

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



FAIRBANKS-DELTA AREA FORESTRY

**FINAL BEST INTEREST FINDING AND
DECISION FOR**

**Underwear Ridge Spruce
NC-1978-F**

SEPTEMBER 2024

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

Abbreviations

AAC	Alaska Administrative Code
ADEC	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
ADNR	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
AS	Alaska Statute
BIF	Best interest finding
CCF	100 cubic feet (timber volume)
DBH	Diameter at breast height (4.5 feet above ground)
DMLW	Division of Mining, Land and Water
DOF	Division of Forestry & Fire Protection
FLUP	Forest Land Use Plan
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
TVSF	Tanana Valley State Forest
YTAP	Yukon Tanana Area Plan

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

Contents

I.	PROPOSED ACTION	1
II.	STATUTORY AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY	1
III.	ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD.....	1
IV.	SCOPE OF DECISION.....	1
V.	PROJECT LOCATION, LAND STATUS, AND DESCRIPTION.....	3
A.	Location	3
B.	Title status	3
C.	Land use planning, classification, and management intent.....	3
D.	Current access and land use:	3
E.	Background and description of proposal	4
F.	Resources and management.....	5
G.	Costs and benefits	8
VI.	PUBLIC NOTICE	8
VII.	PUBLIC COMMENT AND RESPONSE.....	8
VIII.	DISCUSSION AND FINAL FINDING AND DECISION	8
IX.	SIGNATURE	9
X.	APPEALS.....	9
XI.	APPENDICES.....	10
	APPENDIX A: MAPS.....	10
	APPENDIX B. APPEAL AND REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION REGULATIONS.	12

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

I. PROPOSED ACTION

DOF is proposing to offer for sale approximately 82 acres of spruce sawtimber from state lands in the Nenana Ridge Road area. The volume to be offered totals approximately 768 MBF (1,968 CCF), mostly of spruce sawlogs and some spruce fuelwood. DOF would sell the timber as a competitive bid sale for commercial use, along with potential for small negotiated timber sales (AS 38.05.115, < 10 acres) and personal use firewood within the same timber stand. The land covered by this PBIF appeared in the 2024 Fairbanks-Delta Five Year Schedule of Timber Sales (FYSTS).

The management objectives for the proposed timber sales are:

- Provide raw material for the forest industry to produce timber products that provide benefits to the state and local economy through employment opportunities.
- Harvest the commercial sawtimber and fuelwood before a significant decrease in vigor occurs and return the site to a young, productive mixed forest.
- Provide firewood for the residential heating needs of interior Alaska communities.
- Promote multiple use management that provides for the production, utilization, and replenishment of timber resources while perpetuating personal, commercial, and other beneficial non-timber uses of forest resources.

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-Delta Area Office filed as NC-1978-F.

IV. SCOPE OF DECISION

This final best interest finding (BIF) completes step three of a six-step process to design, sell, and administer timber sales. This BIF covers the sale of approximately 82 acres of spruce sawtimber from state lands in the Nenana Ridge Road area depicted in the attached maps (see Appendix A). 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 area

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale Final Best Interest Finding

in this BIF is covered by the Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan and the Yukon Tanana Area Plan (YTAP), and the BIF is consistent with this plan.

Step 2: Five-year Schedule of Timber Sales (AS 38.05.113). A proposed timber sale must appear in at least one of the two Five-year Schedules preceding the sale. The land covered by this BIF appeared in the 2024 Fairbanks-Delta FYSTS.

Step 3: Best Interest Finding. DOF must adopt a final BIF before selling timber. 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.

DOF issued a Preliminary BIF on 7/19/24 covering the decision to sell approximately 82 acres of spruce sawtimber from state lands in the Nenana Ridge Road area in a competitive bid sale for commercial use. DOF considered all written comments received during the 36-day review period. Responses to the comments are listed in Appendix A.

This document is the final BIF for NC-1978-F. 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 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 FLUP(s) for the harvest area within the overall sale area covered by this BIF. 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. FLUPs are based on additional field work, agency and community consultation, and site-specific analyses by the DOF, and are subject to public and agency review.

Step 5: Timber sales and contracts. Following adoption of the final BIF, and completion of the FLUP, DOF will offer the timber for sale by auctioning competitive sales and/or negotiating some sales with purchasers. The Division will sign a contract with the winning bidder for each sale. The contract will include stipulations to ensure compliance with the best interest finding, FLUP, and statutory requirements.

Step 6: Sale administration. DOF will administer the timber sale and conduct field inspections to ensure compliance with the final BIF, FLUP, timber sale contract, and applicable laws, including

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

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

A. Location

The proposed sale is located approximately 30 miles southwest of the Fairbanks Forestry office in the Nenana Ridge Road Area south of the Parks Highway. The unit is not within any organized Borough. The proposed sales are located within Section 10, Township 3 South, Range 6 West, Fairbanks Meridian. The sale area is shown on the attached map and is within the United States Geological Survey 1:63,360 Quadrangle map titled Fairbanks C-4. The unit may be accessed from Parks Highway Mile 328, then 8.8 miles on Nenana Ridge Forest Road, then 1.5 miles on Upper Grouse Forest Road, then 0.4 miles on an existing spur road. Operator must construct 0.6 miles of new spur road to reach the sale (within Section 15, which is part of TVSF).

B. Title status

The proposed sale area is owned and managed by the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources. The acquisition for the land upon which the sale is proposed is based on General Selection 28 (GS 28). According to an earlier title report (RPT 5739), the land and mineral estate were conveyed to State of Alaska by TA 07/25/1960, with the patent apparently finalized 11/21/1985. There are no known title restrictions on the area.

C. Land use planning, classification, and management intent

The proposed sale area is General State Land managed by DNR-DMLW, and is managed according to the 2014 Yukon Tanana Area Plan (YTAP). The land classification is for Forestry and is within YTAP Unit P-03, which is recommended for inclusion within the TVSF. The intent for this Unit is to “manage for forest values and resources, and for multiple uses consistent with this primary use.” All of this Unit will remain open to mineral location and leasing subject to DMLW Mineral Orders.

The Interagency Fire Management Plan includes these lands in the ‘Full’ protection category.

This area is not within any organized Borough.

D. Current access and land use:

The sale area is within the Nenana Ridge Forest Road system, and are all-season accessible via existing forest roads with the exception of a new 0.6 mi spur required to reach the sale boundary. Private property inholdings within the State Forest along the Tanana River are accessed by property owners via the Nenana Ridge Forest Road

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

Existing nearby land uses consist mostly of recreational access by ATV, snowmachine, and dog-mushing, hunting and trapping, and personal use and commercial timber harvest.

E. Background and description of proposal

1. Background: The sale area is within State General Land classified for Forestry use and recommended for inclusion into the adjacent Tanana Valley State Forest. Access to the sale is through the TVSF, which is adjacent one section south of the proposed sale. According to the Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan, the forested areas accessed via Nenana Ridge Forest Road system falls within Subunit 5A and “Subunit 5A will be managed for timber production, habitat and recreation while retaining scenic values along the Parks Highway”. The sale area itself is located within YTAP Unit P-03, which is recommended for inclusion within the TVSF. The management intent for this Unit is to “manage for forest values and resources, and for multiple uses consistent with this primary use.” DOF is offering this timber sale while also recognizing other compatible uses for this public land. The intent is to manage for multiple users while still maintaining a productive “working forest”. This sale falls in line with the guidance provided in the TVSF Management Plan and ETAP.
2. Timber volume and sustained yield: The proposed project area has an estimated volume of 768 MBF (1,968 CCF) of spruce sawlog and fuel wood on approximately 82 acres. Final harvest unit boundaries and timber volume estimates will be determined once DOF staff has completed all pre-sale field measurements. The Fairbanks Area Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) is calculated at approximately 4,606 acres of harvest annually. The volumes proposed in this harvest and in combination with timber volumes from other proposed timber sales that are offered will be within the allowable cut and comply with sustained yield requirements.
3. Harvest unit design: The timber will be harvested as a heavy partial cut for spruce. The harvest unit is situated with a multi-hundred acre mixed spruce-hardwood timber type. All spruce 6 inch DBH and larger, will be included for harvest. Any aspen or birch, and any spruce smaller than 6 inches DBH, will not be cut. Large snags valuable for wildlife habitat will be retained to the extent practical. The logging operations will follow all applicable Best Management Practices and residual trees will be protected from damage during harvest operations. Harvesting will be by the whole tree yarding system using a ground-based skidding method. Slash disposal at the landings will be by burning or by salvage for fuelwood use.
 - a. Reforestation and site preparation: The sale area will be reforested in compliance with the Forest Resources and Practices regulations (11 AAC 95.375-.390) Natural regeneration will be utilized initially for reforestation, and the unharvested boundary will mature, robust spruce trees to provide seed to this unit. It is expected that the harvest method (heavy partial cut) will open sites and increase light and soil warmth. Reforestation will be assessed within five years post-harvest, and a regeneration survey will be conducted if regeneration appears marginal or patchy. If the survey indicates inadequately stocked areas, then scarification

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

may be performed on non-stocked areas. The goal for regeneration is to achieve a minimum of 450 evenly distributed trees per acre at the end of the regeneration survey period (any commercial tree species). If funding is available, this sale area is a prime candidate for white spruce seedling planting to shorten rotation age and accelerate spruce recruitment.

- b. Access design and construction: Access design, construction, and maintenance will comply with the Forest Resources and Practices regulations (11 AAC 95.285-.355).
 - Planned access is along the Nenana Ridge Forest Road, connecting to the Parks Highway near mile 328. Access to the unit is along Nenana Ridge Forest Road for 8.8 miles, then 1.5 miles on Upper Grouse Forest Road, then 0.4 miles on an existing spur road. Operator must construct 0.6 miles of new spur road to reach the sale, mostly through TVSF designated land. The existing road will be maintained to the all-season road standards set out in the AFRPA and the DOF Road Standards.
 - Between individual sale harvests any spurs will be inactive and maintained in accordance with 11 AAC 95.315 (f).
 - Generally DOF applies for public easement right of ways for its long-term routes, but this sale does not require new permanent access.
- c. Appraisal method: Commercial sales will be based on transactional evidence and market demand and DOF will apply a value for those products. DOF will appraise the timber value in compliance with 11 AAC 71.092.

F. Resources and management

1. Timber.

- a. Timber stand composition and structure: The stand to be harvested is primarily a mature closed canopy spruce forest, with small components of birch and aspen and an increasing black spruce component in the lowest elevation portions. The stand contains predominantly vigorous white spruce saw and pole-sized trees. The stand has been inventoried as a closed white spruce sawtimber forest type, which is the highest volume per acre stand type in the State Forest. The grass component is typically low in this type of stand, and aerial imagery shows a minor component of hardwoods. Alder, rose, and highbush cranberry are typically understory vegetation, except where thick moss layers prevail. Similar stands have low defect levels, mostly from form defects like crooks and forks.
- b. Stand silvics: The normally merchantable species of trees on the TVSF are white spruce and birch. Data and research on regeneration and growth characteristics of these species are compiled within the Resource Analysis of the Tanana Valley State Forest (TVSF) Management Plan. The harvest and reforestation systems available in Interior Alaska are also reviewed and listed in the Resource Analysis. The results of the public and agency discussions for harvest and reforestation are

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

discussed in the TVSF Management Plan. Silvicultural harvest systems that facilitate even-aged (natural) management are generally preferred. They mimic the ecological impact of wildfire and other disturbances and result in the greatest increase in site productivity. Even-aged management is normally accomplished through clear cuts, patch cuts and heavy partial cuts (such as seed tree or shelterwood systems), which opens up the site to maximum solar gain. This results in the greatest production of both young hardwood that is important to wildlife and the spruce understory valuable years later as timber. Even-aged management techniques are utilized to provide young, vigorously growing stands in juxtaposition to older, undisturbed stands. Such placement of harvest units can optimize natural seedling and the edge effect. Regeneration of birch occurs principally from seed-fall spread by wind, and secondarily from root-collar sprouting. Regeneration of white spruce occurs only from seeds. White spruce trees generally produce some level of seed crop every three to five years and large seed crops every five to seven years. The proposed sale is a heavy partial cut to remove the mature spruce component of the stand.

- c. Topography and Soils: The harvest unit is on a southwest-facing hillside. Elevation ranges from 600 feet to 1,000 feet with slopes ranging from 10-30%. A few swales cross the harvest area have moderate (< 30%) side slopes. The lower elevation portions of the sale are underlain by Minto silt loam 7-12% slopes, and the upper elevation portions are underlain by Fairbanks silt loam 20-30% slopes. This soil type is moderate- to well-drained and deep, with bedrock more than 72 inches below the surface. The proposed sale will be designed and managed to prevent significant impairment of the land and water with respect to renewable resources (AS 41.17.060(c)(5)).
2. Agriculture. The proposed sales are not anticipated to have any impact on current or future agricultural activity in the area, and any effects of any timber sale operations for agricultural uses will be minimal.
3. Wildlife habitat and harvest. Wildlife typical of Interior Alaska are found on this site. YTAP notes for this Unit that “Brown bear and moose are present in the unit and this location is associated with moose rutting and calving and is used as a winter concentration area”. There are no known raptor nests within the proposed sale area. Should an eagle nest tree be discovered in the sale area, the nest tree will be marked on the ground and a 330 foot no-harvest radius will be established to protect the tree. No critical wildlife habitat has been identified for this area (YTAP, TVSF Management Plan), nor has any become apparent during ground reconnaissance.

Treatments proposed for this stand are projected to enhance habitat conditions for moose, voles, hares, and ultimately, lynx, marten and fox. In the past, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation have recommended managing for as much diversity as possible when prescribing harvest unit size, shape and position to mimic the results of wildfire or other stand replacement phases such as insect outbreaks or flood events. To accomplish these objectives snags will be retained

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

to provide late-successional wildlife habitat for hole nesting birds, woodpeckers, small mammals, and other species requiring perching habitat. The unit will be laid out with an uneven edge, along and between timber types. This will create varied edge effect beneficial to many wildlife species.

4. Fish Habitat, water resources, and water quality. The proposed sale area is within the upper drainage of Little Goldstream Creek, which eventually connects to the Tanana River. Little Goldstream Creek is approximately 0.5 miles north of the sale area, and is considered a FRPA Type III-A waterbody (> 3 feet wide, with the possibility of high value resident fish). Management intent for ETAP Unit P-03 states in part to, "...protect the riverine area of Little Goldstream Creek." The 0.5 mile distance from the streamcourse and a retained buffer of forest vegetation shall serve to protect the riverine area around Little Goldstream Creek.

The proposed sale will be designed and managed to protect fish habitat and water quality in compliance with the Forest Resources and Practices Act and regulations (AS 41.17 and 11 AAC 95). DOF will ensure Best Management Practices are being adhered to by requiring a complete logging plan prior to the start of any harvesting, conducting on-site inspections during logging operations and a final inspection prior to terminating the timber sale.

5. Recreation, tourism, and scenic resources. The lands within this area have high recreational value because of its diversity and easy access from Fairbanks. The Nenana Ridge Road system sees extensive recreational use by snowmachine, ATV, biking, skiing, and dogmushing, as well as for hunting and trapping. The logging road system provides an excellent infrastructure for recreationists to access trails and waterways.

The proposed harvest area is expected to have partial impacts on the viewshed of the Parks Highway, particularly between Miles 318-320. Management intent for YTAP Unit P-03 states:

To the extent practicable, timber harvest operations should be sited so as not to be visible from the George Parks Highway. If this is not practicable, the Forest Land Use Plan should evaluate ways to reduce visual impacts through the use of irregular boundary designs, leave trees, and like design methods.

Harvest of timber in this stand that is both economic and maximizes reforestation success is facilitated by larger harvest units. Nonetheless, DOF intends to moderate viewshed impacts with an irregular boundary (see Maps in **Section XI**), the retention of residual islands, and leaving intact mature spruce forest between the sale and the Parks Highway.

6. Cultural Resources. DOF works with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to identify and avoid known cultural, historic or prehistoric sites in planning the proposed access routes and harvest areas. If additional archaeological sites are identified, proposed harvest areas and road locations will be appropriately adjusted to avoid conflicts. If any historic or archaeological sites are encountered during road construction

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

or harvest activities, DOF will immediately inform SHPO and take action to protect the findings.

7. Subsurface Resources. By statute, exploration for locatable minerals is allowed on all State Lands, subject to DMLW Mineral Orders. No deleterious effects on subsurface activities are anticipated from this project.

G. Costs and benefits

Local commercial logging operations and their customers will benefit from the influx of the raw timber into the market. In addition to generating royalties to the State's general fund, the proposed sales will create economic benefits to local communities and to other locations in Alaska. The local business community will receive direct economic benefits from providing support services for the operators through sales of fuel, food, housing, medical and miscellaneous supplies. Local residents will receive an indirect benefit through any local taxes paid by the operator and employees during the timber harvest operations.

The sales are also expected to benefit the local economy by providing jobs. It will have a positive impact on local employment by generating numerous man-hours of work associated with the harvest and transportation of wood products from this sale. Additionally, the public may benefit from access to additional personal use fuelwood areas, as home heating continues to be expensive in Interior Alaska.

Minimal negative effects are expected on fish and wildlife habitat or water quality due to the small size proposed and distance from waterbodies. Other users of the Nenana Ridge Forest Road may experience an increase in traffic and road wear, but also derive some benefits from road maintenance and snow-clearing operations.

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 both physical and electronic notices were mailed to previous timber sale bidders as well as any property owners or business interests known to the Division in the proposed sale area. Notice was also posted on the Division of Forestry public webpage and social media.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT AND RESPONSE

DOF received comments from no organizations and no individuals.

VIII. DISCUSSION AND FINAL FINDING AND DECISION

After due consideration of all pertinent information and alternatives, the DNR has reached the following decision: To offer for sale approximately 82 acres of spruce sawtimber from state lands in the Nenana Ridge Road area to provide sawtimber as proposed in Alternative 1 and described

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

in this PBIF. Public notice has been accomplished in accordance with AS 38.05.945. The case file has been found to be complete and the requirements of all applicable statutes have been satisfied. The DOF finds that this preliminary 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 Meany
Northern Region Forester
Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection

9/12/24
Date

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).]

If no appeal is filed by that date, this decision goes into effect as a final order and decision on October 4, 2024.

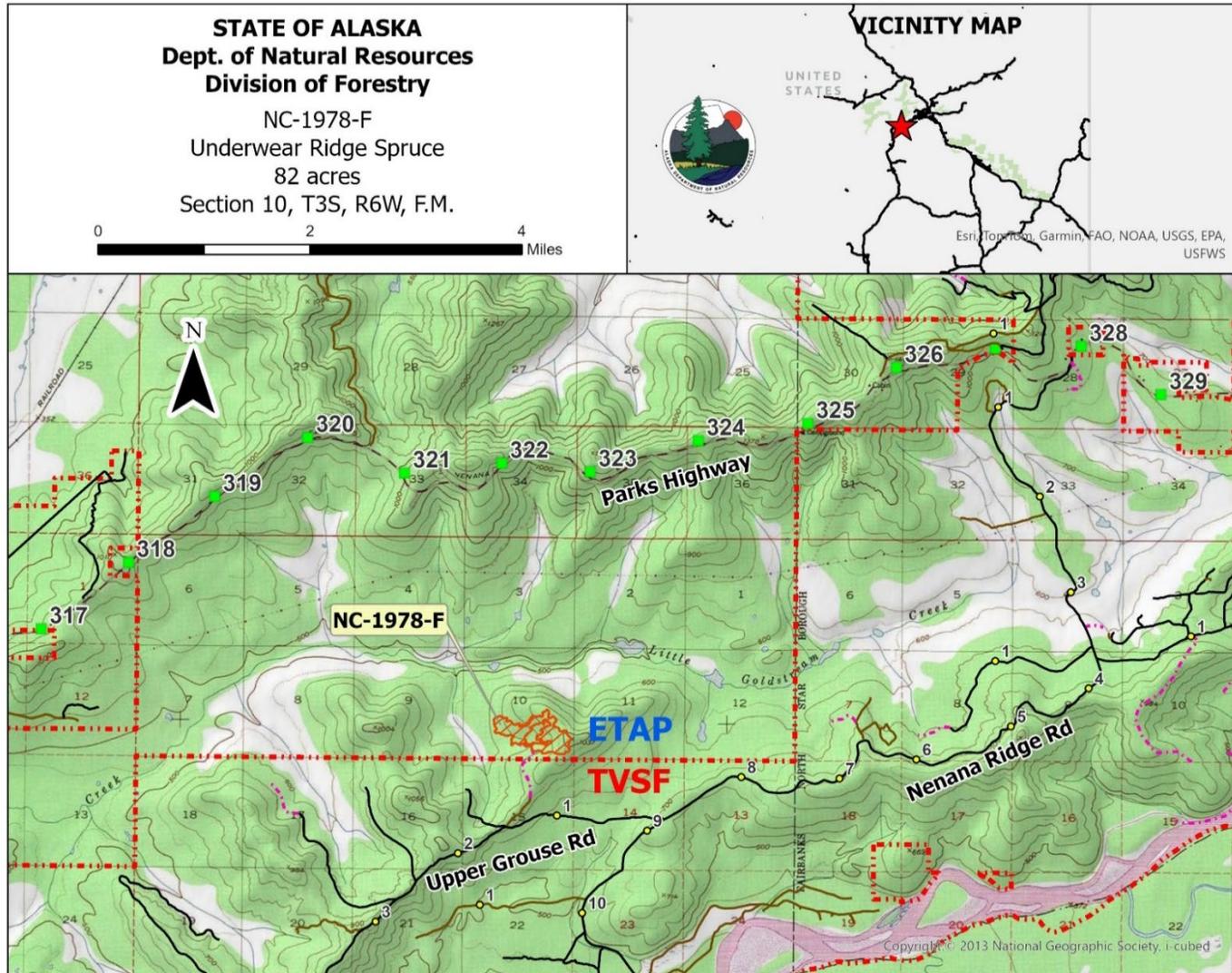
A copy of 11 AAC 02 is enclosed and is also available on the department's website at <https://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/pdf/DNR-11-AAC-02.pdf>.

If you have any questions, please contact Andrew Allaby, Fairbanks-Delta Resource Forester, andrew.allaby@alaska.gov, 907-451-2603, 3700 Airport Way, Fairbanks AK 99709.

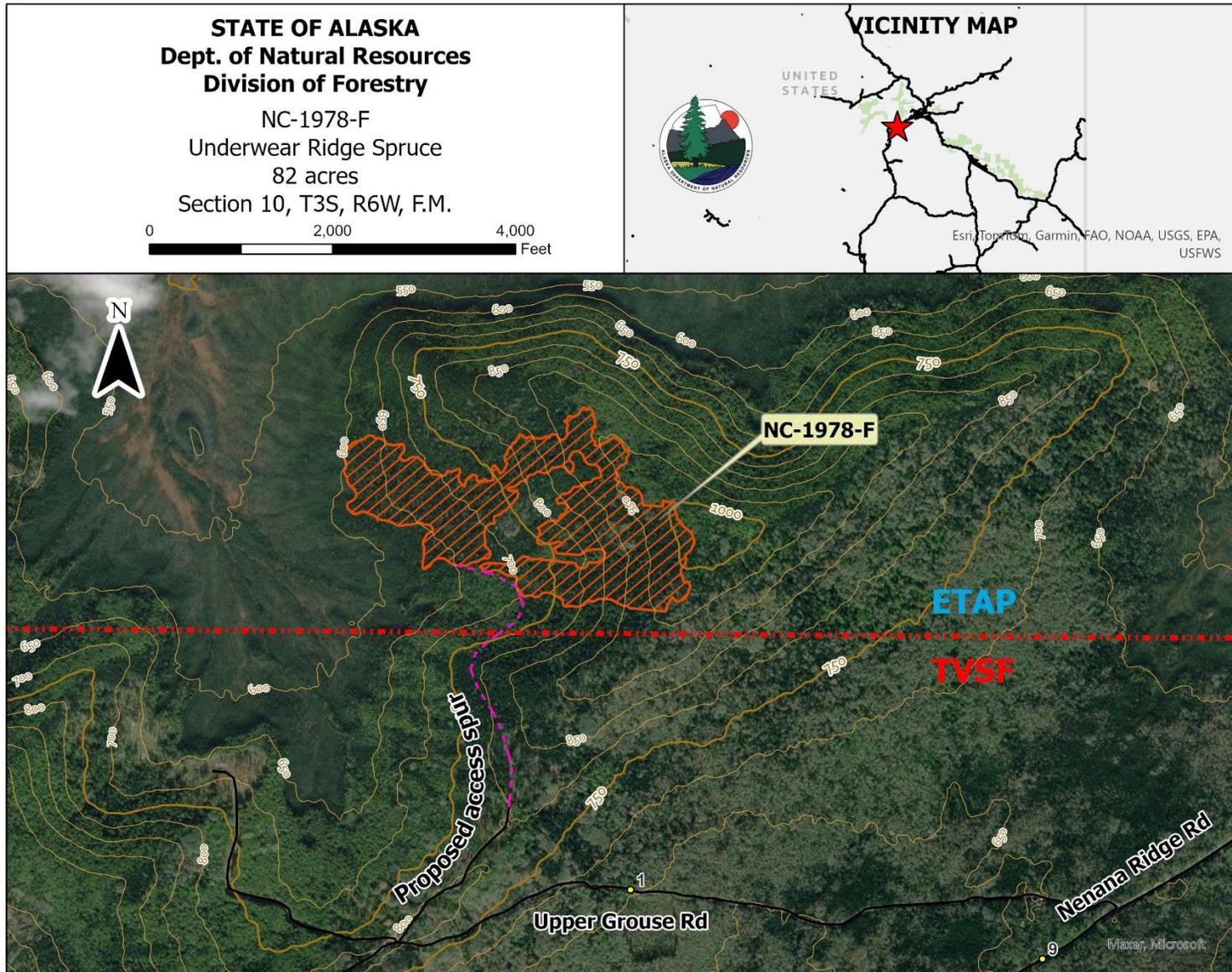
Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

XI. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MAPS



Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding



APPENDIX B. APPEAL AND REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION REGULATIONS

Note: "Appeal" means a request to the commissioner to review a decision that the commissioner did not sign or cosign. "Request for reconsideration" means a petition or request to the commissioner to review an original decision that the commissioner signed or cosigned.

11 AAC 02 Regulations

11 AAC 02.010. Applicability and eligibility.

(a) This chapter sets out the administrative review procedure available to a person affected by a decision of the department. If a statute or a provision of this title prescribes a different procedure with respect to a particular decision, that procedure must be followed when it conflicts with this chapter.

(b) Unless a statute does not permit an appeal, an applicant is eligible to appeal or request reconsideration of the department's decision on the application. An applicant is eligible to participate in any appeal or request for reconsideration filed by any other eligible party.

(c) If a statute restricts eligibility to appeal or request reconsideration of a decision to those who have provided timely written comment or public hearing testimony on the decision, the department will give notice of that eligibility restriction as part of its public notice announcing the opportunity to comment.

(d) If the department gives public notice and allows a public comment period of at least 30 days on a proposed action, and if no statute requires opportunity for public comment, the department may restrict eligibility to appeal or request reconsideration to those who have provided timely written comment or public hearing testimony on the proposed action by including notice of the restriction as part of its public notice announcing the opportunity to comment.

(e) An eligible person affected by a decision of the department that the commissioner did not sign or cosign may appeal the decision to the commissioner within the period set by 11 AAC 02.040.

(f) An eligible person affected by a decision of the department that the commissioner signed or cosigned may request the commissioner's reconsideration within the period set by 11 AAC 02.040.

(g) A person may not both appeal and request reconsideration of a decision.

11 AAC 02.015. Combined decisions.

(a) When the department issues a combined decision that is both a final disposal decision under AS 38.05.035(e) and any other decision, including a disposal decision combined with a land use plan decision, or a disposal decision to grant certain applications combined with a decision to deny others, the appeal process set out for a disposal decision in AS 38.05.035(i) - (m) and this chapter applies to the combined decision.

(b) Repealed 12/27/2012.

11 AAC 02.020. Finality of a decision for purposes of appeal to court.

(a) Unless otherwise provided in a statute or a provision of this title, an eligible person must first either appeal or request reconsideration of a decision in accordance with this chapter before appealing a decision to superior court.

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

- (b) The commissioner's decision on appeal is the final administrative order and decision of the department for purposes of appeal to the superior court.
- (c) The commissioner may order or deny a request for reconsideration within 30 calendar days after issuance of the decision, as determined under 11 AAC 02.040(c) - (e). If the commissioner takes no action during the 30-day period, the request for reconsideration is considered denied. Denial of a request for reconsideration is the final administrative order and decision of the department for purposes of appeal to the superior court.
- (d) If the commissioner timely orders reconsideration of the decision, the commissioner may affirm the decision, issue a new or modified decision, or remand the matter to the director for further proceedings. The commissioner's decision, other than a remand decision, is the final administrative order and decision of the department for purposes of appeal to the superior court.

11 AAC 02.030. Filing an appeal or request for reconsideration.

- (a) An appeal or request for reconsideration under this chapter must
 - (1) be in writing;
 - (2) be filed by personal service, mail, facsimile transmission, or electronic mail;
 - (3) be signed by the appellant or the appellant's attorney, unless filed by electronic mail; an appeal or request for reconsideration filed by electronic mail must state the name of the person appealing or requesting reconsideration and a single point of contact to which any notice or decision concerning the appeal or request for reconsideration is to be sent;
 - (4) be correctly addressed;
 - (5) be timely filed in accordance with 11 AAC 02.040;
 - (6) specify the case reference number used by the department, if any;
 - (7) specify the decision being appealed or for which reconsideration is being requested;
 - (8) specify the basis upon which the decision is challenged;
 - (9) specify any material facts disputed by the appellant;
 - (10) specify the remedy requested by the appellant;
 - (11) state the address to which any notice or decision concerning the appeal or request for reconsideration is to be mailed; an appellant may also provide a telephone number where the appellant can be reached during the day or an electronic mail address; an appeal or request for reconsideration filed electronically must state a single address to which any notice or decision concerning the appeal or request for reconsideration is to be mailed;
 - (12) identify any other affected agreement, contract, lease, permit, or application by case reference number, if any;
 - (13) include a request for an oral hearing, if desired; in the appeal or request for reconsideration, the appellant may include a request for any special procedures to be used at the hearing; the appeal or request for reconsideration must describe the factual issues to be considered at the hearing; and
 - (14) be accompanied by the applicable fee set out in 11 AAC 05.160.
- (b) At the time an appeal is filed, and up until the deadline set out in 11 AAC 02.040(a) to file the appeal, an appellant may submit additional written material in support of the appeal, including evidence or legal argument.
- (c) If public notice announcing a comment period of at least 30 days was given before the

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

decision, an appellant may not submit additional written material after the deadline for filing the appeal, unless the appeal meets the requirements of (a) of this section and includes a request for an extension of time, and the department determines that the appellant has shown good cause for an extension. In considering whether the appellant has shown good cause, the department will consider factors including one or more of the following:

- (1) comments already received from the appellant and others;
- (2) whether the additional material is likely to affect the outcome of the appeal;
- (3) whether the additional material could reasonably have been submitted without an extension;
- (4) the length of the extension requested;
- (5) the potential effect of delay if an extension is granted.

(d) If public notice announcing a comment period of at least 30 days was not given before the decision, an appellant may submit additional written material after the deadline for filing the appeal, if the appeal meets the requirements of (a) of this section and includes a notice of intent to file the additional written material. The department must receive the additional written material within 20 days after the deadline for filing the appeal, unless the appeal also includes a request for an extension of time, and the department determines that the appellant has shown good cause for an extension. In considering whether the appellant has shown good cause, the department will consider factors including one or more of the following:

- (1) comments already received from the appellant and others;
- (2) whether the additional material is likely to affect the outcome of the appeal;
- (3) whether the additional material could reasonably have been submitted without an extension;
- (4) the length of the extension requested;
- (5) the potential effect of delay if an extension is granted.

(e) At the time a request for reconsideration is filed, and up until the deadline to file a request for reconsideration, an appellant may submit additional written material in support of the request for reconsideration, including evidence or legal argument. No additional written material may be submitted after the deadline for filing the request for reconsideration.

(f) If the decision is one described in 11 AAC 02.060(c), an appellant may ask for a stay as part of the appeal or request for reconsideration. The appellant must include an argument as to why the public interest requires a stay.

11 AAC 02.040. Timely filing; issuance of decision.

(a) To be timely filed, an appeal or request for reconsideration must be received by the commissioner's office within 20 calendar days after issuance of the decision, as determined under (c) or (d) of this section, unless another period is set by statute, regulation, or existing contract. If the 20th day falls on a day when the department is officially closed, the appeal or request for reconsideration must be filed by the next working day.

(b) An appeal or request for reconsideration will not be accepted if it is not timely filed.

(c) If the appellant is a person to whom the department delivers a decision by personal service or by certified mail, return receipt requested, issuance occurs when the addressee or the addressee's agent signs for the decision. If the addressee or the addressee's agent neglects or refuses to sign for the certified mail, or if the address that the addressee provided to the department is not correct, issuance by certified mail occurs when the decision is deposited in a United States general or branch post office, enclosed in a postage-paid wrapper or envelope,

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

addressed to the person's current address of record with the department, or to the address specified by the appellant under 11 AAC 02.030(a)(11).

(d) If the appellant is a person to whom the department did not deliver a decision by personal service or certified mail, issuance occurs

(1) when the department gives public notice of the decision; or

(2) if no public notice is given, when the decision is signed; however, the department may state in the decision a later date of issuance and the corresponding due date for any appeal or request for reconsideration.

(e) The date of issuance constitutes delivery or mailing for purposes of a reconsideration request under AS 44.37.011(d) or AS 44.62.540(a).

11 AAC 02.050. Hearings.

(a) The department will, in its discretion, hold a hearing when questions of fact must be resolved.

(b) The hearing procedure will be determined by the department on a case-by-case basis. As provided in 11 AAC 02.030(a)(13), any request for special procedures must be included with the request for a hearing.

(c) In a hearing held under this section

(1) formal rules of evidence need not apply; and

(2) the hearing will be recorded, and may be transcribed at the request and expense of the party requesting the transcript.

11 AAC 02.060. Stays; exceptions.

(a) Except as provided in (c) and (d) of this section, timely appealing or requesting reconsideration of a decision in accordance with this chapter stays the decision during the commissioner's consideration of the appeal or request for reconsideration. If the commissioner determines that the public interest requires removal of the stay, the commissioner will remove the stay and allow all or part of the decision to take effect on the date set in the decision or a date set by the commissioner.

(b) Repealed 9/19/2001.

(c) Unless otherwise provided in a statute or a provision of this title, a decision takes effect immediately if it is a decision to

(1) issue a permit that is revocable at will;

(2) approve surface operations for a disposal that has already occurred or a property right that has already vested; or

(3) administer an issued oil and gas lease or license, or an oil and gas unit agreement.

(d) Timely appealing or requesting reconsideration of a decision described in (c) of this section does not automatically stay the decision. However, the commissioner will impose a stay, on the commissioner's own motion or at the request of an appellant, if the commissioner determines that the public interest requires it.

(e) A decision takes effect immediately if no party is eligible to appeal or request reconsideration and the commissioner waives the commissioner's right to review or reconsider the decision.

11 AAC 02.070. Waiver of procedural violations.

The commissioner may, to the extent allowed by applicable law, waive a requirement of this

Underwear Ridge Spruce NC-1978-F Timber Sale
Final Best Interest Finding

chapter if the public interest or the interests of justice so require.

11 AAC 02.900. Definitions.

In this chapter,

- (1) “appeal” means a request to the commissioner to review a decision that the commissioner did not sign or cosign;
- (2) “appellant” means a person who files an appeal or a request for reconsideration;
- (3) “commissioner” means the commissioner of natural resources;
- (4) “decision” means a written discretionary or factual determination by the department specifying the details of the action to be allowed or taken;
- (5) “department” means, depending of the particular context in which the term is used, the Department of Natural Resources, the commissioner, the director of a division within the Department of Natural Resources, or an authorized employee of the Department of Natural Resources;
- (6) “request for reconsideration” means a petition or request to the commissioner to review an original decision that the commissioner signed or cosigned.