

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**  
**DIVISION OF FORESTRY**



**SOUTHEAST AREA**

**PRELIMINARY BEST INTEREST FINDING AND  
DECISION FOR  
WHALE PASS TIMBER SALE  
SSE-1378-K**

**February 2022**

## Abbreviations

ADEC	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
ADNR	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
BIF	Best interest finding
DMLW	Division of Mining, Land and Water
DOF	Division of Forestry
FLUP	Forest Land Use Plan
FRPA	Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act
FYSTS	Five-year Schedule of Timber Sales
MBF	Thousand board feet
POG	Productive old growth
POW	Prince of Wales
POWIAP	Prince of Wales Island Area Plan
ROW	Right-of-way
SESF	Southeast State Forest
SESFMP	Southeast State Forest Management Plan
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
UA	University of Alaska
USFS	United States Forest Service

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## **I. PROPOSED ACTION**

The Division of Forestry (DOF) is proposing to offer for sale approximately 290 acres of mature old growth timber composed of western hemlock, Sitka spruce, western red cedar and Alaska yellow cedar from state lands on Prince of Wales (POW) Island, adjacent to the City of Whale Pass (see Appendix 1A, Timber Sale Area Map). The volume to be offered totals approximately 7,100 thousand board feet (MBF). The DOF proposes to sell the commercial timber in one or more negotiated sales under provisions of AS 38.05.115 or AS 38.05.118. The sale will be noticed as required by sale type authority and AS 38.05.945 prior to being sold. The land covered by this PBIF appeared in the 2011-2015; the 2015-2019; the 2018-2022; and the 2021-2025 Five-Year Schedules of Timber Sales (FYSTS).

The management objectives for the proposed timber sales are:

1. To follow the Alaska Department of Natural Resources' (ADNR) constitutional mandate to encourage the development of the State's renewable resources, making them available for maximum use consistent with the public interest;
2. To help the State's economy by providing royalties to the State in the form of stumpage receipts, an infusion to the State's economy through wages, purchases, jobs, and business; and
3. To help the local economy of the communities within southern Southeast Alaska by creating additional jobs in Southeast Alaska due to the combination of road building, logging, trucking and potentially milling.

## **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 Southern Southeast Area Office filed as SSE-1378-K.

## **IV. SCOPE OF DECISION**

This preliminary best interest finding (PBIF) is the first part of step three of a six-part process to design, sell, and administer timber sales. This BIF covers the sale of approximately 290 acres of mature old growth forest composed of western hemlock, Sitka spruce, western red cedar and Alaska yellow cedar on state land within the perimeter of the project area (see Appendix A1, Timber Sale Area Map). The following list summarizes the overall process:

Part 1: Regional Planning. The Department of Natural Resources 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 timber sales. Subsequent land use decisions must be consistent with provisions contained within the applicable area and/or forest plans. The project area in this BIF is covered by both the East and West Whale Pass Units of the Southeast State Forest Management Plan (SESFMP) and the Whale Pass Subunit 5 of the Prince of Wales Island Area Plan (POWIAP).

Part 2: Five-year Schedule of Timber Sales (AS 38.05.113). The Southern Southeast Area Office prepares a Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales (FYSTS) every other year. The FYSTS identifies proposed sales, including their location, estimated timber volume, and main access routes. The FYSTS 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 BIF and Forest Land Use Plan. Under AS 38.05.113, proposed timber sales within the area covered by this BIF must appear in at least one of the two FYSTS preceding the sale. The proposed timber sale area was included in the 2011-2015; the 2015-2019; the 2018-2022; and the 2021-2025 FYSTS.

As the result of the 2021-25 FYSTS the DOF participated in a public information meeting via Zoom on August 27, 2020 hosted by the City of Whale Pass. Comment from that meeting aided the DOF in developing this plan. A summary of topics discussed during that meeting is shown below:

1. Adequacy of the infrastructure in the community (road and bridges).
2. Traffic and pedestrian safety.
3. Air quality with a focus on road dust.
4. Harvest operation noise.
5. Personal safety risk from displaced rocks and trees.
6. Risks from fuel and oil spills.
7. The desire to retain timber next to the subdivision.
8. Tree disturbance on private land associated with wind turbulence from the creation of adjacent timber harvest openings.
9. Categorical preservation of “old growth forest”.
10. Residential property values and tourism income are based on the community setting.
11. Wildlife habitat is desirable.
13. The deer habitat on POW island should not be decreased.
14. Soil stability is important relative to public safety and other resources values.
15. Preserve anadromous fish streams and maintain water quality for fisheries and private drinking water sources.
16. Recognize and protect karst features.
18. Long term costs to the community should be considered and the timber should economically benefit the community of Whale Pass.

Part 3: Best Interest Finding (AS 38.05.035(e)). DOF must adopt a final BIF before selling timber. A best interest finding is the decision document that:

- 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.

Part 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 a FLUP(s) 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 units 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. Appropriate regulatory agencies are consulted, and the plan is subject to public review. The timber sale FLUP will consider the cumulative impacts in the project area.

Part 5: Timber Sales and Contracts. Following adoption of the final BIF and completion of the FLUP, DOF offers the timber for sale by either 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 and regulatory requirements.

Part 6: Sale Administration. DOF will administer the timber sales and conduct field inspections to ensure compliance with the final BIF, FLUP, timber sale contract, and applicable laws, including the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act (FRPA) 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 timber sale area is found within Sections 13, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27, Township 66 South, Range 79 East, Copper River Meridian (CRM). The sale area is found within the Petersburg A-4 USGS quadrangle. See attached map titled: Attachment A, SSE-1378 K Whale Pass Timber Sale Harvest Area Map. The project area is within the boundary of the City of Whale Pass.

### **B. Title status**

The sale area lands were granted to the State through National Forest Community Grant 148.

### **C. Land use planning, classification, and management intent**

The preponderance of the land area in the proposed timber sale is located in the Whale Pass Unit of the Southeast State Forest Management Plan. A very small area of the harvest is within the geographic region covered by the POWIAP (Whale Pass Subunit 5). Where the activity occurs on

SESF, the SESFMP is the controlling land planning document. The DOF is the land manager for the SESF; the DMLW is the land manager for all other State lands in this timber sale. The DOF is the forest resource manager for all State land contained in the timber sale. The specific management intent for the variety of anticipated uses in the areas follow as they have relevance to this activity (excerpted from the plans as potentially applicable):

#### SOUTHEAST STATE FOREST PLAN

The primary purpose for the legislatively designated Southeast State Forest is timber management (AS 41.17.200); provisions of area plans do not apply within legislatively designated areas such as state forests. The SESFMP was adopted on February 29, 2016.

“AS 41.17.200. State forest purposes and management. (a) The purpose of AS 41.17.200 - 41.17.230 is to permit the establishment of designated state-owned or acquired land and water areas as state forests. The primary purpose in the establishment of state forests is timber management that provides for the production, utilization, and replenishment of timber resources while allowing other beneficial uses of public land and resources. (b) In managing a state forest, the commissioner shall, consistent with the primary purpose of a state forest under (a) of this section, restrict the public use of the land and its resources, including timber, fish and wildlife, and minerals, only when necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter.”

Whale Pass East and West Units, Chapter 3, Specific Management Direction.

Scenery: Consider recreation use at Big Creek (locally known as 108 Creek).

Recreation: Near Big Creek, a high recreation use fish stream.

#### PRINCE OF WALES AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

##### WHALE PASS UNIT 5a and 5b

#### MANAGEMENT INTENT AND GUIDELINES

State lands will be managed for multiple use, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of the developing community, providing a timber supply base, and protecting the most valuable recreation and fish and wildlife habitat and harvest areas. Use of the log transfer site on the west side of Whale Pass is expected to continue. Future industrial activities are encouraged to locate on state lands south of the log transfer site.

An area for community facilities is proposed for the east side of Whale Pass.

Important recreation and habitat values at the head of Whale Passage are recognized and state lands will be managed for those values. With the exception of areas identified for settlement and public facilities at Whale Pass, all state lands will remain open to mineral entry.

#### Cultural Resources

##### Resource Information:

Identified cultural sites are clustered in the northeast part of Whale Pass, in and near areas previously developed for state land disposals or for timber harvest support facilities.

Cultural sites are not shown on the plan unit maps. The following chart lists cultural resource sites identified in the subunit. These sites are mapped in the Cultural Resources Element.

Cultural Site Number	Name and Description
PET 072	Prehistoric site, midden
PET 107	Prehistoric, petroglyph
PET 121	Prehistoric site, midden

#### Guidelines:

- Development activities should avoid the identified cultural sites to protect the resource and retain the integrity of the sites.

- Refer especially to the following Chapter 2 Guidelines:

Cultural Resources

Recreation, Tourism, and Scenic Resources

#### Fish and Wildlife

#### Resource Information:

The Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association has leased state land to develop a Coho salmon enhancement recovery project sited at the outlet of Neck Lake. Crucial habitat for salmon rearing and schooling extends to a depth of 40 feet at mean lower low water at the mouths of anadromous fish streams unless otherwise indicated.

Type of Habitat or Harvest	Place	Habitat or Harvest Values
Crucial Habitat (Ha)	Whale Pass	Seasonal black bear concentrations, seasonal waterfowl concentrations, trout overwintering, salmon rearing and schooling
	West Whale Pass	Herring spawning
	4 anadromous fish streams	Salmon rearing and schooling
Intensive Community Use (Cy) by Whale Pass	Whale Pass, 108 Creek	Pink, coho, chum salmon, crab, waterfowl, deer

“Deer hunting occurs near the island road system and on Thorne Island but is not designated because it does not meet the criteria for intensive harvest.” *(From Subunit 5b only)*

#### Management Intent:

Lands designated for fish and wildlife habitat and harvest are to be retained in state ownership will be managed to avoid significant impacts to habitats and traditional harvest activities. Impacts on non-designated community harvest areas should be considered when authorizing activities (see Map 1-1).



Guidelines:

- Refer especially to the following Chapter 2 Guidelines:  
Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Harvest Areas

Forestry

Management Intent:

Timber harvest is considered an appropriate use in areas designated “Gu” (General Use) or “S” (Settlement) subject to the requirements of this plan (Chapter 2) and the results of the Forest Land Use Plan planning process. Harvest siting and design must consider the need for use separation buffers, important habitat and wildlife areas, and the protection of viewsheds important to the community in the development of the Forest Land Use Plan. All harvest operations must provide a buffer that separates the existing and any planned subdivision areas with areas of timber harvest.

State tidelands and submerged lands designated “F” (Forestry) will be managed to support timber harvest activities consistent with other co-primary designations. Log transfer operations are to concentrate at the Whale Pass West - Site 5.03 LT.

State tidelands and submerged lands will be designated and managed for timber harvest support activities at the West site.

Guidelines:

- Whale Pass West - Site 5.03 LT: Location of stored log rafts will not preclude public access to the cove.
- Refer especially to the following Chapter 2 Guidelines:  
Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Harvest Areas  
Floating Facilities  
Forestry  
Shorelines and Stream Corridors

Minerals

Management Intent:

State uplands previously closed to mineral entry will remain closed to protect options for community and commercial centers in the Whale Pass area. State lands on the east and west sides of the bay that will be managed for community and industrial center purposes are closed to new mineral entry. All other state lands are open to mineral entry.

Guidelines:

- Refer especially to the following Chapter 2 Guidelines:  
Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Harvest Areas  
Shorelines and Stream Corridors  
Subsurface Resources  
Trail and Public Access Management

## Recreation

### Resource Information:

108 Creek is an important community recreation area for fishing and picnicking.

Location	Resource or Use	Designation
108 Creek	Community recreation	Ru
Neck Lake (mouth)	Community recreation	Ru
East Whale Passage	Anchorage	Ra
West Whale Passage	Anchorage	Ra
Uplands along shoreline surrounding upper Whale Passage	Community recreation	Ru
SE Whale Pass, Tract A	Community recreation	Ru

### Management Intent:

State tidelands and submerged lands that are the access points for upland recreation activities or facilities are designated for recreation. State tidelands, submerged lands designated for recreation will be managed to preserve or improve the identified recreational activities and values. State lands designated Public Recreation - Undeveloped adjacent to the shoreline of Whale Passage are to be retained in state ownership. The area designated Public Recreation - Undeveloped at the mouth of Neck Lake Creek in Section 35 is also to be retained in state ownership.

### Guidelines:

- Refer especially to the following Chapter 2 Guidelines:

Coordination and Public Notice

Recreation, Tourism, and Scenic Resources

Trail and Public Access Management

This area is not within a municipality / No municipal plans apply to this area.

## **D. Current access and land use**

The main overland (road) access to this sale area is through the Alaska Highway System. The sale area is located off the Neck Lake Road (USFS 3000 RD) on the Prince of Wales Island road system.

The adjacent public landowners are the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the second-class City of Whale Pass. Sealaska Corporation is the regional native corporation; there is no native corporation land adjacent to the timber sale. A residential state subdivision was established in the 1980's and expanded several times in the early 2000's; most of these lots were sold and some of the lots have been developed and are proximate to the proposed harvest units in the timber sale.

Portions of the management area were logged approximately 30-50 years ago, and those harvested areas presently support well-stocked second growth timber stands.

The USFS managed the project area prior to State conveyance and conducted timber harvest and other forest management activities in the area prior to State conveyance; the project area contains numerous forest roads managed by the USFS which were constructed and maintained to agency standards for commercial timber operations. The USFS retained the mainline road right-of-way through the community and is the responsible agency for management and maintenance of that road. The USFS stated they grade the road three times a year outside of any timber sale activity. The City of Whale Pass performs limited local road system maintenance.

The overall area experiences incidental use by the public for a variety of uses related to semi-remote recreation including, but not limited to fishing, berry picking, hiking, and hunting.

Privately rented cabins are present in the community. The focus of these cabins is generally associated with the semi-remote location and self-guided fishing of the larger freshwater streams such as the 108 Creek and the associated estuary area of Whale Pass during summer and self-guided deer hunting during fall. Several full-service guided sport fishing lodges are also in the area and focus more on offshore saltwater fishing.

Some of the surface drainages on the western portion of the proposed sale area in Unit 2 and one in Unit 5 have been used at times for residential water sources associated with the subdivisions in the area. The streams are relatively small and typically have bedrock controlled banks with cobble and gravel substrates. The water pipes and intake structures observed in the summer and fall of 2021 on or adjacent to State land, with a few exceptions, were in states of disrepair and looked abandoned. Broader intermittent seasonal use of surface waters in the area may have occurred in the past. Two systems adjacent to Unit 2 appear to have been recently used based on the condition of the intakes and piping. One on the northwest corner of Lot 4 Block 5 and other on the south side of Lot 2, Block 5.

One State water right permit (authorized under AS 46.15 and 11 AAC 93) exists adjacent to Unit 2 benefiting the owner of Lot 2, Block 5 ASLS 81-217 (LAS 10079 for 300 gallons per day). The land administration system (LAS) identified two other systems one on the east side and the other on the west of the bay that are not explicitly authorized due to unresolved trespass issues on state land.

A water right/water use authorization to use water isn't always necessary or required by the State. For consumptive water use of 500 gallons per day or less, or 5,000 gallons per day or less for no more than 10 days, or for non-consumptive use of 30,000 gallons per day or less, a State issued water use authorization is not typically required. However, land use access requirements apply. Land use authorization from the State is required if any aspect of the water use is dependent upon the use of State of Alaska land. None of the observed activity located on State land referenced in the above paragraph is authorized with a State land use lease or permit.

## **E. Background and description of proposal**

### **1. Background:**

The State seeks to use State Forest land on Prince of Wales Island to encourage sustainable development of the State's forest resources, making timber available for sale and harvest. The demand for State timber is significant due to the recent change in the federal timber supply of old growth timber. Most of the State land base in southeast Alaska is remote. The Whale Pass area is proximate to the existing road system and offers forest resource values close to the remaining mill facilities and skilled local work force.

A diversified economy is important to southeast Alaska. By direction from the Governor and Legislature, the Division of Forestry manages a timber sale program that makes timber volume available to help sustain the region's timber industry and economy.

### **2. Timber Volume and Sustained Yield:**

The total estimated saw log volume identified in the 290 acre sale area is 7,100 MBF based on staff estimates. All the timber is located on State Forest or General Use classified land.

The Division of Forestry is required to manage its timber harvest on State Forest and General Use classified land on a sustained yield basis. "Sustained Yield" means the "achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of an annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of the State land consistent with multiple use" (AS 38.04.910). The Division's policy is to define "regular periodic output" as output over a ten-year period. This is done to allow for market fluctuations and operational restrictions. Based on the DOF's inventory of its land and the timber base, it has determined an annual allowable cut of 9.1 MMBF per year for the Southern Southeast Area. The DOF will meter the volume offered for sale without exceeding the annual allowable cut. This action alone and in combination with other timber sales that are sold will be within the allowable cut and comply with sustained yield requirements. The duration of the timber sale contract(s) will be governed by the economic conditions at the time of the sale.

### **3. Harvest Unit Design:**

All sale area harvest units have been designed for clear-cut harvest using conventional shovel logging and high lead cable yarding methods. The specific configuration of harvest types proposed will be defined in the FLUP. Field reconnaissance indicates the majority of the area is harvestable using shovel logging techniques with several areas requiring high lead cable logging methods due to steeper slopes. The Division of Forestry will require full or partial suspension for any cable logging that occurs in the harvest units and ground-based mechanical yarding will be suspended in times of saturated soil conditions if degradation of surface waters and standing water is likely to result.

- 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 is the preferred regeneration method for this sale and it is anticipated that adequate stocking levels will be achieved within five years after harvest.

Experience with this regeneration method on POW has shown that well-stocked stands are readily established within regulatory timeframes.

Sitka spruce is the preferred species in the projected market conditions. Spruce will likely be the favored and dominant species due to anticipated scarification in the units during harvesting operations. Scarification will disturb the vegetative mat and in turn provide a more receptive seed bed for spruce. Western hemlock and western red cedar will likely be major components of the regenerated stand as well, since they currently occupy the sites. Alaska yellow cedar represents less than ten percent (total species composition) in the project area. It is predicted that Alaska yellow cedar will regenerate on sites it currently occupies, but at lower stocking levels due to vigorous regrowth of competing species (western red cedar and hemlock) as typically occurs when the lower volume/lower productivity growing sites are harvested or otherwise disturbed at the stand level.

The DOF will conduct post-harvest reforestation inspections of all areas of commercial timber harvest to ensure the stocking of natural regeneration meets or exceeds FRPA reforestation requirements.

- b. Road Access - Design and Construction: Forest road design, construction, and maintenance will comply with the Forest Resources and Practices regulations (11 AAC 95.285-.355) and meet the DOF Road Standards for secondary and spur roads.

Stream 106-30-10798 is crossed at one location above anadromous habitat. ADF&G surveyed the drainage in 2016 and aided in defining the extent of habitat below the crossing. The crossing is proposed as a culvert and will be designed to DOF standards and best management practices in the FLUP and will be specified and implemented during construction through the timber sale contract.

Numerous tributary waters to Streams 106-30-10798, 106-30-10770, 106-30-10805, and 106-30-10820-2003-3009 will be crossed by roads. None of these stream reaches in the units or crossed by the proposed roads exhibit characteristics or evidence of fish habitat. Other general water quality streams will also be crossed by proposed roads within the sale area. To maintain water quality during road construction, the Division of Forestry will implement FRPA's Best Management Practices (BMP). Due to the relatively small drainage areas, the surface drainages are generally small. The location of the drainages and associated structures will be further specified in the FLUP process.

Soils in the area were observed to be thin, organic horizons with moderate to poor drainage. To keep the potential for soil erosion to a minimum, the amount of road construction has been minimized and the roads are generally not located on steep slopes. The roads are designed to follow the natural contours and benches as much as practical and are generally located on the more moderate slopes. Cable and shovel logging landings have been chosen to manage and minimize the concentration of water and movement of soil. To minimize the potential for erosion, FRPA road construction, maintenance, and slope stability standards will be included in timber sale

contracts. The DOF timber sale administrator will ensure, with frequent field inspections, compliance with the timber sale contract, including those provisions related to erosion and slope stability.

Most of the road is located to achieve a simple overlay style of construction typical of the area. The road system, with a few exceptions on short spurs or on short mainline road segments, is designed to be constructed with grades less than 12%. Some drilling and shooting will be required to remove rock obstructions and facilitate good drainage or to full-bench the road on short steeper sidehill sections of ground. Road grades of less than 12% are desirable over steeper grades because they lose less of their fine surface materials through traffic displacement and the runoff of rainwater.

The units are designed with the management intent of minimizing the timber sale's road footprint. On State Forest the roads will be used for long term silvicultural management, including future commercial timber harvest entries; the minimization of road supports the maximization of ground for the growth of trees and is a factor in managing reoccurring operational costs.

Following harvest operations, the DOF will consider leaving some of the secondary roads open for temporary vehicle access so the public, including local residents, have some access to residual wood for purposes of firewood collection. This will be done where doing so will not compromise obligations to keep the road maintained for the preservation of soil and water quality and there is a significant firewood resource present. Spur roads constructed in this sale will generally be eventually closed after harvest of timber to meet FRPA requirements and minimize dumping of garbage and other unauthorized activities. This road management component may be modified by the land manager in the future as community needs are expressed and then addressed or accommodated. Overall, the secondary roads constructed in the sale are projected to be closed once reforestation has been established and residual firewood has been recovered in the harvest units because funds are typically not available to maintain the roads for long-term general access by the public. Site specific maintenance and closure costs relative to future state budget constraints may require a more aggressive road storage or closure plan.

The existing Forest Road 3000520 was constructed for timber access north of this proposed sale (Units 1,2, and 3) several decades ago associated with the USFS timber sale program. The junction of this road with the 30000 Road currently is aligned for hauling in a southerly direction towards the Whale Pass log transfer facility (LTF). The DOF proposes to expand the intersection footprint (for approximately the first 200 FT of the 3000520 Road) to facilitate log truck traffic in either direction.

The log truck haul route for the sale is projected to occur northwesterly out the 30000 Road towards the USFS El Capitan LTF on the west side of POW. While hauling to the Whale Pass LTF is possible, it is not likely based on the current configuration of timber operators on Prince of Whales Island.

The projected mainline haul route uses roads managed by the USFS. All the existing USFS roads identified, and which may be used in this timber sale are presently in an operable condition. The DOF will work with the USFS to resolve short and long-term maintenance needs that may be appropriate for the projected timber volume to be hauled on the system. Maintenance tasks such as reconditioning of the road surface, brushing, recovering useable turnout space, cleaning ditches and the drainage structures are typically needed prior to the use of a road that has not been used actively. The operator will be required by the timber sale contract to maintain the different road systems proportionate to their use during this sale. Roads will receive regular and timely maintenance during operations to address road conditions such as potholes and excessive road dust precipitated from heavy truck traffic. Residual road conditions will be like or better than conditions that existed prior to the sale. Expectations and responsibilities will be formally established prior to the start of timber sale road construction and timber harvest operations.

DOF will apply for ROWs to State Forest land on General Use land for long-term routes.

- c. Appraisal Method: The DOF will appraise the timber value in compliance with 11 AAC 71.092.

The sale area will be appraised by using a residual value appraisal method. Selling values and extraction cost data are obtained from industry sources, the United States Forest Service, and previous operations.

## **F. Resources and management**

### **1. Timber**

#### **a. Timber Stand Composition and Structure:**

The proposed harvest area has the characteristics of mature old growth Volume Class 2 and Volume Class 3. The stands in the proposed sale area are predominantly a red cedar stand type. The timber identified is of mixed quality and generally has a defective component due to its slow growth and overall medium to low site class. The larger and better-quality timber in the area is located on the better drained soils. The commercial timber stands in the timber sale are composed of western red cedar, western hemlock, Sitka spruce and occasional Alaska yellow cedar.

#### **b. Stand Silvics:**

Second growth forests adjacent to the proposed harvest area exhibit indications of productive site conditions and are between 15 and 50 years old. Some of these stands have been pre-commercially thinned and have responded well to that intermediate stand treatment. The sites targeted in this BIF generally are residual stands that did

not have the species composition to be operable under historical market conditions and are generally located on lower quality growing sites.

The DOF intends for natural reforestation to occur promptly and will encourage the growth of commercial timber species to a merchantable size in the shortest rotation length to support the objectives of the land management designation of the State Forest. The silvicultural prescription that best achieves these objectives is based on experience and will entail clear-cut harvest. Unit size is primarily a product of topography and forest type, respecting other constraints such as soil stability, high-value fish and wildlife habitat and visual concerns. The use of clear cutting is a proven regeneration prescription for most areas in SE Alaska and is also appropriate for removing large timber with its associated variable structure and size. Other regeneration/harvest prescriptions entail complex and costly methods that are more hazardous and also risk damaging residual standing timber. Residual stands associated with partial harvest are also prone to damage in most areas of Southeast due to post-harvest wind-throw.

DOF will verify that levels of natural regeneration meet FRPA standards with prescribed regulatory timeframes. It is anticipated that some precommercial thinning will be prescribed and completed on regenerated stands located on the State Forest to influence the future production of merchantable products (typically saw logs) when those stands reach the stem exclusion stage at approximately 20-30 years of age.

c. Topography and Soils:

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)).

The timber sale occupies an area with broken topography ranging from moderate slopes to areas of short but steep rocky bluffs; aspect on most of the units is generally a southeast and easterly exposure except for Unit 5 which is westerly. Elevation ranges from 100 to 600 feet within the sale area. Most of the sale area has slopes of less than 35 percent. Rock appears shallow and soils are generally poorly drained.

Soil characteristics in Units 1-2 range from well-drained glacial cobble mix on a decayed black metamorphic bedrock with scattered deep organic muskeg soils on lower angled slopes.

In the southwest portion of Unit 3, incised drainages emerge above a more impermeable hard clay horizon and drain to anadromous stream 106-30-10770 (Snoose Creek). The ground on the south side in this area has evidence of some soil instability by the shape and type of the tree growth in the draws (pistol-butted trees are frequent, indicating soil creep). The extent of the raveling is confined based on the geomorphology of the clay layer. The incised draws have observed surface movement associated with emergence of water from the slope that has undermined the upper coble soil layer and incidental clay layer through hydraulic action. The unstable area has minimal potential to impact the public safety in the subdivision due to significant and dominant topography to the south. The proposed timber harvest has been designed to avoid these



slopes except for one setting in Unit 134. This one-acre setting is proposed to recover the merchantable timber being undermined at the head of the draw by gradual soil movement, prior to it becoming wasted like the observed debris at the bottom of the gully.

Limestone geology defines the west side of Unit 4/141 with numerous springs emanating from the base of the bluffs and cliff topography where the ground transitions to a consolidated and semi-permeable brown glacier till. Small solution holes and cracks in the limestone define spring emergences from the cliffs outside the unit. These flow emergences correlate to the timber type change and the feasible operational limits (harvest) of the site. Streams below these emergences in Unit 4 were generally incised in two to three feet of gravelly and coble soil bearing on an impermeable brown soil layer as they flow to the east.

Karst fins were observed outside and to the east of Unit 5; the timber in that area is an even-aged sub-merchantable hemlock timber type having regenerated following a large-scale wind event some 50 years prior. The ground in the unit itself is a mix of soil like that found in Unit 4 with a few inclusions of limestone. The stream running through Unit 5 is influenced in path and character by several limestone outcrops located in the central portion of the unit.

Karst characteristics have been field identified and accommodated in the design of the harvest units. Roads were not necessary in proximity of the karst features such as fins and solution holes. Harvest operations will be able to maneuver and manipulate timber and slash to minimize post-harvest changes to soils and to surface and sub-surface drainage.

2. Agriculture.

No agricultural use or grazing is known to occur within the area.

3. Wildlife habitat and harvest.

This sale has been designed following applicable planning guidelines and to promote statements of management intent for each of the types of land classification contained in the SESFMP, the POWIAP and the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act and Regulations (FRPA). The sale area was not identified as crucial habitat (Ha) or prime habitat (Hb) in the POWIAP or the SESFMP.

POW has a total area of approximately 2,577 square miles. The amount of land harvested by the Whale Pass timber sale is small in comparison to the size of POW (0.02%). Most of the land on POW is owned by the USFS with minor amounts in private and other public ownerships.

The USFS has reserved productive old growth timber (POG) to support non-timber values (such as fisheries and wildlife) in the 2016 Tongass Land Management Plan. In all Plan alternatives, less than a one percent of POG is projected to change, due to harvest, in the next 100 years. The USFS signaled in the fall of 2021 that it was shifting its focus in

general on the Tongass away from old growth timber harvest. With this signal, even less old growth harvest is likely to occur on federal land in the timeframe.

No areas of concern were identified by ADF&G (Division of Wildlife Conservation) in the comments received associated with the FYSTs. The DOF further communicated with ADF&G during the preparation of this decision. Under the FRPA, the DOF will provide due deference to ADF&G for designing the retention of timber or to modify harvest activity during operations for the management of important wildlife species. No known wolf or black bear dens are in or adjacent to the sale area. Based on topography the ADF&G recommended that a travel corridor providing vegetative cover may be desirable from the knob northwest of Unit 2 (inside corner of Unit 2) to the Snoose Creek drainage. This will be considered during the site-specific planning for Unit 2 in the FLUP. The ADF&G also noted that levels of deer harvest as determined from hunt reports covering the timber sale area were not significant.

The DOF used available federal information on bald eagle nest locations and field observations during scoping to avoid cataloged nest sites. No nests were observed or documented in the process of designing the timber sale. If nests are found they will be given at least a 330-foot retention area of undisturbed timber.

The proposed units may have some value for deer habitat due to their relative location to the previously harvested areas on USFS land that is now in a regeneration status of varying ages. While this may be the case, the proposed harvest area did not appear to hold extensive amounts of winter forbs and underbrush for it to make a high value wintering site. The units are also not situated relative to large topography that will hold late season snow and thus concentrate and precipitate use of the terrain for distinct wintering activity any more than other adjacent terrain. The deer activity observed was typical for a medium to low volume stands dominated by red cedar. Animal traffic was relatively dispersed. Stands with significant red cedar generally provide cover but less browse (food) potential than stands dominated by hemlock and Sitka spruce.

The change resulting from harvest, in availability of deer on POW either for wolf predation or for take by humans is projected to be minor. A reduction in deer habitat in the immediate area may be expected to result because of the harvest of this timber. Deer numbers are expected to remain approximately the same following harvest and as the stand regenerates but are expected to diminish as the understory is shaded out during mid-rotation; approximately 30 years following harvest. Consequently, and without intermediate stand treatment (pre-commercial tree thinning) the act of the harvest of timber will eventually lower the capacity of the immediate area to provide for deer habitat values during the period of 30 to 65 years, at which point the understory will gradually provide more long-term food capacity, and the overstory will provide more snow interception and thermal cover. Pre-commercial tree thinning at the canopy closure stage but immediately prior to stem exclusion could extend the period when forage is available to deer mid-rotation.

The USFS has thinned some of the adjacent timber stands, which can aid in the establishment and timing of the growth of browse to increase deer habitat conditions and values

for a longer period of time in the rotation. It is also likely that some of the area's young growth to the north and west will be harvested at about the same time as the stem exclusion phase would be reached in this proposed sale area after it is harvested; this scenario would likely provide an increasing source of browse in those areas at about the same time browse availability is projected to decrease in this sale area.

Hunting and trapping occur in the area. The project area currently receives limited use for hunting away from the existing road system. The DOF did encounter several old, flagged lines around what it viewed as terrain and vegetation obstacles. While these lines are indicative of some local use of the area by hunters or trappers, we did not observe worn trails indicating repetitive use in any one area. Once accessed by road, hunting typically increases. The perceived reduction in deer population may be most noticeable for humans as the area regenerates to a second growth forest, thus diminishing human wheeled access and visibility of the deer.

It is likely that human interaction with wildlife occurs mainly due to the area's proximity to the community of Whale Pass. The roads associated with the timber harvest will provide some additional access for human activities associated with wildlife. Other communities on POW have generally discouraged hunting or shooting on lands bordering residential subdivisions for safety reasons. Regardless, added hunting pressure is not anticipated to be significant due to the proximity of a much larger road network elsewhere on POW. Another mitigating factor will be the intent of the DOF under the FRPA to close roads to vehicle traffic after a period of time.

The relative importance of the area for wolves on the island was discussed with ADF&G. The value of the area for wolf habitat is typically proportional to the area's value for deer habitat. Wolves primarily would be in the area to consume the deer for food or take advantage of conditions in the subdivision (livestock and pets). Some evidence of winter deer mortality was observed but overall a relatively small amount was observed and was not directly attributable to wolf kills. The relative location of the topography away from the center of the island diminishes the relative importance of this site for sustaining the wolves on the island. Deer will continue to be present in numbers adequate for a sustainable wolf population with the development and use of the State Forest. The viability of the island for sustaining wolves is not projected to be influenced significantly due to this project. Impacts to the wolf population by hunting and trapping may increase due to the added road access; this again is thought to be minor though because a large part of the island is currently already accessed by humans via existing roads. Wolf populations generally follow the deer population trends unless targeted by humans through focused hunting and trapping pressure.

The DOF will leave unharvested the entire timbered area between the 3000520 Road and Big Creek (108 Creek) in deference to the observed wildlife travel and cover attributes it provides a variety of species that use the estuary habitat and the cyclic marine species in the bay. The timber located in the area between the 300520 Road and stream 106-30-10798 is likewise proposed to be retained. This effectively adds another 250 feet of width to the overall timber retention area to support ecological function on the west of side of Big Creek.

Additional acres may be deferred from harvest during the development of the FLUP due to site specific conditions and further input from the public and state agencies.

AS 38.04.910(5)(A) implies that multiple use management means the “use of some land for less than all of the resources.” Section 41.17.060(c)(7) of the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act (AS 41.17) states that “allowance shall be made for important fish and wildlife habitat.” Section 41.17.200(a) of the same act states in part; “the primary purpose in the establishment of a state forest is timber management that provides for the production, utilization, and replenishment of timber resources.” Most of the lands in this proposed sale are within the legislatively created Southeast State Forest covered by AS 41.17.200(a).

The sale is not expected to cause significant adverse impacts overall to the wildlife populations on POW based on the area planning information and the site-specific observations of its characteristics.

4. Fish Habitat, Water Resources, and Water Quality. The proposed sale has been 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).

As required by AS 41.17.098, DOF provides due deference to ADF&G to ensure all fish and wildlife habitat issues are addressed by the proposed timber sale design. Likewise, DOF provides due deference to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) for all water quality issues. The DOF also consulted with the Division of Mining Land and Water regarding water reservation and use. The ADF&G-Habitat Biologist in Craig and other staff are familiar with the area. ADF&G staff visited the more significant streams in 2017 and 2018 associated with the Sustainable Salmon Program Grant and verified the extent of tributary habitat.

Several cataloged anadromous streams (106-30-10798, 106-30-10770, 106-30-10805, and 106-30-10820-2003-3009) are located within or adjacent to the sale area. The topography of the area is generally too steep for fish bearing waters along much of the coastal area. No additional anadromous streams were identified during layout of the sale. The identified streams have received timber retention areas and are flagged on the ground at distances from the stream greater than the 100 feet either side as required by AS 41.17. Tributaries to these streams were all deemed to be too steep and did not exhibit anadromous habitat characteristics. These tributaries are delineated on the maps and will receive site specific management by DOF during timber sale activity to maintain water quality considering their source contribution to anadromous fish habitat.

Several commenters in the FYSTS noted the intermittent use of the streams flowing from the proposed timber sale units for residential water sources. The use was further qualified in some comments as residents occasionally use the streams when conditions are dry in the area. Another noted it might be an appropriate resource for large community needs in the future. The DOF examined this topic and observed that the use of the water from the hillsides in the community is not as prevalent as it used to be. Several systems are likely

still used but they are the exception. All the drainages are relatively small. As noted in the Existing Use Section, a reserved water right (certificate for 300 gallons per day) is associated with removal of water at Lot 2, Block 5 of ASLS 81-217. The surface area that contributes to that withdrawal point on private land is an area of approximately 11 acres.

It is expected overall flow in these streams will increase post-harvest. The increased radiant heat and the open nature of a clearcut may increase evaporation potential during sunny portions of the year. Shallow soils will absorb some precipitation but generally will transfer precipitation through them due to the wet climate. The characteristics of the flow may be more abrupt relative to precipitation due to the decrease in interception potential associated with vegetation (timber will not be present for water to collect on). Transpiration (water vapor movement out of plants) will also be diminished for a period and thus also contribute to increased flow until tree regeneration has reached crown closure at which point flow response and quantity will diminish back to preharvest conditions. This cycle of flow volume to pre harvest level typically takes 20-30 years. Given the size of the watersheds, the depth of soil and cover types, the flow quantities realized are not expected to be significantly different in these streams.

FRPA best management practices will be implemented to maintain bank and soil stability and water quality along all streams. It is standard practice on State timber sales to protect water quality of non-fish bearing water bodies through a combination of retention areas, directional felling, partial suspension of logs, split-yarding, and removal of significant logging debris (limbs, tops, etc.) from stream channels. The varied gradient of the streams of the sale area will aid in the control and settlement of incidental turbidity generated by the operations (e.g., from culvert installation and removal).

Due to the location and design of the units and roads, and the topography around significant surface water bodies, the timber sale is anticipated to have no significant adverse impacts on water quality.

##### 5. Recreation, Tourism, and Scenic Resources.

Non-commercial recreation in this part of southeast Alaska is typically dispersed and remote in nature. Past timber sales have provided road access for dispersed recreational opportunities and this timber sale will provide similar access. This timber sale is expected to result in no significant changes to recreational use.

Road access may provide a more ready form of hunting access for vehicle-based hunters, but relative to the overall availability of similar areas on POW, it will be only a minor addition. ATV traffic will not be actively managed. Typically, unless cleared of alder by incidental users, the roadbeds will not be drivable by ATVs within approximately fifteen years following completion of timber sale closeout operations.

Several members of the public commented in the FYSTS that property values and the tourism business is tied to the existing scenic setting of the bay. While this proposed activity may affect perception by some members of the public in the short term it is unlikely

to be a significant factor in transactional long term property values or tourism. The existing landscape on Prince of Wales Island and within the Whale Pass Bay area is composed of disturbances from past commercial timber sale activity. Values and the multiple uses of adjacent property have generally increased regardless of this past activity. Overall density, size and configuration of proposed harvest clearings on the landscape is expected to be similar to previous harvest entries conducted under federal management.

Approximately half of the lots observed on the east side of the bay had cleared timber adjacent to the common property line with the State and are in varying states of vegetation succession and cover types. Several of the lots had structures within 100 FT of the property line but were for the most part developed proximate to the mainline roads. Unit 1, most of the lower half of Unit 2, Units 3, 4, and 5 will not be visible from ground level within the community. Visibility of the harvest may be apparent to some of the neighboring lots depending on proximity of private development to their western and northern property lines. The lower third of Unit 2 is obscured from general view by a no harvest transition area of 100 FT which in most locations exceeds 100 FT.

Commercial fishing lodges and seasonal cabin rentals are located to the south and east of the sale area on the bay's east and west shoreline. The upper half of Unit 2 would be visible along the east shoreline diminishing in the view by the major point approximately a mile south of the City of Whale Pass Public Floatplane dock. The harvest would not be visible from the west shore. The harvest units will be obvious relative to the rest of the landscape for casual viewers from the water for a period of approximately ten years as regenerating trees develop on the hillside. At seven to ten years, the site will transition from a brownish grey surface to a thick green vegetation. While the visual impact in the first ten years may not match some resident and visitor values or expectations; it is not feasible to solve this perception issue and actively manage the land for timber values. While the DOF seeks to avoid long term impact to a variety of resources including tourism, forest management is not practical without visual evidence of the activity on the landscape for short periods of time. The long-term impact to the scenic resource will be very similar to the historical setting of the area. The land planning process has allocated the land for intensive forest management and the overall land planning has provided for other multiple uses (including settlement and tourism) on POW Island. It is not realistic or feasible to develop the State's timber resources and prescribe a visually unchanged landscape during all periods in time. The legislature specifically allocated the land in this area for forest resource use. The proposed use of the timber reflects the intent while acknowledging the significance of other resource values and mitigating potential impacts where feasible.

The DOF has retained 100 feet of timber in Unit 2 and Unit 3 adjacent to the residential subdivision to provide a transition zone and aid in wind disturbance mitigation for private property in the area. This transition area provides ancillary benefits associated with wildlife travel, viewing and a visual transition to the regenerating harvest area.

Most of the private lot owners adjacent to the State Forest have previously cleared significant portions of their property. As expected with any timber stand and more so with older timber that has openings, wind disturbance is evident on the overall landscape.

Some of these disturbances are the result of timber harvest others are attributed to residential activity but just as numerous are other disturbances associated the poorly drained shallow soils, decadent timber, the site topography, and aspect. Due to the location of the subdivision relative to the dominant topography (the hill, the end of the bay, the pass to El Capitan, bay orientation, etc.), wind throw is naturally occurring on this hillside. The edge of the proposed timber unit correlates with a significant topographic break on the upper hill side. The topography influences wind stability of the timber in a macro sense as much or more than the proposed removal of the timber. It is likely that some of the timber not removed will be affected by the timber sale opening and may be lost. This cannot be predicted with certainty. Experience with similar sized retention areas indicate that most of the timber retained will contribute in the long term to its intent as a visual transition. The hazard from overturning timber is not inconsequential or claimed to be minimized. Quite the contrary, the DOF observes it is categorically not wise to build next to or leave large timber in proximity to residential structures. The State does not proactively manage vegetation stability adjacent to private property for specific property in Southeast Alaska. While the State cannot feasibly mitigate all risk because of its extensive land base and the dynamic nature of the problem, it does categorically work with adjacent property owners to authorize reasonable actions by landowners for removal of hazard trees on State land.

6. Noise and Operational Safety

Noise from timber cutting, road development, harvesting and hauling all have the potential to interrupt the area's noise back drop. Traffic on narrow roads can also be intrusive and detrimental to all parties that are ignorant of the other's use. The DOF has controlled both issues successfully in the past using specific standards in the FLUP. These standards are then referenced in the timber sale contract and applied in the purchaser's operating plan that is subject to approval by the DOF. Given the proximity of harvest to the residential area and lodges, the purchaser will be required to function under a standard of conduct in its operations that is feasible to implement and designed to protect community interests, including safety, during the short period of time that the proposed harvest activities will be occurring. Communication on planned activity will occur in the community ahead of time and regular contract administration by DOF will govern these issues. Harvest operations will likely take several seasons to complete and be broken up by periods of inactivity. If it is discerned that significant issues exist based on community input during the development of this sale, the state will implement reasonable constraints on the purchaser for hours and locations of noisier, disruptive or high-risk activities.

Displacement of timber and rocks from the timber sale site on a landscape level is not likely to impact the community or individual residents. While site specific incidents of dislodged objects may possibly present local hazards, it is highly unlikely to reach the subdivision. Operations are designed to control these situations and prevent them from occurring. Retained timber provides a significant and fundamental barrier to these hazards.

State and federal requirements, best management practices in the FRPA and contract requirements all influence the use of fuel oil and other lubricants on the site. Planning categorically identifies potential risks and in response, has developed mitigation strategies

commensurate with the likely risks (I.E.- trained personnel, mechanically sound equipment, limits of onsite fuel storage, drip pans, adequate absorbents, etc.). The management of hazardous substances and lubricants is a significant cost to heavy equipment operations that cannot be ignored and is a fundamental part of the purchaser's submitted/approved operating plan under terms of the timber sale contract.

#### 7. Cultural Resources.

The 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. The SHPO identified several sites on the coast outside the footprint of the timber sale units and roads associated with historic use during scoping. The SHPO conducted a site survey of the area and did not make recommendations for retaining or buffering resources.

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

#### 8. Subsurface Resources.

There is no known current mining activity in the immediate area. Other than sharing some of the same access roads, this sale should have no impact on the potential mining resources or mining activity in this area.

### **G. Costs and benefits**

Based on DOF observations of the project area resources and markets, timber revenue is projected to cover administration, access and operating costs for this sale area and provide stumpage royalty to the State. Access will also be established to State Forest land that will be of benefit for future forest management and use.

Timber sales have traditionally created broad economic benefits to the communities of Southeast Alaska. The business communities on POW and to certain extent in Ketchikan will receive direct economic benefits by providing support services for the operators such as fuel, food, housing, medical and miscellaneous supplies.

While scoping this decision in the community of Whale Pass, several commenters voiced a desire for local businesses to benefit from the timber proposed for harvest. The management intent for the timber sale is to allow for as much of the timber as is economically feasible, to be locally processed in Southeast Alaska as possible and specifically on POW. It is anticipated that the residents of the communities in Southeast Alaska will receive a direct benefit through employment opportunities and wages paid by the operator during the timber harvest and milling operations. The DOF in the past has sold significant timber on the island to small



mills and to the mill owned by Viking Lumber Company in Klawock. The DOF plans to continue a similar approach to the extent that timber sale economics and budgetary conditions make it prudent.

The DOF projects that it will generally require a sale covering most of the proposed area to provide adequate capital for mobilization, access, and timber removal. The distance from the mill in Klawock and the several mills in Thorne Bay to Whale Pass is farther than most timber sales sold in the past 20 years on POW Island. While this is significant it does not appear to be an economic barrier. This remote aspect of the site will likely require some amount of locally based support operations (shop, housing needs, etc.).

## **VI. PUBLIC REVIEW**

The public and agencies are invited to review and comment on this Preliminary Best Interest Finding. Objections or comments pertaining to the proposed action must be received in writing by the DOF Southern Southeast Area Office **by 4:00 pm March 22, 2022** in order to ensure consideration for review. Commenters are encouraged to confirm receipt of their comments by the DOF prior to the submission deadline. Comments should be mailed to the State of Alaska, Division of Forestry, 2417 Tongass Avenue, Ketchikan, Alaska 99901 or emailed to [greg.staunton@alaska.gov](mailto:greg.staunton@alaska.gov). For more information, please contact Greg Staunton at 907-225-3070 or by email at [greg.staunton@alaska.gov](mailto:greg.staunton@alaska.gov). To be eligible to appeal the final decision, a person must have provided written comment on this Preliminary Best Interest Finding by the deadline of: **4:00 pm March 22, 2022**.

## **VII. PUBLIC NOTICE**

The preliminary best interest finding and decision is publicly noticed in compliance with AS 38.05.945. Notice was posted on the Alaska Online Public Notice System on February 19, 2022. Notices were also posted at the Ketchikan, Craig and Whale Pass Public Libraries. Mailed notices were distributed to a mailing list maintained by the Southeast Area Office and public notices were sent to the post offices of Ketchikan, Ward Cove, Craig, Klawock, Whale Pass, Coffman Cove, Naukati, Metlakatla, Wrangell and Petersburg. A legal notice is also provided in the Ketchikan Daily News; the Island Post; and the Petersburg and Wrangell papers.

## **VIII. RECOMMENDATION AND PRELIMINARY DECISION**

After due consideration of all pertinent information, the ADNDR has reached the following Preliminary Decision: to offer for sale approximately 290 acres of old growth forest composed of western hemlock, Sitka spruce, western red cedar and Alaska yellow cedar from State forest land and Settlement classified land on Prince of Wales Island as described in this PBIF. Harvest activities on the State forest lands will follow the management intent of the Southeast State Forest Land Management Plan. Activities on Settlement land will follow the management intent of the Prince of Wales Island Area Plan. 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) and AS 38.05.110-120; 11 AAC 71 (Timber Sale Statutes and Regulations).

A person is eligible to participate in any appeal or request for reconsideration to the final finding if s/he has submitted comment to the preliminary finding and decision during the comment period.

If you have any questions, please contact Greg Staunton, Area Forester at [greg.staunton@alaska.gov](mailto:greg.staunton@alaska.gov) or (907) 225-3070.

## **IX. SIGNATURE**

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Greg Staunton, Area Forester  
Alaska Division of Forestry

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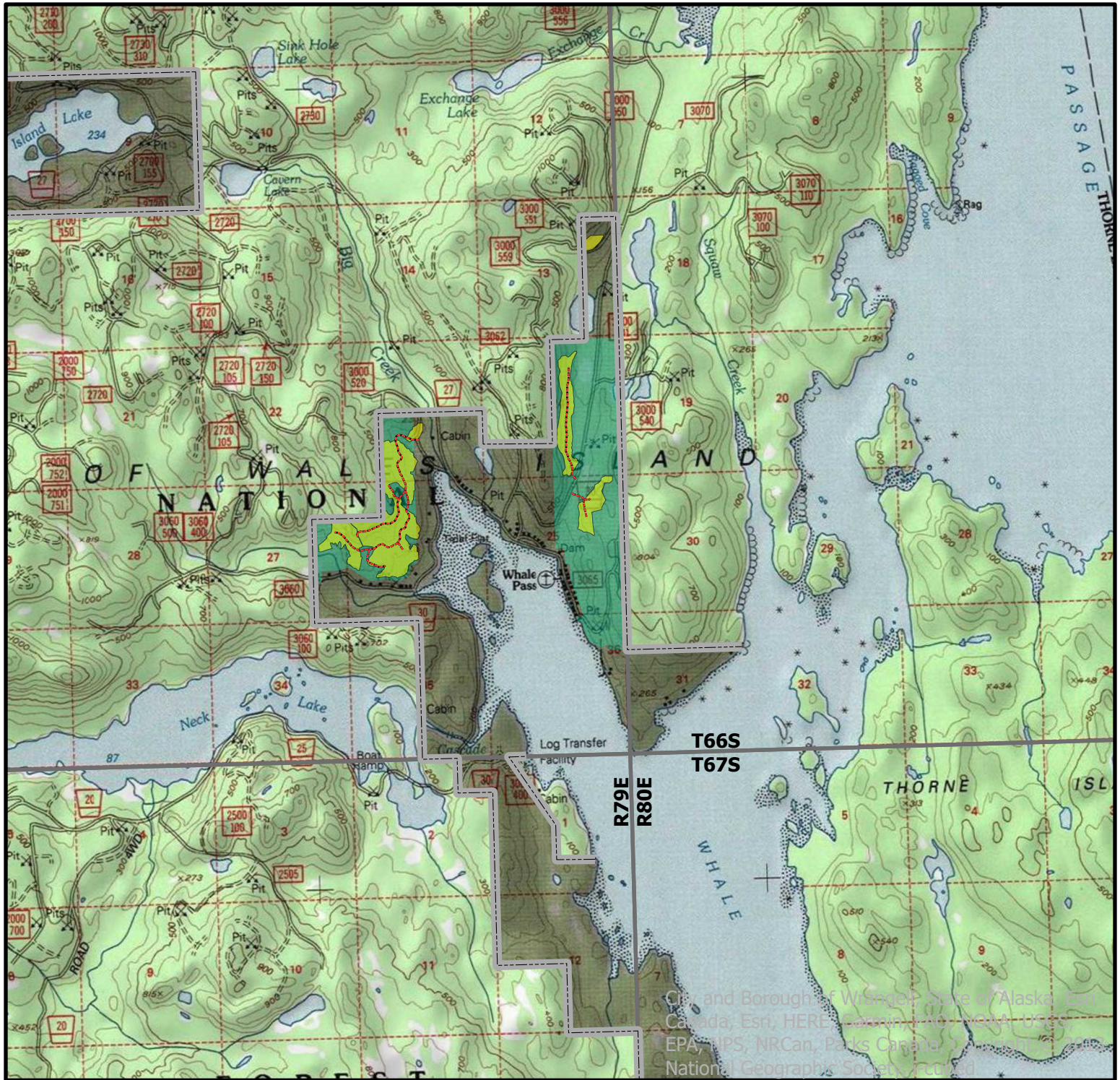
Date

**X.     APPENDICES**

<b>Appendix A</b>	SSE-1378-K Whale Pass Timber Sale Area Maps (3 pages)
<b>Appendix B</b>	References
<b>Appendix C</b>	Reserved for Appeal Regulations
<b>Appendix D</b>	Reserved for Whale Pass Timber Sale Comments & Responses

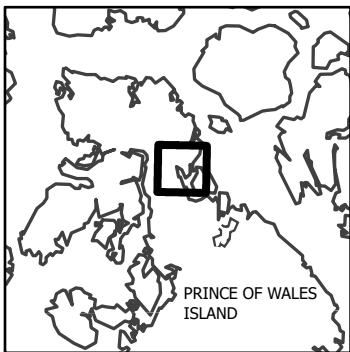
## **Appendix A SSE-1378-K Whale Pass Timber Sale Area Maps**





0 1 2 Miles

Copper River Meridian



Vicinity Map  
1 inch equals 32 miles

**Legend**

- Proposed Harvest Unit
- State Forest
- Proposed Road
- Public Property Lines

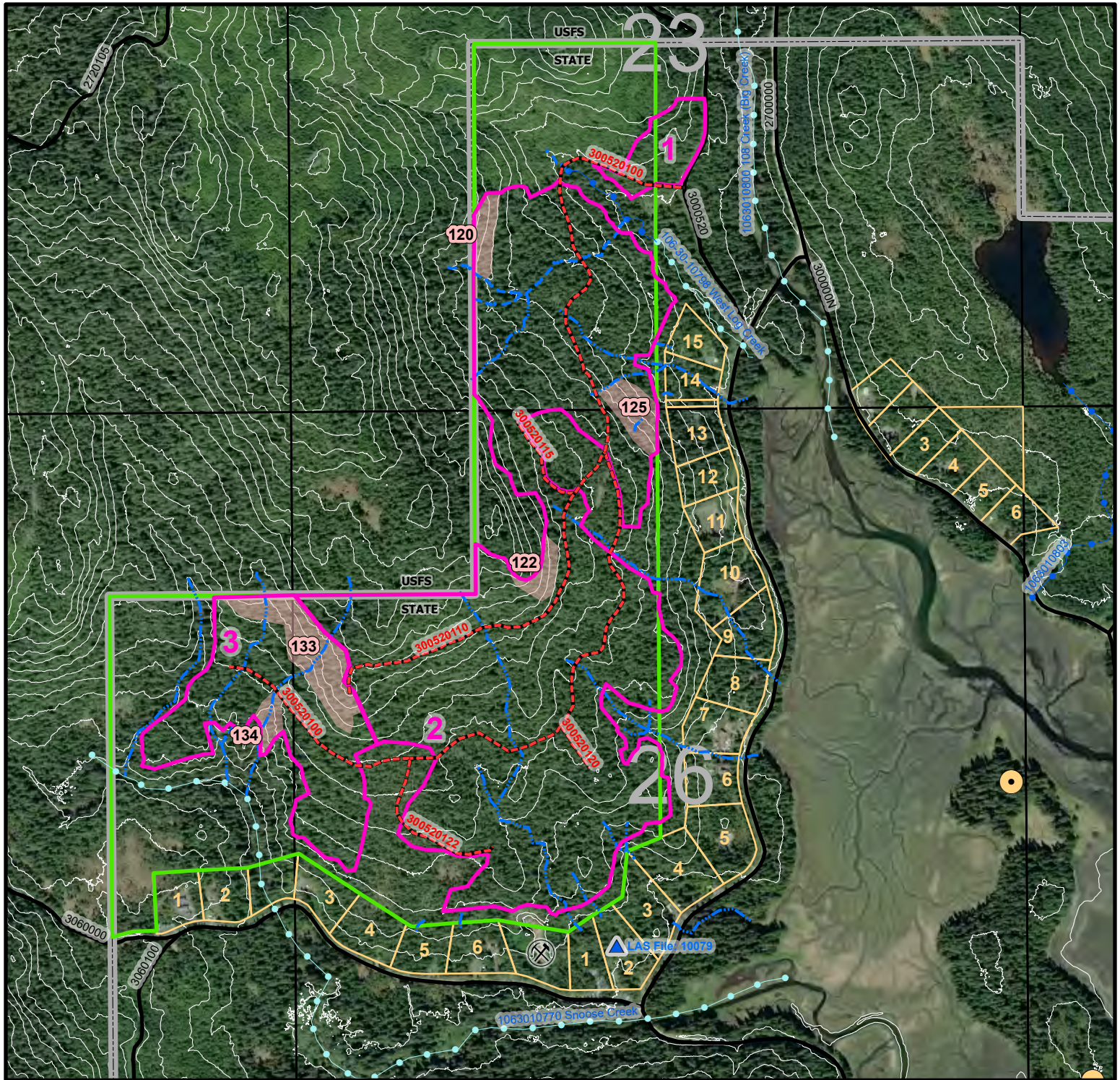
# **APPENDIX A1** **SSE-1378 K** **WHALE PASS TIMBER SALE** **AREA MAP**



**DIVISION OF FORESTRY**







0 1,000 2,000 US Feet

T66S, R79E, Section(s) 26 , 23  
Copper River Meridian

Contour Interval = 40 FT  
Source: USFS LiDAR 2018

## Legend

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <span style="border: 2px solid magenta; padding: 2px;"> </span> Proposed Harvest Unit   | Streams   |
| <span style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;"> </span> Cable Harvest               | <span style="color: lightblue;">—</span> Cataloged Anadromous   |
| <span style="border: 1px dashed magenta; padding: 2px;"> </span> Shovel Harvest         | <span style="color: blue;">—</span> Non Cataloged Anadromous    |
| <span style="border: 2px solid green; padding: 2px;"> </span> State Forest              | <span style="color: blue;">•</span> Resident Fish               |
| <span style="border: 1px solid yellow; padding: 2px;"> </span> Subdivision              | <span style="color: blue;">---</span> Tributary Anadromous <12% |
| <span style="border-top: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px;"> </span> Public Property Line | <span style="color: blue;">---</span> Tributary Anadromous >12% |
| <span style="border-top: 1px dashed red; padding: 2px;"> </span> Proposed Road          | <span style="color: blue;">---</span> General Water Quality     |
| <span style="border-top: 2px solid black; padding: 2px;"> </span> Existing Roads        | <span style="color: yellow;">●</span> EagleNests                |
|   | <span style="color: blue;">▲</span> Water Right                 |

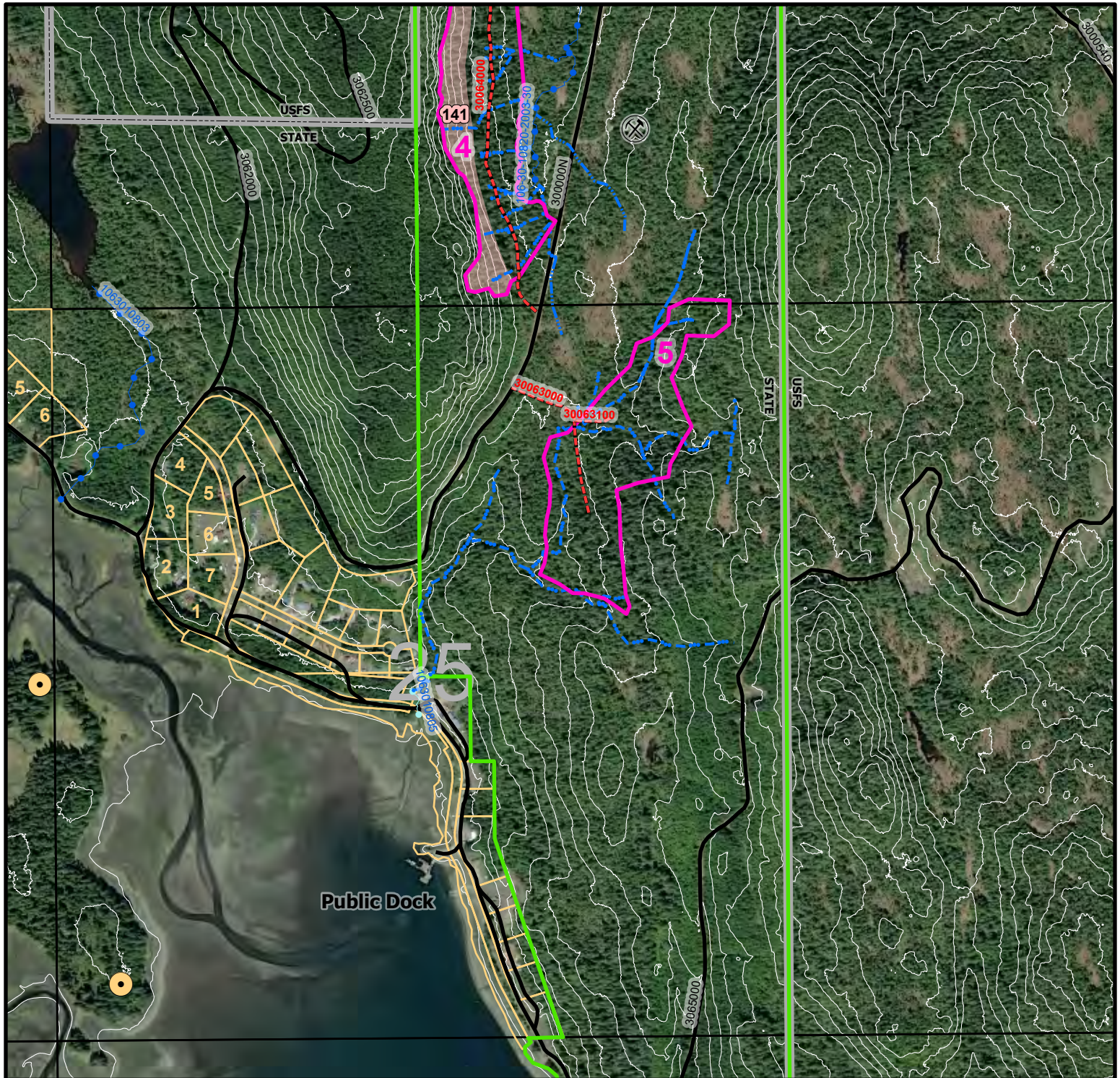
## APPENDIX A2 SSE-1378 K WHALE PASS TIMBER SALE MAP 1 Unit 1, Unit 2, Unit 3



DIVISION OF FORESTRY







0 1,000 2,000 US Feet

T66S, R79E, Section(s) 25 , 30  
Copper River Meridian

Contour Interval = 40 FT  
Source: USFS LiDAR 2018

## Legend

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <span style="border: 2px solid magenta; padding: 2px;"> </span> Proposed Harvest Unit | <span style="color: cyan;">—</span> Streams                     |
| <span style="border: 2px solid orange; padding: 2px;"> </span> Cable Harvest          | <span style="color: cyan;">●</span> Catlogged Anadromous        |
| <span style="border: 2px solid pink; padding: 2px;"> </span> Shovel Harvest           | <span style="color: blue;">—</span> Non Catlogged Anadromous    |
| <span style="border: 2px solid green; padding: 2px;"> </span> State Forest            | <span style="color: blue;">●</span> Resident Fish               |
| <span style="border: 2px solid yellow; padding: 2px;"> </span> Subdivision            | <span style="color: blue;">---</span> Tributary Anadromous <12% |
| <span style="border: 2px solid gray; padding: 2px;"> </span> Public Property Line     | <span style="color: blue;">---</span> Tributary Anadromous >12% |
| <span style="border: 2px dashed red; padding: 2px;"> </span> Proposed Road            | <span style="color: blue;">---</span> General Water Quality     |
| <span style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 2px;"> </span> Existing Roads          | <span style="color: orange;">●</span> EagleNests                |
|   | <span style="color: blue;">▲</span> Water Right                 |

## APPENDIX A2 SSE-1378 K WHALE PASS TIMBER SALE MAP 2 Unit 4 South, Unit 5



DIVISION OF FORESTRY













## **Appendix B** References

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**Appendix C Appeal and Request for Reconsideration Regulations**  
(Reserved)

**Appendix D** SSE-1378-K Whale Pass Timber Sale Comments & Responses  
(Reserved)