

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



FAIRBANKS-DELTA AREA FORESTRY
PRELIMINARY BEST INTEREST FINDING AND
DECISION FOR
MELODY SPRUCE
NC-1983-F
OCTOBER 8, 2026

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 & Fire Protection
FLUP	Forest Land Use Plan
FRPA	Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act
FYSTS	Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales
MBF	Thousand board feet
OHA	Office of History and Archeology
ROW	Right-of-way
TVSF	Tanana Valley State Forest

Contents

I.	PROPOSED ACTION	1
II.	STATUTORY AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY	1
III.	ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD.....	1
IV.	SCOPE OF DECISION.....	1
V.	PROJECT LOCATION, LAND STATUS, AND DESCRIPTION.....	3
A.	Location	3
B.	Title status.....	3
C.	Land use planning, classification, and management intent.....	3
D.	Current access and land use:	4
E.	Background and description of proposal	4
F.	Resources and management.....	5
G.	Costs and benefits	7
VI.	PUBLIC REVIEW	7
VII.	PUBLIC NOTICE	7
VIII.	ALTERNATIVES AND DISCUSSION.....	8
IX.	RECOMMENDATION AND PRELIMINARY DECISION	8
X.	SIGNATURE	9
XI.	ATTACHMENTS	9

I. PROPOSED ACTION

DFFP is proposing to offer for sale approximately 15 acres of White Spruce sawlog from state lands in the Standard Creek Road area. The volume to be offered totals approximately 315 gross CCF of sawlog and 48 CCF of Spruce fuelwood. DFFP would sell the timber as a competitive bid sale for commercial use. For this timber sale, the PBIF and Draft FLUP are being issued for review at the same time. The land covered by this PBIF appeared in the Fairbanks-Delta Area FYSTS 2026-2030.

The management objectives for the proposed timber sales are:

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

II. STATUTORY AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY

The Division is taking this action under the authority of

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

III. ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD

The Division will maintain an administrative record regarding the decision of whether or not to proceed with the action as proposed. This record will be maintained at the DFFP's Fairbanks-Delta Area Office filed as NC-1983-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 allowed use, and what other uses must be considered when designing and implementing sales. Subsequent land use decisions must be consistent with the area plans. The area in this PBIF is covered by the Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan and the Eastern Tanana Area Plan. The finding also considers the Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan.

There are Fairbanks Northstar Borough Community Wildfire Protection Plans in this area. The proposed area is within the Fairbanks North Star Borough, and this finding considers the Fairbanks North Star/borough plan.

Step 2: Five-year Schedule of Timber Sales (AS 38.05.113). The Fairbanks-Delta Area prepares a Five-year Schedule of Timber Sales every other year. The Schedule identifies proposed sales, including their location, volume, and main access routes. The Five-year Schedules 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 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, DFFP reviews comments, makes changes as appropriate, and issues a final best interest finding (BIF). DFFP 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 DFFP must adopt a site-specific Forest Land Use Plan (FLUP) for the harvest area. DFFP will prepare a FLUP for the Standard Creek area within the overall sale area covered by this best interest finding. FLUPs specify the site, size, timing, and harvest methods for harvest unit within the sale area. FLUPs also address site-specific requirements for access construction and maintenance, reforestation, and multiple use management. Draft FLUPs will be based on additional field work, agency and community consultation, and site-specific analyses by the DFFP, 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, DFFP will offer the timber for sale by auctioning competitive sales and/or negotiating some sales with purchasers. The Division will sign a contract with the winning bidder for each sale. The contract will include stipulations to ensure compliance with the best interest finding, FLUP, and statutory requirements.

Step 6: Sale administration. DFFP 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.

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:

in AS 38.05 and 11 AAC 71.

V. PROJECT LOCATION, LAND STATUS, AND DESCRIPTION

A. Location

The proposed sale is located approximately 20 miles southwest of the Fairbanks Forestry office in the Standard Creek Road Area off the Old Nenana Highway. The proposed sale is within the Fairbanks Northstar Borough. Located within Sections 32, Township 1 South, Range 4 West, Fairbanks Meridian. The sale may be accessed from the Old Nenana Highway, then 6 miles on

B. Title status

The proposed sale area is owned and managed by the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources. The acquisition for the land upon which the sale is proposed is based on General Selection 34 (GS 34). the land and mineral estate were conveyed to State of Alaska by TA 4/16/1962, with the patent (1232735 finalized 7/26/1963. There are no known title restrictions on the area.

C. Land use planning, classification, and management intent

Both units of the sale area are within the Tanana Valley State forest Unit 5a and unit F-36 of the Eastern Tanana Area Plan.

Unit 5a is to be managed for the commercial and personal-use timber production, while providing recreation opportunities.

F-36 is managed for its agricultural values. Forestry activities are also appropriate within this area and may occur independently of or can precede an agricultural land disposal. Timber harvest scheduled far in advance of agricultural operations should be reforested to protect soils. The Division of Agriculture should be consulted prior to any forest management.

All of this Unit will remain open to mineral location and leasing subject to DMLW Mineral Orders.

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

The sale is within the boundaries of the Fairbanks North Star Borough comprehensive Management plan.

D. Current access and land use:

- E. The sale area is accessible by the Standard creek road system. A Spur at 6 mile of Standard creek road travels west for 1.2 miles to the spur into NC-1446. One new winter road 0.25 in length will need to be created into unit 2 and there is an existing 0.4 mi winter road that will need to be refurbished into unit 1.

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

F. Background and description of proposal

1. Background: The sale area is access through the TVSF and exists on both state forest land and agriculture classified lands. Subunit 5A is managed for timber production, habitat and recreation while retaining scenic values along the Parks Highway. The 6 mile standard creek road area has a history of timber harvest starting in 2008. The DFFP is offering this timber sale while also recognizing other compatible uses for this public land.
2. Timber volume and sustained yield: The proposed sale area has an estimated volume of 315 CCF of sawlog and 48 CCF of spruce fuelwood on 15 acres of land. The Fairbanks area AAC is calculated at approximately 4,606 acres of harvest annually. The volumes proposed in this harvest and in combination with timber volumes from other proposed timber sales that are offered will be within the AAC and comply with sustained yield requirements.
3. Harvest unit design: The timber will be harvested as a clear cut for spruce. The harvest units are situated at the lower edge of productive uplands. All spruce 6 inch DBH and larger, will be included for harvest. Any trees smaller than 6" DBH will not be cut. Large snags valuable for wildlife habitat will be retained to the extent practical. The logging operations will follow all applicable Best Management Practices and residual trees will be protected from damage during harvest. Harvesting will be by the whole tree yarding system using a ground based skidding method. Slash disposal will be at the landings by burning or salvage for fuelwood.
 - a. Reforestation and site preparation: The sale area will be reforested in compliance with the Forest Resources and Practices regulations (11 AAC 95.375-.390) Natural regeneration will be utilized initially for reforestation, and the unharvested boundary will mature, robust spruce trees to provide seed to this unit. It is expected that the harvest method (heavy partial cut) will open sites and increase light and soil warmth. Reforestation will be assessed within five years post-harvest, and a regeneration survey will be conducted if regeneration appears marginal or patchy.

- b. Access design and construction: Access design, construction, and maintenance will comply with the Forest Resources and Practices regulations (11 AAC 95.285-.355).
 - Planned access is through Standard creek road a primary road in the TVSF
 - 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.
 - roads will be inactive following the sale.
 - DFFP typically applies for ROW of access but the creation of new spur roads such as what is anticipated for this sale do not qualify.
- c. Appraisal method: DFFP will appraise the timber value in compliance with 11 AAC 71.092. Commercial sales will be based on transactional evidence and market demand.

G. Resources and management

1. Timber.

Timber stand composition and structure: The site is located towards the bottom of Goldstream valley with a slight southern aspect at about 550' elevation. It is an open canopy White Spruce stand with a mix of Black Spruce at the edge of productivity. The understory is dominated by moss and Labrador Tea with minimal grass or shrubs.

Cored trees revealed an even-aged stand between 150 to 190 years at breast height. The dominant size class was between 10-16" DBH and average sawtimber height about 80'. There are approximately 109 sawtimber trees per acre with a basal area of 88 ft².

The age of the stand is evident, showing signs of decadence throughout. Larger canopy- trees had scattered incidence of broom rust, with some of the largest/oldest trees within the stand showing evidence of butt rot with weeping scars on the lower bole. Some of this decadence could also be attributed to marginal site conditions. There is evidence of thermokarst features primarily on the lower portions of the northern unit.

- a. Stand silvics: The normally merchantable species of trees on the TVSF are white spruce and birch. Data and research on regeneration and growth characteristics of these species are compiled within the Resource Analysis of the Tanana Valley State Forest (TVSF) Management Plan. The harvest and reforestation systems available in Interior Alaska are also reviewed and listed in the Resource Analysis. The results of the public and agency discussions for harvest and reforestation are discussed in the TVSF Management Plan. Silvicultural harvest systems that facilitate even-aged (natural) management are generally preferred. They mimic the ecological impact of wildfire and other disturbances and result in the greatest increase in site productivity. Even-aged management is normally accomplished through clear cuts, patch cuts and heavy partial cuts (such as seed tree or shelter

wood systems), which opens up the site to maximum solar gain. This results in the greatest production of both young hardwood that is important to wildlife and the spruce understory valuable years later as timber. Even-aged management techniques are utilized to provide young, vigorously growing stands in juxtaposition to older, undisturbed stands. Such placement of harvest units can optimize natural seedling and the edge effect. Regeneration of birch occurs principally from seed fall spread by wind, and secondarily from root-collar sprouting. Regeneration of white spruce occurs only from seeds. White spruce trees generally produce some level of seed crop every three to five years and large seed crops every five to seven years. The proposed sale is a clear cut to remove the mature spruce component of the stand.

- b. 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)). NC-1983 lies on the foot slope of a small south facing slope less than 10% at an elevation of 550' above sea level. Both units of the sale area lie on Minto Silt Loam which is moderately well drained with a water table 2-12" below surface.
2. Agriculture. There is no current agriculture activity in the area. A portion of the harvest area is on agriculture classified lands.

Wildlife habitat and harvest. classified lands. The Division of Agriculture will be consulted

Wildlife habitat and harvest.

The Goldstream bottom lands are important moose, black bear and furbearer habitat. There is signs of hunting in the sale area, two tree stands surrounding thermokarst ponds. There are no known raptor nests within the proposed sale area. Should an eagle nest tree be discovered in the sale area, the nest tree will be marked on the ground and a 330 foot no-harvest radius will be established to protect the tree. No critical wildlife habitat has been identified for this area.

3. Fish Habitat, water resources, and water quality. The proposed sale will be designed and managed to protect fish habitat and water quality in compliance with the Forest Resources and Practices Act and regulations (AS 41.17 and 11 AAC 95). The proposed sale will be designed and managed to protect fish habitat and water quality in compliance with the Forest Resources and Practices Act and regulations (AS 41.17 and 11 AAC 95). There are no fish-bearing streams in the sale area. The nearest creek, Ohio creek is non fish bearing, the closest fish bearing body of water is Goldstream creek. Harvest activities are not expected to impact any fish habitat.

Recreation, tourism, and scenic resources. The standard creek road area is a popular recreational area for ATV riders, hunters and trappers. The timber sale is not likely to have adverse affects on any recreation. The sale area has territorial views and is not expected to impact any viewsheds.

4. Cultural Resources. DFFP 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.
5. Subsurface Resources. There are no mining claims within the sale boundaries, although claims due serialized at ADL 715659 at the start of the 6 mile spur road used to access the sale.

H. Costs and benefits

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

The sales are also expected to benefit the local economy by providing jobs. It will have a positive impact on local employment by generating numerous man-hours of work associated with the harvest and transportation of wood products from this sale. Additionally, the public may benefit from access to additional personal use fuelwood areas, as home heating continues to be expensive in Interior Alaska. Minimal negative effects are expected on fish and wildlife habitat or water quality due to the small size proposed and distance from waterbodies. Other users of the Nenana Ridge Forest Road may experience an increase in traffic and road wear, but also derive some benefits from road maintenance and snow-clearing operations.

VI. PUBLIC 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 DFFP Fairbanks-Delta Area Office **by 4:30 PM AKST Friday, November 6th, 2026** in order to ensure consideration for review. Comments should be mailed to the State of Alaska, Division of Forestry & Fire Protection, 3700 Airport Way or by email to Andrew.Allaby@alaska.gov For more information you may contact the Andrew Allaby Fairbanks-Delta Area Office (907) 451-2603.

VII. PUBLIC NOTICE

The preliminary best interest finding and decision were publicly noticed in compliance with AS 38.05.945. Notice was posted on the Alaska Online Public Notice System, and both physical and electronic notices were mailed to previous timber sale bidders as well as any property owners or

business interests known to the Division in the proposed sale area. Notice was also posted on the Division of Forestry public webpage and social media.

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 TVSF Management Plan for Subunit 5a.

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(s) 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.

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 15 acres of mature White Spruce sawlog in the Standard Creek road area as proposed in Alternative 1 and described in this PBIF. The DFFP finds that this preliminary decision satisfies the objectives stated in this document and

Preliminary Best Interest Finding Melody Spruce NC-1983-F

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 to 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 Andrew Allaby, Fairbanks-Delta Area Forester andrew.allaby@alaska.gov (907)-451-2603

X. SIGNATURE

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

10/8/2026_____
Date

XI. ATTACHMENTS

Maps of the proposed project area follow.



