



# *News Release*

## TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST

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### **Improvements to Hot Springs Coming Next Summer**

#### **Extensive public input played heavily in Forest Service Decision**

SITKA, Alaska – A popular hot springs destination in the Tongass National Forest will be undergoing some needed improvements next summer.

Located in the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness, the White Sulphur Hot Springs and cabin is a go-to site for both overnight visitors and day-users, local and non-local alike. Its age, high-use, and exposure to the Southeast Alaskan elements meant, however, that it was time for the Forest Service to do some maintenance and improve on some safety concerns.

In response to extensive public input and an environmental analysis, the Forest Supervisor for the Tongass, Forrest Cole, issued a decision on August 17<sup>th</sup> that describes the project at White Sulphur Hot Springs. The full scope of this decision is outlined in the “Decision Notice” and accompanying environmental analysis.

Although the site is used extensively, it is also located in a Wilderness Area, limiting the extent of improvements the Forest Service could make. “We wanted to be sure we could address maintenance and safety concerns without really impacting the wilderness character of the Springs” said Cole. “We think this project will do that.”

Carol Goularte, the Sitka District Ranger, added to Cole’s statements: “We heard from a lot of people who care passionately about this place and what happens here. The project was a great opportunity to work with local community members and really figure out how to balance a wilderness experience with providing a safe, positive outdoor experience.”

Specifically, the project includes: removing and replacing the existing cabin with a slightly larger Architectural Barriers Act accessible cabin about 30 feet from its current location; reconstructing the woodshed with screening and a place to keep clothes dry between the

warm spring and the cabin; removing the bathhouse building and adding decking to create an accessible outdoor soaking pool; and reconstructing the trail. The project will use local native material where possible depending on availability onsite, and an array of mitigation and monitoring measures to minimize environmental impacts.

For members of the public who participated in the comment process, there is an appeal period on this decision. The Legal Notice was published in the Ketchikan Daily News on August 17, 2011, which marks the beginning of the 45 day appeal period.

For more information or copies of the Environmental Assessment and Decision Notice please contact: Carol A. Goularte, District Ranger, 204 Siginaka Way, Sitka, AK 99835, 907-747-6671, [cgoularte@fs.fed.us](mailto:cgoularte@fs.fed.us).