

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



SOUTHEAST AREA

**PRELIMINARY BEST INTEREST FINDING AND
DECISION FOR
EL CAPITAN TIMBER SALE
SSE-1380-K**

August 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 & 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
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
UA	University of Alaska
USFS	United States Forest Service

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I. PROPOSED ACTION

DOF is proposing to offer for sale approximately 340 acres of mature old growth timber composed of primarily western red cedar and western hemlock with components of Sitka spruce, and Alaska yellow cedar from state lands on Prince of Wales (POW) Island. The volume to be offered totals approximately 8,000 thousand board feet (MBF). 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 2018-2022 and 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-1380-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. 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 BIF is covered by the Southeast State Forest Management Plan (SESFMP) and the Prince of Wales Island Area Plan (POWIAP), and the BIF is consistent with these plans. The finding also considers the Interagency Wildfire Management Plan. The proposed area is not within a municipality, and therefore no municipal plans apply.

Step 2: Five-year Schedule of Timber Sales (AS 38.05.113). The Southeast Area Office 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. The land covered by this BIF appeared in the 2018-2022 and 2021-2025 FYSTS.

Step 3: Best Interest Finding. 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.

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 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.

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

Step 6: Sale administration. DOF administers 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 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 1, 12, and 13, Township 66 South, Range 78 East, and Sections 6, 7, 8 and 18, Township 66 South, Range 79 East, Copper River Meridian (CRM). The sale area is found within the Petersburg A-4 NW USGS quadrangle. See attached map titled: Appendix A, SSE-1380- K El Capitan Timber Sale Harvest Area Map.

B. Title status

The sale area lands were granted to the State through National Forest Community Grant 341 and 385.

C. Land use planning, classification, and management intent

This area is not within a municipality / No municipal plans apply to this area. The Inter-agency Fire Management Plan includes these lands in the Modified protection category. Other than the portions of the proposed harvest areas within the State Forest, and the portions of the proposed harvest areas within the west half of Section 12, the proposed harvest areas are closed to leasehold location with respect to mining (see Mineral Order 1118).

The preponderance of the proposed harvest is on state land within the geographic region covered by the POWIAP (El Capitan Subunit 4a) that is adjacent to the Southeast State Forest (SESF) represented in the El Capitan North Unit of the Southeast State Forest Management Plan. 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.”

El Capitan North and South Units, Chapter 3, Specific Management Direction.

Fisheries: #195-42-10100 (Wolf Creek), #103-90-10010, #101-90-10020.

Scenery: Consider scenic byway.

PRINCE OF WALES AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN (El Capitan UNIT 4a)

Chapter 2 of the plan contains area wide plan policies by use type. These policies and guidelines describe policies and guidelines for the varying use types that will be integrated as resource use and development occurs. Chapter 3 outlines the management policies for the specific land management units and are listed below.

Chapter 3. MANAGEMENT INTENT

State tidelands and submerged lands are managed for multiple use. Some areas are designated for resource development support facilities, such as log transfer and storage areas and mining access sites.

Management for the subunit emphasizes the important recreation and aesthetic values and the use of commercial forest resources of El Capitan Passage. Negative impacts on the recreation and aesthetic values of El Capitan Passage should be mitigated when siting and designing development activities.

Tidelands and submerged lands are also managed to protect the most important fish and wildlife habitat and harvest areas.

State lands will emphasize the importance of this area as the most northerly major road junction on Prince of Wales Island. Primary management considerations for the subunit are to retain options for siting future public, private, and commercial recreation developments, and saltwater access facilities. Low density residential uses may also be

developed. However, most community services, such as a school or post office, should be located in Whale Pass. Areas designated “Gu” (General Use) and “S” (Settlement) that are 400 feet or more from the coast are appropriate for timber harvest.

Three anadromous fish stream mouths will be closed to mineral entry. Two streams drain into the western arm of El [sic] Passage and one stream flows into Devilfish Bay. All other state lands in this subunit will remain open to mineral entry.

Fish and Wildlife (Applicable Excerpts)

Trapping and deer hunting occur throughout the subunit but are not designated because they do not meet the criteria for intensive community harvest.

Management Intent:

Lands designated for fish and wildlife habitat and harvest 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.

Forestry

There are significant stands of commercial grade timber in portions of the subunit. Some of the areas within the subunit, especially adjacent to Twin Island Lake have experienced timber harvest. Extensive areas of timber harvest also occurred to the north and south of Twin Lake within the Tongass National Forest.

Management Intent:

State uplands, tidelands and submerged lands designated “F” (Forestry) will be managed to support timber harvest activities consistent with other co-primary designations. Timber harvest is considered to be an appropriate use in areas designated “Gu” (General Use) and those areas designated for settlement (“S”) consistent with the requirements of Chapter 2. Future timber harvest operations should, in the preparation of the Forest Land Use Plan, provide a buffer separation from Twin Island Lake to protect viewsheds, between harvest and proposed disposal areas, and at anadromous streams and other significant habitat areas. The access and road requirements of potential settlement and commercial areas should be considered in the design of timber harvest roads.

Recreation (Applicable Excerpts)

Management Intent:

State lands in El Capitan Passage will be managed for public recreation and private recreational services appropriate to the road junction location and for potential water access on the west side of the island. Other appropriate uses can take place, including settlement and timber harvest under appropriate site and design considerations.

Settlement (Applicable Excerpts)

Management Intent:

Timber harvest in the areas designated “S” (Settlement) is appropriate, although the design of timber harvest areas and their roads should consider buffer separations from potential subdivisions and other design measures intended to minimize impacts to residential uses.

D. Current access and land use:

The main overland (road) access to this sale area is through the Alaska Highway System. Most of the sale area is located off the 2000 Road west of Twin Lake on the Prince of Wales Island Road system. The remaining portion of the sale is located on the 2700 Road to the south. Lands used in planning the timber sale are a combination of legislatively classified State Forest land, General Use, Settlement/ Recreation and classified land. The bulk of the merchantable timber identified is located on the latter mixed land classification managed by DMLW.

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

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 still contains numerous reserved forest roads managed by the USFS which were constructed and are maintained to that agency’s standards for commercial timber operations. The USFS is the responsible agency for the road management and maintenance of these drivable roads in the area. The USFS stated they grade these roads three times a year outside of timber sale activity. The road system in the area is only seasonally maintained.

The second-class City of Whale Pass is seven miles to the east on the other side of POW. Residents of that community and other communities on POW to some extent use the area for subsistence activity. Sealaska Corporation is the regional native corporation; there is no native corporation land adjacent to the timber sale.

Dispersed recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, and camping are conducted seasonally in the area by residents and tourists alike. Several saltwater fishing lodges are located to the west in Sea Otter Sound and on the other side of the island based in Whale Pass.

A federal mineral claim is located to the west of State ownership focused on limestone. The activity on the mineral claim occasionally warrants private operators to plow the 2000 Road for access to the rest of POW in the winter.

The USFS has an established and permitted Log Transfer Facility (LTF) on a small island connected to POW by a road causeway approximately one mile west of sale area. The LTF has not

received use in the last decade other than for moving heavy equipment by barge to the north end of POW. The El Capitan LTF also has a primitive boat launch that receives use by residents and fishing charter operators accessing the west coast of POW. The USFS has listed the ramp as a recreational improvement project in the POW Landscape Level Analyses. Several groups were observed camping at various times on the LTF uplands during the State timber sale planning fieldwork.

A quarter mile east of the LTF, there is an established trailhead to the El Capitan cave, a karst interpretive site and an old USFS administrative camp area that the public uses for staging remote activities. The cave and karst interpretive site, although promoted and staffed by the USFS in the past decade, has received limited use and has been subject to funding constraints. The USFS also has an administrative cabin and a dock adjacent to the site. The dock is used by the public for transient boat moorage. All of the USFS facilities are in a state of decline.

The El Capitan Passage receives occasional boat traffic from recreational and commercial vessels trafficking the outside of POW through the semi-protected passage. The passage is also a traditional transportation corridor for log rafts moving within the Tongass Archipelago.

The southeast quarter of Section 11 was subdivided by DMLW and is posted in the 2022 State Land Offing Brochure. Some of the lots within that subdivision are listed for disposal (purchase).

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 State is also making timber available as is feasible from other land classifications responding to its objective to develop settlement land for Alaskan use. 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. While the El Capitan area is relatively remote it 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 timber is located on a combination of Settlement/ Recreation, General Use and State Forest classified land. Based on staff observations, the total estimated saw log volume identified in the proposed 340-acre sale is 8,000 MBF. Of this, approximately 76

acres with an estimated 1,800 MBF is located on State Forest land 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 9,100 MBF 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.

Timber harvest areas located on Settlement-classified land are not managed on a sustained yield basis because the State's primary focus for those lands is eventual disposal and divestiture from State ownership.

3. Harvest unit design:

The sale area harvest units are designed for clear-cut harvest using conventional shovel logging and high lead cable yarding methods. The clear-cut silvicultural action is common in Southeast Alaska. Due to the variability of the existing stands of timber and the constraining topography, the unit lines generally are irregular in edge appearance and provide elements of structure to the units as they reforest. Clear-cut harvest is used for a variety of reasons. Categorically it yields positive forest growing conditions in most of Southeast Alaska from the standpoint of timber recovery and rate of regeneration. Typically, clear-cuts also yield the most return on the investment for the road constructed and the costs associated with the logging. In this case it also aids in the feasibility to provide access proximate to settlement suitable land. From a safety standpoint, clear-cuts are safer and thus more cost effective to manage during logging because of the reduction in hazards compared to partial cuts. While other prescriptions such as a partial cut may provide a level of retained forest values, the forest regeneration generally responds slower than in a clear-cut due to the diminished light available. Post-harvest wind-throw in these shallow rooted stands tends to be significant. This is precipitated by added turbulence created by openings and irregular stand height in partial cuts which tend to present a post-harvest risk to regeneration. This damaged timber is in turn difficult and often not feasible to utilize without damaging the regenerating timber around it. The specific configuration of the harvest proposed will be defined in more detail in the FLUP. Field reconnaissance indicates the area is harvestable using shovel logging techniques with several settings 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.

4. 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.

5. Road access design and construction: Access 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. Where roads are in Settlement Classified land, the DOF has coordinated with the land development section on the appropriateness of the location of the road relative to the planning intent.
6. Existing Roads: The existing forest roads were constructed for timber access several decades ago associated with the USFS timber sale program. The projected mainline haul route uses roads managed by the USFS. The log truck haul route for the sale is projected to occur westerly towards the USFS El Capitan LTF on the west side of POW. While hauling to the Whale Pass LTF or points to the south is possible, it is not likely based on economics and the current configuration of timber operators on Prince of Wales Island. The timber purchaser will be required to obtain authorization of the land or road manager to use the roads and any log transfer facilities as part of the sale operating plan.

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 commercially active within a decade's time. 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.

The 2700 and 2000 Roads have been maintained for highway traffic and are in fair condition. The roads receive intermittent use by the public. The road system on this portion of the island has a very low volume of traffic. Spot observations of the two mainline roads indicate that vehicle traffic per day ranges between 2 and 20 vehicles with most of the activity occurring in the late summer and fall. The roads handle light opposing traffic moving at lower speeds. Some sections on the 2700 have limited sight distance for drivers; young growth timber and other vegetation such as grass and shrubs along the ditch line and shoulder make for slow two-way traffic. The usability and safety of the pull outs and the shoulder of the road could benefit from clearing.

Log trucks on narrow roads can be a traffic hazard. The DOF will work with the USFS to mitigate the risk by reconditioning the pull outs, increasing signage, and clearing the routes of vegetation. Logging operations adjacent to the system roads will be on secondary road systems, located off the road surfaces and will seek separation where feasible for loading per USFS reservation and policies.

The 2000770 Road is not drivable due to vegetation. Harvest operations will recondition the first several hundred feet of the road for access. The residual condition of this road segment will be coordinated with the USFS.

7. Proposed Roads: Within the State Forest, the roads will be used for long-term forest resource management, including future commercial timber harvest entries. The minimization of the road footprint supports the greatest allocation of ground area to silviculture, influences logging costs and is typically a factor in reoccurring operational costs. On Settlement classified land, the road has been placed to facilitate the near-term harvest of the timber, balancing this with long-term access objectives. The DOF intends to document and request reservation of right of ways from DMLW for access to the State Forest land through the other land classifications as part of this management action.

Sale development has documented all significant surface drainages crossed by the proposed roads. To maintain water quality during road construction, the Division of Forestry will implement the FRPA's Best Management Practices (BMP). Due to the relatively

small drainage areas, the surface drainage structures are generally small. The location of the drainages and associated structures will be specified in the FLUP process. Most of the crossings are projected to use culverts.

Numerous tributary waters to anadromous streams 105-42-10110 and 106-30-10800-2050 are proposed to be crossed by spur roads. Only one crossing on a tributary of stream 105-42-10110 was proximate to observed fish habitat on the 200900 Road in Unit 6. Based on stream gradient, the proposed crossing of this stream very close to the upper limit of observed rearing habitat. Topography constrains the crossing location. Maintaining existing flow conditions will govern the structure chosen. The other stream reaches crossed by the proposed roads elsewhere are above ADF&G documented fish barriers and do not exhibit characteristics or evidence of fish habitat.

Limestone karst topography was evident in most of the units. Road location has avoided and minimized visible karst features. Construction will mitigate activity that could lead to recruitment of fines and debris into underground features or feature collapse.

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 are performance requirements of the state 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, 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 DOF will consider leaving some of the secondary roads open for temporary vehicle access so the public may access residual wood for purposes of firewood collection if it is made aware of the need. It is unlikely that the area would be utilized significantly for firewood because there is not a nearby community. Keeping a road open 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 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 local 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 assured and residual cordwood value 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.

8. Appraisal method: 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 is primarily composed of Volume Class 2 and 3 timber types with old growth characteristics. Western hemlock makes up most of the commercial species along with minor components of western red cedar, Sitka spruce and Alaska yellow cedar. The timber identified in this sale is largely on poorly drained organic soils with steeper areas of karst topography and limestone. The larger and better-quality timber is located on the well-drained soils with steeper terrain.

b. Stand silvics:

The timber in this proposed sale is of mixed quality and defective except in some of the areas with steeper, well-drained features. Comparable areas previously harvested by the USFS adjacent to the proposed sale appear to be fully stocked, vigorously growing and generally of even ages by stand. These stands are primarily composed of western hemlock, Sitka spruce, and western red cedar sapling and pole-timber. Evidence of tree species prior to harvest (stumps and snags) was that of hemlock and spruce types. Prior harvest areas contain generally better drained soils and features associated with limestone bedrock. The sites targeted in this PBIF are residual stands that were difficult to operate on due to terrain or had species composition less desirable under historical market conditions (red cedar). Western red cedar has contemporarily gained significant market value since then as a species.

The DOF intends for natural reforestation to occur promptly. The growth of

commercial timber species to a merchantable size will be encouraged 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 to loggers and 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 within 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 sale area occupies an area with broken topography ranging from low/moderate slopes to areas of short but steep rocky bluffs; aspect on most of the units is primarily facing south and west. Elevation ranges from 20 to 800 feet within the sale area. Much of the sale area has slopes of less than 35 percent. Limestone, and other karst features are apparent on steeper terrain which also inherently experience better overall drainage. Conglomerate bedrock was observed in areas that are not limestone. Flatter terrain is found to have thicker organic soils composed of primarily feather moss mats with underlying rock and typically poor site drainage.

Limestone geology defines most of the units. Springs were generally emanating from the base of the topography where the ground transitions to a consolidated and semi-impermeable brown cobble till. Spring emergences from the hillsides were found in several units. These flow emergences correlated to the timber types in many cases. Streams below these emergences were generally incised in gravelly and cobble soil keyed to the bed rock observed.

Karst fins were observed generally in all the units; the timber in these areas is more often a hemlock timber type and typically has a higher wind disturbance evidence in the stand.

Karst characteristics that may be more susceptible to hydraulic change (damage) have been field identified and accommodated in the design of the harvest units. Harvest operations will be instructed to maneuver and manipulate timber and slash to minimize post-harvest changes to soils and to avoid long term influence of surface and sub-surface drainage patterns.

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.

Most of the lands in this proposed timber sale are co-designated Settlement and Recreational classified land. While these uses are identified as the highest and best use in the area plan, they do not preclude other uses such as habitat when it is identified as important on a site-specific basis in support of wildlife or fisheries.

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.”

A portion of the area in the proposed timber sale are on State Forest land. 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.” Other uses on State Forest land must be considered and permitted unless they are found not compatible in a finding (AS 41.17.230).

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 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 FYSTSs. 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. DOF staff did not observe wolf or bear dens within the units during timber reconnaissance efforts, unit layout or road location. No known wolf or black bear dens are in or adjacent to the sale area per ADF&G.

Per ADF&G, the proposed units may have some value for deer habitat due to their relative location to the previously harvested areas on state and federal land that is now in a regeneration status with varying ages. ADF&G's analysis of the timber sale area is there is adequate winter habitat outside of the proposed state harvest areas. The units are 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 adjacent terrain. The deer activity observed by DOF in the spring and fall was relatively dispersed. Wildlife activity associated with deer, bear and wolf was observed along anadromous stream 105-42-10110 and its associated tributaries in the form of game trails. These observations correlate for the most part with ADF&G's collared deer studies in the area. ADF&G combined several habitat models with collared deer data to apply a predicted importance to the timber sale footprint. It projected that approximately 20% of the area as having important seasonal habitat scores for deer. This timber sale will likely remove important winter deer habitat, but important winter deer habitat will remain in between these timber sale units. Due to the remaining important habitat in between the timber sale units, ADF&G does not have major concerns for impacts on deer populations or the predator populations that rely on deer.

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 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 for a variety of reasons but mainly to encourage sawlog timber growth. The stem exclusion phase post thinning on these young growth stands has already occurred. Harvesting timber adjacent to these thinned stands would generally provide a boost to the area's food capacity until the stem exclusion phase. It is also likely that some of the area's young growth 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 proposed sale footprint. This sequential mix of timber types would typically benefit wildlife populations like deer that tend to use the disturbance areas for their associated cover and food.

Human interaction with wildlife occurs mainly associated with the area's proximity to the community of Whale Pass and the POW road network. Hunting and trapping occur in the area. Evidence of roadside trapline(s) for mink and martin was seen on the 2000 Road. The project area likely receives limited use for hunting away from the existing road system due to the thick vegetation and terrain. Once accessed by spur roads, hunting by humans and wolves typically increases; this tends to be considered "normal" for a period until the vegetation obscures ready wildlife viewing at 20 plus years post-harvest. The perceived reduction in deer population by humans after that point precedes the downturn in deer numbers in the area by several years due to diminishing access and visibility of the deer to the roads and areas that people can access easily by foot.

The roads associated with the timber harvest will provide some additional access for human activities associated with wildlife. Regardless, added hunting pressure is not anticipated to be significant due to the proximity of the large road network elsewhere on POW. Another mitigating factor will be the intent of the DOF under the FRPA to close roads to vehicle traffic.

Some wolf sign on the existing roads was observed by DOF in the preparation of the sale. 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. The area's importance for deer habitat is considered nominal. Wolves primarily would be in the area to consume the deer for food or take advantage of other conditions in the area such as in estuaries and fish streams. Some

evidence of winter deer mortality was observed in Units 1, 5 and 6 but was not directly attributable to wolf kills.

Deer will continue to be present in numbers adequate for a sustainable wolf population on POW with the development and use of these state lands. 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 timbered area within 300 feet of anadromous stream 105-42-10110 in deference to the observed wildlife travel and cover attributes it provides. This effectively leaves a significant travel corridor from tidewater to the ridge system to the northwest and the Twin Island Lake area.

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 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.

4. 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 DOF has mapped surface drainages encountered in field design of the units as well as obvious adjacent drainages using remote sensing (LDIR and aerial imagery).

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 ADF&G-Habitat Biologist in Craig and other staff are familiar with the area. ADF&G staff visited the more significant streams in 2016 through 2018 associated with the Sustainable Salmon Program Grant and verified the extent of habitat.

Several cataloged anadromous streams (105-42-10110 and 106-30-10800-2050) are located adjacent to the sale area. The topography of the area other than in these areas 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 visited proximate to the proposed units and 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 as needed during timber sale activity to maintain water quality considering their source contribution to anadromous fish habitat.

5. Settlement, recreation, tourism, and scenic resources. The POWIAP identified an objective to maintain aesthetic qualities and recreation values of the El Capitan area by minimizing development on the waterfront of Twin Island Lake and El Capitan Passage associated with settlement. The DMLW and the DOF considered this objective relative to terrestrial access (roads) which was also desired in the plan. The two objectives were discerned to be in opposition in some areas for some users but considered to be rectifiable. This perspective is based on the propensity and resilience of Southeast Alaska to grow trees within the time frame of likely residential and recreational development. Creating initial access through a timber sale prior to settlement development also avoids direct conflicts of aesthetics and use in residential areas. Providing physical access up front facilitates establishment of long-term access corridors to the State Forest and Settlement land prior to being constrained by focused residential use. This also provides time for areas harvested to visually “green” in a similar manner to the harvest done previously by the USFS.

Commercial use of the area is currently associated with the saltwater sport fishing. Lodge and charter boat use of the area is focused to the west. Non-commercial recreation in this part of Southeast Alaska is typically dispersed and remote in nature. Users of the area are typically passing through to other locations on either the road or El Capitan Passage by boat. Past timber sales have provided road access for dispersed recreational opportunities and this timber sale will provide similar access. Without the road access provided by the past harvest, upland public use would be significantly constrained by terrain and vegetation. Upland recreational use would, for the most part, not be present or be relatively rare. This timber sale is expected to result in no significant changes to current recreational use.

The Twin Island Lake receives occasional public use for its fish resources in the summer and early fall and provides an aesthetic setting. The past timber harvest is now covered with young growth of ages between 30 and 50 years. The area by Unit 4 was observed to not have specific shoreside value for direct recreation use due to the broken terrain. The backdrop of the lake can be easily observed for a short distance where the 2700 Road is adjacent to the lake on its west end. The proposed Unit 4 will be visible as it extends up the hill north of the lake and road; a retention area of more than 100-foot width is proposed adjacent to the lake per statutory requirements associated with the fish habitat of the lake and several small tributary streams. The retention area provides transition but does not obscure the harvest.

While access to the lake is currently undeveloped (primitive), small craft that are on the lake in the next several decades will see the harvested unit's upper extent. Portions of the top of the knob occupied by Unit 8 will also be visible from the lake.

Units 1, 2 and 5 are adjacent to saltwater and placed accordingly to provide basic access to the area for forestry and future settlement use. All these units will look like the surrounding mottled hillside inside of twenty years and are broken in view by topography.

Road access may provide a more ready form of hunting access for vehicle-based or pedestrian hunters, but relative to the overall availability of similar areas on POW, it is 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.

The DMLW has subdivided the southeast corner of Section 11 (ASLS No. 2019-05). The subdivision is currently undeveloped. The DNR is advertising some of these lots in the Alaska State Land Offering—Auction #493 in calendar year 2022. These lots are one-quarter of a mile to the west of Unit 1. This land sale will have limited visibility to the timber sale due to the retention area adjacent to anadromous stream 10542101000 (Turn Creek) and intervening topography.

The classification configuration of state land at El Capitan makes it desirable for DOF to develop initial access through the Settlement classified land to actively manage State Forest land in the future. With the State Forest north and south of the settlement land otherwise constrained by federal ownership, the DOF has focused effort overall on creating access via state land due to the uncertainty of federal access and use. Per the POWIAP, timber sales in settlement land are to benefit the eventual settlement classification. DNR interprets this to mean that roads are beneficial to the economics and practicality of a settlement project if they do not preclude the primary classification. The proposed timber sale is projected to develop the pioneering access typically needed for more permanent roads and economical survey work associated with subdivision development. The forest roads provide functional access for later lot development and facilitate road right of way construction that is not solely dependent on high initial private or government startup capital. Additionally, while forest values are recognized as desirable to many remote Alaskan experiences, the removal of large trees proximate to building sites, utilities and roads is generally beneficial to safer development of land, particularly in Southeast.

Where timber exists in the tract, it was considered appropriate to include it to contribute to the revenue of the project if it did not significantly detract from other resources values to provide scale for developing access in the tract.

It was determined through the project reconnaissance that some areas classified as Settlement are likely not suitable for a subdivision because of the terrain or other resources (such as streams). In these areas, the land and roads will likely serve in the long term to support overall forest values. Some of the area could support future silvicultural management if compatible with the adjacent uses when the timber reaches merchantability.

The POWIAP identified the scenic setting of the El Capitan Passage as a resource to consider relative to the observed and projected uses in the area. More specifically, the POWIAP forestry management intent is that future timber harvest operations should, in the preparation of the Forest Land Use Plan, provide a buffer separation from Twin Island Lake to protect viewsheds, between harvest and proposed disposal areas, and at anadromous streams and other significant habitat areas. The DNR has avoided harvest within 300 feet of the cataloged riparian areas in support of fish and wildlife values and secondarily to aid in the maintenance of the visual resource. Topography draped with the different vegetative covers cast the setting in the area. Portions of the proposed timber sale will be visible from the waters of Twin Island Lake or El Capitan Passage. This existing and proposed mixture of vegetation types on the landscape is like many viewsheds on POW. There are previously harvested areas within this project viewshed that are already a mixture of dense lush landscape that varies in structure and age. This timber sale will result in the same vegetation backdrop once reforested. Regardless, it is expected that over time, settlement areas adjacent to these shorelines will see development associated with residential lot development that will be different than the existing conditions. Retention of all timber and shielding all development from the various access points is not a reasonable expectation with the objective of providing proximate access to land suited for remote settlement. It is observed that the higher valued lots in Southeast are associated with waterfront and view lots. While the proposed harvest will be visible from the waterbodies, it by contrast to residential development is temporal and will be reforested within the timeframe that most settlement is projected to occur in the area. The other factor considered by DNR was the quantity of the scenic resources in the area and region. While the immediate area is an attractive setting it is reasonably like other areas on the island and in the archipelago of Southeast and is only a small portion of the broader setting. With management changes on the Tongass National Forest, the likelihood of significant adjacent landscape change is low to nonexistent in the time frame of the reforestation in the project area.

6. Cultural Resources.

DOF works with the State Office of History and Archeology (OHA) to identify and avoid known cultural, historic or prehistoric sites in planning the proposed access routes and timber sales. State archaeologists have visited the sale area several times. The OHA did not note specific concern in their 2022 review of this project.

If additional archaeological sites are identified, proposed salvage 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 OHA and take action to protect the findings.

7. Subsurface Resources.

No mineral claims are present on the proposed sale area. Several claims are located to the south and west of the sale area. These claims are for limestone, gold, and molybdenum. The timber sale is not expected to affect use of or access to these claims. Road activity may offer further insight to below ground conditions or provide future access for exploratory effort.

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. Making the timber available on State Forest land is in keeping with the Alaska Constitution and the intent of the governor and legislature to make the resource available in a sustainable manner commensurate with demand. Making the timber available on the Settlement classified land similarly responds to the market demand.

Access will also be established to State Forest land that will be of benefit for future forest management and use. On Settlement lands, terrestrial access will be proximate to likely future residential development and coastal areas identified by the DMLW as having value to the state for future community development and recreation.

Logging roads in general have pioneered access to much of SE Alaska. Forest roads have provided many people initial access to land and secondary projects. They are scalable and regularly used in a similar format to build more refined roads. They are appropriate for the timber harvest and outlook for settlement given the lack of certainty of the future development. The forest roads will be constructed to the DOF standards that account for the foreseeable uses. The DOF has worked with the Land Development Section to place feasible alignments that could be upgraded to applicable American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Guidelines for Very Low Volume Roads in the future. To construct a higher order road in all parts of the settlement area at this time is not needed to remove the timber and is not a reasonable expectation relative to the other needs of the state.

Timber sales have traditionally created broad economic benefits to the communities of Southeast Alaska. The business communities on POW and to certain extent other nearby SE communities 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 and the Whale Pass timber sale in the community of Whale Pass, several commenters voiced a desire for local businesses to benefit from timber harvest operations. The remote aspect of the area will likely require some amount of locally based support for operations (equipment maintenance, housing needs, etc.). 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 and specifically on POW. It is anticipated that the residents of the communities in Southeast Alaska will receive a direct benefit through employment opportunities 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 timber removal from settlement areas can be an economic hurdle to land and right of way development and is typically an obstacle to utility installation. Mobilization and capitalization costs are typically a barrier unless done at scale for site development. To protect the State's interest, its land disposal policy restricts the removal of resources (timber or rock) until the State has been paid in full by a purchaser; this policy in practice limits lot development to those with significant working capital. While some lot developers have the capability economically, it is inherently a constraint. Removing timber in a planned manner and in bulk creates scale to effectively manage and market it to the benefit the parties involved and sets the stage for smaller land purchasers to occupy and develop the lots at the time of purchase.

The timber industry has requested timber at the scale presented that is currently lacking on federal land. A sale of this size is achievable and appropriate given the State's resources. This sale provides the potential for significant jobs during a time of economic anxiety. Providing the timber at scale also provides a market base for wood procured by smaller operators elsewhere in the region and contributes to maintaining the resident skill sets and contractor capacity to handle timber overall in the region, regardless of scale. Due the general competitive interest on POW and goal to process the timber locally, the DOF proposes to use the request for proposal process for selling the sale.

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 timber sale may also be bundled with the Whale Pass timber sale depending on the scope of interest, market conditions and projected costs at the time that the sale is executed. The distance from the existing mills on the island 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.

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 September 26, 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 & Fire Protection, 2417 Tongass Avenue, Ketchikan, Alaska 99901 or emailed to greg.staunton@alaska.gov. For more information, please contact Greg Staunton at 907-225-3070 or by email at 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 September 26, 2022.

VII. PUBLIC NOTICE

This PBIF was publicly noticed in compliance with AS 38.05.945. Notice was posted on the Alaska Online Public Notice System on August 26, 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 ADNR has reached the following Preliminary Decision: to offer for sale approximately 340 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); 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 Greg Staunton, Area Forester at: greg.staunton@alaska.gov or (907) 225-3070.

IX. SIGNATURE

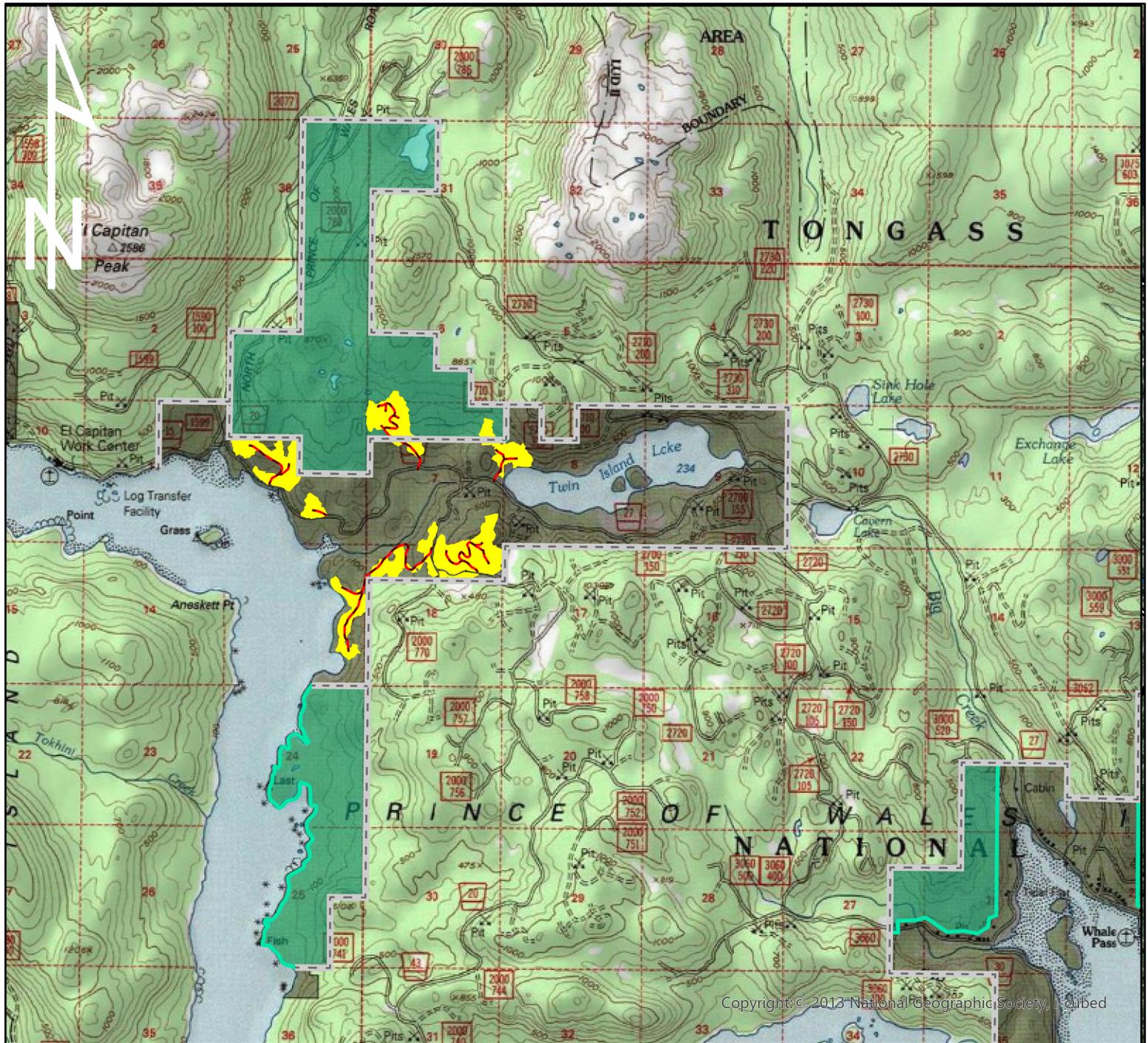
Greg Staunton, Area Forester
Alaska Division of Forestry

Date

X. APPENDICES

Appendix A	SSE-1380-K El Capitan Timber Sale Area Maps (4 pages)
Appendix B	References
Appendix C	Reserved for Appeal Regulations
Appendix D	Reserved for El Capitan Timber Sale Comments & Responses

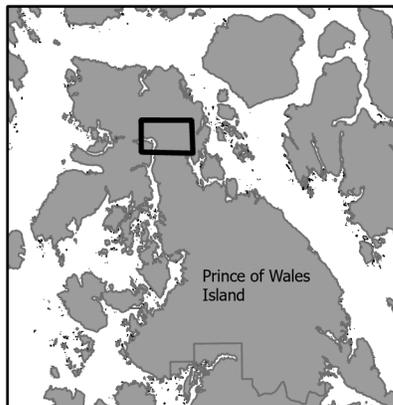
Appendix A SSE-1380-K El Capitan Timber Sale Area Maps



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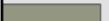
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Area Map 1 in = 1 Mile



Vicinity Map 1 in = 32 miles

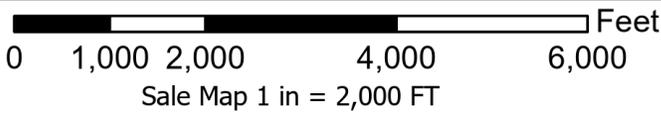
LEGEND

-  Property Line
-  Proposed Road
-  Other State/Private Land
-  Proposed Harvest Unit
-  Southeast State Forest

**APPENDIX A1
SSE-1379-K
EI CAPITAN TIMBER SALE
AREA MAP**



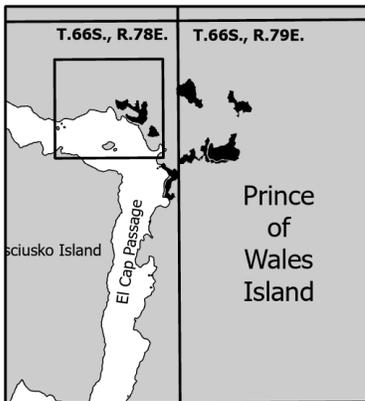
TC 08/25/2022



Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA, Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community

Contour Interval = 40 FT
Source: USFS LiDAR 2018

APPENDIX A2
SSE-1379-K
EI CAPITAN TIMBER SALE
MAP 1 UNITS 1, 2



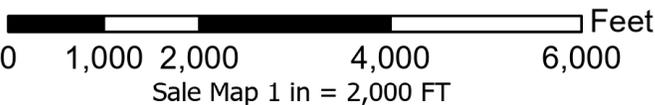
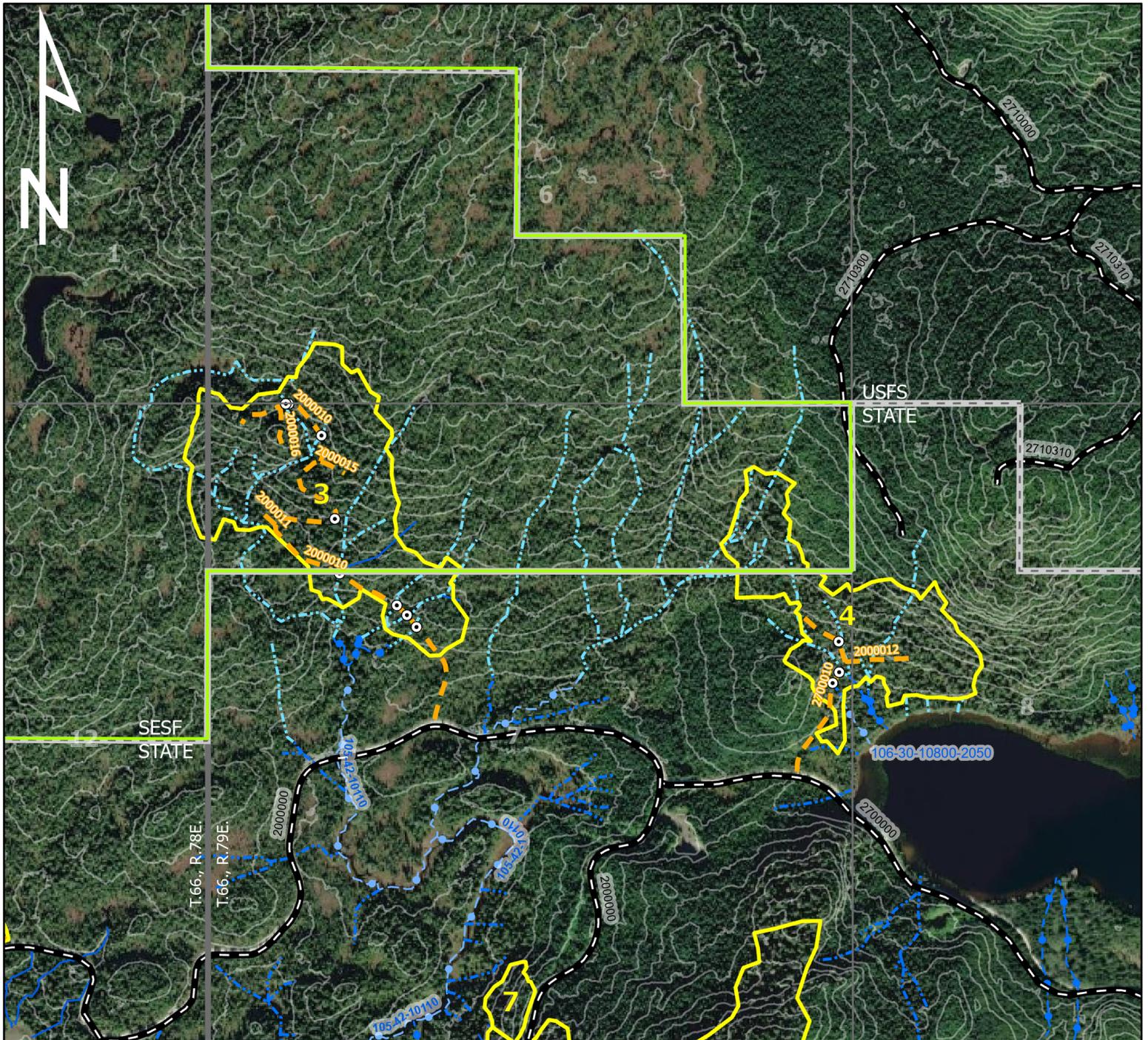
Vicinity Map 1 in = 3 miles

LEGEND

- Southeast State Forest
- Harvest Unit
- Property Line
- Existing Road
- Proposed Road
- Proposed Drainage Structure
- Log Transfer Facility (LTF)
- Cataloged Anadromous
- Non Cataloged Anadromous
- Tributary to Anadromous <12%
- Tributary to Anadromous >12%
- General Water Quality

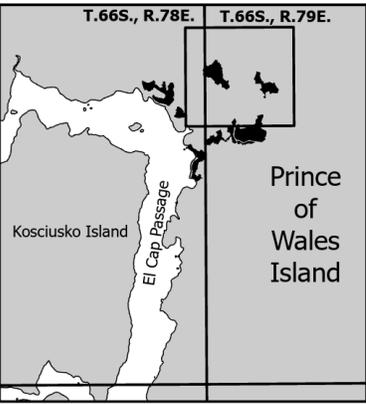


TC 08/25/2022



Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA, Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community

Contour Interval = 40 FT
Source: USFS LiDAR 2018



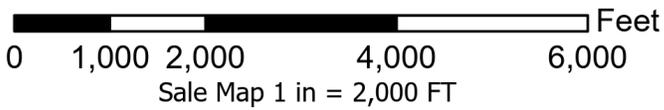
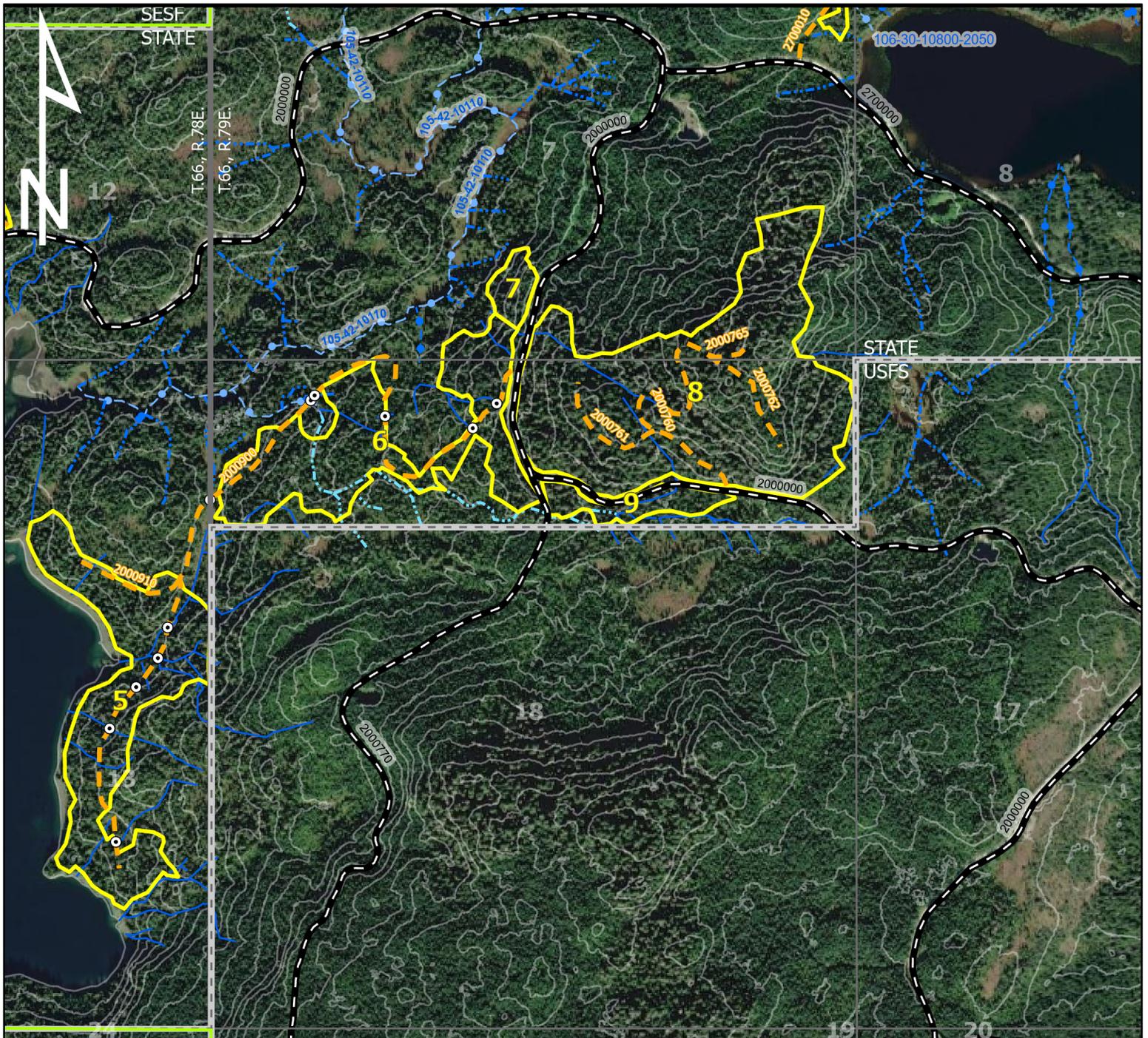
Vicinity Map 1 in = 3 miles

LEGEND

Southeast State Forest	Cataloged Anadromous
Harvest Unit	Non Cataloged Anadromous
Property Line	Tributary to Anadromous <12%
Existing Road	Tributary to Anadromous >12%
Proposed Road	General Water Quality
Proposed Drainage Structure	

APPENDIX A2
SSE-1379-K
EI CAPITAN TIMBER SALE
MAP 2 UNITS 3, 4

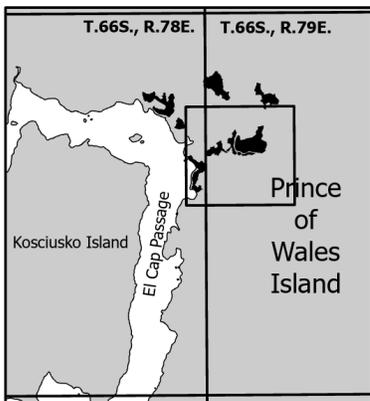




Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA, Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community

Contour Interval = 40 FT
Source: USFS LiDAR 2018

APPENDIX A2
SSE-1379-K
EI CAPITAN TIMBER SALE
MAP 3 UNITS 5, 6, 7, 8, 9



Vicinity Map 1 in = 3 miles

LEGEND

Southeast State Forest	Cataloged Anadromous
Harvest Unit	Non Cataloged Anadromous
Property Line	Tributary to Anadromous <12%
Existing Road	Tributary to Anadromous >12%
Proposed Road	General Water Quality
Proposed Drainage Structure	



Appendix B References

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Appendix C Appeal and Request for Reconsideration Regulations
(Reserved)

Appendix D SSE-1380-K El Capitan Timber Sale Comments & Responses
(Reserved)