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

FAIRBANKS-DELTA AREA FORESTRY

PRELIMINARY BEST INTEREST FINDING AND DECISION FOR
Cache Creek Mixed 2025 Timber Sales
NC-1984-F, NC-1989-F, NC-1991-F, NC-1996-F, NC-1998-F, NC-1999-F, & NC-2069-F

June 2025

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
ETAP	Eastern Tanana Area Plan
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
TVSFMP	Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan

Contents

Cache Creek Mixed 2025 Timber Sales
Preliminary Best Interest Finding

I. PROPOSED ACTION

DOF is proposing to offer for sale approximately 208 acres of mature birch forest and mixed birch & spruce forest from state lands in the Cache Creek Forest Road area. The volume to be offered totals approximately 1,746 Cords (1,571 CCF) of birch & spruce fuelwood and 1,307 MBF (3,189 CCF) of spruce sawlogs. DOF intends to sell the timber as approximately seven commercial sales through the competitive bid (AS 38.05.120) and/or small negotiated sale (AS 38.05.115) process. The proposed sales covered by this PBIF appeared in the 2024 Fairbanks-Delta Five Year Schedule of Timber Sales (FYSTS) or are less than 10 acres (sales under 160 acres are exempt from FYSTS requirements as described in AS 38.05.113).

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 fuelwood and sawtimber 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-1984-F, NC-1989-F, NC-1991-F, NC-1996-F, NC-1998-F, NC-1999-F, & NC-2069-F.

IV. SCOPE OF DECISION

This preliminary best interest finding (PBIF) is the first part of step three of a six-step process to design, sell, and administer timber sales. 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 allowable 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 in this PBIF is covered by the Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan (2025 Update),

or the DNR's Eastern Tanana Area Plan (ETAP). The finding also considers the Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan. The Fairbanks North Star Borough Community Wildfire Protection Plan applies to this area.

Step 2: Five-year Schedule of Timber Sales (AS 38.05.113). The Fairbanks-Delta Area Office prepares a Five-year Schedule of Timber Sales (FYSTS) every other year. The FYSTS identifies proposed sales, including their location, volume, and main access routes. FYSTS are scoping documents that provide an opportunity for public, agency, and industry to identify potential issues and areas of interest for further consideration in the best interest finding and Forest Land Use Plan. A proposed timber sale greater than 160 acres must appear in at least one of the two Five-year Schedules preceding the sale.

Step 3: Best Interest Finding. A best interest finding is the decision document that:

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

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

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

Step 4: Forest Land Use Plans (AS 38.05.112). Prior to authorizing harvest of timber on any area greater than 10 acres, the DOF must adopt a site-specific Forest Land Use Plan (FLUP) for the harvest area. DOF will prepare FLUPs for the 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.

Step 5: Timber sales and contracts. Following adoption of the final best interest finding, and completion of the FLUP, DOF will offer the timber for sale by auctioning competitive sales and/or negotiating some sales with purchasers. DOF 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 administers timber sales and conducts field inspections to ensure compliance with the final best interest finding, FLUP, timber sale contract, and applicable laws, including the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act and regulations (AS 41.17 and 11 AAC 95), and forest management statutes and regulations in AS 38.05 and 11 AAC 71.

V. PROJECT LOCATION, LAND STATUS, AND DESCRIPTION

A. Location

The proposed sales are located approximately 16 miles northwest of the Fairbanks Area Forestry office in the Cache Creek Forest Road area accessed via Murphy Dome Road. The proposed sales are accessed via spur roads from between 7-10 miles down Cache Creek Road.

- **NC-1984-F / Cache Point Mixed**: a 2-unit 26-acre mixed sale located 7.5 miles down Cache Creek Road, then 0.9 miles down an existing spur. This proposed sale is within Section 34, T1N, R4W, Fairbanks Meridian.
- **NC-1989-F / Keystone Creek Mixed**: a 104-acre 3-unit mixed sale located 10.1 miles down Cache Creek Road, then 3.0 – 4.4 miles up the Keystone Creek spur on the uphill side. This proposed sale is within Sections 11 & 15, T1N, R4W, F.M.
- **NC-1991-F / Fortune Creek Mixed #1**: a 15-acre mixed sale located 10.1 miles down Cache Creek Road, then 0.4 miles down the Fortune Creek spur on the downhill side. This proposed sale is within Section 29, T1N, R4W, F.M.
- **NC-1996-F / Cache 8 Mile Birch**: a 10-acre birch sale located 7.8 miles down Cache Creek Road on the uphill side. This proposed sale is within Section 27, T1N, R4W, F.M.
- **NC-1998-F / Keystone's End Spruce**: a 27-acre spruce sale located 10.1 miles down Cache Creek Road, then 4.0 miles up the Keystone Creek spur on the downhill side. This proposed sale is within Section 27, T1N, R4W, F.M.
- **NC-1999-F /Fortune Creek Mixed #2**: a 19-acre mixed sale located 10.1 miles down Cache Creek Road, then 1.0 miles up the Fortune Creek spur. This proposed sale is within Sections 29-30, T1N, R4W, F.M.
- **NC-2069-F / Cache Creek 9 Mile Spruce**: an 8-acre spruce sale located 8.7 miles down Cache Creek Road, then 0.4 miles up an unnamed spur. This proposed sale is within Sections 11 & 15, T1N, R4W, F.M.

The sale areas are shown on the attached map.

B. Title status

The proposed sale areas are owned and managed by the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources. The acquisition for the land is based on General Selection 29, and the title transferred by Patent 50-73-0017, except **NC-1991-F** and **NC-1999-F**. These two sale areas were acquired in General Selection 27, and the title transferred by Patent 50-73-0017. There are no known title restrictions in these areas.

C. Land use planning, classification, and management intent

The proposed sale areas are mostly within or immediately adjacent to the legislatively-designated Tanana Valley State Forest (AS 41.17.400) as part of Subunit 4C, and are managed according to the Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan, 2025 Update. Subunit 4C will "be managed for dispersed and developed recreation and for commercial and personal use timber production." Unit 4C will remain open to mineral location and leasing. These sales are all within the Cache Creek Management Area and are compatible with the management guidelines described in the TVSF MP.

However, the following three sale areas are on General State Land managed by the DNR through the Eastern Tanana Area Plan (ETAP):

- **NC-1984-F / Cache Point Mixed** and **NC-1991-F / Fortune Creek Mixed #1**: these proposed sales are within ETAP unit F-20, which is classified for Agriculture uses. Per ETAP, "Forestry activities are also appropriate within this area and may occur independently of or can precede an agricultural land disposal…The Division of Agriculture should be consulted prior to any forest management activity, especially commercial timber harvest." Previous DNR timber sales have been sold within and adjacent to Unit F-20 and appear to be a compatible use.
- **NC-1998-F / Keystone's End Spruce**: 23 of 27 acres of this proposed sale are within ETAP unit F-17, which is classified for Habitat & Recreation uses. Harvest of this unit will provide early successional browse for wildlife, promoting diverse habitat mosaics. Recreation use within this steep-walled valley is similar to adjacent areas of the State Forest immediately west and north of the sale, though increased road maintenance and upgrades may result in increased public visitation. Previous DNR timber sales have been sold within 100 feet of the proposed sale and appear to be a compatible use.

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

D. Current access and land use

All proposed sales are accessed via the Cache Creek Forest Road system, which is connected to Murphy Dome Road. Except **NC-1984-F, NC-1991-F,** and **NC-1998-F**, all sales are within the legislatively-designated boundaries of the Tanana Valley State Forest. **NC-1984-F, NC-1991-F,** and **NC-1998-F** are on General DNR Land, and these forested areas currently experience similar public use as adjacent portions of the State Forest.

The Lincoln Creek Subdivision, which includes several dozen private parcels with residences, is within a few miles of the proposed sales. The closest proposed timber sale is **NC-1998-F**, which is 0.44 miles from and 500 feet elevation below Abraham Road.

Some private and FNSB properties utilize segments of the Cache Creek Forest Road for access, particularly between miles 3.0 and 4.7.

The University of Alaska owns and manages a half section of land 200 feet northeast of NC-1984-F Unit 2, and conducted timber sales in the area in 2015.

Existing land uses consist of recreational (motorized and non-motorized) access, dog-mushing, hunting, trapping, and personal use and commercial timber harvest.

E. Background and description of proposal

1. Background: These 7 proposed sales are within or accessed via the Tanana Valley State Forest Subunit 4C. According to the TVSFMP, Subunit 4C shall be "will be managed for dispersed and developed recreation and for commercial and personal use timber production". Where the proposed sales are on adjacent General DNR Land, the timber sales as proposed appear to be a compatible use. DOF is offering these sales with the intent to maintain a productive working forest while continuing to provide habitat, recreation, and scenic values.

2. Timber volume and sustained yield: The proposed project area has 208 acres of mature birch forest and mixed birch & spruce forest, and the volume to be offered is estimated at approximately 1,746 Cords (1,571 CCF) of birch & spruce fuelwood and 1,307 MBF (3,189 CCF) of spruce sawlogs. Final harvest unit boundaries and timber volume estimates will be determined upon completion of sale preparation activities. The Fairbanks Area Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) is calculated at approximately 4,606 acres of harvest annually. The volumes proposed in these harvests alone, and in combination with timber volumes from other proposed timber sales, will be within the Annual Allowable Cut and comply with sustained yield requirements.

3. Harvest unit design: The 208 acres to be offered will be split between at least seven individual sales, each with one planned cutting unit except **NC-1989-F**. This sale is proposed as three discrete cutting units between 27-45 acres each. Cutting units buffer stand type boundaries and existing harvest units to retain an adequate seed source of mature birch and spruce. Patches of nonmerchantable advanced regeneration and significant snags important for wildlife habitat will be preserved as much as possible. Harvesting will be by the whole tree yarding system. 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). The preferred reforestation method for birch and white spruce rotational harvest is via natural seeding from adjacent trees. The harvest unit design described above retains adjacent mature forest to provide an adequate seed source, and birch stump sprouting is expected to contribute a share of regeneration. Mechanical ground scarification will be required on portions of sales < 20% slope to expose mineral soil microsites for birch seedling establishment and limit competition from grasses. Reforestation will be assessed five years post-harvest with a regeneration survey if the site appears to have marginal seedling establishment. If surveys indicate inadequately stocked areas (less than a minimum of 450 evenly

distributed trees per acre of commercial species), additional silvicultural actions may be performed to intervene and improve stocking.

b. Access design and construction: Access design, construction, and maintenance will comply with the Forest Resources and Practices regulations (11 AAC 95.285-.355).
   - Primary access to the sale areas will involve use and maintenance of the Cache Creek Forest Road, with construction of spurs and landings within sale boundaries. Spur road construction up to 0.25 miles is expected to reach the boundaries of **NC-1984-F**, **NC-1989-F** Unit 3, and **NC-1999-F**.
   - The planned access for these timber sales will solely utilize the Cache Creek Forest Road system and associated forest road spurs, and no logging traffic shall utilize the Lincoln Creek Subdivision roads (e.g., Sherman, Abraham, Seward, Emancipation, Reconstruction).
   - It is not anticipated that access to proposed sales would require a Fish Habitat Permit issued by ADF&G for a winter stream crossing (AS 16.05.871 (b)) due to their landscape positions.
   - Between individual sale harvests, spur roads will be inactive and maintained in accordance with 11 AAC 95.315 (f).
   - Generally, DOF applies for public easement rights-of-way for long-term routes, but access spur roads do not qualify.

c. Appraisal method: DOF will appraise the timber value in compliance with 11 AAC 71.092. Commercial sales will be based on transactional evidence and market demand and DOF will apply a value for those products.

F. Resources and management

1. Timber.

a. Timber stand composition and structure: Proposed timber sales include mature productive upland forest with mixed birch and white spruce forest.
   - **NC-1984-F / Cache Point Mixed**: 26-acre mixed stand in two units. This stand is composed of primarily white spruce sawtimber and birch fuelwood with a minor component of Aspen. This stand has an average estimated age at breast height of 149 years, and the spruce component and degree of canopy closure is highest on the southmost portions of the sale. Typical spruce diameters are between 14-20" and 90 ft tall, with an estimated basal area of 80 ft^2 /acre. Typical birch diameters were 11-13" and 70 feet tall, with an estimated basal area of 15 ft^2 /acre. North and east of this proposed sale area are 7 past DOF sales totaling 235 acres that were harvested between the late 1980s and early 2000s, principally under a partial cut harvest system that left significant standing timber. Timber remaining in those harvested areas is largely birch at the very end of its rotation age with accumulating health and form defects.

- **NC-1989-F / Keystone Creek Mixed**: a 104-acre 3-unit mixed stand with patches of denser mature spruce forest with a closed canopy, surrounded by mature open canopy birch and spruce forest. The stand has an estimated basal area of 70 ft^2 / acre of spruce sawlogs and 30 ft^2 /acre of mixed fuelwood. The average age of cored spruce trees was 171 years at breast height. Birch timber is senescing with high levels of form and health defects. White spruce site indices (average height expected at 100 years) were generally good, between 70-80. Spruce trees averaged 15 inches diameter at breast height (dbh) and 80 feet tall. Birch trees averaged 12 inches dbh and 65 feet tall.
- **NC-1991-F / Fortune Creek Mixed #1**: a 15-acre mixed stand with an estimated basal area of 60 ft^2 / acre of mixed birch and spruce fuelwood and 30 ft^2 /acre of sawlog spruce. Spruce sawlog trees averaged 15 inches dbh and 80 feet tall. Birch trees averaged 12 inches dbh and 70 feet tall. Cored spruce trees indicate a stand age around 160 years at breast height, and large aspen and birch appear to be of this cohort. A younger cohort of birch and white spruce fuelwood is estimated around 60 years (the 1958 Murphy Dome W-5 fire likely partially impinged on the sale area). White spruce site indices (average height expected at 100 years) were quite favorable, between 80-90.
- **NC-1996-F / Cache 8 Mile Birch**: a 10-acre birch stand with an estimated basal area of 90 ft^2 / acre of birch fuelwood. Average diameter of birch was 11 inches with an average height of 65 feet, and first fork was typically above 40 feet. A small component of mature spruce and senescing aspen is also present. The stand has an open canopy with significant snags and downed logs, as well as spreading alder shrubs in canopy gaps.
- **NC-1998-F / Keystone's End Spruce**: a 27-acre closed canopy spruce stand with a lesser component of mixed spruce and birch fuelwood. Nearby harvested stands have moderate volumes of white spruce sawtimber (14-22 CCF/acre).
- **NC-1999-F /Fortune Creek Mixed #2**: a 19-acre mixed stand with an estimated basal area of 70 ft^2 / acre of birch and 20 ft^2 /acre of spruce sawlogs. Spruce sawlog trees averaged 14 inches dbh and 80 feet tall. Birch trees averaged 10 inches dbh and 70 feet tall. Cored spruce trees indicate a stand age around 160 years at breast height, and large aspen and birch appear to be of this cohort. A younger cohort of birch and white spruce fuelwood is estimated around 60 years (the 1958 Murphy Dome W-5 fire likely partially impinged on the sale area). White spruce site indices (average height expected at 100 years) were quite favorable, between 80-90.
- **NC-2069-F / Cache Creek 9 Mile Spruce**: an 8-acre closed canopy spruce stand with an estimated basal area of 130 ft^2 / acre of spruce sawlogs and 30 ft^2 /acre of spruce fuelwood.

b. Stand silvics: Regeneration of birch occurs principally from seed-fall spread by wind, and secondarily from root-collar sprouting. White spruce regeneration occurs principally from seed-fall spread by wind onto favorable microsites. Data and research on regeneration and growth characteristics of these species are compiled within the Resource Analysis of the Tanana Valley State Forest

Management Plan (TVSFMP). 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 discussed in the TVSFMP. 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 seeding and the edge effect.

These stands are assessed to be at or just past ideal rotation age, and these productive sites would benefit from a vigorous new stand being established. Except for **NC-1996-F**, these proposed sales shall be harvested via a clearcut system, where all merchantable timber is removed at time of harvest. **NC-1996-F** shall be harvested as a heavy partial cut for birch. Removal of the overstory in conjunction with equipment operation, should provide a high-light and favorable seedbed environment favorable for birch and white spruce to naturally seed and establish, along with adjacent mature stands to serve as a seed source.

c. Topography and Soils: The proposed sales 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)).
   - **NC-1984-F / Cache Point Mixed**: this proposed sale is on the toe of a south-facing slope between 575-675 feet of elevation. The slope is between 8-15%, with a hogback-and-swale topography across the contours. The soil type is mainly Minto silt-loam 7-12% slope. This deep silt soil type is rated as moderately well-drained with a medium run-off potential; permafrost and bedrock are not typically within 80 inches of the surface. The most upslope portions of the stand are underlain by Fairbanks silt-loam 7-12% slope, which is similar to Minto silt-loam with the exception of a deeper water table and is rated as well-drained.
   - **NC-1989-F / Keystone Creek Mixed**: this proposed 3-unit sale is located on a south-facing slope above the Keystone Creek valley.
     - **Unit 1** is between 950-1,250 feet in elevation with slopes between 20-30%. Unit 1 has typical hogback-and-swale topography descending across the contours,
     - **Unit 2** is between 950-1,250 feet in elevation with slopes between 20-30%. Unit 2 is centered around an ephemeral drainage with a steep headwall (<50%) marking the upslope boundary.

    - **Unit 3** is between 1,100-1,350 feet of elevation with 15-20% slopes. Unit 3 has typical hogback-and-swale topography descending across the contours,

  The sale area is mostly underlain by Fairbanks silt-loam 12-20% slopes. This deep silt soil type is rated as well-drained with medium run-off potential; permafrost and bedrock are not typically within 80 inches of the surface. However, the upper (midslope) portions of Units 1 and 2 are underlain by Steese silt-loam 20-30% slopes. This soil type is rated as well-drained with high run-off potential; weathered bedrock may be encountered within 40 inches of the surface.

- **NC-1991-F / Fortune Creek Mixed #1:** this proposed sale is on the toe of a south-facing slope above Fortune Creek between 725-800 feet of elevation. The slope is between 8-12% and generally smooth and free of microtopography. The sale area is underlain by Fairbanks silt-loam 12-20% slopes. This deep silt soil type is rated as well-drained with medium run-off potential; permafrost and bedrock are not typically within 80 inches of the surface.
- **NC-1996-F / Cache 8 Mile Birch**: this proposed sale is midslope between 825-1,000 feet of elevation. The west-facing slope is 20-25% and generally smooth and free of microtopography, though some incipient hogback-and-swale topography is present on the lowest portions of the sale. The sale area is underlain by Fairbanks silt-loam, gullied, 7-70% slopes. This deep silt soil type is rated as well-drained with medium run-off potential; permafrost and bedrock are not typically within 80 inches of the surface.
- **NC-1998-F / Keystone's End Spruce**: this proposed sale is located on a south-facing slope above the Keystone Creek valley between 975-1,100 feet in elevation. The slope is between 10-20% with hogback-and-swale topography descending across the contours. The sale area is principally underlain by Fairbanks silt-loam 12-20%. This deep silt soil type is rated as well-drained with medium run-off potential; permafrost and bedrock are not typically within 80 inches of the surface.
- **NC-1999-F /Fortune Creek Mixed #2**: this proposed sale is on the toe of a south-facing slope above Fortune Creek between 750-850 feet of elevation. The slope is between 10-15% and generally smooth and free of microtopography. The sale area is underlain by Fairbanks silt-loam 12-20% slopes. This deep silt soil type is rated as well-drained with medium run-off potential; permafrost and bedrock are not typically within 80 inches of the surface.
- **NC-2069-F / Cache Creek 9 Mile Spruce**: this proposed sale is midslope on a spur ridge between 900-1,000 feet of elevation. The west-facing slope is a steady 15% and generally smooth and free of microtopography. The sale area is underlain by Steese silt-loam 12-30% slopes. This soil type is rated as well-drained with medium-to-high run-off potential; weathered bedrock may be encountered within 40 inches of the surface.

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. NC-1984-F and NC-1991-F are within ETAP Unit F-20, which is designated for agricultural uses. As discussed in **Section V.C. Land Use Planning** above, this timber sale proposal appears to be a non-conflicting compatible use.

3. Wildlife habitat and harvest. 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 in the TVSFMP or the ETAP.

   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 wherever feasible 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 that is beneficial to many wildlife species.

4. Fish Habitat, water resources, and water quality. The proposed sales 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.

   There are no catalogued anadromous waters in the proposed sale area. **NC-1991-F** and **NC-1999-F** are in the Fortune Creek valley approximately 1,300 feet away from the streamcourse. **NC-1989-F** and **NC-1998-F** are in the Keystone Creek valley at least 400 feet away from the streamcourse. Keystone and Fortune Creeks join to form Cache Creek, and all three are considered FRPA Type III-A waterbodies (non-glacial with resident fish, > 3 feet wide); harvest is restricted within 100 feet of Type III-A waterbodies. **NC-1984-F, NC-1996-F**, and **NC-2069-F** are near at least 500 feet distant from distinct seasonal drainages in the hills above Cache Creek.

5. Recreation, tourism, and scenic resources. The State lands within and near TVSF Subunit 4C have high recreational value because of their diversity and easy access from Fairbanks. The Cache Creek 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 harvests in the Keystone Creek valley (**NC-1989-F, NC-1998-F**) are expected to have impacts on the viewshed of the Lincoln Creek Subdivision. A viewshed analysis shows that **NC-1998-F** may be partially visible from Abraham Road miles 0.8-1.6, **NC-1989-F** Unit 1 will be visible from most of Abraham Road, **NC-1989-F** Unit 2's western half will be visible from most of Abraham Road, and **NC-1989-F** Unit 3 middle and upper portions will be visible from most of Abraham Road. To mitigate impacts to the scenic viewshed, timber sale cutting units will be designed with irregularly shaped harvest boundaries and total size of any single cutting unit will be kept small (< 50 acres). These actions in addition to the mature forest between the proposed sales and Abraham Road should reduce the impact on scenic resources.

Significant public recreational use of established and casual trails occurs in the Cache Creek area, and trails will be left unblocked by timber harvest activity.

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

7. Subsurface Resources. All of TVSF Subunit 4C (which includes proposed sales **NC-1989-F, NC-1996-F, NC-1999-F,** and **NC-2069-F**) is open to mineral entry and is available for leasing, subject to DMLW Mineral Orders. Mineral potential in this Unit has been rated moderate, and mining claims have previously been established within the Left Fork Creek valley. No deleterious effects on subsurface activities are anticipated.

   No restrictions on access to subsurface resources were noted in the area of **NC-1998-F**, which is managed within ETAP Unit F-17.

   ETAP Unit F-20, which includes proposed timber sales **NC-1984-F** and **NC-1991-F**, is subject to a mineral closing order MCO 262 (initiated 1983) which restricts mineral exploration and mining activities. An MCO closes state land to all forms of mineral entry, making it unavailable for staking mining claims, leasehold locations or prospecting site locations (see AS 38.05.195, 38.05.205 and 38.05.245). Nonetheless, the proposed timber sales are not expected to have any deleterious effects on subsurface activities.

G. Costs and benefits

Local commercial logging operators and their customers will benefit from the inflow of raw timber into the market. In addition to generating royalties to the State's general fund, the

proposed sales will create economic benefits for the community of Fairbanks and other locations in Alaska. The local business community will receive direct economic benefit from providing support services for the operators through sales of fuel, food, housing, medical and miscellaneous supplies. Local residents may 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 additional access to personal use fuelwood areas, as home heating costs remain high in Interior Alaska.

Many of the stands proposed for timber sales are at rotation age, and may begin to lose timber value as mortality begins to exceed annual growth and damages and tree health issues accumulate. Stands too far past rotation age may no longer be economically viable for forest management via harvest. Commercial timber sales provide the most cost-effective strategy to initiate a vigorous young stand that provides sustainable harvest opportunities to future generations.

Some of the proposed sales areas may be at least partly visible from about a half-dozen private parcels with structures along Abraham Road. However, over 2,500 acres of TVSF are visible from Abraham Road, and the proposed harvests within the Keystone Creek valley account for less than 1% of the viewshed area.

Minimal negative effects are expected on fish and wildlife habitat or water quality due to the upland landscape position of these sales and the retention of adjacent seed sources which may provide additional travel corridors for wildlife. Some types of wildlife will benefit from early stages of forest development, which may provide additional opportunities for hunters and trappers. Maintenance and upgrades to existing roads may increase areas for recreation, dispersing forest road users over a broader network.

VI. PUBLIC REVIEW

The public and agencies are invited to comment on this Preliminary Best Interest Finding. Objections or comments pertaining to the proposed action must be received in writing by the DOF Fairbanks-Delta Area Office **by 4:30 PM AKDT Monday, July 14th, 2025** in order to ensure consideration for review. Comments should be mailed to the State of Alaska, Division of Forestry & Fire Protection, 3700 Airport Way, Fairbanks, AK 99709 or by email to andrew.allaby@alaska.gov. For more information you may contact Andrew Allaby, Fairbanks-Delta Area Resource Forester, at 907-451-2603 or andrew.allaby@alaska.gov. To be eligible to appeal the final decision, a person must have provided written comment **by 4:30 PM AKDT Monday, July 14th, 2025.**

VII. PUBLIC NOTICE

This PBIF will be publicly noticed in compliance with AS 38.05.945. Notice will be posted on the Alaska Online Public Notice System, and both physical and electronic notices will be 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 will also be posted on the Division of Forestry public webpage.

VIII. ALTERNATIVES AND DISCUSSION

There are 4 possible alternatives to consider for this project area. A discussion of each of the alternatives follows. All alternatives are consistent with the area plan and applicable statutes and regulations.

1. **To continue the sale(s) as proposed.**
This alternative meets the objectives of the Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales and DNR's constitutional mandate, and is consistent with the land classification. It also meets the silvicultural objective of improving forest vigor, provides for a value-added end product and creates additional jobs in Alaska due to the combination logging and trucking. This alternative also complies with the management objectives of the TVSFMP for Subunit 4C and is compatible with DNR's ETAP management guidelines.

2. **To modify the sale(s) by making them smaller or larger.**
The proposed sale units are logical settings for typical commercial logging equipment in Interior Alaska. The sizes of these sales are designed to be large enough to be economically viable considering access development and mobilization costs and distance to processing facilities. Sales within this size range are appropriately balanced to maintain other resource values as well as provide economic benefits to the Tanana Valley.

3. **Defer the sale of this timber to a later date.**
Deferring harvest to a later date would fail to meet many of the objectives of the sale program. One of the main objectives is to make State-owned timber consistently available to the timber industry. Many of these stands will lose substantial economic value if they continue past optimal harvest age.

4. **Do not offer this timber for sale.**
This alternative would result in not meeting any of the objectives outlined for this management action. Utilization of the forest resource would not be achieved. There would be no significant contribution to the State and local economies. This alternative would delay the management objectives planned for the area, deny making a source of raw materials available to the local wood products industry, and would delay the harvest of mature trees, prior to the onset of disease or insect infestation. Decay and senescence of mature birch trees results in the loss of economic value.

IX. RECOMMENDATION AND PRELIMINARY DECISION

After due consideration of all pertinent information and alternatives, the DNR has reached the following Preliminary Decision: To offer for sale approximately 208 acres of mixed birch and spruce timber sales as proposed in Alternative One and described in this PBIF. 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).

To be eligible to participate in any appeal or request for reconsideration of the final finding, a person must be affected by the decision, and must have submitted comment to the preliminary finding and decision during the comment period.

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

X. SIGNATURE

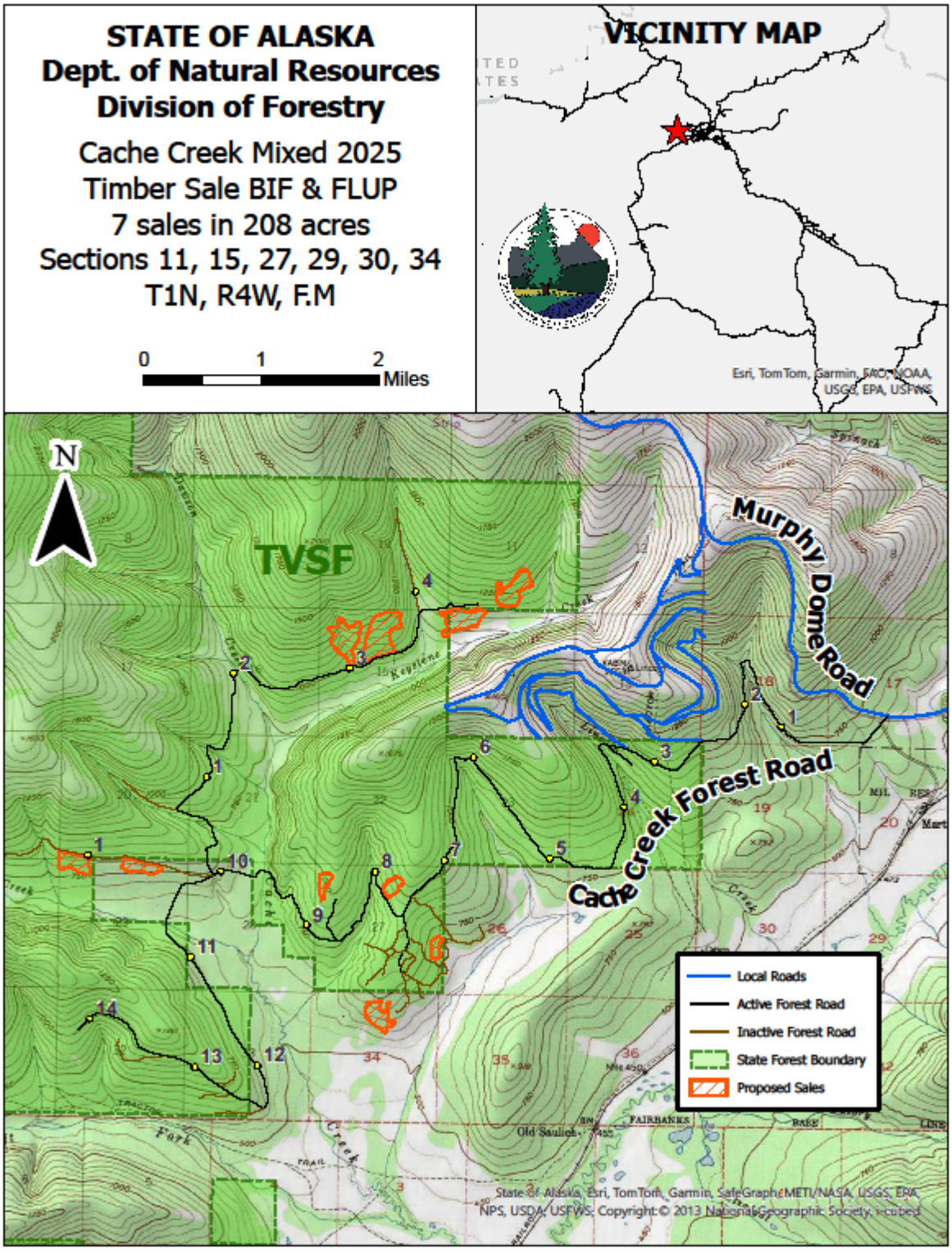
_____ _____

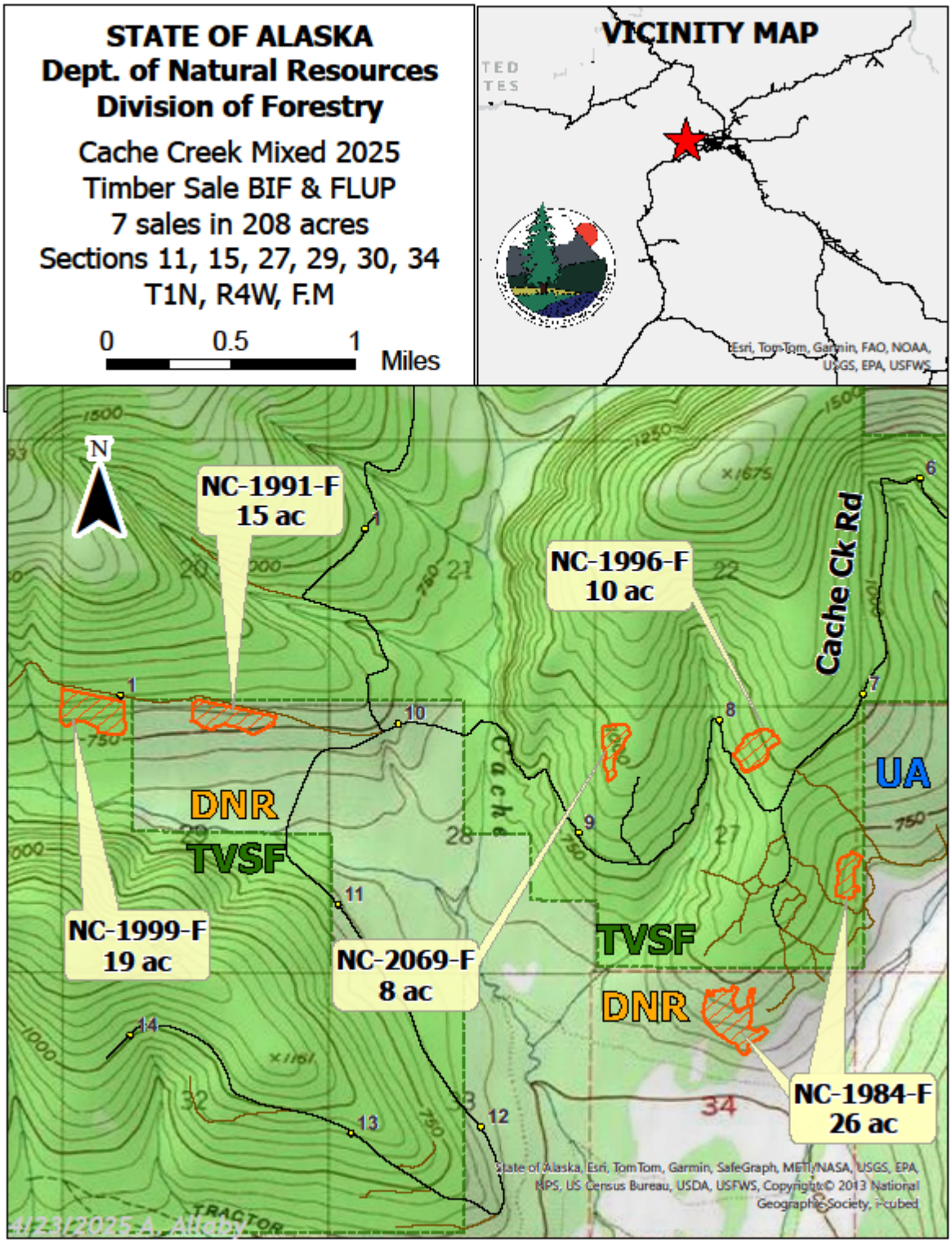
Kevin Breitenbach
Fairbanks-Delta Area Forester
Division of Forestry & Fire Protection
Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Date

XI. ATTACHMENTS

Maps of the proposed project area follow.




STATE OF ALASKA
Dept. of Natural Resources
Division of Forestry
Cache Creek Mixed 2025
Timber Sale BIF & FLUP
7 sales in 208 acres
Sections 11, 15, 27, 29, 30, 34
T1N, R4W, F.M
0
0.5
1
Miles
VICINITY MAP
Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, USFWS
N
NC-1991-F
15 ac
NC-1996-F
10 ac
Cache Ck Rd
NC-1999-F
19 ac
NC-2069-F
8 ac
NC-1984-F
26 ac
DNR
TVSF
UA
TVSF
DNR
Cache
TRACTOR
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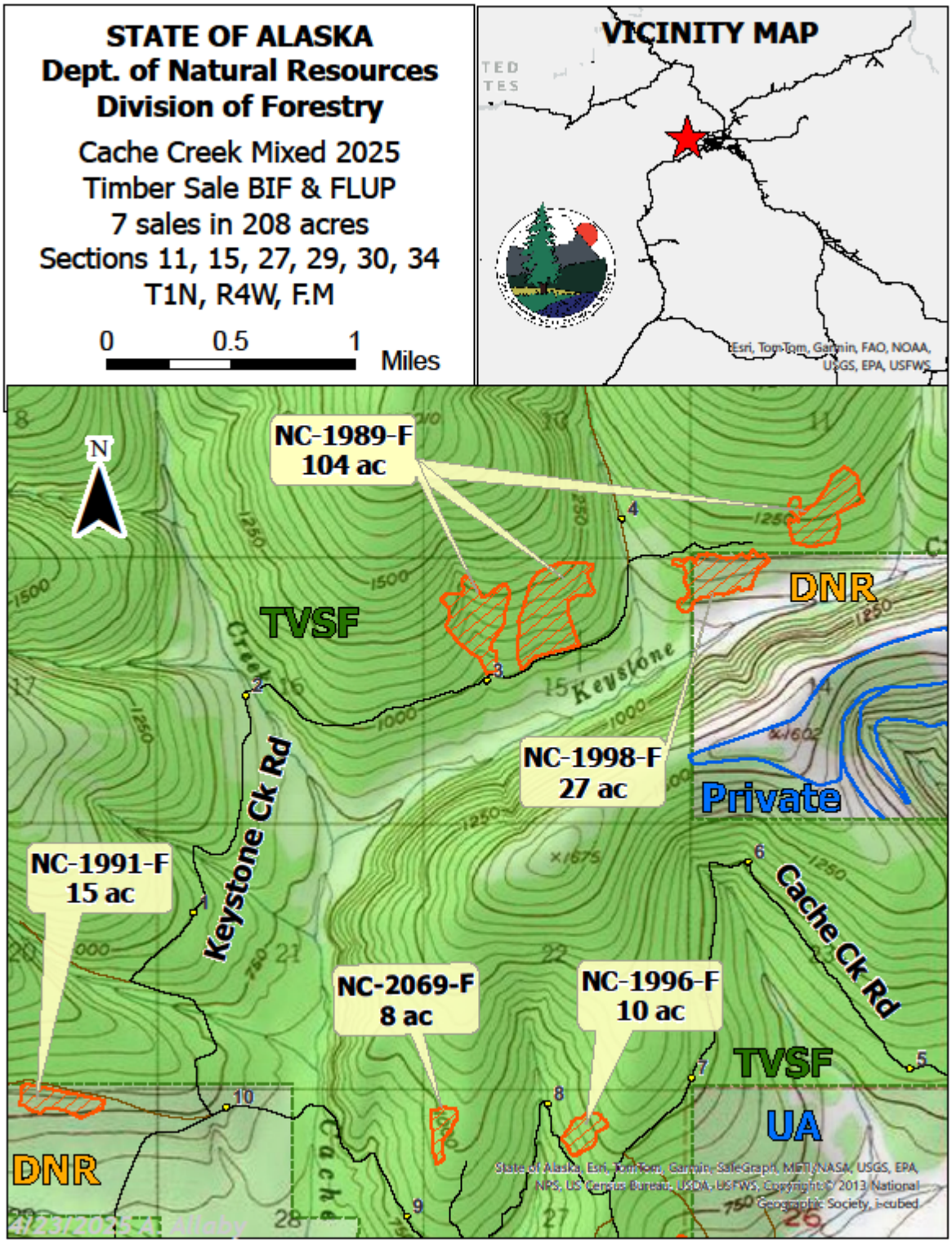
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Miles
VICINITY MAP
Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, USFWS
N
NC-1989-F
104 ac
NC-1998-F
27 ac
NC-1991-F
15 ac
NC-2069-F
8 ac
NC-1996-F
10 ac
TVSF
DNR
Private
UA
Keystone Ck Rd
Cache Ck Rd
Keystone
Creek
Cache
4/23/2025 Alaoby
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