Fost Legworks LLC, and Alaska Birch Works LLC a 10-year timber sale high value-added processing contract. The overall volumes to be offered totals approximately 68,120 CCF or 2,929 MBF (2.9 MMBF) of spruce sawlogs and 2,635 CCF of birch fuelwood.

The management objectives for the proposed timber sales are:

- Harvest the commercial sawtimber and poletimber before significant decrease in vigor occurs.
- Return the site to a young productive mixed stand forest to include balsam poplar, birch, aspen, and white spruce.
- Provide raw timber for local business to continue to offer a source dry firewood for the community benefiting the local and State economy.
- Provide access to future commercial timber sales in the Fairbanks Management Area.

II. STATUTORY AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY

The Division is taking this action under the authority of

- AS 38.05.035(e) Best Interest Finding;
- AS 38.05.110-120 and 11 AAC 71, Timber Sale Statutes and Regulations; and
- AS 41.17.010-950 and 11 AAC 95 Forest Resources and Practices Statutes and Regulations.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD

The Division will maintain an administrative record regarding the decision of whether or not to proceed with the action as proposed. This record will be maintained at the DOF's Fairbanks Office filed as NC-1971-F, NC-0972-F, NC-1973-F.

IV. SCOPE OF DECISION

This best interest finding (BIF) is the first part of step two of a six-step process to design, sell, and administer timber sales. This BIF covers the sale of approximately 4,000 (+ - %15) acres of spruce sawlogs and birch fuelwood within the perimeter of the larger tracts totaling 29,440 acres (52 Sections) on State lands classified Forestry or lands within the Tanana Valley State Forest. The following list summarizes the overall process:

Step 1: Regional planning. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) develops area plans and state forest management plans to designate appropriate uses for state land, classify the land accordingly, and establish management guidelines for multiple use. These plans determine where timber sales are an allowed use, and what other uses must be considered when designing and implementing sales. Subsequent land use decisions must be consistent with the area plans. The majority of the lands in this BIF are covered by the Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan, with 8 Sections of State Lands classified as Forestry and managed under the Yukon-Tanana Area Plan (YTAP). The finding also considers the Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan and the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

Step 2: Best Interest Finding. A best interest finding is the decision document that:

- Ensures that the best interest of the State will be served by this proposed action,
- Establishes the overall area within which the timber sale may occur,
- Determines the amount of timber that will be offered for sale and the duration of the sale,
- Sets the overall harvest and reforestation strategy for the sale area,
- Determines whether the sale proposal complies with the Constitutional requirement to manage for sustained yield by evaluating the amount of timber in the sale and the annual allowable cut for the affected area,
- Selects the appropriate method of sale (i.e., competitive or negotiated sale), and
- Determines the appraisal method that will be used to determine the sale price.

The Preliminary Best Interest Finding (BIF) is intended to provide sufficient information for reviewers to ensure that the best interest of the State will be served by the proposed action.

After public and agency review of the preliminary BIF, DOF will review comments, make changes as appropriate, and issue a final best interest finding [BIF]. DOF must adopt a final BIF before selling timber. An eligible person affected by this decision, and who provided timely written comment or public hearing testimony to the department, may appeal the decision to the DNR Commissioner per AS 44.37.011 and 11 AAC 02.

Step 3: Five-year Schedule of Timber Sales (AS 38.05.113). The Fairbanks-Delta Area staff generally prepares a Five-year Schedule of Timber Sales (FYSTS) every other year. The FYSTS identifies proposed sales, including their location, volume, and main access routes. The Five-year Schedules is a scoping document that provides an opportunity for public, agency, and industry to identify potential issues and areas of interest for further consideration in the Forest Land Use Plan. Proposed timber sales within the area covered by this BIF must appear in at least one of the two FYSTS preceding the sale. Many of the proposed units are in established logging areas and are bordering or located adjacent to where prior sales have occurred. All of the proposed units will be identified in the upcoming FYSTS.

Step 4: Forest Land Use Plans (AS 38.05.112). Prior to authorizing harvest of timber on any area greater than 10 acres, the DOF must adopt a site-specific Forest Land Use Plan (FLUP) for the harvest area. DOF will prepare FLUPs for harvest areas within the overall sale area covered by this best interest finding. FLUPs specify the site, size, timing, and harvest methods for harvest unit within the sale area. FLUPs also address site-specific requirements for access construction and maintenance, reforestation, and multiple use management. Draft FLUPs will be based on additional field work, agency and community consultation, and site-specific analyses by the DOF, and will be subject to public and agency review.

Step 5: Timber sales and contracts. Following adoption of the final BIF, and completion of the FLUPs, DOF will offer the timber for sale by negotiating a contract with the purchasers. The contracts will include stipulations to ensure compliance with the BIF, FLUP, and statutory requirements.

Step 6: Sale administration. DOF administers timber sales and conducts field inspections to ensure compliance with the final BIF, FLUP, timber sale contract, and any applicable laws, including the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act and regulations (AS 41.17 and 11 AAC 95), and forest management statutes and regulations in AS 38.05 and 11 AAC 71.

V. PROJECT LOCATION, LAND STATUS, AND DESCRIPTION

This final best interest finding and decision supplements the preliminary best interest finding and decision issued January of 2024 for the proposed actions. The preliminary finding and decision are incorporated herein, except as amended, changed, or deleted by this final finding and decision. Amendments or changes to the preliminary finding and decision follow.

VI. PUBLIC NOTICE

The preliminary best interest finding and decision were publicly noticed in compliance with AS 38.05.945. Notice was posted on the Alaska Online Public Notice System, and a formal notice was sent out via electronic and physical mailer lists.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT AND RESPONSE

DOF received comments from 2 organizations and 8 individuals. See comment matrix below.

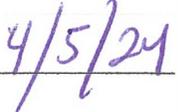
VIII. DISCUSSION AND FINAL FINDING AND DECISION

The Division has reached the following final decision: To offer for sale approximately 4000 acres of spruce and birch to provide sawtimber and fuelwood to local markets as proposed in this BIF. The DOF finds that this decision satisfies the objectives stated in this document and it is in the best interest of the State to proceed with this action under its authority of AS 38.05.035(e) (Powers and Duties of the Director) & AS 38.05.110-120; 11 AAC 71 (Timber Sale Statutes and Regulations); and AS 41.17.010-.950 and 11 AAC 95 (Forest Resources and Practices Statutes and Regulations).

IX. SIGNATURE



Kevin D. Meany
Northern Regional Forester
Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources
Division of Forestry & Fire Protection

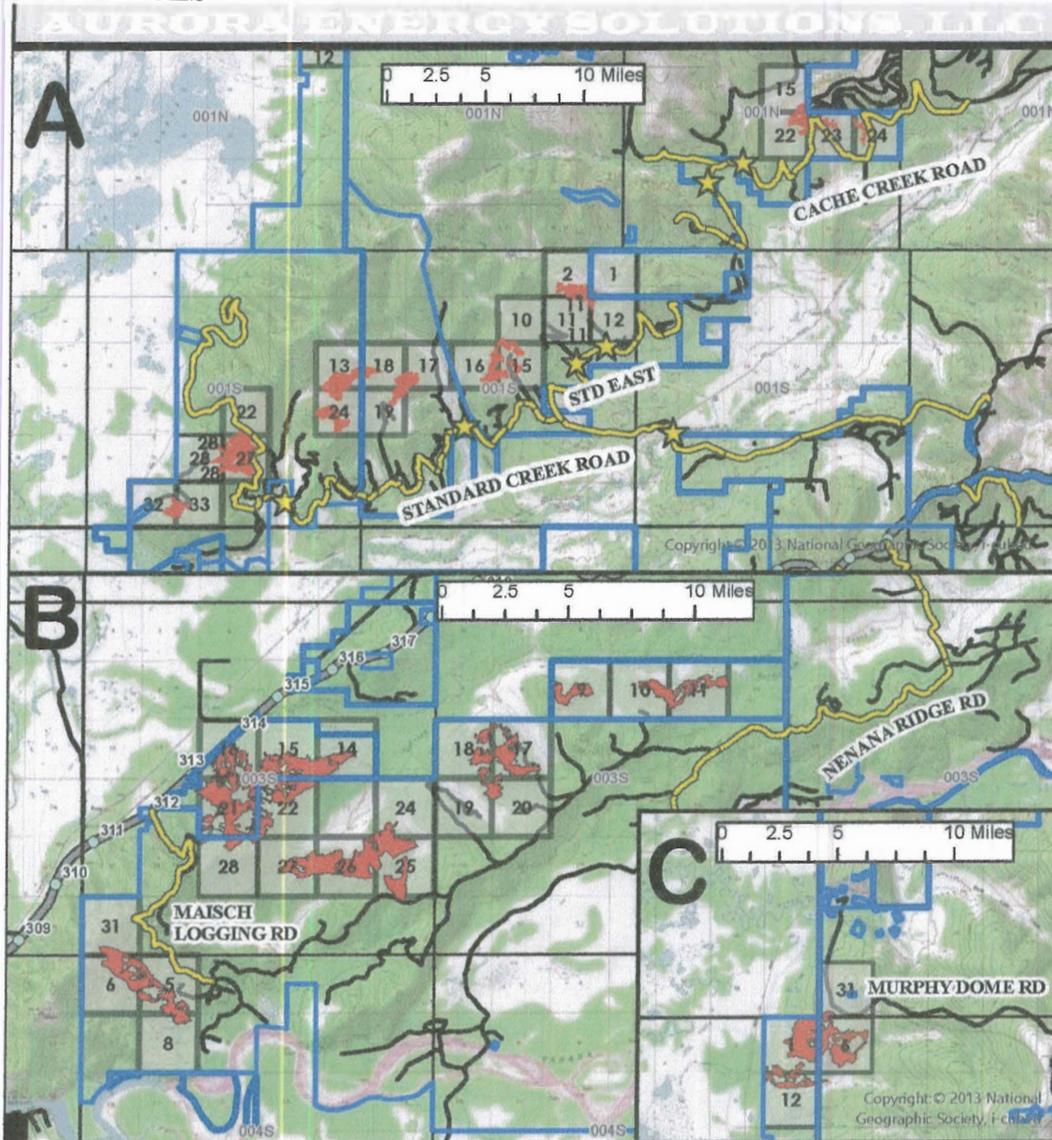


4/5/24

X. APPEALS

An eligible person affected by this decision, and who provided timely written comment or public hearing testimony to the department, may appeal the decision to the DNR Commissioner per AS 44.37.011 and 11 AAC 02. Any appeal must be received within twenty (20) calendar days after issuance of this decision under 11 AAC 02.040. An eligible person must first appeal a decision to the Commissioner before seeking relief in superior court. The Alaska State Courts establish its own rules for timely appealing final administrative orders and decisions of the department. Appeals may be mailed or hand-delivered to the DNR Commissioner's Office, 550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1400, Anchorage, Alaska, 99501; or faxed to (907) 269-8918; or sent by electronic mail to dnr.appeals@alaska.gov. Appeals must be accompanied by the fee established in 11 AAC 05.160(d)(6), which has been set at \$200 under the provisions of 11 AAC 05.160 (a)-(b).]

XI. APPENDICES

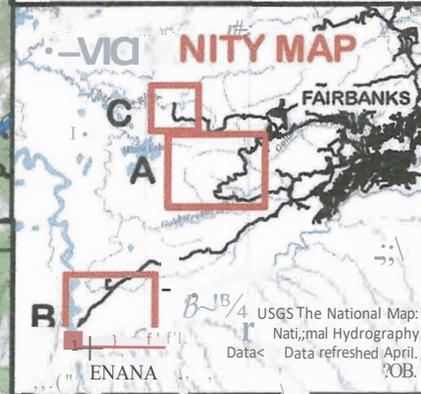


STATE OF ALASKA
DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF FORESTRY
& FIRE PROTECTION

NC-1971-F
AOL422196

GROUP A: NI,429 ACRES
GROUP B: NI,453 ACRES
GROUP C: N638 ACRES

T1N, R4W SECTIONS 15, 22
T1S, R5W SECTIONS 1, 2, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
T1S, R8W SECTIONS 13, 22-24, 27, 28, 32, 33
T3S, R8W SECTIONS 9-11, 17-20
T3S, R7W SECTIONS 14-16, 21, 22, 24, 25-28, 31
T4S, R7W SECTIONS 5, 8



Legend

- DOFBRIDGE
- LOGGING ROAD
- PROPOSED UNITS
- NC-1971-F BIF Sections
- Milepost
- Parks Highway
- Forest Roads
- 1VSF Lands
- State lands Classified Forestry

STATE OF ALASKA
 DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES
 DIVISION OF FORESTRY
 & FIRE PROTECTION

NC-1972-F
 AOI.# 422197

UNIT 1: 28 ACRES
 UNIT 2: 50 ACRES
 UNIT 3: 70 ACRES

T1N, R4W SECTIONS 27, 28, 34, 35

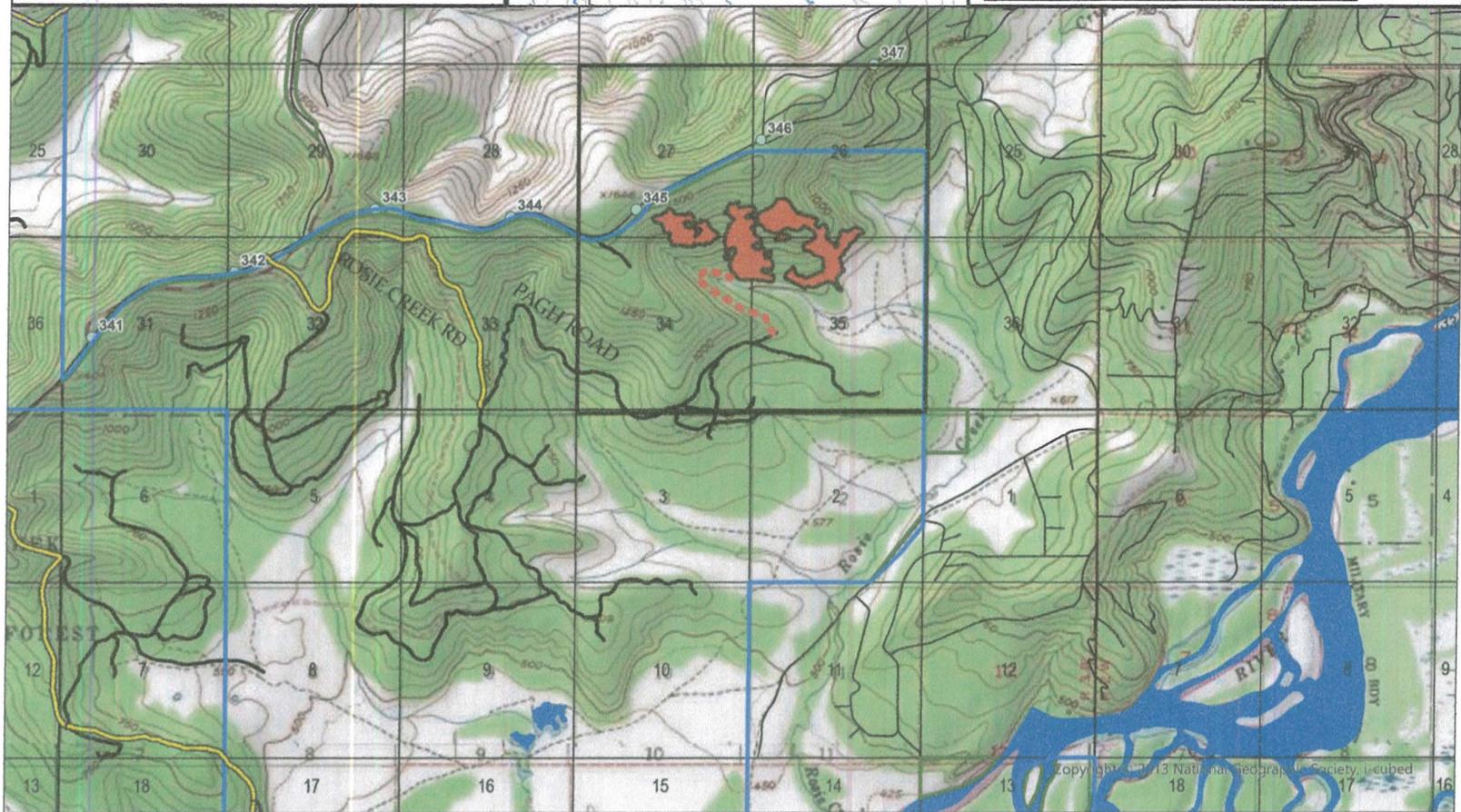


Legend

- PROPOSED ROAD
- - - PROPOSED UNITS
- LOGGING ROAD
- CJ IVSf Lands
- State Lands Classified
- Forestby
- 0 Milepost
- Tanana River
- Forest Roads

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

@



STATE OF ALASKA
DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF FORESTRY
& ARE PROTECTION

NC-1973-F
ADL#4221998

UNIT 1: ~25 ACRES
UNIT 2: ~130 ACRES

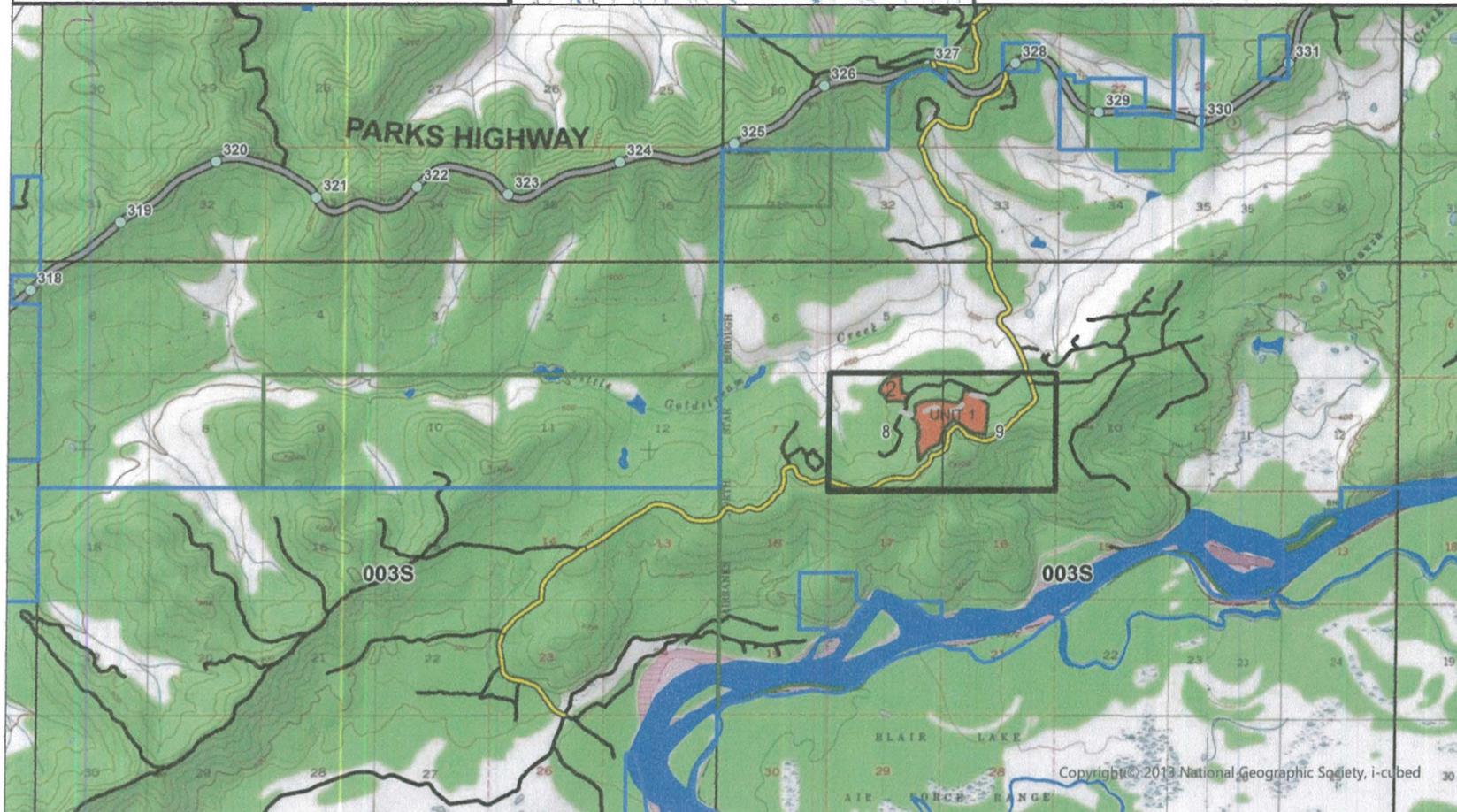
T3S, RSW SECTIONS 8, 9

VICINITY; MAP



Legend

- PROPOSED ROAD
 - PROPOSED UNITS
 - LOGGING ROAD
 - TWISF Lands
 - State Lands Classified Forestry
 - Mapost
 - Tanana River
 - Forest Roads
- 0 1.5 3 6 Miles



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Comment Matrix -Best Interest Finding

Com-ment#	Re-ceived	Summarized Comment	Action
Public Com-ment #1	2/7/24 Email	Commenter supports State timber sales program and management of the renewable resource.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted. No change required.
Public Com-ment #2	2/9/24 Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NC-1971-F lacks Statutory authority • Sale does not comply with the Five Year Schedule of Timber Sales requirement in AS 38.05.113 • Inconsistencies between PBIF and draft FLUP make it hard to know what is being proposed • Aurora sale does not meet the intent of the high value added law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comment noted. In 1996, SB 180 was passed and codified as AS 38.05.123. This bill allows the Division of Forestry (DOF) to offer negotiated sales of up to 10 MMBF of state timber per year for up to 10 years to in-state wood processors. No change required. • Comment noted. The Division will be issuing a revised 2024 FYSTS which will include these timber sales. Only when the timber sale is held, not these documents or the planning process, is applicable under AS 38.05.113. No change required. • Comment noted. DOF will review the comments and address any specific inconsistencies or corrections. • Comment noted. To understand the intent of the law, it is more helpful review the legislation on which it is based. The goal of SB 180, which passed in 1996 and then written

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PBIF high grades the timber stand • Use of a base sale price is unreasonable, unfair and not in the States best interest • Sales lock the State into long-term contracts while management of the TVSF is reevaluated and will include carbon offsets 	<p>into Statute, is to increase Alaskan jobs from timber harvested off state land by encouraging in-state wood processing. These sales fall in line with that intent. No action required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted. The PBIF and the Final BIF are decision documents in a 6-step planning process to sell timber. No action required. • Comment noted. Under AS 38.05.123, the Commissioner has the authority to establish a base price. No action required. • Comment noted. The Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan revision began in 2021 and is ongoing. These sales will be administered as 10 year contract but renegotiated every 3 years. DOF's competitive bid timber sales generally include terms of 3 years. No action required.
Public Comment #3	2/9/24 Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little effort to notify public • Concerns about size and contiguous nature of sales and reseedling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted. Public notice has been accomplished in accordance with AS 38.05.945. No change required. • Comment Noted. Sales feature irregular boundaries following timber types and other natural features. Harvested species will leave a seed bank already in the ground and leave trees outside the unit will naturally seed in. No change required.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have ADF&G advise DOF on habitat loss • Concerns about sustainability of harvests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment Noted. DOF will work with ADF&G to minimize long term habitat loss. No change required. • Comment Noted. Proposed harvests fall within the Annual Allowable Cut .No change required.
Public Comment #4	2/9/24 Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns with regeneration after harvest. • Areas for habitat should be left uncut. • Concerns of eliminating mature habitat from a given drainage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted. No change required. • DOF will look for natural features and timber type changes within harvest units to identify potential areas of exclusion from harvest to benefit wildlife
Public Comment #5	2/9/24 Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns with regeneration after harvest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted. No change required.
Public Comment #6	2/9/24 Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clearcutting, hold contractor accountable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted. No change required.
Public Comment #7	2/9/24 Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs better public notice • Concerns over regeneration • Locate sales further off the road system • Difficulty understanding maps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted. No change required. • Comment noted. No change required. • Comment noted. No change required. Many units will require road building. • Comment noted. No change required. Additional maps will be included in the forthcoming 2024 Northern Region Five Year Schedule of Timber Sales

Public Com- ment #8	2/9/24 Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Units are large and close together, concerns over regeneration • Comment period not publicized enough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted. No change required. • Public notice has been accomplished in accordance with AS 38.05.945.
Brock Tabor State of Alaska DEC	1/8/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEC has no comment on the sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted. No change required.
Jaclyn Cheek State of Alaska DNR DMLW	2/6/24 Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend individual unit maps • Maintain public access on existing trails • F001S006W active lease AOL 418997 • Section 13 F001S006W permit under LAS 34647 for access and meteorological tower. Concerns over access via Murphy Dome Road. • MTRS incorrectly labeled on map • University reseach plots and existing trails need protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments noted. All recommendations will be incorporated into maps and documents.