

Appendix 1

Nonsignificant Forest Plan Amendment

Small Old-growth Habitat Reserve Adjustment in VCU 7400

Based on the project-level analysis as described in the Old-growth Habitat Management Prescription and Appendix K of the Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), the locations of small Old-growth Habitat Reserves (OGRs) in VCUs 7380 and 7400 in the Traitors Cove area were evaluated by an interagency group of biologists. At this time, I am deferring the decision on the small OGR in 7380 until the Forest Plan amendment is completed. The small OGR in VCU 7390 was not reviewed under the Traitors Cove EIS because changes were made under the 2002 Fire Cove Salvage Decision Notice. At this time, only changes to the small reserve in VCU 7400 are proposed. I have decided to implement the interagency biologically preferred option for the small Old-growth Habitat Reserve in VCU 7400.

The small OGR in VCU 7400 currently meets Forest Plan size, spacing, and habitat composition criteria. Interagency biologists recommended changes to the OGR to better meet wildlife needs. In May 2005, the Forest Supervisor issued direction to consider an option that does not exceed minimum Forest Plan requirements. Three options were evaluated for the small Old-growth Reserve in VCU 7400:

- The current mapped Forest Plan reserve,
- The interagency biologically preferred reserve, and
- An option which does not exceed minimum Forest Plan requirements.

These evaluations are presented in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS, Old-growth Reserves.

Table A1-1 summarizes the proposed acreage changes to the small reserve in VCU 7400. As proposed, the small reserve would exceed Forest Plan minimum requirements for size and acres of POG.

Table A1-1
Proposed Changes to VCU 7400 Small Old-growth Reserve

VCU	Forest Plan Required Acres		Current Small Reserve Acres		Biologically Preferred Acres	
	Total	POG ¹	Total	POG	Total	POG
7400	1,033	517	1,047	703	1,193	785

¹POG = Productive Old Growth forest.

Source: Small Old-growth Habitat Reserve Review, Planning Record

Appendix 1

Significance

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 Plan amendments when using planning regulations in effect before November 9, 2000. This guidance, in Forest Service Manual (FSM) 1926.51, identifies four changes considered not significant:

1. actions that do not significantly alter the multiple use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management;
2. adjustments of management area boundaries;
3. minor changes in standards and guidelines; and
4. opportunities for additional projects or activities that will contribute to achievement of the management prescription.

The changes to the small Old-growth Reserve boundaries fit the adjustments of management area boundaries change above, and are in compliance with the Forest Plan (pg. 3-82) to further evaluate the size, spacing and habitat composition of old growth reserves during project level environmental analysis.

Four additional factors were considered in this analysis: timing; location and size; goals, objectives, and outputs; and management prescriptions. An analysis of these four factors is presented below.

Timing

The timing factor takes into account when, during the life of the Forest Plan, the proposed change is to take place. Generally, the later the change in the life of the Plan, the less likely it is to be significant.

The Forest Plan revision was completed in 1997, so these changes are proposed 10 years into the life of the Plan. The Old-growth Habitat Management Prescription in the Forest Plan recognizes the small mapped reserves have received differing levels of field review and integration of site-specific information in their design. The intent of the Forest Plan was for project-level environmental analysis, for project areas that include or are adjacent to mapped Old-growth Habitat Reserves, to evaluate the size, spacing and habitat composition of mapped reserves. Forest Plan Appendix K gives specific instruction for how to make these changes. Clearly, modifications to the Old-growth Habitat Land Use Designation (LUD) were anticipated in the Forest Plan. For these reasons, I have determined that this proposed change relevant to timing is not considered significant.

Location and Size

This factor takes into account the location and size of the area involved in the change, and the affected area's relationship to the overall planning area. Generally, the smaller the area affected, the less likely the change is to be a significant change in the Forest Plan.

The areas added to the small Old-growth Habitat Reserve in VCU 7400 were taken from Modified Landscape LUDs adjacent to the existing reserve. The area removed from the Old-growth Habitat LUD in VCU 7400 will change to the Modified Landscape LUD. The net change in total acres for this VCU, and the project area, is an increase of 146 acres for the Old-growth Habitat LUD, which is not considered significant with respect to the size of the overall planning area within the Tongass National Forest (17 million acres).

The boundaries of the Old-growth Habitat Reserve was modified to better address the Forest Plan objectives for biodiversity and to better meet the Old-growth Reserve Criteria located in Appendix K of the Forest Plan. In addition, this location was has the most identifiable boundary of the three options considered. A more complete comparison of the options considered is in Chapter 3 of the Traitors Cove Timber Sale Final EIS.

The recommended changes result in a reduction of 62 acres of suitable timber in VCU 7400.

Goals, Objectives, and Outputs

This factor examines whether the change alters long-term relationships between the levels of goods and services projected by the Forest Plan. In most cases, changes in outputs are not likely to be a significant change in the Forest Plan unless the change would forego the opportunity to achieve an output in later years.

Goals

The Forest Plan goal for Biodiversity is to maintain healthy forest ecosystems and to 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 this reserve is consistent with the goals of the Forest Plan.

Objectives

The Forest Plan objectives are to maintain a Forest-wide system of old-growth forest habitat (including reserves, non-development LUDs, and beach, estuary and riparian corridors) to sustain old-growth associated species and resources. Objectives also are to ensure that the reserve system meets the minimum size, spacing and composition criteria described in Appendix K of the Forest Plan. The adjustments to this reserve were specifically designed to meet the Forest Plan Objectives.

Outputs

Adjustment of this reserve will have a relatively minor effect on the Forest Plan outputs on a Forest-wide basis, primarily because the change in the acres of LUDs that allow scheduled timber harvest is relatively small. There was a net decrease of 62 acres of forest lands classed as suitable for timber production on 49,754 acres of development LUDs within the vicinity of the Traitors Cove project, which is negligible when considered across the Tongass National Forest.

Management Prescriptions

This factor accounts for whether the change in a management prescription is only for a specific situation or whether it would apply to future decisions throughout the planning

Appendix 1

area. It evaluates how the change alters the desired condition of the land and resources or the anticipated goods and services to be produced.

None of the Standards and Guidelines associated with the management prescriptions have been changed as a result of this amendment. The changes to the mapped small Old-growth Habitat Reserve applies only to this location; however, these changes also would apply in future management. The proposed amendment fulfills the desired condition for the Old-growth Habitat LUD Management Prescription as defined in the Forest Plan and would not significantly affect the goods and services produced.

Cumulative Changes

The Traitors Cove Timber Sale EIS is one of 25 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decisions as of March 1, 2007, to make non-significant amendments to the Forest Plan by modifying LUD boundaries. These changes are tracked with a monitoring question posed by the Forest Plan and are part of the Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report.

The Niblack Environmental Assessment (EA) changed a Wild River non-development LUD to Old-growth Habitat and Timber Management LUDs. The other amendments involved enlargement or reduction of Old-growth Habitat LUDS, usually exchanging acres with one of the development LUDs in order to more effectively meet Forest Plan objectives. Usually, whenever an Old-growth Habitat LUD was expanded, there was a corresponding reduction of acres suitable for timber harvest. Likewise, an Old-growth Habitat LUD size reduction usually meant an increase in suitable acres. Often non-forest or low-productive forest lands are included in the modification of shape of a small reserve due to the natural fragmentation of forest in Southeast Alaska.

While the LUD changes within each project decision constituted non-significant Forest Plan amendments, Table A1-2 displays the accumulated effect on suitable acres for all projects. For each project, the table displays acres that were changed from a non-development LUD to a resource development LUD, or from a development LUD to Old-Growth Habitat and the net change in acres suitable for timber management. The net change in suitable acres represents about 2 percent of the suitable land base across the Tongass National Forest.

Table A1-2
**Effects of Forest Plan Amendments on Acres Suitable for Timber Harvest as of
 March 1, 2007**

Project	Non-development to Development LUD Suitable Acres	Development to Non-development LUD Suitable Acres	Net Change in Suitable Acres
Traitors Cove EIS	0	62	-62
Tuxekan EIS	431	1,614	-1,183
Overlook EA	354	578	-224
Scott Peak EIS	1,089	1,962	-873
Couverden EIS	0	790	-790
Kensington Gold EIS	0	1,615	-1,615
Madan EIS	377	1,501	-1,124
Finger Mountain EIS	0	593	-593
Cholmondoley EIS	894	6,873	-5,979
Woodpecker EIS	180	130	+50
Polk Small Sales EA	0	151	-151
Threemile EIS	458	826	-368
Fire Cove Salvage EA	186	633	-447
Salty EA	99	126	-27
Luck Lake EIS	257	794	-537
Doughnut EIS	0	19	-19
Kuakan EIS	416	542	-126
Sea Level EIS	185	500	-315
Canal Hoya EIS	0	196	-196
Chasina EIS	0	78	-78
Control Lake EIS	446	142	+304
Crystal Creek EIS	481	1,152	-671
Nemo Loop EA	177	932	-755
Todahl Backline EA	2	363	-361
Niblack EA	252	0	+252
Total	6,284 acres	22,172 acres	-15,888 acres

Appendix 1

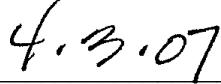
Conclusions

Based on a consideration of the factors above, I conclude adoption of this amendment is considered not significant in the context of Forest Service Manual (FSM) 1926.51. 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 small Old-growth Habitat Reserve in VCU 7400 as shown on the Record of Decision map and documented in the project planning record for the Traitors Cove Timber Sale Final EIS (see Figure A1-1, below).

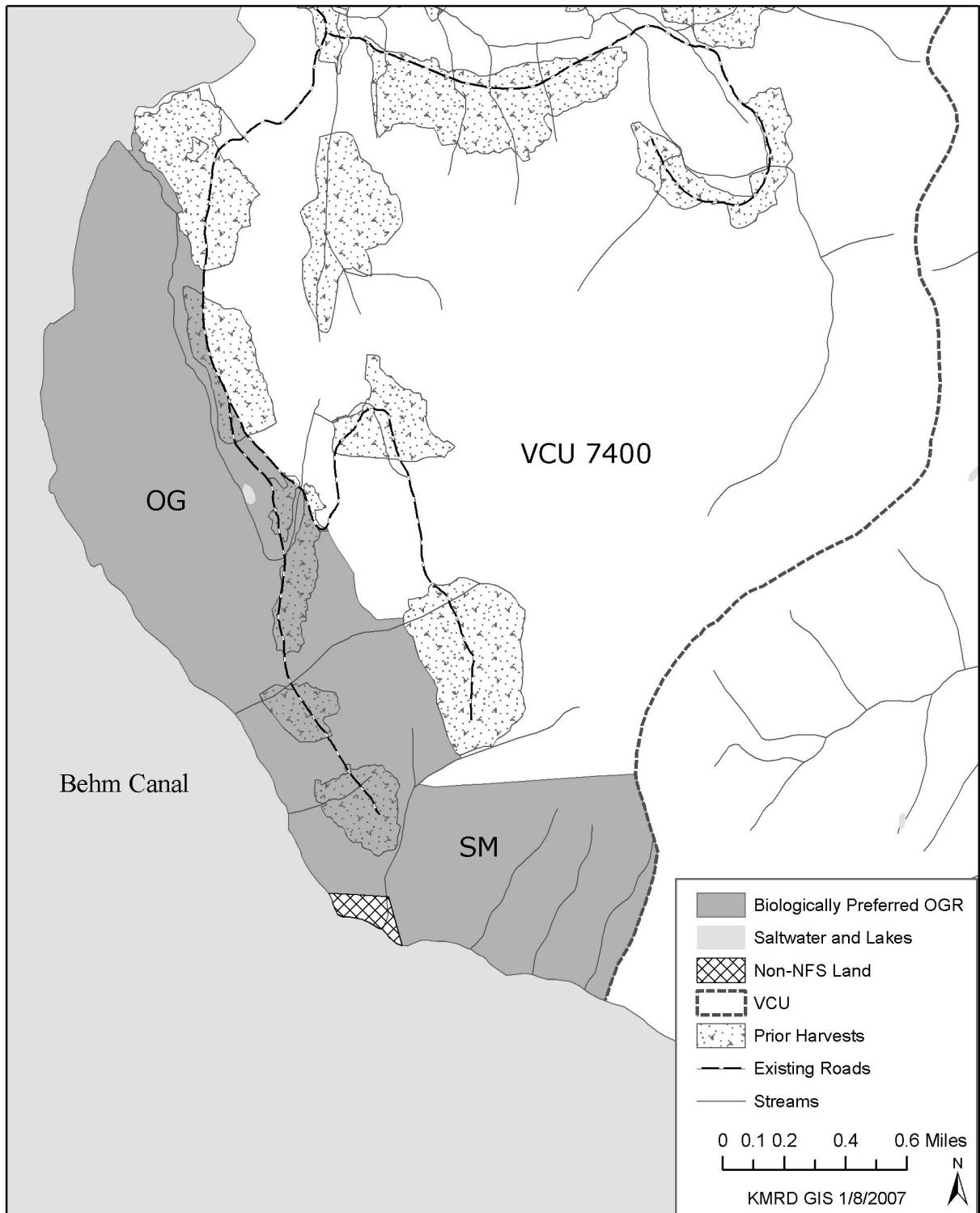


FORREST COLE
Forest Supervisor



4.3.07
Date

Figure A1-1
Traitors Cove Old-growth Habitat Reserve VCU 7400



Source: GIS, J. Llanos, 2007

Appendix 1

This page left blank.