

# Chapter 1

## Purpose and Need

### Introduction

The Forest Service has prepared this Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) on the potential effects of timber harvest in the Iyouktug project area (see Figure 1-1) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. This FEIS describes the Purpose and Need for the Iyouktug Timber Sale and discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts and any irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources that would result from the Proposed Action and alternatives. The project area is located in the northeastern part of Chichagof Island and is within the Hoonah Ranger District, Tongass National Forest, Alaska Region (Region 10), of the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This FEIS is prepared according to the format established by Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508).

The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) used a systematic approach for analyzing the proposed project and alternatives to it, estimating the environmental effects, and preparing this FEIS. The planning process complies with NEPA and the CEQ regulations. Planning was coordinated with the appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies, and local federally recognized tribes. The public, agencies, and tribes were involved in the planning process through meetings, letters, and personal conversations.

### Document Organization

**Chapter 1** explains the Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action, discusses how the Iyouktug project relates to the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended (Forest Plan), and identifies the significant issues driving the EIS analysis.

**Chapter 2** describes the Proposed Action, compares alternatives to the Proposed Action including a No-action Alternative, and summarizes the significant environmental consequences by issue.

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**Chapter 3** describes the natural and human environments potentially affected by the Proposed Action and alternatives, and discloses what potential effects are anticipated.

**Chapter 4** contains the list of preparers, the EIS distribution list, literature cited, a glossary, and an index.

**Appendices** provide additional information on specific aspects of the proposed project. This FEIS incorporates documented analyses by summarization and reference where appropriate.

The FEIS and Record of Decision (ROD) are available on line at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/projects/projects.shtml> or copies of the FEIS and ROD may be obtained from the USDA Forest Service offices at Hoonah or Sitka, Alaska.

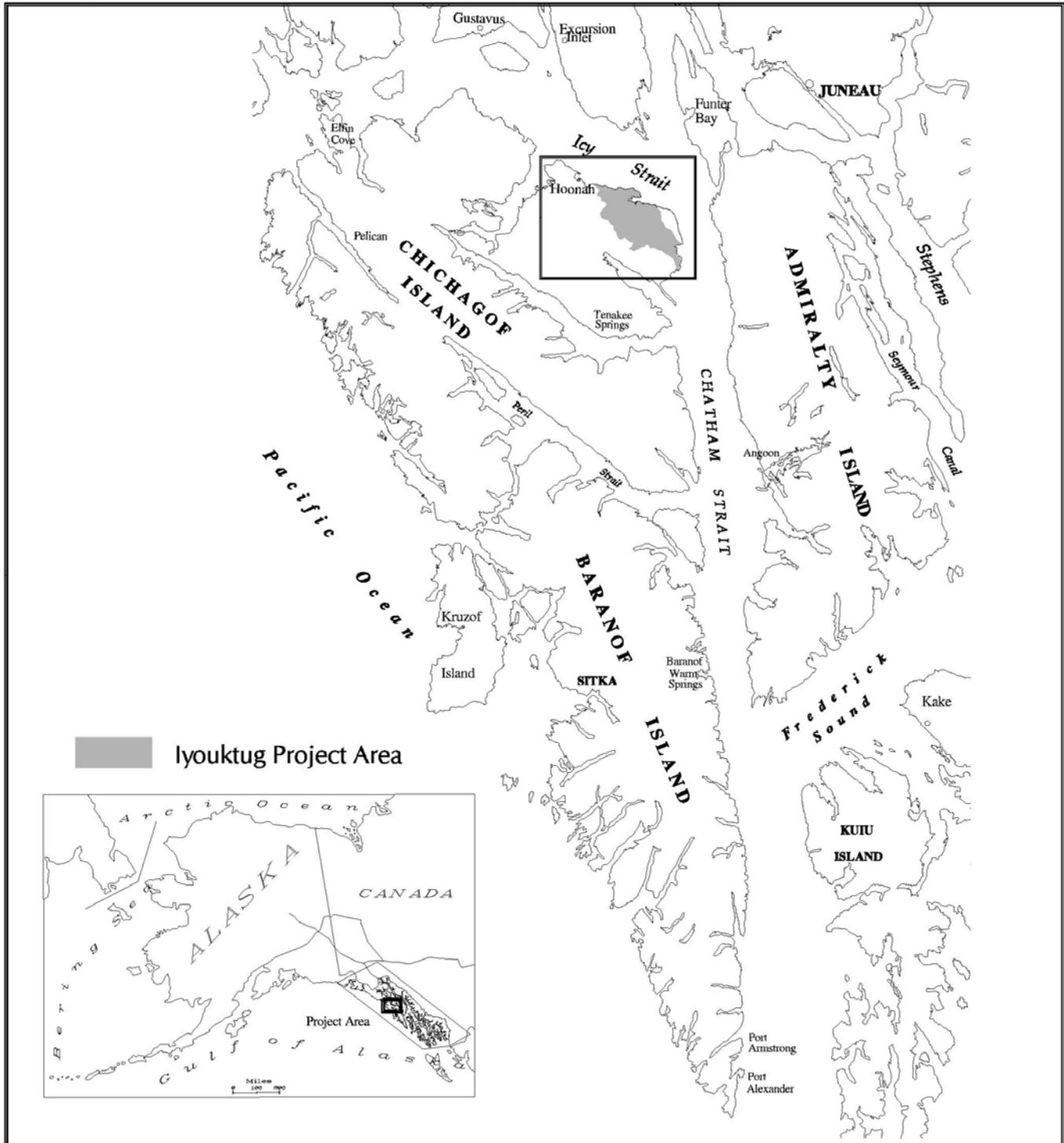
Additional documentation, including more detailed analyses of project-area resources, may be found in the project record located at the Sitka Ranger District Office in Sitka, Alaska.

## Description of the Project Area

The Iyouktug project area contains 40,651 acres and is located on the northeastern part of Chichagof Island in the Iyouktug valley, northwest of the Iyoukeen Peninsula. The project area is located north of Freshwater Bay, west of False Bay and Chatham Strait, and south of Icy Strait, approximately 12 miles east-southeast of Hoonah, Alaska (see Figure 1-1). The project area lies within the Iyouktug and Suntaheen Creek valleys, along National Forest System Road 8530, and includes Whitestone Harbor. The project area is located in Townships 43-44 South and Ranges 62-64 East, Copper River Meridian. The project area is bordered on the northwest by private land, much of which has been previously harvested. The Iyouktug project area includes approximately 265 acres of non-Forest Service System land, all of which is owned by Huna Totem Corporation.

The project area includes Value Comparison Units (VCUs) 2080, 2090, and 2100. VCUs are comparable to large watersheds and generally follow major watershed divides (see the Introduction to Chapter 3 for a more detailed definition). For analysis purposes, the project area boundaries are the same as the VCU boundaries. VCUs are delineated in Figure 1-2. VCU 2110 was not included in the project area because no activities are proposed in VCU 2110 and it is entirely Old-growth Habitat Land Use Designation (LUD).

Figure 1 - 1  
Iyouktug Timber Sales Project Area - Vicinity Map.



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### Forest Plan Goals and Objectives

The Iyouktug project is proposed at this time to respond to goals and objectives of the Tongass Forest Plan, to help move the project area towards desired conditions described in that plan, and to meet the needs of Southeast Alaska timber operators. The Forest Plan includes both forest-wide goals and objectives, and area-specific (land use designation) goals, objectives, and desired conditions. The purpose of the Iyouktug Timber Sales project is to:

- Maintain and promote wood production from suitable timber lands, providing a supply of wood to meet society's needs.
- Seek to provide a stable supply of timber from the Tongass National Forest, which meets the annual planning-cycle market demand, while managing these lands for sustained long-term yields, consistent with sound multiple-use and sustained-yield objectives.
- Seek to provide a long-term, stable supply of timber for local sawmills and timber operators.
- Provide a diversity of opportunities for resource uses that contribute to the local and regional economies of Southeast Alaska to support a wide range of natural resource employment opportunities within Southeast Alaska's communities.

Applicable forest-wide goals and objectives (USDA Forest Service 1997, pp. 2-3 and 2-4) are the guiding principles for the purpose of the Iyouktug Timber Sales project. Goals, objectives and desired conditions of the land use designations within the project area are described in the section in this chapter, "Relationship to the Forest Plan."

Appendix A of this document provides information on how this project relates to the overall Tongass timber sale program and why the project is being scheduled at this time.

## Proposed Action

A "Proposed Action" is defined early in the project-level planning process. This serves as a starting point for the interdisciplinary team and gives the public and other agencies specific information on which to focus comments. Using these comments (see discussion of Significant Issues later in this chapter), and information from preliminary analysis, the interdisciplinary team then develops alternatives to the Proposed Action. These are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Alternative 2 represents the Proposed Action. Alternative 2 would provide up to 58.1 million board feet (MMBF) of timber from approximately 4,185 acres using shovel yarding, cable-logging, and helicopter yarding systems

(see Figures 2-3a and 2-3b, Chapter 2). Approximately 1,253 acres would be clearcut and 2,932 acres would be partial harvest of up to 50% of the basal area. Alternative 2 would harvest approximately 1,871 acres in inventoried roadless areas.

Timber in Alternative 2 would be offered through various small sales and one or more large sales over an extended period of time following the Record of Decision (ROD).

This alternative would construct a total of about 13.4 miles of temporary roads and 4.2 miles of National Forest System (NFS) road. All new temporary roads would be decommissioned after timber harvest. All newly constructed NFS roads would remain open for future timber harvest and silvicultural needs. Alternative 2 would include reconstruction of about 6.9 miles of existing NFS roads that are currently closed; these roads would be closed and placed into storage after timber harvest. Road maintenance of existing open roads would be part of ongoing activities and would occur no matter which Iyouktug alternative was chosen. Approximately 40.4 miles of NFS road would remain open after timber sale completion. The existing Long Island marine access facility (MAF) would be used.

About 5.4 miles of temporary road and 2.7 miles of NFS road would be constructed in inventoried roadless areas; all miles of NFS road would remain open in inventoried roadless areas for future silvicultural activities.

Alternative 2 would modify the project area old growth reserves (OGRs) to meet the interagency biologists recommendations to increase acres, improve connectivity, and adjust boundaries to follow recognizable features (see Chapter 2, Alternative 2 description and Figures 2-3a, 2-3b, and Chapter 3, Figure 3-1).

## Decisions to Be Made

The Responsible Official for this proposal is the Forest Supervisor for the Tongass National Forest. Based on the environmental analysis in this FEIS, the Tongass Forest Supervisor will decide whether and how to make timber available from the Iyouktug project area in accordance with Forest Plan goals, objectives and desired conditions. This decision will be documented in the ROD and will include:

- The estimated timber volume, if any, to make available from the project area;
- The location, design, and method of timber harvest, road construction and reconstruction, log transfer facilities, and silvicultural practices;
- The timeframe harvest may occur in;

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- Road management objectives for roads constructed, reconstructed, or with bridge replacements;
- Any necessary project-specific design criteria, mitigation measures, and monitoring requirements;
- Whether there may be a significant restriction on subsistence uses; and
- Whether any changes in small old growth reserves should be made and approved as a non-significant amendment to the Forest Plan.

If the decision is made to implement an action alternative beyond approximately five years, the Forest Supervisor will determine if a review of resource effects is needed, in addition to the standard review before the timber sale contract is released for bid. If a review is needed, it may result in no change to implementation, a change analysis in the timber sale contract, or revising the EIS in accordance with the Forest Service Handbook (FSH 1909.15 Chapter 18).

## Relationship to Forest Plan

Forest planning takes place at several levels: national, regional, forest, and project levels. The Forest Plan is a forest-level analysis. It embodies the provisions of the National Forest Management Act, its implementing regulations, and other guiding documents, and sets forth in detail the direction for managing the land and resources of the Tongass National Forest. The Forest Plan is the result of extensive analysis, which is addressed in the Forest Plan Final EIS and the 1997 Record of Decision.

The Iyouktug EIS is a project-level analysis; its scope is confined to addressing the significant issues and possible environmental consequences of the project. It does not attempt to address decisions made at higher levels. It does, however, implement direction provided at those higher levels. Where appropriate, the Iyouktug EIS tiers to the Forest Plan FEIS, as encouraged by 40 CFR 1502.20.

### **Forest Plan 1997 Record of Decision, as amended**

In *AFA v. USDA* (J99-0013 CV (JKS)), the U.S. District Court, District of Alaska vacated the 1999 Record of Decision for the Tongass Forest Plan and upheld the 1997 Record of Decision. This project is consistent with the 1997 Record of Decision for the Tongass Land Management Plan.

### **Forest Plan Supplemental EIS**

In *Sierra Club v. Lyons* (J00-0009 CV (JKS)), the U.S. District Court, District of Alaska directed the Forest Service to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) that evaluates and considers roadless areas within the Tongass for recommendation as potential wilderness areas. The Notice of Availability for the Final SEIS and Record of Decision appeared in the *Federal Register* on March 7, 2003. In the SEIS

Record of Decision, the No-action Alternative was selected, in which no additional wildernesses were recommended and the existing land use designations were maintained. The roadless inventory and roadless area descriptions were updated to support the SEIS (USDA Forest Service 2003a) and were incorporated into the Iyouktug Timber Sale FEIS analysis.

## **Forest Plan Amendment (2008 Forest Plan)**

The 2008 Forest Plan was prepared while the Iyouktug project was being planned. The Forest Plan Amendment DEIS was released in January 2007 and the extended public comment period ended on April 30, 2007. The Forest Plan Amendment was completed with the signing of the Record of Decision (ROD) on January 23, 2008, and is effective on March 17, 2008. The ROD for the Forest Plan Amendment adopts the Timber Sale Program Adaptive Management Strategy, under which portions of the suitable land base become available for project-level planning in three phases. The Iyouktug project area is within the Phase 1 portion of the suitable land base, which allows planning to continue for this project and to implement it once the planning process is completed.

The Forest Plan Amendment ROD also contains transition language for timber sale projects already being planned. This language identifies three different categories of projects, depending on how far along they are in the planning process. The Iyouktug project is in Category 2, which requires the Forest Supervisor to review the project and incorporate the new direction in the 2008 Forest Plan to the extent this can be done without causing major disruptions in the implementation of the project. The Iyouktug project is consistent with all of the land allocations of the 2008 Forest Plan, including the Old-Growth Habitat reserves and Special Interest Areas. The Iyouktug FEIS analysis was substantially completed prior to the decision on the 2008 Forest Plan and does not include any amended or new standards and guidelines from the 2008 Forest Plan; however, the majority of the standards and guidelines remain the same from the 2008 Forest Plan from the 1997 Forest Plan. Information on the 2008 Forest Plan was included as applicable in Appendix B, Responses to Comments on the DEIS. The Iyouktug project is consistent with the transition language in the 2008 Forest Plan Amendment ROD.

Throughout this FEIS, the term “Forest Plan” refers to the 1997 Forest Plan unless it is specifically described as the “2008 Forest Plan”.

## **1997 Forest Plan Land Use Designations (LUDs)**

The Forest Plan uses land use designations (LUDs) to guide management of the National Forest System lands within the Tongass. Each designation provides for a unique combination of activities, practices and uses. The Iyouktug project area includes three land use designations, Timber Production, Scenic Viewshed, and Old-growth Habitat, as well as approximately 265 acres of non-Forest Service System land. Goals, objectives, and desired conditions of each LUD are included or summarized

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below and their locations are shown in Figure 1-2. Chapter 3 of the Forest Plan contains a detailed description of each LUD.

Table 1-1 displays the acreages within the project area of each LUD and of lands in private ownership. Figure 1-2 displays the location of the LUDs and VCUs within the project area.

Table 1-1: Project Area LUDs and non-National Forest Acreages

<b>Timber Production</b>	<b>Scenic Viewshed</b>	<b>Old-growth Habitat</b>	<b>Other Ownership</b>	<b>Total Acres</b>
28,938 ac.	1,706 ac.	9,742 ac.	265 ac.	40,651 ac.

Source: GIS, Forest Plan LUD Layer \*S\*

## **Timber Production**

The goals of this designation are to:

- maintain and promote industrial wood production from suitable timber lands, providing a continuous supply of wood to meet society's needs;
- manage these lands for sustained long-term timber yields; and
- seek to provide a supply of timber from the Tongass National Forest, which meets the annual and planning-cycle market demand, consistent with the standards and guidelines of this land use designation.

Timber management objectives of this land use designation include:

- seek to reduce clearcutting when other methods will meet land management objectives;
- improve timber growth and productivity on commercial forest lands; and
- plan, inventory, prepare, offer, sell, and administer timber sales and permits to ensure the orderly development of timber production.

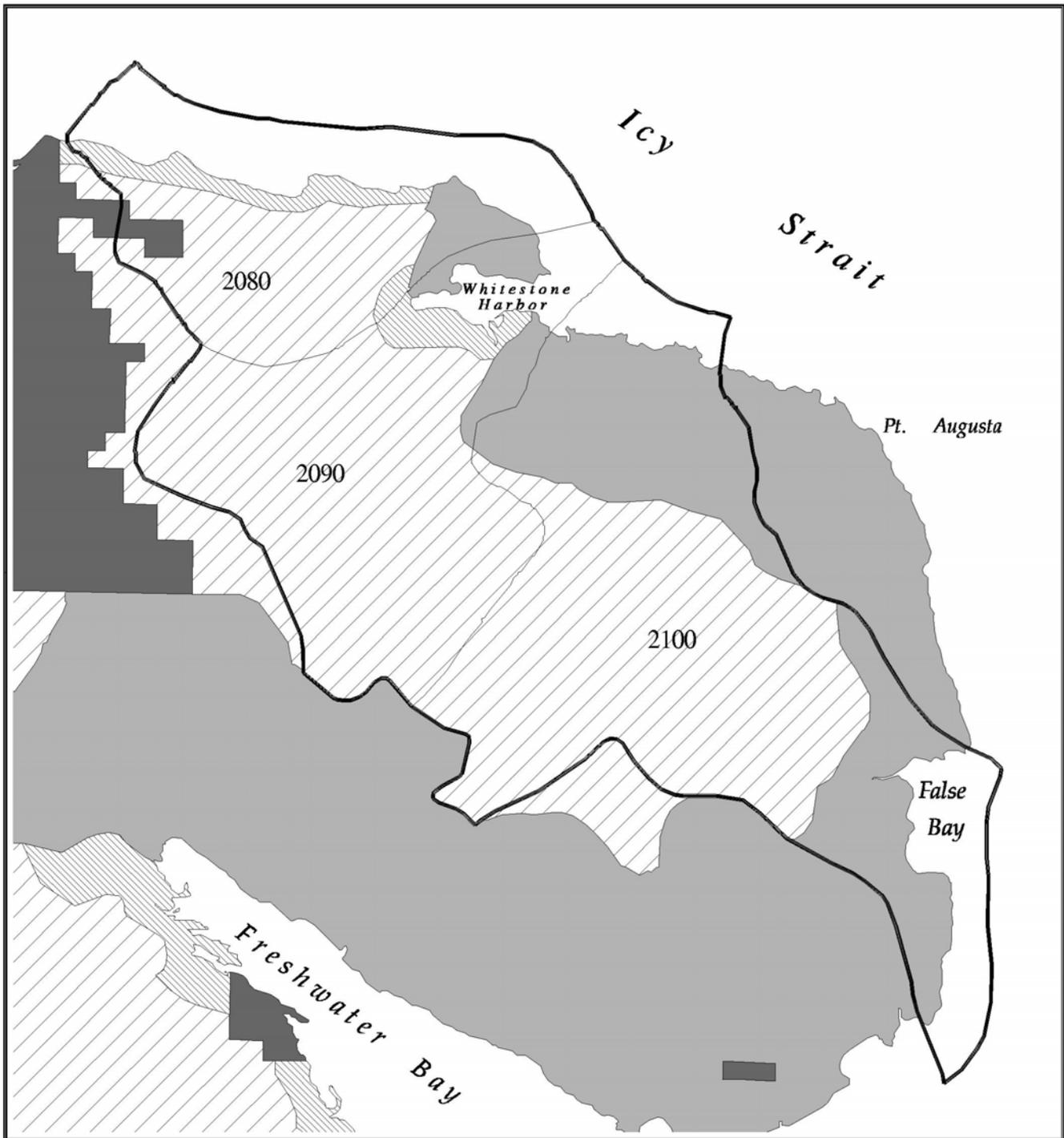
For Timber Production, the desired condition includes a sustained yield of timber, healthy tree stands in a balanced mix of age classes from young stands to trees of harvestable age, and a road system providing access for timber management as well as recreation, hunting and fishing, and other public uses. Recreation opportunities associated with roaded settings are available. Wildlife habitats are predominantly in the early and middle successional stages.

## **Scenic Viewshed**

The goals of this designation repeat the third goal under Timber Production, and include two others:

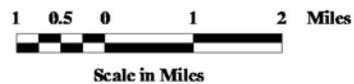
- provide a sustained yield of timber and a mix of resource activities while minimizing the visibility of developments as seen from visual priority travel routes and use areas; and

Figure 1 - 2  
Project Area Land Use Designation (LUD) Map



-  Old Growth Habitat
-  Scenic Viewshed
-  Timber Management
-  Non-National Forest Land

-  Value Comparison Unit (VCU) Boundary
-  Project Boundary
-  2090 VCU Number



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- recognize the scenic values of suitable timber lands viewed from selected popular roads, trails, marine travel routes, recreation sites, bays, and anchorages, and ... modify timber harvest practices accordingly.

Timber management objectives of the Scenic Viewshed land use designation are the same as those included for Timber Production. The scenery objective is to apply the Retention visual quality objective in the foreground distance zone, and Partial Retention in the remaining zones, as seen from visual priority travel routes and use areas.

For Scenic Viewshed, the desired condition emphasizes a natural-appearing landscape as viewed by users of visual priority travel routes and use areas. Recreation and tourism opportunities in a range of settings are available. A variety of successional stages providing wildlife habitat occur, although late successional stages predominate.

## **Old-growth Habitat**

The goals of this designation are:

- maintain areas of old growth forests and their associated natural ecological processes to provide habitat for old growth associated resources; and
- manage early seral conifer stands to achieve old growth forest characteristic structure and composition based upon site capability.

Applicable objectives of Old-growth Habitat include:

- provide old growth forest habitats, in combination with other land use designations, to maintain viable populations of ... fish and wildlife species ... that may be closely associated with old growth forests;
- contribute to the habitat capability of fish and wildlife resources to support sustainable human subsistence and recreational uses; and
- maintain components of flora and fauna biodiversity and ecological processes associated with old growth forests.

For Old-growth Habitat, the desired condition is that all forested areas attain old growth forest characteristics and provide a diversity of old growth habitat types, associated species, and ecological processes.

## **Non-National Forest System Lands**

There are 265 acres of land under Huna Totem Corporation ownership in the northwestern corner of the Iyouktug project area (see Figure 1-2). About 100 acres of this land have been harvested through clearcuts. Sealaska Corporation has purchased the timber rights on the area from Huna Totem Corporation. At this time, Sealaska plans to harvest some of the uncut Huna Totem corporation land within the project area in 2 or 3 years.

## Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines

Approximately 5,050 acres of the Iyouktug project area, located in the northwestern corner of the Iyouktug project area, are encumbered by Huna Totem Corporation. Huna Totem Corporation has “selected” all but approximately 6 acres of encumbered lands from other federally managed land parcels; none of these selected lands fall within the Iyouktug project area. If encumbered areas are harvested, any harvest receipts from encumbered lands would be placed in escrow until Huna Totem Corporation receives its final entitlement under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). The Huna Totem Corporation may reach full entitlement by the time this project is implemented.

Outside of the Iyouktug project area, to the northwest, lays a large area of private land. Much of this area has been harvested (see Figure 2-1, Chapter 2). This area is not part of the project area. Depending on the resource, activities in these private lands have been considered in cumulative effects (Resource Specialist Reports, Iyouktug Project Record).

Standards and guidelines delineate spatial areas not available for programmed timber harvest within land use designations that are otherwise available. Many Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines apply and many of these are summarized in Chapter 2. Detailed information about these and other standards and guidelines is included in the Forest Plan, Chapter 4. Areas with specific standards and guidelines and management recommendations are displayed on the Unit and Road Cards in Appendices B and C of the DEIS and Appendix C of the FEIS.

## Tongass National Forest Five-year Timber Sale Plan

The Tongass National Forest Five-year Timber Sale Plan is adjusted annually based on the most current information about timber demand, availability, and legislation. The plan is designed to allow time to complete the environmental analysis and sale layout prior to timber being offered, which usually takes two to four years depending on the complexity of the project.

Timber may be offered for harvest in multiple sales of various sizes in the near future if the decision is made to harvest timber in the Iyouktug Timber Sale project area. The Iyouktug project is currently listed in the five-year sale plan starting in 2008. The number and volume of the timber sales will depend on the final decision.

Except for ongoing small sales under contract, no additional timber sale activities are planned in the Iyouktug project area in the next 5 years.

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## Public Involvement

### Scoping

Public involvement is a key component of the planning process. The Council on Environmental Quality defines scoping as "...an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action" (40 CFR 1501.7). Among other things, the scoping process is used to invite public participation, to help identify public issues, and to obtain public comment at various stages of the EIS process. Although scoping is to begin early, it is really a process that continues until a decision is made. In addition to the following specific activities, the Iyouktug project has been listed on the Tongass National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions since January 2005; the Schedule of Proposed Actions is available on the Internet ([www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass](http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass)).

### Notice of Intent (NOI)

A Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register on August 28, 2006 (Volume 71, Number 166), when it was decided that an EIS was to be undertaken for the project. This notice briefly described the proposed action and the Purpose and Need for the project. Estimated timelines for the project were given, along with a background summary, and contact information for those interested in participating in the planning process.

### Public Mailings

On August 22, 2006, a scoping letter providing information and seeking public comment was mailed to 84 individuals and groups that had previously shown interest in Forest Service projects in Southeast Alaska. This included Federal and State agencies, Alaska Native groups, municipal offices, businesses, interest groups, and individuals. Scoping letters were mailed to several additional individuals and groups after August 22<sup>nd</sup>. A total of 16 responses to this initial mailing were received; the comments are filed in the Iyouktug project record.

Comments were used to determine issues, design alternatives, and to determine what information to discuss in the EIS or specialist reports and when to further explain policies or procedures.

### Local News Media

An announcement about the project was printed in the *Juneau Empire* on August 25, 2006. Public service announcements about the September 6, 2006 public meeting in Hoonah were provided to radio stations that broadcast in Hoonah and Juneau, KINY and KJNO.

### Public Meetings

An open house meeting was held in Hoonah on November 8, 2005 to provide information to the public about the project area and potential proposals and to discuss local concerns and interests prior to scoping for the Iyouktug project. Twenty people attended; many attendees provided input.

Another open house meeting, announced via the newspaper, radio, and posters, was held in Hoonah on September 6, 2006 to present the Proposed Action, provide further information, and discuss local concerns. No one attended this meeting.

## **Meetings and Consultation with Agencies, Communities, and Others**

An interagency review of the small old growth reserves (OGRs) in the Iyouktug project area was conducted between August and December of 2005 by biologists from the Forest Service, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG), Department of Natural Resources and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This interagency team assessed if the size, spacing, location and habitat composition meet Forest Plan standards and guidelines for OGRs. The review team developed a recommendation for the biologically preferred location of the OGRs. An interagency forest-wide review of the OGRs was completed as part of the Forest Plan Amendment process in 2007. This review concurred with the biologically preferred location for the OGRs in the project area. This recommendation is part of the Proposed Action and the other action alternatives.

Further consultation with USFWS, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and ADFG occurred related to threatened and endangered species.

A meeting was held with representatives of the Sitka Conservation Society (SCS) on January 22, 2007 and with representatives of Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC) on November 19, 2007. SCS presented information about the project area and concerns to the IDT about the proposed action. SEACC presented concerns to the IDT about the alternatives. Members of the Sitka Conservation Society, Juneau Group of the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, The Wilderness Society, and the Tongass Conservation Society also met with and went to the field with IDT member Chris Budke in July 2006.

A meeting was held with Gary Fallin, a representative of Erickson Skycranes, in June 2007 in which information about economics related to helicopter yarding was discussed.

In addition, several phone conversations with various organization and industry representatives and individuals occurred throughout the analysis. These conversations are documented in the Project Record.

## **Consultation with Tribal Governments**

The National Historic Preservation Act (1966 as amended) strengthens the relationship between the Forest Service and Indian Tribes (defined as federally recognized tribes, Alaska Native Corporations and Native Hawaiian Organizations) in consultation regarding site significance and the potential affects on historic and archaeological sites. Executive Orders

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13084 and 13175 require that federal agencies consult with tribes during planning activities.

Letters providing information and inviting government-to-government consultation were sent to the following federally recognized tribes and Alaska Native corporations in May 2005 prior to public scoping for the Iyouktug Timber Sales DEIS: Hoonah Indian Association; Angoon Community Association; Huna Totem Corp., Inc.; and Kootznoowoo Inc. Comments were received from the Hoonah Indian Association. The Hoonah Indian Association was generally supportive, with some questions and concerns about roads, economics, and subsistence.

The Hoonah District Ranger on November 8, 2005 and the Acting District Ranger on January 25, 2007, attended tribal council meetings in Hoonah to highlight high interest projects on the Hoonah District and to review the 2006 and 2007 program of work. The Iyouktug Timber Sale project was highlighted and concerns were solicited.

In January 2007, voice mails were left for Huna Totem Corp., Inc. and Kootznoowoo Inc. (associated with Angoon) asking to provide additional opportunities for consultation, asking for further comments, concerns and input, and providing additional information about the Iyouktug Timber Sales. No phone calls or letters were received from these contacts.

In February 2007, certified letters were sent to the Hoonah Indian Association, Angoon Community Association, Huna Totem Corp., Inc., Kootznoowoo Inc., and Sealaska Corporation asking to provide additional opportunities for consultation, asking for further comments, concerns and input, and providing additional information about the Iyouktug Timber Sales. No phone calls or letters were received from this mailing.

The Hoonah Indian Association, Angoon Community Association, Huna Totem Corp., Inc., Kootznoowoo Inc., and Sealaska Corporation were sent a copy of the DEIS prior to the mailing to the general public.

A consultation meeting was held with the Hoonah Indian Association on October 11, 2007, which included discussion about the Iyouktug Timber Sales. A question was asked about the road maintenance responsibilities on the Iyouktug and recent small timber sales. A Hoonah Ranger District employee explained that there are two options for road maintenance: the purchaser may provide maintenance on the roads utilized under the authority of the contract or the purchaser may pay a road use fee (in which case the Forest Service maintains the road). On January 23, 2008, the Hoonah District Ranger spoke to Raynelle Jack, Administrator for Angoon Community Association (representative). She informed the Ranger that a new tribal President, Matthew Fred, Jr., was recently elected, replacing Ed

Gamble, Sr. The summary, including an area map, from the Iyouktug DEIS was provided to the new President for his review.

The tribes and corporations will receive a copy of this FEIS and the ROD.

## DEIS

### **Availability of Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

Availability of the DEIS was announced through a Notice of Availability on October 5, 2007 in the *Federal Register* and through a legal notice published October 12, 2007 in the *Juneau Empire*, the newspaper of record for this project (when the DEIS was published). The Notice of Availability started a 45-day comment period that began October 5, 2007. One hundred and one EIS documents or letters providing an internet location for the DEIS were mailed to Federal and State agencies, Alaska Native and municipal offices, libraries, and anyone else who had requested them.

### **Subsistence Hearings**

Following publication of the DEIS, the Forest Service held a formal subsistence hearing in Hoonah on November 1, 2007. Two people attended the meeting, but no one provided testimony at the Hoonah hearing. A formal hearing was also scheduled in Angoon, Alaska on October 31, 2007, but weather precluded the hearing officer from attending. A Forest Service representative, however, was present at the hearing location for the entire time that the hearing was planned, and one individual did show up for the hearing. The hearing officer later called this individual and his testimony was taken and recorded by phone on November 13, 2007. A complete transcript of the testimony from the hearing is included in Iyouktug Project Record. Concern was expressed during the hearing that subsistence uses would be reduced. The individual stated that subsistence harvest is important to the local communities and that this way of life should be maintained.

## FEIS

### **Publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement**

The Notice of Availability of this FEIS will be published in the *Federal Register*. A legal notice will be published in the *Ketchikan Daily News*, the newspaper of record, which initiates a 45-day appeal period (36 CFR 215), during which the project cannot be implemented. A legal notice will also be published in the *Juneau Empire*. Copies of the FEIS and ROD have been mailed to Federal and State agencies, federally recognized tribal governments, municipal offices, and to those who requested them or responded to the DEIS. The FEIS and ROD are also available at the Hoonah and Sitka Ranger District Offices.

## **Public Comments on the DEIS**

### **Analysis and Incorporation of Public Comments on the DEIS**

Eighteen agencies, organizations, and individuals submitted written comments on the Iyouktug Timber Sales DEIS. Sixteen comment letters

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about the DEIS were received during the comment period, and two comment letters were received after the comment period. The IDT used these comments to further refine and develop this FEIS (please see the lists of Changes Made Between Draft and Final EIS on the backs of the chapter divider pages). The comments and the Forest Service responses to these comments are displayed in Appendix B of this FEIS.

## Issues

### Significant Issues

Issues for the Iyouktug project were identified through public and internal scoping. Each comment received during scoping was considered a potential issue and each comment was evaluated to determine how to address the comment. Similar issues were combined into one statement where appropriate. The following three issues were determined to be significant and within the scope of the project decision. The IDT developed alternatives to the Proposed Action to address these issues; Chapter 2 of this FEIS discusses and compares the alternatives. Additional concerns were considered but did not form the basis for an alternative; they are discussed separately below.

Units of measure were defined to identify how each alternative responds to a significant issue. Measures were chosen that were quantitative where possible; predictable; responsive to the issue; and linked to cause and effect relationships. These measures describe how the alternative affects the resource or resources central to the issue.

### Issue 1

#### ***Issue 1: Proposed harvest and associated road construction would reduce habitat connectivity for Sitka black-tailed deer by removing additional low elevation forest and travel corridors connecting low and high elevation habitat***

Previous timber harvest in the Iyouktug area has removed several areas of low-elevation productive old growth forest. Deer use old growth forest corridors to move between low elevation winter habitat and high elevation summer habitat; these corridors have been affected by previous harvest. Proposed harvest and associated road construction would reduce habitat connectivity for Sitka black-tailed deer by removing additional low elevation forest and travel corridors connecting low and high elevation habitat.

#### **Measurements:**

- Percent reduction in productive old growth below 800 feet elevation in the Wildlife Analysis Area (WAA)
- Acres of productive old growth (POG) remaining in the WAA
- Degree of influence on deer habitat connectivity

## Issue 2

### ***Issue 2: Timber harvest and road construction may affect the roadless character of Iyouktug's three inventoried roadless areas***

Harvesting trees and building and maintaining a road system for current and future harvest may affect the roadless character of the three inventoried roadless areas in the Iyouktug project area: Whitestone, Point Augusta, and Freshwater Bay. Additionally, several comments expressed the desire to avoid roads and avoid harvest in Tongass inventoried roadless areas because of the potential to affect wildlife and fish and their habitat as well as to affect ecological, cultural, and geological values in inventoried roadless areas.

#### **Measurements:**

- Acres of timber harvest and miles of road construction in Whitestone, Freshwater Bay, and Point Augusta Inventoried Roadless Areas
- Acres of inventoried roadless area retaining roadless characteristics in the project area
- Degree of influence on high value fish and wildlife habitat in each inventoried roadless area
- Degree of influence on ecological, cultural, and geological special values in each inventoried roadless area

## Issue 3

### ***Issue 3: Proposed helicopter yarding and road-building may reduce the economic viability of timber sales***

If proposed timber harvest is not designed to be economically viable across fluctuating market conditions, there is a concern that the forest products industry in Southeast Alaska and in the local area may not remain viable. The amount of timber available for sale from national forests and a stable supply affects local employment and revenues. Small operators need local, economical timber to stay in business and loss of those operators would negatively impact the local economy. Proposed helicopter yarding and road-building may reduce the economic viability of timber sales.

#### **Measurements:**

- Total volume in million board feet (MMBF)
- Logging costs per thousand board feet (MBF)
- Indicated bid - dollars per MBF
- Employment in number of total job years
- Direct income based on projected employment (in millions of dollars)

## **Other Issues and Concerns**

Each comment received during scoping was considered a potential issue. Some concerns and suggestions brought up by the public were considered but determined not to be alternative-driving issues. Some of these issues are

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already addressed through other processes or in the Forest Plan through protection via Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines or through LUD designations (see Activities and Design Elements Common to All Action Alternatives in Chapter 2 and unit cards in Appendix B of the DEIS), or their resolution is beyond the scope of this project. Where possible, suggestions about the Iyouktug Timber Sales project were incorporated into the design of the Proposed Action and alternatives (see Chapter 2 of this FEIS). Additionally, some concerns and suggestions for the analysis of the timber sales were considered but eliminated from detailed analysis for the reasons discussed in Chapter 2 of this FEIS (Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis).

The following issues were considered but determined not to be alternative-driving issues. The rationale for why these issues were determined to be non-significant is included below. As needed, resource effects related to these concerns are discussed in Chapter 3.

**Issue: Windthrow may be increased by proposed harvest due to high windthrow risk in parts of the Iyouktug project area.**

Response: Windthrow was considered an important factor in this analysis; all of the action alternatives were designed to minimize the impact of windthrow through site-specific Reasonable Assurance of Windfirmness (RAW) zones, harvest prescriptions, and unit design (see Activities and Design Elements Common to All Action Alternatives, Chapter 2, and Appendix B of the DEIS).

**Issue: Timber harvest and road construction may reduce deer habitat and therefore reduce the number of deer available for subsistence harvest.**

Response: Issue 1 and the wildlife section address the effects of the proposed activities on deer habitat. Through the analysis process, it was determined that the significant issue (Issue 1) would focus on habitat connectivity; habitat connectivity directly affects deer habitat which in turn affects subsistence harvest. The subsistence section addresses the effects of the proposed actions on subsistence harvest.

**Issue: There was concern that yellow-cedar are being negatively impacted by cedar decline, past logging, and global warming, and that the role and value of yellow-cedar stands is unknown; therefore, yellow-cedar stands should not be harvested.**

Response: Yellow-cedar decline is not prevalent in the Iyouktug project area. The Forest Service intends to maintain cedar in the Iyouktug landscape. This concern is addressed through unit prescriptions and unit design in all action alternatives, which will maintain Alaska yellow-cedar as part of species composition.

**Issue: Past harvest in the surrounding area, additional harvest and road building in the Iyouktug drainage may cumulatively impact the remaining multiple uses that the area currently supports, including fish and wildlife, customary and traditional uses, and recreation uses.**

Response: The Forest Service analyzed cumulative effects at a scale appropriate to each resource. The analysis determined that Forest Plan standards and guidelines and non-development LUDs maintain fish and wildlife and their habitat, as well as other resources and uses.

**Issue: Different harvest and yarding techniques should be prescribed under different alternatives for the same unit (either to minimize effects to a resource or to improve economics).**

Response: Proposed prescriptions were driven by LUD designations, economics, and resource concerns such as mistletoe infestation, wind risk, steep slopes, marten habitat, soils, or visuals. The various prescriptions and yarding techniques in the action alternatives were specified to meet resource concerns.

**Issue: Due to the recent 9th Circuit Court of Appeal decision in NRDC v. USFS, the USFS should not be planning any large sales and in particular, not in Roadless Areas.**

Response: The process of remedying the shortcomings identified by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals was completed with the 2008 Forest Plan Amendment, effective March 17, 2008. Both the 1997 and the 2008 Forest Plans allow for the activities in Iyouktug to take place. Delaying planning and analysis regarding road building and timber harvest, even for a short time period, can have a significant effect on the amount of timber available for sale in the next year; this is due to the time needed for sale preparation, appraisal and advertisement, and to provide for the time period when sale areas are typically inaccessible (winter months). Delayed project analyses affect other projects ‘in-line’ for consideration, creating impacts to the entire sale program several years into the future and diminishes the Forest Service’s ability to respond to the on-going timber demand since these analyses are time-consuming. The Tongass National Forest will continue to be managed in compliance with Section 101 of the Tongass Timber Reform Act (TTRA).

Clearing the Iyouktug Timber Sales project through the NEPA process helps meet the Alaska Region’s obligations with regards to Section 101 of the TTRA. In addition, the Iyouktug Timber Sales project includes consideration of two alternatives (Alternatives 1 and 4) that do not harvest or build roads in the inventoried roadless area and one alternative with substantially less effects to roadless than the Proposed Action. The Iyouktug Timber Sales project is consistent with the 2008 Forest Plan, as described in the transition language in the 2008 Plan ROD.

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## **Issue: Members of the public are opposed to all timber harvest and road building on the Tongass National Forest**

Response: The National Forest Management Act (1976) directed preparation of Forest Plans to determine what management activities would be allowed on what portions of the National Forests and what standards and guidelines would apply. The allocation of Tongass National Forest land to different land use designations was decided with the Forest Plan. The plan looks at multiple uses on the Tongass as a whole and determines what areas are best used in what ways.

Analysis done for the 1997 and 2008 Forest Plans included timber harvest and road construction for certain areas. The Iyouktug project area was one of the areas that allowed timber harvest and road building. Avoiding all timber harvest and road building is outside the scope of this analysis because it has been addressed during development, revision and amendment of the Tongass Forest Plan. The project was also proposed to meet the purpose and need for this project, including providing a long-term, stable supply of timber for local sawmills and timber operators.

## **Issue: Iyouktug Creek and Suntaheen Creek watersheds could be at risk for a detrimental change in water yield due to a combination of past and proposed harvest and road building. The cumulative effects of harvest and road-building within the Iyouktug Timber Sales area may affect the condition of stream channels draining this area.**

Response: When the forest canopy is reduced due to harvest and road building, the amount of rain reaching the forest floor increases (Banner et al. 2005). Current science suggests that water yield and peak flows in stream channels may increase measurably when 20% or more of the forest canopy is less than 30 years old (Bosch and Hewlett 1982). Increased water yield and peak flows may influence sediment transport and change channel form. This concern was not considered significant because harvest would only reach 20% in the Suntaheen Creek watershed in one alternative, thus the effects of increased water yield to sediment transport and channel form would likely be minor. Additionally, the Suntaheen Creek watershed is not a productive anadromous stream, although it supports a significant population of resident fish.

## **Issue: Two species of plants currently considered rare in Alaska are within proposed harvest units: *Listera convallarioides* (broad-leaved twayblade) and *Galium kamtschaticum* (boreal bedstraw).**

Response: Suitable habitat for both species is abundant and populations are widespread in the Iyouktug project area and on other parts of Chichagof Island. Therefore, the proposed Iyouktug Timber Sale will not have a significant impact on the viability of these species.

**Issue: The effect of the project on deer should be analyzed using volume class not volume strata.**

Response: Tongass National Forest direction states that, if a deer model is used, you must use the current interagency model that utilizes volume strata to assess the effects to habitat capability (USDA Forest Service 2005b).

**Issue: Conduct effectiveness monitoring of Best Management Practices (BMPs)**

Effectiveness monitoring is a function of the Forest-wide monitoring program and is not part of project-level planning, therefore conducting effectiveness monitoring of BMPs is outside the scope of this analysis. Chapter 6 of the Forest Plan describes the Forest-wide Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. The Tongass National Forest Annual Monitoring & Evaluation Report(s) (USDA Forest Service 2006b, for example) describe effectiveness monitoring for Standards and Guidelines. Effectiveness monitoring will be completed according to the Forest-wide Monitoring and Evaluation Plan with available funding and the findings will be reported in the Tongass Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report.

## **Federal and State Permits, Licenses, and Certifications**

Prior to implementation of the proposed timber sale, various permits need to be obtained from other Federal and State agencies. Some permits are already in place for the Iyouktug project; others would be obtained.

The Forest Service has a cooperative agreement with Huna Totem Corporation to use an existing, permitted marine access facility (MAF) on private land in Hoonah, so no new MAFs would be necessary for the Iyouktug project and no permits would need to be obtained. Huna Totem Corporation holds permits for tideland lease from the State of Alaska and for work in navigable waters and discharge of dredged or fill material from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

No wetlands permits are necessary from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers because roads built in wetlands are for silvicultural purposes and will follow the 33CFR 323 guidelines to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands.

### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

Storm water discharge permit - the timber sale contractor would acquire this permit. Huna Totem Corporation holds a permit for National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System review (Section 402 of the Clean Water Act). While the permit expired in 2005, it has been administratively extended and is still valid.

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Permits will be needed from the Corps of Engineers and the State of Alaska if large amounts of fuel were stored in the project area for helicopter yarding - the timber sale contractor would acquire these permits.

## Applicable Laws and Executive Orders

Shown below is a partial list of Federal laws and executive orders pertaining to project-specific planning and environmental analysis on Federal lands. While most pertain to all Federal lands, some of the laws are specific to Alaska. Disclosures and findings required by these laws and orders are contained in Chapter 3 of this FEIS.

- Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971
- Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980
- American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978
- Archeological Resource Protection Act of 1980
- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (as amended)
- Cave Resource Protection Act of 1988
- Clean Air Act of 1970 (as amended)
- Clean Water Act of 1977 (as amended)
- Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (as amended)
- Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (as amended)
- Executive Order 11593 (cultural resources)
- Executive Order 11988 (floodplains)
- Executive Order 11990 (wetlands)
- Executive Order 12898 (environmental justice)
- Executive Order 12962 (aquatic systems and recreational fisheries)
- Executive Order 13007 (Indian sacred sites)
- Executive Order 13175 (government-to-government consultation)
- Executive Order 13443 (hunting heritage and wildlife conservation)
- Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) of 1974 (as amended)
- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1996
- Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (amended 1936 and 1972)
- Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960

- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (as amended)
- National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 (as amended)
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended)
- National Transportation Policy (2001)
- Organic Act of 1897
- Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899
- Tongass Timber Reform Act (TTRA) of 1990
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, amended 1986

## **State of Alaska**

Under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), coastal states may develop coastal management plans, subject to approval by the Secretary of Commerce. Upon approval, Federal agency activities that affect any land or water use or any natural resource of the state's coastal zone must be consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with the enforceable policies of the state's coastal management plan. The Alaska Coastal Management Plan (ACMP) has been approved by the Secretary of Commerce. If a Federal agency determines that an activity in Alaska has coastal effects, it must evaluate the activity for consistency with the applicable enforceable policies of the ACMP, and submit a consistency determination to the State for review.

To make the process more efficient, categories of activities may be evaluated and reviewed together under what is called a "general consistency determination" (GCD). Upon approval of a GCD, activities within that category do not require an individual consistency determination or review. The Forest Service has developed a GCD for timber harvest activities conducted on the Tongass National Forest, and the State of Alaska has agreed that Tongass timber harvest activities are consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the ACMP.

The Iyouktug Timber Sales project falls within the scope of the GCD. Consequently, no individual ACMP consistency determination or review is required. The Forest Service received a letter from the State of Alaska, Office of Project Management and Permitting agreeing that the GCD applies to the Iyouktug project, as described, and that no additional ACMP review is required (see Appendix B of this FEIS).

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## Availability of the Project Record

An important consideration in preparation of this FEIS has been reduction of paperwork as specified in 40 CFR 1500.4. In general, the objective of the EIS is to furnish enough site-specific information to demonstrate a reasoned consideration of the environmental impacts of the alternatives and how these impacts can be mitigated. The project record contains supporting material that documents the NEPA process and analysis from the beginning of the project to the publication of the FEIS.

The project record is located at the Sitka Ranger District office in Sitka, Alaska. Reference documents, such as the Forest Plan and the Tongass Timber Reform Act, are available for review at public libraries and Forest Service offices throughout Southeast Alaska, including the Forest Supervisor's office in Sitka. The Forest Plan and the 2003 SEIS are also available on CD-ROM and on the Internet (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/>). The 2008 Forest Plan Amendment is also available on CD-ROM and on the Internet ([http://tongass-fpadjust.net/FPA\\_ROD.htm](http://tongass-fpadjust.net/FPA_ROD.htm))