

News Release

TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE-FOREST SERVICE

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Prince of Wales Island Road Closures Ongoing

PRINCE OF WALES ISLAND, Alaska - The Tongass National Forest, Thorne Bay and Craig District Rangers are reminding the public that the roads system on Prince of Wales Island is changing.

All road and trails users are encouraged to pick up a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) and associated updates free of charge at Forest Service offices. They are available also on the Interisland Ferry and at other locations in Prince of Wales communities. These maps show which roads, trails, and areas are open to motorized use.

The decision to make changes to the road system came about only after extensive stakeholder involvement on Prince of Wales and in Ketchikan in 2009. Public involvement ensured the system will meet public needs while addressing existing environmental concerns in an era of declining federal government budgets. Nearly 1,200 miles of roads and trails remain open to public use to access the resources on POW.

Contracts were awarded in 2010 to several Southeast Alaska road construction companies to carry out road closure actions on more than 150 miles of public forest roads on Prince of Wales Island. Certain closures happening this year are not reflected in the 2011 MVUM for Prince of Wales, but are reflected in associated update maps, which will be provided along with the MVUM. Generally, as closures are put into place, the MVUM will be updated annually to reflect changes on the ground. The next update is scheduled to occur in January 2012.

Thorne Bay District Ranger Jason Anderson added, "We want to make sure that residents and visitors to POW are aware of these road closures, before the fall deer hunt gets underway. This is especially important for our neighbors in other Southeast communities who may be planning a visit to POW to hunt from our extensive road system – which will remain the largest in Southeast long after these closures are implemented."

The POW District Rangers are open to hearing about site-specific concerns and ideas for other options when issues arise. In a few instances, road-to-OHV trail conversions have been impractical due to dangerous conditions or faulty bridge concerns. Minor adjustments to the planned transportation system can be considered in the future by the POW rangers, on a case by case basis.

Tongass National Forest

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The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Closures and trail designations not included in the current contracts will occur in the future and be listed on the MVUM's as funds become available.

Roads, trails, and areas designated in the plan are considered the official transportation system for the Tongass National Forest. Forest Service policy prohibits the use of motorized vehicles off the official road system. There are some exceptions to this policy for administrative or military use; please contact the local ranger for further information.

For more information on the Forest Service policy that guided this decision, please see the "2005 OHV Rule," at <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/>.

The POW Access and Travel Management analysis and decision documents also can be obtained by contacting either the Craig Ranger District at 907-826-3271 or the Thorne Bay Ranger District at 907-828-3304.

Please contact Thorne Bay District Ranger, Jason Anderson (907-828-3304), with any questions, concerns, or ideas concerning this ongoing road work.

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