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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Tongass
National
Forest

R10-MB-369c

May 1998



Control Lake Timber Sales

Record of Decision

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Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation
10900 NE 8th Street
Bellevue, Washington 98004
Contract No. 53-0109-3-00369
Control Lake Environmental Impact Statement





File Code: 1950

Date: May 12, 1998

Dear Planning Participant:

Attached is the Control Lake Timber Sales Final EIS and Record of Decision. The package includes the following items:

- Final EIS - Volume I, including Summary
- Final EIS - Volume II, Appendices
- Record of Decision
- Large scale project map with selected harvest units, roads and road access management strategy.

The Record of Decision documents my decision on the selection of an alternative and the factors considered in reaching the decision. The effective date of implementation for the decision and the appeal rights are also specified in the Record of Decision

The decision reflects the efforts of many individuals, groups, Federal, State and Native representatives who have been involved in the development of the Control Lake project. I want to thank these individuals for their substantial involvement. I also want to thank those of you who took the time to review and comment on the Draft and Supplemental Draft EISs, and also those of you who participated in the Subsistence Hearings. Your interest in the management of the Tongass National Forest is appreciated.

Sincerely,

BRADLEY E. POWELL
Forest Supervisor

enclosures



Record of Decision

Background

The purpose and need for this project is to implement direction contained in the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), to help provide a sustained level of timber supply to meet annual and Forest Plan planning cycle market demand, and to provide diverse opportunities for natural resource employment, consistent with providing for the multiple use and sustained yield of all renewable forest resources. Another objective is to provide timber volume that will contribute to the Ketchikan Area Timber Sale Program. The alternatives and actions considered are possible approaches to meeting this purpose and need. The EIS study process was designed to help ensure that, in meeting this purpose and need, the Forest Service makes the most informed decision possible for this project area specifically, and for the Tongass National Forest generally. The Control Lake Timber Sales Project could provide up to maximum of approximately 86 MMBF of timber, given the guidance of the Forest Plan.

Under the Forest Plan, approximately 45 percent of the Project Area is included in Land Use Designations (LUDs) that allow programmed timber harvest. The majority of the project is in LUDs which do not allow programmed timber harvest. This primarily includes the Semi-Remote Recreation LUD that covers the Elevenmile shore and most of the Western Peninsula portion of the Project Area; the Honker Old Growth Habitat Reserve (OGHR) in the eastern portion of the Project Area; and, small OGHRs in the Rush Peak, Logjam, Steelhead and Election Creek areas. A comparison of the desired future condition for the Timber Production, Modified Landscape and Scenic Viewshed LUDs in the Project Area with the existing condition shows an opportunity to harvest suitable stands of old growth and to produce managed productive stands capable of long-term timber production. Approximately 22,800 acres of mature and overmature timber are suitable and available for programmed timber harvest within those LUDs which allow timber harvest.

Section 101 of the Tongass Timber Reform Act of 1990 (TTRA) directs the USDA Forest Service "... to the extent consistent with providing for the multiple use and sustained yield of all renewable forest resources, seek to provide a supply of timber from the Tongass National Forest which (1) meets the annual market demand for timber from such forest and (2) meets the market demand from such forest for each planning cycle." Section 101 of the TTRA specifies that Forest Service efforts to seek to meet market demand are subject to appropriations, National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requirements, and other applicable laws.

There is demonstrated mill capacity in the region to process the logs, if the supply of timber is available. There is also a projected need for the timber volume being considered from this project area (see Appendix A, Final EIS) for the Forest Service to come closer to meeting an objective of providing timber under contract to the existing dependent industry, as a means of providing for stability in relation to fluctuating market demand (Morse, 1995). There is a substantial component of the economy of Southeast Alaska that is dependent on a viable timber industry. There is also a need on Prince of

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Wales and Southeast Alaska for timber sales to support a growing number of small and medium sized operators and mills. Based on these factors, the need for the project is clearly indicated.

Public scoping, data collection and analysis, and document production began with issuance of the Notice of Intent published in the Federal Register on October 6, 1993 for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and August 14, 1997 for the Supplemental Draft EIS. This Record of Decision (ROD) and the Final EIS disclose the environmental effects of the alternatives considered and document the decision for authorization of activities within the project area.

In developing the Final EIS and this ROD, it is recognized that less than complete knowledge exists about many relationships and conditions of wildlife, fish, forests, jobs, and communities. The ecology, inventory, and management of a large forest area is a complex and developing science. The biology of wildlife species prompts questions about population dynamics and habitat relationships. The interaction of resource supply, the economy, and communities is the subject matter of an inexact science.

The data and level of analysis used in the Final EIS were commensurate with the importance of the possible impacts (40 CFR 1502.15). When encountering a gap in information, the interdisciplinary team (ID Team) took one of two approaches: (1) they collected the missing information or conducted the analysis necessary to identify important relationships; or (2) they concluded that, although the missing information would have added precision to estimates or better specified a relationship, the basic data and central relationships are sufficiently well established in the respective sciences that the new information would be very unlikely to reverse or nullify understood relationships. Thus, any information missing from the Final EIS was determined to be not essential for a reasoned choice among the alternatives.

Decision

This Record of Decision documents my decision to make timber available from the Control Lake Project Area to help meet the Tongass National Forest Timber Sale Program requirements. My decision encompasses the following:

- the volume to make available in this Project Area in multiple timber sales;
- the location and design of timber harvest units;
- the location and design of road systems;
- road management objectives including closures for resource protection and economics;
- necessary mitigation measures and monitoring;
- whether there may be a significant restriction on subsistence use, and if so, related findings and measures to minimize impacts on subsistence users; and
- Non-significant Forest Plan Amendment.

It is my decision to select Alternative 13 with minor modification for implementation in the Control Lake Project Area (see the description of Alternative 13 in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS). This decision is responsive to issues raised during scoping, data gathered and

analyzed, public responses to the Draft and Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statements, and testimony received at the subsistence hearings.

Modifications to Alternative 13

I modify Alternative 13 by deleting the harvest units in VCU 575 associated with the 3016 Road.

The Selected Alternative includes the following features to help meet the purpose and need for the project and to respond to public comments regarding timber harvest in the Control Lake Project Area:

Description of the Selected Alternative

1. The Selected Alternative will harvest about 2,358 acres of commercial forest land (CFL) to provide timber for Tongass National Forest Timber Sale Program. This specified harvest will provide approximately 54.9 MMBF of sawlog and utility volume along with 3.0 MMBF of right-of-way (ROW) volume, for a total of 57.9 MMBF. Preliminary implementation planning indicates this volume will be offered for sale in about 17 timber sales ranging in size from about 0.2 to 11.2 MMBF. Nine of these sales will be less than 2 MMBF. These sales are projected to begin in 1998 and to provide timber over the next 5 years. Design features of the harvest units are described in detail on the Unit Cards in Appendix D of the Final EIS. Integrated silvicultural prescriptions have been developed for each unit and will be further updated during final layout. A full set of prescriptions are included in the Planning Record.
2. The Selected Alternative includes partial cut harvest, rather than clearcut harvest, for 1,736 acres (74% of the project area). Clearcuts with reserve trees are planned for 622 acres, or about 26 percent. This is consistent with Forest Service Chief's policy to reduce the amount of clearcutting. The partial cut harvest prescriptions for these units are intended to promote regeneration (especially red and yellow cedar), provide for stand structural diversity, maintain riparian habitat, maintain scenic quality, maintain high value marten habitat, and leave young, vigorously growing trees. The impacts to residual trees will be minimized. The Unit Cards in the Final EIS provide specific direction for field layout to accomplish these objectives.
3. The Selected Alternative includes reconstruction of approximately 4 miles of existing road, and construction of about 42 miles of new road in order to access the specified timber harvest units. Appendix E of the Final EIS contains the Road Cards with direction for the location of each road. The Road Cards list road segments and road management objectives for future management of the transportation system including the specific location, method and rationale for road closures. Access Management prescriptions are summarized in Chapter 4 of the Final EIS. The large scale map for the ROD and Final EIS indicate which roads are to be closed or left open for the Control Lake Project Area.
4. No new log transfer facilities (LTFs) will be needed to implement any of the Control Lake timber sales. Existing sites at Naukati and Winter Harbor could be used. The A Frame LTF at Thorne Bay is being removed and cleaned up as part of the KPC Long-term Contract Settlement Agreement. It is anticipated that in the future, most logs will not be placed in the water at Thorne Bay but rather transported by methods such as barging. Additionally, it is expected some of the timber sales will be purchased by businesses located on Prince of Wales Island and likely will not need to use LTFs.
5. This Record of Decision identifies mitigation measures authorized to reduce or eliminate adverse environmental effects of the timber harvest and road construction activities specified in the Selected Alternative. Chapter 2 of the FEIS specifies the implementation and effectiveness monitoring that will be conducted to determine if the resource management objectives have been met.

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6. The small Old Growth Habitat Reserves (OGHRs) mapped in the Forest Plan within the Project Area have been jointly evaluated by ADF&G, USFWS and the Forest Service for size, spacing and habitat composition. This effort focused primarily on the Rush Peak and Election Creek small reserves; a proposed new small reserve on the north part of the Steelhead watershed; and, the Rio Roberts watershed portion of the Honker large reserve (See Chapter 3 of the FEIS).

Based on the evaluation, I have decided to adjust the Rush Peak small OGHR by reducing it on the west and north portion of the reserve and adding a similar acreage to the Honker large reserve north of the 30 Road in the vicinity of Rio Beaver Creek. The reduction is in an area primarily associated with previous timber management activities and roads, while the addition will add protection to important fish and wildlife habitats. The resulting small OGHR will meet all of the size, spacing and composition requirements specified in Appendix K of the Forest Plan. I have reviewed the Rio Roberts watershed related part of the OGHR evaluation and have decided not to adjust the Honker OGHR in this vicinity at this time. However, I have not included any harvest units in this area in the Selected Alternative. This will allow this area to be evaluated with a future Forest Plan level evaluation of the overall old growth habitat conservation strategy. I have also reviewed a potential small OGHR that would connect the Honker OGHR near Control Lake to the west and the Election Creek small OGHR. I have decided to not include this new reserve. The Forest Plan conservation biology strategy does not require the level of connectivity suggested with the new small reserve. Regardless, this connectivity would continue to be functional after implementation of the Selected Alternative. The Election Creek small OGHR had no suggested adjustments. A non-significant Forest Plan amendment will document the adjustments associated with the Rush Peak small OGHR. The amendment is in Appendix 1 of this ROD.

7. I have determined that there may be a significant possibility of a significant restriction of subsistence use of deer, marten and black bear in the project area in the future. The effects of the Selected Alternative on the subsistence use of these species are minimal. However, increased demand and cumulative effects of future actions may at some point result in a significant restriction of subsistence use of these species in the project area. This restriction exists regardless of which alternative is implemented, including the no action alternative. I have determined that: (1) these restrictions are necessary, consistent with sound management of public lands, (2) the Selected Alternative involves the minimum amount of public land necessary to accomplish its purpose, and (3) reasonable measures to minimize impacts on subsistence uses and resources have been adopted to the extent practicable while still meeting the purpose and need for this project.

Reasons For Decision

1. In making my decision, I worked to assure consideration of all issues and to take into account the competing interests and values of the public. There were many divergent public, personal, and professional opinions expressed during this project. This decision will probably not completely satisfy any one particular group or individual. However, I considered all views, and I believe the decision I have made is reasonable. The Selected Alternative provides a beneficial mix of resources for the public within the framework of the existing laws, regulations, policies, public needs and desires, and capabilities of the land, while meeting the stated purpose and need for this project.

2. My decision to implement this Selected Alternative conforms with the Forest Plan and sound National Forest management. I have considered the need to help provide a sustained level of timber supply to meet annual and Forest Plan planning cycle market demand, and to provide diverse opportunities for natural resource employment, consistent with providing for the multiple use and sustained yield of all renewable forest resources. Timber sales implemented through this project will help meet Southeast Alaska timber supply needs.
3. Early stages of planning for the Control Lake EIS, which included significant involvement with the public, helped identify areas within the Project Area that include high resource and/or public use values. The Landscape Zones described in the Draft and Supplemental Draft EISs helped clarify and track these areas. The Western Peninsula including the Elevenmile shore, Rio Roberts watershed, and Honker areas are examples that have been tracked through the development of the Control Lake EIS, the coordination and finalization of the Forest Plan, and my decision.

The Forest Plan resulted in most of the Western Peninsula being designated as Semi-Remote Recreation LUD which responds to the historic subsistence use of the area important to the communities of Klawock and Craig. The Elevenmile shoreline of the peninsula receives the highest use, but the undeveloped nature of the inland area is important to the historic uses of the area.

In ongoing discussions with people from Klawock and Craig, concern has been expressed that development along the eastern boundary of the Semi-Remote Recreation LUD could still change the character and historic use of the Western Peninsula and the Elevenmile shore. I have decided to not include any of the proposed harvest units or roads in VCU 592 and 593 in the Selected Alternative. This will allow ongoing uses of the area and maintain the option of different land allocations in a future Forest Plan revision.

The Rio Roberts watershed provides a connective old growth corridor between the Karta Wilderness south of the Project Area and blocks of old growth habitat through the north part of Prince of Wales Island. Most of the Rio Roberts watershed has been designated as Old Growth Habitat Reserve LUD.

As discussed above, in the Rio Roberts portion of the Honker OGHR, a small portion of the western edge of the watershed is outside the OGHR LUD and is available for scheduled timber harvest in the Forest Plan. Four harvest units and associated roads were proposed in this area, 2 of which are partially in the Rio Roberts watershed. As discussed above, I have decided not to increase the OGHR in this area, but have chosen to not select any of the units for harvest until the overall old growth conservation biology strategy is formally reviewed in the future. This maintains the option for different land allocations in a future Forest Plan revision.

The Honker area is considered by many to be one of the most important old growth habitat blocks in the Northern Prince of Wales Province. The Forest Plan designated most of this area to Old Growth Habitat Reserve LUD, including all or most of the Rio Roberts, Control Lake, Cutthroat Lakes, upper Thorne River, upper Hatchery Creek, and upper Logjam Creek watersheds within the Project Area. Additionally, the Forest Plan allocated the Thorne River and Hatchery Creek corridors as Scenic and Recreation River LUDs, and areas seen from the corridor as Scenic Viewshed LUD within the project not already in the OGHR LUD.

Concern has been expressed by members of the public and various State and Federal agencies about two areas associated with the Honker area; the 3016 Road area on the northeast side of the Honker OGHR, and the drumlin area on the north side of the 30 Road near Rio Beaver Creek. Concerns related to the 3016 Road include extension of

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the road, and the effectiveness of the closure of the road during periods of inactivity. I have decided to not include the harvest of units associated with the 3016 Road. This road is to be closed with a gate to restrict motorized access. The area on the north side of the 30 Road near Rio Beaver Creek will be added to the Honker OGHR as an adjustment to the Rush Peak small OGHR as discussed earlier.

4. No timber harvest will occur in large, medium, and small old-growth habitat reserves following current Forest Plan direction. These reserves, as modified, meet the size, spacing, and distance parameters as set forth by the Forest Plan.
5. I have ensured that the Selected Alternative meets the visual quality objectives (VQOs) as specified from the priority travel routes and key viewsheds. Areas that can be viewed from Control Lake, Balls Lake and the Thorne River/Hatchery Creek corridor will meet the Retention and Partial Retention objectives. The main road from Klawock to Thorne Bay will meet Partial Retention objectives within the foreground as seen from the road.
6. I have designed the Selected Alternative so that no created openings will exceed 100 acres in size.
7. I have listened to the Control Lake Citizens Group. My selected alternative incorporates many of their recommendations.
8. The Selected Alternative is necessary as a component of the timber management program designed to implement the Forest Plan, and meet TTRA direction. There is currently a limited timber supply from other sources, and an under-utilized mill capacity in the region. The Selected Alternative provides the most volume to contribute to the Forest Service's actions to seek to meet market demand while providing for other resources and uses.

How Issues Are Addressed

In the following summary, I detail how significant issues are addressed within the Selected Alternative. Refer to Chapter 2 of the Final EIS to supplement the following discussion and provide a comparison to the proposed activities and environmental consequences of the alternatives.

Issue 1: Honker Divide

As discussed above, coordination with the Forest Plan Revision has addressed old growth habitat, recreation and scenic resources within the Honker Divide. I have decided to not harvest the units in VCU 575 associated with the 3016 Road system. My adjustment to the Honker OGHR in the vicinity of Rio Beaver Creek and Habitat Slough north of the 30 Road will add protection to an area with important fish and wildlife habitat including deer winter range and numerous Class I streams.

Issue 2: Recreation and Visual Quality

Harvest unit and road designs have been done to minimize effects on scenic resources, especially from Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas. To the casual forest visitor, minimal to no changes in the scenery will be observed from the West Coast Waterway, Thorne River/Hatchery Creek Canoe Route, Control Lake, Balls Lake, and the foreground area of the main road from Klawock to Thorne Bay (Forest Highway #9/30 Road). Helicopter yarding will be used in the more sensitive scenic areas to assure meeting of the Retention and/or Partial Retention Visual Quality Objectives. This is especially the case for harvest units 596-404, 406 and 407 in the Control Lake and Balls Lake viewshed.

Timber harvest would have minimal effects on existing and potential recreation sites. Timber harvest and road construction would result in a change of approximately 23,500 acres from unroaded to roaded Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) settings.

Issue 3: Subsistence

Protection from development of the Elevenmile shore and much of the Western Peninsula was accomplished with the Semi-Remote Recreation LUD in the Forest Plan. My decision to not select harvest units in the eastern portion of VCU 593 will strengthen this protection and provide the option to further evaluate this area and its relationship to the ongoing and historic subsistence uses in the Elevenmile shore and the Western Peninsula.

The Forest Plan has allocated about 55 percent of the Project Area to LUDs which do not allow programmed timber harvest, including approximately 2/3 of the existing old growth related habitats. Based on the wildlife analysis and existing harvest levels, deer habitat capability would be below that needed to support current total harvest levels, but would be above that needed to support rural harvests, indicating that there may be a need to restrict nonsubsistence users at sometime in the future. This is the same for all alternatives including Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative. Similarly, black bear and marten habitat capabilities would be below needed populations in some areas and close to needed populations for the Project Area as a whole indicating that there may be a need to restrict nonsubsistence users at sometime in the future also.

Related to potential competition and habitat effectiveness is how roaded access is managed. In consideration for minimizing access into or near key habitat areas and my desire to allow basic roaded access to most of the developed portions of the Project Area, I have adopted an access strategy that tries to reconcile these often divergent objectives. Key in development of the access strategy has been the ongoing discussions on access management facilitated by the Thorne Bay Ranger District. Effective closure of the 3016 Road to minimize access into key habitats related to the Honker OGHR is one example. Adjustment of the Rush Peak small OGHR and keeping portions of the existing 3013 Road system open is an example of providing basic public access to the Project Area. (See the Access Management discussions in Chapter 4 of the Final EIS and the large scale map with this ROD). In combination with the Forest Plan LUDs and Standards and Guidelines used as mitigation measures, the Selected Alternative reflects efforts by the Forest Service to minimize effects on subsistence resources used by those rural communities that would be most likely to receive the highest priority for fish and wildlife in the event of an ANILCA Section 804, Tier II restriction.

Issue 4: Wildlife Habitat and Biodiversity

The Forest Plan contains an integrated old growth habitat conservation strategy consisting of two basic components: (1) a forest-wide reserve network, and (2) a matrix management strategy. The Control Lake Timber Sales have been designed to be fully consistent with this strategy. The Selected Alternative includes efforts to strengthen the strategy, including adjustments to OGHRs, road management strategies, and harvest unit prescriptions. The prescriptions have been designed to leave substantial individual and groups of trees within harvest units. This will especially benefit wildlife species that use larger tree structure habitats after the harvests and into the future when they provide large tree structural attributes to second growth stands. Marten will be a key benefactor of these efforts, especially in VCU 597 where more timber harvest activities have occurred in the past. Specific modifications have been made to the units in this VCU to provide for high value marten habitat. Approximately 74 percent of the harvest acres in the Selected Alternative prescribed for non-clearcut regeneration or uneven-age treatments. The remaining 26 percent is prescribed for clearcut harvest with reserve trees

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left in the units, mostly along the edges. To facilitate the alternatives to clearcutting about 33 percent of the harvest volume will be yarded using helicopters.

Issue 5: Fish Habitat and Water Quality

The Selected Alternative reflects public and agency concerns for water quality and fisheries resources in the Project Area. Field verification of units and roads was performed to identify road locations and unit boundaries with the least potential to impact streams and fisheries. This effort will continue during the more intensive ground investigations associated with implementation of the Selected Alternative.

The potential effects on fish habitat and water quality are minimal for all action alternatives. All alternatives meet the requirements and the intent of the Clean Water Act and the Tongass Timber Reform Act. Adherence to Best Management Practices (BMPs) outlined in the Soil and Water Conservation Handbook (FSH 2509.22) during timber harvest and road construction activities will minimize the potential for impacts on fish habitat.

The various components of a watershed analysis as outlined in the Forest Plan have been accomplished during the different phases of the Control Lake EIS development. These components were summarized and included in Appendix E of the Supplemental Draft EIS. I considered preparation of a separate Watershed Analysis document for the Control Lake Project Area. Because a separate document would not add to, or significantly change the Selected Alternative, I considered this to be disruptive to the timely design and implementation of this project. Furthermore, I have directed the Selected Alternative to be implemented with all of the riparian buffers specified in the Forest Plan including buffers on all Class III streams.

The Forest Plan also provides guidance on timber harvest and road construction activities on steep slopes. These Standard and Guidelines have been incorporated into harvest unit and road design. In particular, slopes over 72 percent have been excluded from most harvest units. Some harvest units have small inclusions of steeper slopes within them and have been deemed stable by soil scientists. During final implementation of these units a more intensive investigation by a soil scientist will be done to assure harvest is not done on unstable slopes, especially if they would provide a risk to downstream fish resources. This intensive investigation will be documented in the unit cards or in the change analysis and will include steepness, dissection, parent material, drainage and potential impacts on downstream beneficial uses. Similarly, roads on slopes greater than 67 percent will be avoided or the road designed to minimize the risk of landslides or erosion.

Issue 6: Timber Economics and Supply

The centralized location of the Control Lake Project Area makes it especially important for smaller timber sale operators, especially those located on the Prince of Wales Island road system. Timber volume provided from the Tongass National Forest, including Prince of Wales Island is important to the timber industry as a whole. The Selected Alternative will contribute to both industry entities, for both the short and long term.

Preliminary implementation planning indicates the Selected Alternative would be prepared and sold in approximately 17 timber sales ranging in size from 0.2 to 11.2 MMBF. This would include 9 sales less than 2.0 MMBF with 1 to 3 units in any one sale. The list of these sales is shown in Appendix 2 of this ROD. I have asked the Thorne Bay District Ranger to continue to look for additional small sale opportunities within the Selected Alternative. Economic viability of the smaller sales as well as potentially larger sales will need to be considered also.

The framework for some alternatives included the distribution of timber harvest through a rotation in an effort to address a more even flow of harvest from an area. To be most effective such distribution is best done at a much larger scale than the Project Area. Approximately 22,800 of 26,500 acres are available for scheduled timber harvest in the Control Lake Project Area at this time. As indicated in Chapter 4 of the Final EIS, and depending on the amount of site specific mitigation needed to meet resource objectives, the Project Area could provide 35 to 75 MMBF per decade after the Control Lake project for the next five decades from old growth timber alone.

The economic analysis summarized in Chapter 4 indicates the Selected Alternative would have a stumpage value of \$76.20/MBF. Actual stumpage values will be determined on a sale by sale basis. The PNV of the Selected Alternative was estimated to be \$0.7 million. Market conditions, logging systems, competitive bidding, and other factors will be influential and often will yield higher stumpage values of sales that are sold. The analysis also indicated that some timber sales were at risk of being economically marginal, especially in low market conditions. Areas with expensive logging systems or that need larger road related investments in relation to smaller volumes are examples. Approximately 1/3 of the volume in the Selected Alternative is to be helicopter logged. These sales may need to be sold in higher market conditions. Similarly, timber sales in the Kogish and Shinaku areas have relatively small conventional logging volume in relation to the amount of road related costs needed to provide access to the areas.

Issue 7: Karst and Cave Resources

No roads or timber harvest on high vulnerability karst is included in the Selected Alternative. Timber harvest proposed on low/moderate vulnerability karst is designed for helicopter yarding.

Public Involvement

Public involvement has been instrumental in identification and clarification of issues for this project. This has been helpful in the formulation of alternatives and has assisted me in making informed decisions for the Control Lake Project. Of special note is the effort that has been made by the Control Lake Citizen Coalition throughout the project planning effort and their development of Alternative 10 used in the EIS. Many aspects of their alternative are contained in my selected alternative. Their effort is an example of a collaborative effort that we hope to build on in planning future timber sale projects.

Public mailings, Federal Register notices, news releases, open houses, subsistence hearings, meetings with groups and individuals, and extensive interaction with State, Federal and Tribal agencies were some of the tools used to involve and solicit input for the project. Public scoping and involvement activities for the Control Lake Project are described in Chapter 1 and Appendix B of the Supplemental Draft EIS; and, Chapter 1 and Appendix B of the Final EIS. Appendix B includes public comments received on the Supplemental Draft EIS and Forest Service responses to those comments.

Coordination With Other Agencies

From the time scoping was initiated, meetings and site visits with interested State and Federal agencies have occurred. Issues were discussed and information was exchanged.

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Coordination meetings were held with the State of Alaska including the Department of Governmental Coordination, Department of Fish and Game, and the Department of Environmental Conservation between the Supplemental DEIS and Final EIS. Information contained in the Draft and Supplemental Draft EIS, and at subsequent meetings, has been provided to the State of Alaska for their concurrence that the activities proposed in the Control Lake Project Area are consistent with the Alaska Coastal Management Program.

The location of the small Old Growth Habitat Reserves was jointly evaluated by biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Forest Service. These biologist developed a biologically preferred location for these small OGHRs which is analyzed in the Final EIS. Several of their recommendations are included in my decision.

A Biological Assessment has been prepared and sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and to the National Marine Fisheries Service as part of the Section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act.

The FEIS identifies the agencies who were informed of and/or involved in the planning process (see List of Agencies, Organizations, and Individuals to Whom Copies of This Statement Were Sent).

Alternatives Eliminated From Detailed Consideration

This section briefly describes alternatives that have been considered but eliminated from detailed study for the Final EIS. Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 were eliminated from detailed study in the Supplemental Draft EIS. In the Draft EIS published in October 1995, Alternatives 2, 7, 8, and 9 were analyzed in detail in the main text and Alternatives 4 and 6 were analyzed in detail in Appendix B of the Draft EIS.

Alternative 2

Under Alternative 2, timber volume would have been provided at the maximum level that could be allowed under full implementation of Alternative P of the TLMP Draft Revision (1991a). Implementation of Alternative 2 would have resulted in the harvest of 9,409 acres producing approximately 233 MMBF of net sawlog and utility volume. It would have required approximately 218 miles of new road and 8 miles of reconstructed road to access the harvest units. This alternative was considered in detail in the Draft EIS, but dropped in the Supplemental Draft EIS because of the degree of inconsistency with the revised Forest Plan.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 was used during scoping to help solicit unit specific comments across the Project Area. Implementation of this alternative would have resulted in the harvest of about 5,150 acres producing approximately 173 MMBF of net sawlog and utility volume. This alternative was not considered in detail because the choice and distribution of units did not form logical groups for harvest and did not respond to specific issues developed during scoping.

Alternative 4

The framework for Alternative 4 emphasized timber economics and conventional cable yarding methods. Implementation of this alternative would have resulted in the harvest

of about 4,555 acres producing approximately 129 MMBF of net sawlog and utility volume. This alternative was not considered in detail because it would reduce the economic viability of future entries.

Alternative 5

Alternative 5 used the landscape zones as a basis for alternative design. No harvest was scheduled in Honker Divide “ridge-to-ridge”, north of the 30 Road, within the Rio Roberts watershed, and the Western Peninsula. All other areas would be entered at the Forest Plan implementation level. Implementation of this alternative would have resulted in the harvest of about 2,281 acres producing approximately 68 MMBF of net sawlog and utility volume. This alternative was not considered in detail because it is similar to Alternative 10, which responded to similar issues.

Alternative 6

Like Alternative 5, this alternative used the landscape zones as a basis for design. Harvest was scheduled to maintain the function of all landscape zones throughout a harvest rotation. It scheduled harvest in all zones except zones identified as old growth blocks. Implementation of this alternative would have resulted in the harvest of about 4,021 acres producing approximately 106 MMBF of net sawlog and utility volume. This alternative was not considered in detail because of the degree of inconsistency it would have with the revised Forest Plan and because most of its framework is captured by Alternatives 10, 11 and 13.

Alternative 7

Alternative 7 sought to provide 187 MMBF while responding to scoping concerns related to entry into the Western Peninsula and upper Rio Roberts watershed. It allowed no entry into these two areas of concern, but included all units within the project unit pool from other areas, including the Honker Divide. Implementation of this alternative would have resulted in the harvest of about 7,399 acres producing approximately 180 MMBF of net sawlog and utility volume. This alternative was not considered in detail because of the degree of inconsistency it would have with the new Forest Plan.

Alternative 8

Similar to the framework for Alternative 7, this alternative sought to provide 187 MMBF but responded to scoping concerns related to entry into the core of the Honker Divide area and most of the Western Peninsula. Implementation of this alternative would have resulted in the harvest of about 7,107 acres producing approximately 184 MMBF of net sawlog and utility volume. This alternative was not considered in detail because of the degree of inconsistency it would have with the new Forest Plan.

Alternative 9

Alternative 9 was designed to minimize harvest in the Honker Block, avoid harvest in the Rio Roberts corridor, minimize harvest in the Western Peninsula, and allow harvest at the full implementation level for all other areas. Implementation of this alternative would have resulted in the harvest of about 5,123 acres producing approximately 130 MMBF of net sawlog and utility volume. This alternative was not considered in detail because of the degree of inconsistency it would have with the new Forest Plan.

Alternatives Considered for Detailed Study

Four alternatives that provide timber from the Control Lake Project Area and one No Action alternative were considered in detail. Each alternative is consistent with the Forest Plan. This section provides a discussion of the framework of each alternative and

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various resource outputs associated with its implementation. For a summary of the environmental consequences of each alternative, refer to Chapter 2 of the Final EIS.

Alternative 1 (No Action)

Framework

This alternative would result in no new timber harvest from the Control Lake Project Area at this time. It does not preclude timber harvest from other areas at this time, or from the Project Area at some time in the future. The Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations 40 CFR 1502.14d requires a "No-Action" alternative be analyzed in every EIS. This alternative serves as a benchmark by which effects of the other action alternatives can be compared.

Outputs

There are no new timber harvest outputs associated with this alternative.

Alternative 10

Framework

This alternative did not schedule harvest in the Honker Divide north of the 30 Road, in the upper Logjam Creek area, in the Rio Roberts watershed, or in the Western Peninsula. It used a harvest scheduling process similar to Alternative 6. Alternative 10 attempted to emphasize community-based, value-added products by choosing units that would be most easily harvested by independent and small operators. This alternative was independently developed by a group consisting of environmental organization representatives, independent timber contractors, Alaska Natives, educators, business owners, and fishermen, most of whom are residents of Prince of Wales Island.

Outputs

Implementation of Alternative 10 would result in the harvest of about 964 acres in 31 harvest units producing approximately 25.6 MMBF of net sawlog and utility volume. This volume includes approximately 1.5 MMBF from road ROW clearing. Average unit size would be about 31 acres. Of this harvest, 639 acres are planned for partial cut; the remaining 325 acres are planned for clearcut with reserve tree harvest. To implement this harvest, approximately 21 miles of road would be constructed or reconstructed. Preliminary implementation planning indicates that Alternative 10 would be sold in 11 sales ranging in size from 0.2 to 5.5 MMBF.

Alternative 11

Framework

This alternative was designed to be consistent with the Forest Plan and to respond to concerns expressed regarding the Elevenmile and Western Peninsula area, and concerns regarding extension of the 3016 Road system along the northern part of the Honker OGH. Alternative 11 reflects collaborative efforts between the Forest Service and other state and federal agencies, especially between the Draft and Supplemental Draft EISs.

Outputs

Implementation of Alternative 11 would result in the harvest of about 2,980 acres in 91 harvest units producing approximately 71.2 MMBF of net sawlog and utility volume. This volume includes approximately 3.8 MMBF from road ROW clearing. Average unit size would be about 33 acres. Of this harvest, 2,348 acres are planned for partial cut; the remaining 632 acres are planned for clearcut with reserve tree harvest. To implement this harvest, approximately 62 miles of road would be constructed or reconstructed. Preliminary implementation planning indicates that Alternative 11 would be sold in 17 sales ranging in size from 0.2 to 11.2 MMBF.

Alternative 12**Framework**

This alternative was designed to provide a maximum level of harvest consistent with the Forest Plan.

Outputs

Implementation of Alternative 12 would result in the harvest of about 3,769 acres in 112 harvest units producing approximately 85.6 MMBF of net sawlog and utility volume. This volume includes approximately 4.5 MMBF from road ROW clearing. Average unit size would be about 34 acres. Of this harvest, 3,082 acres are planned for partial cut; the remaining 687 acres are planned for clearcut with reserve tree harvest. To implement this harvest, approximately 84 miles of road would be constructed or reconstructed. Preliminary implementation planning indicates that Alternative 10 would be sold in 20 sales ranging in size from 0.2 to 11.2 MMBF.

Alternative 13**Framework**

This alternative represents ongoing collaborative efforts between the Forest Service and state and other federal agencies. It also is responsive to the public comments received on the Supplemental Draft EIS, and numerous meetings with communities, groups and individuals since issuance of the Supplemental Draft EIS. Alternative 13 was formed by combining components of Alternative 10 and Alternative 11. Components from these two alternatives were incorporated based on public comments. Alternative 13 defers harvest in the eastern portion of VCU 593, the western edge of the Rio Roberts watershed and the area north of the 30 Road in the vicinity of Rio Beaver Creek.

Outputs

Implementation of Alternative 13 would result in the harvest of about 2,577 acres in 79 harvest units producing approximately 60.6 MMBF of net sawlog and utility volume. This volume includes approximately 3.0 MMBF from road ROW clearing. Average unit size would be about 33 acres. Of this harvest, 1,955 acres are planned for partial cut; the remaining 622 acres are planned for clearcut with reserve tree harvest. To implement this harvest, approximately 46 miles of road would be constructed or reconstructed. Preliminary implementation planning indicates that Alternative 13 would be sold in 18 sales ranging in size from 0.2 to 11.2 MMBF.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

There is no single factor that can be used to determine which alternative is environmentally preferred. Maintaining the basic productivity of the land and the quality of lifestyle of the local residents are vitally important.

Alternative 1, the no-action alternative, would cause the least environmental disturbance and is therefore the environmentally preferred alternative. This is based on the comparison of all the alternatives in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS.

All alternatives considered in detail have varying levels of environmental effects depending on what issue is addressed. Alternatives 10 would cause the least adverse environmental effects of the action alternatives because of the number of miles of road and acres harvested. Alternatives 11, 12 and 13 would have slightly higher overall effects with Alternative 13 being the lowest.

Planning Record

The Planning Record for this project includes the Draft EIS, Supplemental Draft EIS, Final EIS, Forest Plan, Alaska Regional Guide, and all material incorporated by reference, and all material produced during the environmental analysis of this project. The Planning Record is available for review at the Forest Supervisor's Office, Ketchikan, Alaska.

Mitigation

Mitigation measures are prescribed to avoid, reduce, minimize, or correct for the adverse effects of actions. These measures were applied in the development of the project alternatives, including the Selected Alternative, through the avoidance of specific geographic areas and in the design of the harvest units and road corridors. The Mitigation Measures section of Chapter 2 of the FEIS discusses the mitigation measures for all alternatives.

Mitigation measures applicable to the Selected Alternative include those contained in the Standards and Guidelines of the Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP 1997), Alaska Regional Guide, and applicable Forest Service Manuals and Handbooks. The Final EIS includes Unit Design and Road Cards which incorporate site-specific mitigation and are adopted as part of this decision. Finalized integrated silvicultural prescriptions will be developed which will further specify mitigation direction for each unit.

All practical measures have been adopted to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects of the Selected Alternative. Measures have been included to protect, enhance, and restore resources affected by timber harvest and related actions. The Forest Service has the authority, through the timber sale contract and other permit requirements or authorities, to enforce and implement adopted mitigation measures and monitoring necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the mitigation. Table 1 lists site-specific mitigation measures authorized for application to the Control Lake Project Area. The specific units in which the measures apply are listed in Appendix C of the Final EIS, as well as on the Unit and Road Cards.

Monitoring and Enforcement

A monitoring program is the process by which the Forest Service can evaluate whether or not the resource management actions of the Final EIS have been implemented as specified, whether or not the measures identified for mitigating the environmental effects were effective, and whether the resource management objectives have been met. Three types of monitoring are recognized. The first type, implementation monitoring, is routinely conducted at the project level and covers all project activities. Implementation monitoring is guided by the Unit Cards, Silvicultural Prescriptions, and Road Cards for each proposed activity. The second and third types of monitoring, effectiveness and validation monitoring, are conducted at the Forest-wide level. Effectiveness and validation monitoring are guided by the Tongass National Forest and Ketchikan Area

Monitoring Strategy. A more detailed discussion of monitoring is provided in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS.

Monitoring activities may reveal results that depart from planned effects, in which case corrective actions are prescribed (40 CFR 1505.2(c)).

Table 1

Site-Specific Mitigation Measures Incorporated into Unit and Road Design^{1/}

Mitigation Measure	Description	No. of Units Affected in Selected Alternative ^{2/}
Minerals and Caves		
M1	Protect all known mineral improvements, such as mine claim markers, by specifications in timber sale and road construction contracts.	0
M2	Develop and implement site-specific protective measures for cave and karst features containing significant resources.	2
Fish, Water Quality, and Soils		
F1	Modify unit design to avoid very high mass movement areas (BMP 13.5), including slopes >72%.	32
F2	Avoid road construction in areas of very high mass movement potential resulting in the need for helicopter yarding.	17
F3	Require partial- to full-suspension logging systems in areas with high mass movement potential or McGilvery soils (BMP 13.9).	31
F4	Modify unit design or logging system to avoid or minimize damage to muskegs or other wetlands BMPs 12.5 and 13.15).	41
F5	Establish no-harvest and selective-cut buffers along streams and around lakes to protect Riparian Management Areas (BMP 12.6). This includes TTRA minimums and additional area as described in the Riparian Standards and Guidelines.	71
F6	Avoid roads on slopes >67%, unstable or slide prone areas. If not able to avoid, take special measures to prevent soil erosion or mass wasting.	30
F7	Permit no harvest within steep Class IV V-notch streams with high erosion potential (BMP 12.7 and 13.16).	17

Table 1
Site-Specific Mitigation Measures Incorporated into Unit and Road Design^{1/}

Mitigation Measure	Description	No. of Units Affected in Selected Alternative^{2/}
F8	Implement measures to reduce surface erosion and drainage interruption related to transportation including water barring and cross-draining roads, using ditches and culverts to prevent water running long distances over roads, seeding and fertilizing cut and fill slopes, and locating and designing landings for good drainage and dispersion of water (BMPs 13.10 14.3, 14.5, 14.8, 14.9, 14.11, 14.12, 14.13).	57
F9	Protect local water supplies by implementing erosion control measures during road construction.	0
F10	Establish timing restrictions for instream road construction activities to avoid impacts on fish populations (BMP 14.6).	25
F11	Evaluate opportunity for stream barrier removal to increase fish habitat availability.	0
F12	Evaluate opportunity for stream habitat enhancement by addition of large woody debris (LWD).	0
Vegetation and Timber		
T1	Conduct partial harvest by helicopter to maintain yellowcedar trees in the unit to provide seed and shelter to maintain high yellowcedar composition in future stand.	0
Wildlife		
W1	Provide for greater habitat diversity on a stand level by leaving no-cut islands or fingers of timber (Type D Clearcut).	54
W2	Provide for greater structural diversity on a stand level by partial cutting all or most of the harvest unit.	28
W3	Provide for greater structural diversity on a stand level by leaving nonmerchantable trees and safe snags over the entire harvest unit (Type C Clearcut).	18
W4	Provide for snag retention and greater structural diversity on a stand level by prescribing and contractually requiring a specified number of reserve trees including snags and live tree replacements along the harvest unit edges and internal setting boundaries. Also leave safe-snags and nonmerchantable, reserve trees along harvest unit edges and internal setting boundaries through contractual recommendations (Type B Clearcut).	21

Table 1

Site-Specific Mitigation Measures Incorporated into Unit and Road Design¹⁷

Mitigation Measure	Description	No. of Units Affected in Selected Alternative ²⁷
W5	Provide for snag retention and greater structural diversity on a stand level by leaving safe snag and nonmerchantable reserve trees along harvest unit edges and internal setting boundaries through contractual recommendations (Type A Clearcut).	24
W6	Maintain uncut areas of original unit and leave trees throughout the harvest portion of the unit high value marten habitat.	8
W7	Modify unit design to provide 30-acre no-cut buffers around known marbled murrelet nest sites.	0
W8	Restrict the timing of helicopter logging and/or helicopter flight paths and blasting near bald eagle nest sites when occupied.	1
W9	Implement Region 10 goshawk management guidelines, as appropriate, if nesting is identified.	3
W10	Implement road closures immediately after harvest to minimize human disturbance to wildlife and road access by hunters in specific areas.	44
W11	Evaluate potential for disturbance and restrict harvest and road construction activities in areas and during time periods when Vancouver Canada goose nesting or trumpeter swan wintering might be disturbed.	16
W12	Modify unit and road location to provide wolf den buffers. Monitor according to the Forest Plan.	3
W13	Restrict the approach of Forest Service-authorized aircraft and vessels near humpback and other whales.	0
W14	Restrict harvest and road construction within 1/2 mile of active peregrine falcon nest sites.	0

Visual Resources

V1	Modify unit boundaries to assure harvest unit meets proposed VQOs in partial retention/retention areas.	8
V2	Conduct partial cutting of unit to minimize visual contrast with adjacent areas.	8
V3	Leave behind all nonmerchantable trees after clear-cutting to minimize visual contrast with adjacent areas.	5

Recreation

R1	Close roads to keep area as remote as possible to minimize effects on roadless opportunities.	23
R2	Provide for public access, parking, and sufficient turnouts at recreation sites.	0

Table 1
Site-Specific Mitigation Measures Incorporated into Unit and Road Design^{1/}

Mitigation Measure	Description	No. of Units Affected in Selected Alternative ^{2/}
R3	Require all road construction slash and debris from right-of-way (ROW) clearing along roads to be used for recreational access, to be buried in the road prism or hauled to a designated disposal area.	0

Cultural Resources

C1	Provide for mitigation of indirect effects to cultural resource sites near proposed harvest units and roads.	4
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- These measures potentially affect an indefinite number of harvest units.

1/ Refer to the appropriate section in Chapter 4 for a more complete description of each measure.

2/ Refer to Appendix C for a specific listing of the units affected.

The Forest Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that project implementation, mitigation, monitoring, and enforcement is accomplished as specified.

Findings Required By Law

National Forest Management Act

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires specific determinations in this Record of Decision including consistency with existing Forest Plans and Regional Guides. It also requires a determination of clearcutting as the optimal method of harvesting.

Tongass Forest Plan and Alaska Regional Guide

This decision is consistent with the Alaska Regional Guide and the Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1997). I have reviewed the Management Direction, Standards and Guidelines, and the schedule of activities for the VCUs included in the Selected Alternative, and find the Selected Alternative to be fully consistent with these elements. The activities authorized in this decision are consistent to the extent practicable with the standards and guidelines and management prescriptions of the Forest Plan.

Clearcutting as the Optimal Method of Harvesting

The Alaska Regional Guide established silvicultural and management standards for the western hemlock-Sitka spruce forest type (Alaska Regional Guide, page 3-18). Even-aged management in the form of clearcutting is, according to the Regional Guide, to be used where (1) the management objective is to meet timber production objectives established in the Forest Plan, (2) where there is a risk of dwarf mistletoe infestation, and (3) where risk of windthrow is determined to be high. Harvest units in the Selected Alternative are within Timber Production, Modified Landscape, and Scenic Viewshed LUDs and have a moderate to high risk of windthrow. Approximately 26 percent of the units in the Selected Alternative are prescribed for clearcut harvest with reserve trees. Clearcutting of these harvest units will meet the objective of maintaining fast-growing, mistletoe-free stands of mixed species and is the optimum method of harvesting, considering the following factors referenced in the Alaska Regional Guide:

1. The thin bark and shallow roots of hemlock and spruce make them particularly susceptible to logging injury, which leads to decay. Losses from decay fungi are high, especially in the old-growth forests of Alaska. Conversion from old- to young-growth by clearcutting has the greatest potential for reducing decay.
2. Hemlock dwarf mistletoe, *Arcanthobium tsugense*, a common disease of western hemlock, can best be controlled by clearcutting. Elimination of residual overstory trees infected with dwarf mistletoe prevents infestation of western hemlock in the new stand.
3. Exposure to the sun raises soil temperature, which speeds decomposition, thereby improving the productivity of most sites.
4. Clearcutting favors regeneration of Sitka spruce by destroying advance hemlock regeneration and by creating more favorable conditions for post-logging reproduction of spruce.
5. Risk of blowdown in residual stands is eliminated. The chance of blowdown along cutting boundaries is increased but can be reduced through proper design of cutting units.
6. Natural seed fall is generally adequate for regeneration and most young stands are dense.

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7. Logging costs are lower than with other systems.

Tongass Timber Reform Act

Harvest units were designed and will be located to maintain a minimum 100-foot buffer zone for all Class I streams and Class II streams which flow directly into Class I streams as required in Section 103 of the TTRA. The design and implementation direction for the Selected Alternative incorporate BMPs for protection of all stream classes.

Endangered Species Act

Actions authorized in the Selected Alternative are not anticipated to have a direct, indirect, or cumulative affect on any threatened, endangered, or sensitive species in the Control Lake Project Area. A complete biological assessment is included in the Planning Record for the Final EIS. I have determined that this action will not have any adverse impacts on any threatened or endangered species.

Bald Eagle Protection Act

Management activities within 330 feet of an eagle nest site are restricted by a Interagency Agreement between the Forest Service and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to facilitate compliance with the Bald Eagle Protection Act. The Selected Alternative includes no road construction within 330 feet of a known bald eagle nest.

Clean Water Act

The design of harvest units and roads for the Selected Alternative were guided by standards, guidelines, and direction contained in the current Forest Plan, Alaska Regional Guide, and applicable Forest Service manuals and handbooks. Unit and Road Cards in the Final EIS, contain specific details on practices prescribed to prevent or reduce non-point sediment sources. Reasonable implementation with site-specific application and monitoring of approved BMPs is expected to comply with applicable State Water Quality Standards Regulations. These regulations provide for variances from anti-degradation requirements and water quality criteria. The harvest and road-building operators will be responsible for compliance, including obtaining any variance required by the State, and will be monitored for compliance by the Forest Service. The Forest Service expects the Control Lake Project Area activities will fully qualify for any variance required by the State, according to the criteria in 18 AAC 70.015.

A monitoring plan to detect and evaluate possible effects of bark accumulations, oil sheens, and surface runoff will be implemented as a part of permitting processes for log transfer facilities (BMP 14.4, FSH 2509.22).

National Historic Preservation Act

Cultural resource surveys of various intensities have been conducted in the project area. The State Historical Preservation Officer has been consulted, and the provisions of 36 CFR part 800 have been complied with. Forest Service timber sale contracts contain enforceable measures for protecting any undiscovered cultural resource that might be encountered during sale operations. No ground-disturbing activities associated with this action will occur before a cultural resource clearance for a specific area has been given. I have determined, consistent with the Forest Service direction on cultural resources, that there will be no significant effects on cultural resources. We have completed the Section 106 review for all timber harvest related activities displayed in the Final EIS. This includes roads and units in all alternatives.

Federal Cave Resource Protection Act of 1988

The actions in the Selected Alternative are not expected to have a direct, indirect, or cumulative effect on any significant cave in the Control Lake Project Area. Cave resources have been documented in the Project Area. The Forest Geologist has field checked units with karst concerns, deleting areas that were high vulnerability. Implementation of cave and karst standards and guidelines is designed to protect these resources.

ANILCA Section 810 Subsistence Evaluation and Findings

A subsistence evaluation was conducted for the alternatives considered in detail for the proposed activities in accordance with ANILCA Section 810. Open houses followed by ANILCA Section 810 hearings were held in Klawock, Thorne Bay, Coffman Cove and Ketchikan. The results from the subsistence hearings were incorporated into the development of the Selected Alternative.

Based on the subsistence analysis and existing harvest levels, deer habitat capability would be below that needed to support current total deer harvest levels, but would be above that needed to support rural harvests, indicating that there may be a need to restrict nonsubsistence users at sometime in the future. This is the same for all alternatives including Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative. Similarly, black bear and marten habitat capabilities would be below needed populations in some areas and close to needed populations for the Project Area as a whole indicating that there may be a need to restrict nonsubsistence users at sometime in the future also.

Implementation of the Selected Alternative by itself does not present a significant possibility of a significant restriction to subsistence use of deer, black bear or marten. The effects of the Selected Alternative on the subsistence use of deer, black bear and marten are minimal, with a reduction in habitat capability within the project area of less than 2 percent for the deer and marten. Black bear is expected to be about the same. However, there is a significant possibility of a significant restriction when the Selected Alternative together with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions are considered in a cumulative manner and in relation to projected demand for these resources. This restriction exists regardless of which alternative is implemented, including the Final EIS No-action Alternative. This restriction would be a result of (1) a decrease in habitat capability that could decrease the abundance or distribution, (2) high mortality during severe winters that occur periodically, (3) average yearly harvest levels exceeding what appears to be sustainable harvest levels, and (4) anticipated human population growth with its associated increase in subsistence hunter/trapper demand when compared to the habitat capability to produce deer, black bear and marten.

Subsistence Determinations

Section 810 of ANILCA requires that when a use, occupancy, or disposition of public lands would significantly restrict subsistence uses, determinations must be made that (1) the significant restriction of subsistence uses is necessary, consistent with sound management of public lands, (2) the proposed activity involves the minimum amount of public lands necessary to accomplish the purposes of the activity, and (3) reasonable steps will be taken to minimize adverse impacts on subsistence uses and subsistence resources resulting from the action.

**Necessary,
Consistent with
Sound Management
of Public Land**

The alternatives proposed in this Final Environmental Impact Statement have been examined to determine whether they are necessary, consistent with sound management principles for the utilization of public lands. In this regard, the National Forest Management Act of 1976, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, the Tongass Timber Reform Act, the Alaska Regional Guide, the Tongass Land Management Plan, the Alaska State Forest Resources and Practices Act, and the Alaska Coastal Zone Management Program have been considered.

Management activities on the National Forest must provide for the multiple-use and sustained yield of renewable forest resources in accordance with the Multiple-Use

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Sustained Yield Act of 1960. Multiple-use is defined as “the management of all the various renewable surface resources of the National Forest System so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people” (36 CFR 219.3). The alternatives presented in the Final EIS represent different ways of managing the Control Lake Project Area resources in combinations that are intended to meet the needs of the American people. Each provides a different mix of resource uses and opportunities, and each has some potential to affect subsistence uses. Given the framework and emphasis of each alternative, the potential restrictions associated with each alternative are necessary, consistent with sound management of public lands.

ANILCA placed an emphasis on the maintenance of subsistence resources and life-styles. However, the Act also emphasized providing for adequate opportunity for satisfaction of the economic and social needs of the State of Alaska and its people, and recognized public lands necessary and appropriate for more intensive uses. The Act also required the Forest Service to make available for harvest 4.5 billion board feet of timber per decade from the Tongass National Forest. The TTRA removed the 4.5 billion board foot requirement from ANILCA, but directed the Forest Service to seek to meet market demand for timber to the extent consistent with providing for the multiple use and sustained yield of all renewable forest resources, and subject to applicable law.

The Selected Alternative is necessary as a component of the timber management program designed to implement the Forest Plan and meet TTRA direction. There is currently a limited timber supply from other sources, and an under-utilized mill capacity in the region. The Selected Alternative provides the most volume to contribute to the Forest Service’s actions to seek to meet market demand while providing adequately and reasonably for other resources and uses. This volume serves as a component of the ten year timber sale schedule which attempts to provide timber to industry in an even timber flow over the planning cycle. The timber volume is also a substantial component of the timber sale program to be offered in the next five years on the Ketchikan Area to seek to meet annual market demand. Timber volume from other areas of the Tongass National Forest is not likely to be available to replace this volume in a reasonable time frame. Of the action alternatives, the Selected Alternative best meets the objectives of the Forest Plan and TTRA for timber harvests while also providing reasonable protection measures for forest resources, especially for subsistence. It is consistent with the Forest Plan, laws, regulations, policies, public needs, and the capabilities of the land.

Amount of Land Necessary to Accomplish the Purpose of the Activity

The amount of public land necessary to implement the selected alternative is, considering sound multiple use management of public lands, the minimum necessary to accomplish the purpose of that alternative. The entire forested portion of the Project Area is used by several rural communities for subsistence purposes for deer hunting and possibly other uses. It is not possible to avoid all of these areas in implementing resource use activities such as timber harvesting and road construction under any alternative and attempting to reduce effects in some areas can mean increasing the use of others.

Forest Plan

Many of the decisions to minimize the amount of public land were made as part of the Forest Plan. The Forest Plan allocated many of the important subsistence use areas to Land Use Designations (LUDs) which are not suitable for timber harvest. For the Control Lake Project Area, 55% of the total acres and approximately 2/3 of the existing old growth were allocated to LUDs which do not allow timber harvest. Such areas included the Eleven Mile, Honker Divide, Rio Roberts, Log Jam, and Election Creek areas. In addition, Forest Plan standards and guidelines removed additional acres which are important for subsistence from the suitable land base including 1,000-foot buffers

around the beach and all estuaries as well as specific riparian buffers along all Class I, II, and III streams to protect fish habitat and water quality. The remaining acres in the Control Lake Project Area were selected to become part of the timber sale schedule because it is designated as a multiple use area that permits timber harvest in the Forest Plan including the Timber Production, Modified Landscape and Scenic Viewshed. These designations provide for resource use and development for commodity resources such as timber.

Additional Project Avoidance Areas

In addition to the areas protected under the Forest Plan, the Selected Alternative avoids harvest in other areas of concern raised during the public involvement and interagency coordination meetings.

The harvest units of in VCU 575 associated with the 3016 Road are not included in the Selected Alternative. This road will also be closed to all public access with a gate. This area is adjacent to the Honker Old Growth Habitat Reserve (OGHR) and prevents further fragmentation of the Honker Ridge to Ridge boundary. The closure of the road may reduce deer harvest from non rural hunters, the majority of whom hunt from the road system.

All of the units in VCU 593 are not included in the Selected Alternative. This increases the size of the area maintained in old growth status associated with the Elevenmile Semi-Remote Recreation LUD to include the entire watershed. This will strengthen this protection and provide the option to further evaluate this area and its relationship to the ongoing and historic subsistence uses in the Elevenmile shore and the Western Peninsula.

The Selected Alternative expands the size of the Honker Large Old Growth Habitat Reserve (OGHR) to the south all the way to include the Drumlins Area. This will not only increase the size of this OGHR, but will protect the unique and important subsistence use area associated with the Drumlins.

Additionally, the Selected Alternative does not include the harvest of any units in VCU 596 south of Control Lake. This will effectively keep the entire Rio Roberts watershed unharvested and will allow for the option to consider the area for possible expansion of the OGHR in the future.

The Selected Alternative provides a sound location and design for all harvest units and roads. Given the framework and emphasis of the selected alternative, the minimum amount of land and roading was used to resolve resource concerns while meeting the purpose and need for the project in a practical and efficient manner.

Comparison to Other Alternatives

Choosing an alternative other than the Selected Alternative (including the No-action Alternative) or locating the harvest in another location on the Ketchikan Area would not avoid or substantially lessen the risk to subsistence use in the future.

While Alternative 10 harvests less total acres than the Selected Alternative, it does not have the same framework or emphasis as the Selected Alternative. The Selected Alternative has a greater emphasis on timber supply and economics. This is accomplished by providing more volume and at a higher dollar value per MBF. Thus, the selected alternative helps meet the economic timber supply needs of the industry in a more rapid fashion than Alternative 10. Both Alternative 10 and the Selected Alternative

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avoid any harvest in the same general locations (Elevenmile, Honker Divide and Rio Roberts) considered to be important for subsistence use. The Selected Alternative simply harvests more volume in this entry from the same general areas (Steelhead Creek, Shinaku Creek and Rio Beaver) entered by Alternative 10. The result is a higher appraised value for the timber, and a more rapid supply. This is consistent with the Selected Alternative's greater emphasis on timber supply and timber economics. By harvesting timber from the same selected areas as Alternative 10 but at a faster rate, the selected alternative is able to meet its emphasis on timber supply and economics while minimizing harvest in the important subsistence use areas.

Therefore; it is my determination that the Selected Alternative involves the minimum amount of public land necessary and strikes the best balance between meeting the needs of the public and protecting the forest resources.

Reasonable Steps to Minimize Adverse Impacts Upon Subsistence Uses and Resources

Considerable steps were taken to minimize the impacts to subsistence use and resources. The Selected Alternative reflects special efforts by the Forest Service to minimize the effects on resources used for subsistence by those rural communities that would be most likely to areas receive the highest priority in the event of an ANILCA section 804 "Tier II" restriction. Most of high value are beach fringe and stream buffers which are the areas of traditional use. In the Control Lake Project Area, the Western Peninsula and the associated Elevenmile shore represent the highest current and historic subsistence use area. The Forest Plan LUDs and my decision to not select harvest units in the eastern part of VCU 593 will minimize adverse impacts on subsistence uses. The overall Forest Plan LUD strategy, alternatives to clearcutting, road access management strategy, and the Selected Alternative itself represent reasonable steps to minimize adverse impacts to subsistence resources.

The Selected Alternative reflects a reasonable balance between projected need for Tongass timber from the project area to help meet TLMP, ANILCA, and TTRA timber related objectives, and continued protection of subsistence uses and resources. The Selected Alternative avoids timber harvest in the same important subsistence use areas (Elevenmile, Rio Roberts and Honker Divide) as the lower volume action alternative, Alternative 10, but consistent with its emphasis on timber supply and economics simply harvest more timber from the areas selected for entry.

Impacts on subsistence have been minimized through the development of the individual harvest units and road corridors, and through the formulation of the alternatives.

The Final EIS and this ROD describe the mitigation measures that will be implemented as a part of the Selected Alternative. Most of the mitigation measures are designed to maintain fish and wildlife habitat productivity at the highest level possible, while still producing a supply of timber.

It is my determination that, in light of the framework and emphasis of the selected alternative, reasonable measures to minimize impacts on subsistence have been adopted to the maximum extent practicable while still meeting the purpose and need for this project.

Executive Orders

Executive Order 11988

Executive Order 11988 directs Federal agencies to take action to avoid, to the extent possible, the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains. The numerous streams in the Project Area make it impossible to avoid all floodplains during timber harvest and road construction. The

design of the proposed developments and the application of Best Management Practices combine to minimize adverse impacts on floodplains.

Executive Order 11990

Executive Order 11990 requires Federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands. The Selected Alternative avoids most identified wetlands; however, many small wetlands or muskegs occur as inclusions within forested areas. These areas may be altered by timber harvest or road construction. Techniques and practices required by the Forest Service serve to maintain the wetland attributes including values and functions. It is estimated there will be only minimal loss of wetlands with any of the alternatives. Soil moisture regimes and vegetation on some wetlands may be altered in some cases; however, these altered acres would still be classified as wetlands and function as wetlands in the ecosystem.

Executive Order 12898

Executive Order 12898, issued in 1994, ordered Federal agencies to identify and address the issue of environmental justice, i.e., adverse human health and environmental effects of agency programs that disproportionately impact minority and low income populations. Public scoping, subsistence hearings and the analysis in the Subsistence section of the EIS all contribute to satisfy meeting this executive order.

Executive Order 12962

Executive Order 12962 requires Federal agencies to evaluate the effects of proposed activities on aquatic systems and recreational fisheries. The Selected Alternative attempts to minimize the effects upon aquatic systems through project design, watershed analysis, application of Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines, BMPs, and site specific mitigation measures. Recreational fishing opportunities will remain essentially the same because aquatic habitats are protected to the extent practicable.

Coastal Zone Management Act

The Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (CZMA), as amended, while specifically excluding Federal lands from the coastal zone, requires that a Federal agency's activities be consistent with the enforceable policies of a state's coastal management program to the maximum extent practicable when that agency's activities affect the coastal zone. Standards against which the consistency evaluation take place include Alaska Forest Practices Act of 1990.

The Alaska Coastal Management Plan incorporated the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act of 1990 (as revised) as the applied standards and guidelines for timber harvesting and processing. The Forest Service Standards and Guidelines, BMPs, and mitigation measures described in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS are fully consistent with the State Standards.

Based on the analysis in the Final EIS, review of the Alaska Forest Practices Act, and comments from the local and State agencies on the Draft and Supplemental Draft EIS, the action and activities are consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the Alaska Coastal Management Plan.

The Standards and Guidelines for timber management activities in the Control Lake Project Area meet or exceed those indicated in the Alaska Forest Practices Act and the Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP).

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I have determined that the proposed activities are consistent with the Alaska Coastal Management Program to the maximum extent practicable. The State of Alaska has concurred with my determination.

Federal and State Permits

Federal and State permits necessary to implement the authorized activities are listed at the end of Chapter 1 of the FEIS.

Implementation Process

Implementation of this decision may occur no sooner than 30 days after the date of publication of the Notice of Availability of the FEIS in the Federal Register, or 50 days following publication of the legal notice of the decision in the Ketchikan Daily News, published in Ketchikan, Alaska, whichever is later.

This project will be implemented in accordance with Forest Service Manual and Handbook direction for Timber Sale Project Implementation in FSM 2431.3 and FSH 2409.24. This direction provides a bridge between project planning and implementation and will ensure execution of the actions, environmental standards, and mitigation approved by this decision, and compliance with the TTRA and other laws.

Implementation of all activities authorized by this Record of Decision will be monitored to ensure that they are carried out as planned and described in the Final EIS, ROD, and Unit and Road Cards unless modified consistent with direction in the FSM 2432.3 and FSH 2409.18.

Unit and Road Cards are an integral part of this decision because they document the specific resource concerns, management objectives, and mitigation measures to govern the layout of the harvest units and construction of roads. These cards will be used during the implementation process to assure that all aspects of the project are implemented within applicable standards and guidelines and that resource impacts will not be greater than those described in the Final EIS. Similar cards will be used to document any changes to the planned layout, as the actual layout and harvest of the units occurs with project implementation. The implementation record for this project will display each harvest unit, transportation facility, and other project components as actually implemented; any proposed changes to the design, location, or other mitigation measures for the project; and the decisions on the proposed changes.

Process for Change During Implementation

Proposed changes to the authorized project actions will be subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), Section 810 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), the Tongass Timber Reform Act (TTRA), the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), and other laws concerning such changes.

In determining whether and what kind of further NEPA action is required, the Forest Supervisor will consider the criteria for whether to supplement an existing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 40 CFR 1502.9(c) and FSH 1909.15, sec. 18, and in particular, whether the proposed change is a substantial change to the intent of the Selected Alternative as planned and already approved, and whether the change is relevant to environmental concerns. Connected or interrelated proposed changes regarding particular areas or specific activities will be considered together in making this determination. Cumulative impacts will be considered.

The intent of field verification was to confirm inventory data and to determine the feasibility and general design and location of a unit or road, not to locate the final boundaries or road locations. Minor changes are expected during implementation to better meet on-site resource management and protection objectives. Minor adjustments to unit boundaries are also likely during final layout for the purpose of improving logging system efficiency. This will usually entail adjusting the boundary to coincide with logical logging setting boundaries. Many of these minor changes will not present sufficient potential impacts to require any specific documentation or action to comply with applicable laws. Some minor changes may still require appropriate analysis and documentation to comply with FSH 1909.15, sec. 18.

Right To Appeal

This decision is subject to administrative appeal. Organizations or members of the general public may appeal this decision according to Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 215. The appeal must be filed within 45 days of the date that legal notification of this decision is published in the Ketchikan Daily News, the official newspaper of record. The Notice of Appeal must be filed in duplicate with:

Phil Janik, Regional Forester
Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 21628
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1628

It is the responsibility of those who appeal a decision to provide the Regional Forester sufficient narrative evidence and argument to show why the decision by the Forest Supervisor should be changed or reversed. At a minimum, the written notice of appeal must:

1. State that the document is a Notice of Appeal filed pursuant to 36 CFR part 215;
2. List the name, address, and, if possible, a telephone number of appellant;
3. Identify the decision document by title and subject, date of the decision, and name and title of the Responsible Official;
4. Identify the specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks or portion of the decision to which the appellant objects; and
5. State how the Responsible Official's decision fails to consider comments previously provided, either before or during the comment period specified in 36 CFR 215.6 and, if applicable, how the appellant believes the decision violates law, regulation, or policy.

Record of Decision

Contact Person

For additional information concerning the specific activities authorized with this decision contact one of the following.

Steve Kimball
District Ranger
Thorne Bay Ranger District
P.O. Box 1
Thorne Bay, Alaska 99919
(907) 828-3304

David Arrasmith
Planning Staff Officer
Ketchikan Area, Tongass National Forest
Federal Building
648 Mission Street
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901
(907) 228-6304



BRADLEY E. POWELL
Forest Supervisor
Tongass National Forest

May 12, 1998

Date

Appendix 1

Small Old Growth Habitat Reserve Adjustments in VCU 597 Non-significant Forest Plan Amendment

Based on the project level analysis as described in the Old Growth Management Prescriptions and Appendix K of the Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1997), the Rush Peak small Old Growth Habitat Reserve located in VCU 597 in the Control Lake Project Area has been adjusted to better provide size, location and habitat composition in the VCU. The Rush Peak Reserve as mapped in the Forest Plan meets the overall VCU acreage requirements of small reserves, but contained more acres of habitat than was required for an individual reserve. An area within the VCU north of the 30 Road in the vicinity of Rio Beaver Creek, Habitat Slough and the drumlin fields contain high value fish and wildlife habitats. Specifically, the Rush Peak Old Growth Habitat Reserve will be reduced in the west and north portion of the reserve and similar acreage will be added to the Honker large Old Growth Habitat Reserve north of the 30 Road as described above.

The Secretary of Agriculture's implementing regulation indicates the determination of significance is to be "[b]ased on an analysis of the objectives, guidelines and other contents of the forest plan" (36 CFR 219.10(f)). The Forest Service has issued guidance for determining what constitutes a "significant amendment" under NFMA. This guidance, in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 - Chapter 5.32, identifies four factors to be used in determining whether a proposed change to a forest plan is significant or not significant. These four factors are timing; location and size; goals, objectives, and outputs; and management prescriptions. The Alaska Region issued a Supplement to the FSH 1909.12 - Chapter 5.32 effective October 17, 1990 that includes an additional factor that can be considered in determining the significance of a Forest Plan Amendment. This additional factor deals with technical changes. An analysis of the factors is presented below.

Timing - The Forest Plan Revision was completed in 1997. The Old Growth Habitat Management Prescription in the Plan indicates the small mapped reserves have received differing levels of ground-truthing and integration of site-specific information in their design. During project level environmental analysis, for project areas that include or are adjacent to mapped old growth habitat reserves, the size, spacing and habitat composition of mapped reserves may be further evaluated. Several timber sale projects are in progress forest-wide, but the Control Lake EIS is one of the first project decisions that include the decision to amend the Plan.

Location and Size - Approximately 1,330 total acres were deleted from the Rush Peak Reserve, and approximately 1,260 acres were added to the Honker Reserve north of the 30 Road. The area deleted from the Rush Peak Reserve will become Timber Production LUD, and the area added to the Honker Reserve was primarily Modified Landscape LUD.

Goals, Objectives, and Outputs

Goals - The Forest Plan Goal for Biodiversity is to maintain healthy forest ecosystems; maintain a mix of habitats at different spatial scales (i.e. site, watershed, island, province and forest) capable of supporting the full range of naturally occurring flora, fauna, and ecological processes native to Southeast Alaska. The adjustment to the Reserves in VCU 597 is consistent with the Goals of the Plan.

Objectives - The Forest Plan Objectives include to maintain a Forest-wide system of old growth forest habitat (includes reserves, non-development LUDs, and beach, estuary and riparian corridors) to sustain old growth associated species and resources; and, to ensure that

the reserve system meets the minimum size, spacing and composition criteria described in Appendix K of the Plan. The adjustment to the Reserves in VCU 597 was specifically designed to meet the Forest Plan Objectives.


Outputs - Adjustment of the Reserves in VCU 597 will have minimal effect on Forest Plan Outputs, primarily because the acres of LUDs changed that allow scheduled timber harvest are relatively similar.

Management Prescriptions - The Reserves in VCU 597 have been adjusted as noted in the Forest Plan Record of Decision and in accordance with the Old Growth Land Use Designation Management Prescription. None of the standards and guidelines associated with the Management Prescriptions have been changed.

Technical Changes - Technical changes to a Plan's management direction may be made on the basis of new information about the actual resource characteristics of the area. This category does not apply to this case.

Conclusion - Based on a consideration of the factors above, I conclude adoption of this amendment is not significant in a NFMA context. This amendment is fully consistent with current Forest Plan goals and objectives. The amendment provides added detail on implementation of the Old Growth Habitat Management Prescriptions of the Forest Plan.

I hereby amend the Forest Plan with this non-significant amendment by adjusting the Rush Peak and Honker Old Growth Habitat Reserves as shown on the Record of Decision Map and documented in the project record for the Control Lake Timber Sales Final EIS.



BRADLEY E. POWELL
Forest Supervisor

May 12, 1998

DATE

Appendix 2

Planned Number And Size Of Timber Sales

Sale Name	Number Of Units	Acres	Volume (MMBF)
Wolf Pup	3	70	1.5
North Thorne	3	111	2.7
Big Salt	18	505	11.2
West Steel	1	12	0.2
Lower Rio Beaver	1	9	0.2
Beaver Pond	1	7	0.3
Muskrat	1	9	0.4
Rio Beaver	5	150	5.3
Rush Fast	2	49	1.6
Rush Angel	14	376	8.0
Hard Steel	5	122	5.7
Steel Roberts	4	198	3.9
Log Jam	3	83	1.8
Kogish	5	247	7.5
Shinaku	7	388	6.0
Andy's Peak	1	59	1.0
Shaheen	3	40	0.5

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