

FACT SHEET

Alaska Region Operational Update – Alaska-Specific Roadless Rulemaking January 2019

Aligned with United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) recent guidance to prioritize Forest Service projects that can be maintained during the ongoing lapse in federal funding, the Alaska Region is currently moving forward with several high-priority projects, one of which is the **Alaska Roadless Rulemaking**.

The Alaska Region is utilizing prior year remaining and available federal funding to continue these priority projects during the federal furlough. A limited number of Forest Service employees, working in exempt status, have been called back to complete focused work to move the project forward in a timely manner.

The region also continues to do work on a wide variety of programs - both with prior year funds (exempt) and to protect public health and safety (excepted). Examples include the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center, the Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center, special use permitting, and the Mental Health Trust land exchange - in addition to the Prince of Wales Landscape Level Analysis and Roadless.

Current Status

- Written public comments received during the scoping public comment period have been reviewed and environmental analysis is now underway for the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), anticipated to be released during the summer of 2019.
- Alaska Roadless Rulemaking is currently in the analysis phase per National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements with the draft environmental impact statement anticipated during the summer of 2019.
- Limited Forest Service employees have been called back to duty to carry out focused work to ensure the project moves forward in a timely manner.





Next Steps and Estimated Timeframe

- Ongoing and anticipated next steps include environmental impact analysis, Cooperating Agency meetings, and Tribal and Alaska Native Corporation consultations. Anticipated timeframes are estimates only and highly subject to lapse in federal funding and resultant furlough of Forest Service employees.

Next Steps and Estimated Timeframe

Activity	Estimated Timeframe*
Draft Environmental Impact Statement Analysis	December 2018 – Summer 2019
Cooperating Agency Meetings and Tribal and Alaska Native Corporation Consultations.	Ongoing as Needed

*Estimated Timeframe is highly-subject to change pending furlough environment.

Background

- In January 2018, the State of Alaska petitioned the United States Department of Agriculture to exempt the Tongass National Forest from the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule.
- In June 2018, the US Department of Agriculture directed the US Forest Service to initiate a state-specific rulemaking for Roadless area management direction for the Tongass National Forest. A state-specific Roadless Rule will determine which currently-designated Roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest require an alternative management designation to further Alaska’s economic development or other needs, while still conserving Roadless areas.
- During August 2018, a Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement was published in the *Federal Register* (August 30, 2018) further clarifying the “intent is to evaluate the regulatory exemption set forth in the petition, as well as to evaluate other management solutions that address infrastructure, timber, energy, mining, access, and transportation to further Alaska’s economic development, while still conserving Roadless areas for future generations.”

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