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Final decision issued for Tok biomass sale

(Tok, AK) – The Division of Forestry today issued a final best interest finding describing its intent to proceed with a 25-year timber sale on state land near Tok. The decision affirms that it is in the state’s best interest to sell woody biomass for a combined heat and power (CHP) and/or manufacturing forest products facility, and to meet the state’s objective of reducing significant wildland fire risks in the Tok area.

The best interest finding is the result of a multi-year planning process with extensive public input, and it grew out of the Tok Community Wildfire Protection Plan, which concluded that “fuel reduction is by far the most effective way to protect Tok from a large scale destructive wildfire and return our forests to a healthier, more natural state.” After meeting multiple times on the topic, the Tanana Valley State Forest Citizens’ Advisory Committee unanimously adopted a resolution in support of the timber sale.

The division will seek competitive bids for a 25-year timber sale contract enabling an annual harvest of approximately 700 to 900 acres of trees – primarily white and black spruce – from the Tanana Valley State Forest near Tok. The 25-year contract is necessary for the successful bidder to obtain private sector funding to build a combined heat and power or forest products facility. The amount of trees proposed for harvest falls well within the annual allowable cut for maintaining a sustainable forest in the Tok area. The best interest finding calls for harvesting trees from lands in the forest already designated for settlement.

Next steps for the Division of Forestry include developing the timber sale contract and putting the timber sale up for competitive bid. After the contract is awarded, division foresters will prepare forest land use plans that will address specific location and operational details for the harvests, within two to five-year timeframes. The public will be able to review and comment on these plans prior to their adoption.

Copies of this decision may be viewed in the Tok and Fairbanks Area Forestry Offices or downloaded at <http://forestry.alaska.gov/whatsnew.htm> or <http://forestry.alaska.gov/timber/tok.htm>.

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