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# Environmental Assessment

## Seal Point Recreation Enhancement Project

Petersburg Ranger District, Tongass National Forest, Alaska

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File Code: 1950/2360

Date: March 27, 2012

Dear Planning Participant:

The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Seal Point Recreation Enhancement Project on the Petersburg Ranger District, Tongass National Forest is now available at: [http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/projects/nepa\\_project.shtml?project=34770](http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/projects/nepa_project.shtml?project=34770). Hard copies may be obtained at the Petersburg Ranger District office upon request. This document describes the no action and proposed action alternative. It also provides rationale for why we are proposing the project.

The Petersburg Ranger District is seeking your input. Facilities and upgrades are proposed in the Seal Point Project Area, located about 8.5 miles southeast of Kake, Alaska. The project is proposed based on the amount of existing use occurring in the Seal Point Recreation Area. The area is primarily used for recreation and subsistence fishing, big game and waterfowl hunting, picnicking, and berry picking, with day and overnight use. The existing amenities, including a boat ramp and two clearings for parking, are inadequate for multiple users. The development activities proposed include:

- Reconstructing and extending the existing boat ramp by raising the grade above the high tide level, removing and resurfacing the length of ramp, reconstructing the jetty, if necessary, and adding a 130-foot concrete segment to the end of the ramp.
- Constructing a 4-foot wide, approximately 1,000 linear-foot gravel trail that would meander through the trees and provides access to the beach.
- Developing two day-use areas (Day Use Site 1 on Seal Point and Day Use Site 2 just before the causeway) with the addition of picnic shelters and associated fire rings, picnic tables, and pedestal grills.
- Converting and expanding the existing clearings into parking areas. Day Use Sites 1 and 2 would provide parking for four or more vehicles and the boat ramp parking would accommodate eight vehicles with boat trailers. Approximately five pull-outs would need to be added along each of the NFS 6000 and 45006 roads.
- Constructing a single bathroom facility at each of the day use areas.

You may provide written comments on this project four different ways: 1) in person at the Petersburg Ranger District office at 12 N. Nordic Dr., Petersburg, Alaska; 2) by mail to Petersburg Ranger District, c/o Carin Christensen, P.O. Box 1328, Petersburg, Alaska, 99833; 3) by fax to 907-772-5995; or 4) by email to [comments-alaska-tongass-petersburg@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-alaska-tongass-petersburg@fs.fed.us). Please include 'Seal Point' in the subject line. It is most helpful if the comments are site-specific, detailed, and that they refer to the proposed action.

For appeal eligibility, written comments must include: your name, address, and telephone



number; project title, signature or other verification of your identity; and identification of the individual or organization who authored the comments. Comments must be received within 30 calendar days following publication of the notice of availability (NOA) of this EA in the Petersburg Pilot, the newspaper of record for this project. Your name, address, and comments will become part of the public record.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this process. Your comments and involvement are important to the District. If you have questions about this project, please contact Carin Christensen at 907-772-5978 or [clchristensen@fs.fed.us](mailto:clchristensen@fs.fed.us).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason C. Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

JASON C. ANDERSON  
District Ranger

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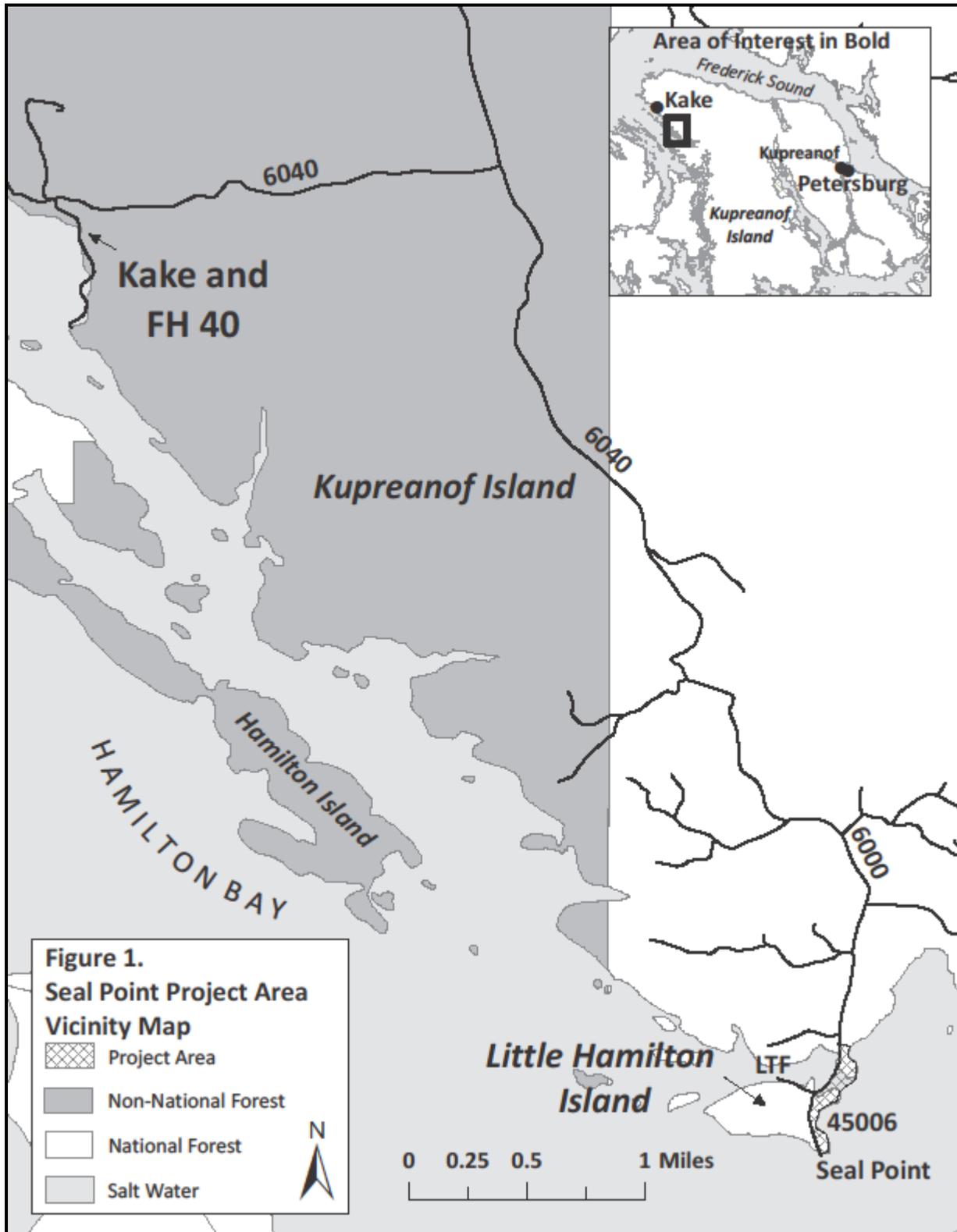


## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Project Area**

The Seal Point Project Area (also known locally as the Seal Point Recreation Area) is located about 8.5 miles southeast of Kake, Alaska (see Figure 1. – Seal Point Project Area Vicinity Map). The Kake to Seal Point road begins at the junction of Forest Highway (FH) 40 and the National Forest System (NFS) 6040 road. The road proceeds in a southeasterly direction to the junction of the NFS 6040/6000 roads. The project area is divided into two sections by a causeway connecting Kupreanof Island with Little Hamilton Island. To the west after the causeway, the NFS 6000 road continues to its terminus at the Little Hamilton Log Transfer Facility (LTF). The NFS 45006 road continues south, adjacent to the existing Seal Point boat ramp, and ends at a site referred to as Seal Point. Project activities are proposed for coastal and forested lands on the east side of the road beginning north of the causeway and extending south to Seal Point. The two land use designations (LUDs) within the project area are Semi-Remote Recreation (approximately 3.6 acres of proposed project area) and Timber Production (approximately 2.9 acres of proposed project area).

Figure 1. – Seal Point Project Area Vicinity Map



### **Proposed Action**

A proposed action is defined early in the project-level planning process. This serves as a starting point for the interdisciplinary team (IDT) and gives the public and other agencies specific information on which to focus comments. Using these comments and information from preliminary analysis, the interdisciplinary team can develop additional alternatives to the proposed action. For the Seal Point Recreation Enhancement Project, two alternatives will be considered: Alternative 1 (no action) and Alternative 2 (proposed action). Maps for each alternative are shown in Appendix B.

The Petersburg Ranger District of the Tongass National Forest proposes the following work within the Seal Point Project Area:

- Reconstructing and extending the existing boat ramp by raising the grade above the high tide level, removing and resurfacing the length of ramp, reconstructing the jetty, if necessary, and adding a 130-foot concrete segment to the end of the ramp.
- Constructing a 4-foot wide, approximately 1,000 linear-foot gravel trail that would meander through the trees and provides access to the beach.
- Developing two day-use areas (Day Use Site 1 on Seal Point and Day Use Site 2 just before the causeway) with the addition of picnic shelters and associated fire rings, picnic tables, and pedestal grills.
- Converting and expanding the existing clearings into parking areas. Day Use Sites 1 and 2 would provide parking for four or more vehicles and the boat ramp parking would accommodate eight vehicles with boat trailers. Approximately five pull-outs would need to be added along each of the NFS 6000 and 45006 roads.
- Constructing a single bathroom facility at each of the day use areas.

### **Decision Framework**

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is not a decision document. It is a document disclosing the environmental consequences of implementing the no action or proposed action alternative. After completion of the EA, there will be a 30-day public review and comment period. Following the public comment period, a decision will be made. Based on the environmental analysis contained in this EA and planning record, and evaluation of public comments, the Responsible Official will decide whether to implement none, all, or part of the proposed action, and any mitigation measures and monitoring necessary. The Petersburg District Ranger, the Responsible Official for this project, will document the decision and rationale in a Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (DN and FONSI).

## Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Seal Point Recreation Enhancement Project is to offer additional day-use recreation facilities and safer access to Hamilton Bay for the community of Kake and the visiting public. According to Forest-wide standards and guidelines for recreation and tourism, the Forest Service will *“Identify opportunities to enhance existing, and provide additional, recreation activities, opportunities, and services where desirable to meet local or Forest-wide recreation demands”* (USDA Forest Service 2008a, p. 4-44, IIB).

The need for action is based on the amount of existing use occurring in the Seal Point Project Area. The area is primarily used for recreation and subsistence fishing, big game and waterfowl hunting, picnicking, and berry picking, with day and overnight use. The amenities, including a boat ramp and two clearings for parking, are inadequate for multiple users. The boat ramp is located on a flat section of beach, and requires fill at the top end and an extension at the bottom in order to make it accessible at a wider tide range. There is also a need to protect ecological resources, as well as cultural resources present near Seal Point. Development of day-use facilities and improvements to the boat ramp to alleviate safety and access issues have been discussed with and supported by residents of Kake for a number of years (see Public Involvement section later in this chapter).

The project is timely, as the funding is tied to the Kake to Seal Point Federal Highway (FH 40) road construction project, which began in calendar year 2011. As part of the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) program, up to 10 percent of the total road construction costs can be used for recreation enhancement projects on federal lands along the Forest corridor. The improvements to the highway, which include paving and bridge reconstruction, are expected to increase use and access to the Seal Point Recreation Area.

## Background and Current Condition

Human occupation and use of Seal Point has occurred since prehistoric times. The area is in the traditional territory of the Kake Tlingit, who still utilize Seal Point for subsistence activities, such as fishing, big game and waterfowl hunting, and berry picking.

More recent development in the area includes the construction of the NFS 6000 and 45006 roads in the 1980s. These roads were mainly built for logging equipment and log truck haul from logging camps in the National Forest to Kake and the log transfer facility (LTF) on Little Hamilton Island. The NFS 6000 road begins at the junction with the NFS 6040 road and continues to its terminus at the LTF. The most recent logging activity requiring use of the Little Hamilton LTF was in 2003.

Up to the present, Kake residents and the visiting public have used the NFS 6000 and 45006 roads to access the Seal Point area for recreation and subsistence. Use of the area

prompted scoping for a boat ramp that could be available for sport and subsistence fishing, as well as search and rescue efforts. The establishment of the Seal Point Recreation Area was approved in the Seal Point Recreation Area DN and FONSI (USDA Forest Service 1997). The boat ramp near Seal Point was subsequently constructed in the following year.

### **Desired Condition**

The proposed action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Forest Plan, and helps move the project area toward the desired conditions described in the Plan. Little Hamilton Island is entirely within the Semi-Remote Recreation LUD, and the proposed project improvements located within this LUD include Day Use Site 1 and the boat launch. In order to achieve the desired condition within a Semi-Remote Recreation area, Users should *“Have the opportunity to experience a moderate degree of independence, closeness to nature, solitude, and remoteness, with some areas offering motorized opportunities and others non-motorized opportunities (except for the traditional uses of boats, aircraft, and snowmachines)”*. In addition, *“Facilities and structures may be minimal or occasionally may be larger in scale, but will be rustic in appearance, or in harmony with the natural setting”* (USDA Forest Service 2008a, p. 3-63).

The proposed Day Use Site 2 and gravel trail occur in the Timber Production LUD on Kupreanof Island. The Forest Plan description of the desired condition for this LUD designates *“An extensive road system that provides access for timber management activities, recreation uses, hunting and fishing, and other public and administrative uses...”*(USDA Forest Service 2008a, p. 3-116). Multiple uses are already occurring in the project area, but constructing a shelter and bathroom facilities may improve health and safety conditions and offer a better overall experience.

### **Public Involvement**

An open house in Kake occurred on July 8, 2010, to solicit information from Kake residents on recreation enhancement opportunities along the Kake to Seal Point corridor. An additional meeting followed on July 27, 2010, with Federal Highways, Forest Service, and Organized Village of Kake (OVK) officials to talk about improvement opportunities at Seal Point. From these meetings, the proposed action was outlined.

The project proposal was presented to the Wrangell-Petersburg-Kake Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) in December 2010, and the NEPA efforts were later funded through RAC for FY2011 and FY2012.

The Tongass National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) first listed the Seal Point Recreation Enhancement Project in January 2011. The quarterly listing and subsequent

quarters are available on the internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/forest-level.php?111005>.

A public notice outlining the project was printed in the *Petersburg Pilot* on April 7, 2011. The public was given 30 days to submit comments and ideas.

The scoping letter was distributed to more than 250 Alaska Native Organizations, relevant state, federal and local agencies, and involved businesses and residents on June 13, 2011. This action initiated a 30-day comment period. A separate consultation letter was also signed by the Petersburg District Ranger and sent to the president of OVK.

### **Issues**

For the purposes of this analysis, issues identified during the public involvement process are categorized by the project interdisciplinary team as either significant or non-significant. Significant issues are those directly or indirectly caused by implementing the proposed action and represent unresolved disputes, disagreements or debate about the effects of the proposed action.

No responses were received following the public notice in April. The 30-day public comment period following the distribution of the June scoping letter generated nine responses. Four of these comments were substantive in nature, while five comments demonstrated concurrence and support. The scoping comments were evaluated by the IDT, and the concerns were discussed and resolved, with no significant issues brought forward.

Non-significant issues are those that have been resolved through analysis by the IDT. They are typically resolved in a number of ways, and are categorized as: 1) outside the scope (not related to the effects) of the proposed action; 2) already decided by law, regulation, Forest Plan, or other higher level decision; 3) irrelevant to the decision to be made; or 4) conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence. The magnitude, extent, duration, speed, and direction of preliminary effects can also be considered in determining non-significance. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations require this delineation in Sec. 1501.7, “...*identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (Sec. 1506.3)...*” (40 CFR 1501.7).

One non-significant issue identified during field surveys conducted prior to the Seal Point Recreation Area EA/DN/FONSI (USDA Forest Service 1997) revealed an eelgrass bed adjacent to the boat ramp. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the U.S. Department of the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) all commented on the importance of this valuable habitat type. Any improvements to the boat ramp should avoid this bed where practicable. In addition, a COE permit, file number 2-

970546, Hamilton Bay 3, which authorized the construction of the Seal Point boat ramp in 1998, would need to be modified before the project moves forward.

Additional non-significant issues identified during scoping and resolved by the IDT included requests to:

- Add signage near the boat ramp about weed removal from boat motors
- Implement the Seal Point project through a Stewardship contract
- Allow enough money in future recreation budgets to cover maintenance costs of the new proposed facilities
- Account for increased sport and subsistence fishing and access to Hamilton and Cathedral Falls Creeks

## **ALTERNATIVES**

This section describes and compares the no action and proposed action alternatives considered for the Seal Point Recreation Enhancement Project. It provides a basis for selection among options by the responsible official and the public. No alternatives to the proposed action were identified during scoping or analysis that would meet the purpose and need and have meaningful differences in environmental effects.

### **Alternative 1: No Action**

The no action alternative is included to meet NEPA requirements, and to provide a baseline for comparison. Under the no action alternative, no new recreation or toilet facilities or trail would be constructed, and the boat ramp and parking areas would remain in their current conditions. The existing use occurring in the Seal Point Recreation Area would continue as unmanaged and unmaintained. Concerns about increasing recreation use, safety and access issues related to the boat ramp, potential conflicts with future logging activities involving the Little Hamilton LTF, impacts of litter, and health and safety effects of potential human waste would remain unresolved. See Appendix B for the No Action Alternative Map.

### **Alternative 2: Proposed Action**

The proposed action is the only action alternative. The following areas will be considered for development:

- Boat ramp – The existing boat ramp, approximately 478 feet long by 36 feet wide, was constructed in 1998 from shot rock available in local quarries near Kake. The ramp was designed mainly to access Hamilton Bay for sport and subsistence fishing, and was also planned with search and rescue efforts in mind. Use of the boat ramp is low, due to its accessibility only at the higher tide cycles. Because the ramp was built on a flat stretch of beach, reconstruction and extension is necessary to make it

more usable. These activities could involve raising the grade, removing, widening, and resurfacing the length of the ramp, reconstructing the jetty, and adding up to a 130-foot concrete segment to the end. These actions may still result in a boat ramp that is available only at approximately a +6 foot tide and higher. This would be an improvement over the user-reported working tide range for the existing ramp of +16 foot tide and higher. Other locations within the Seal Point Recreation Area were considered in the 1997 Seal Point Recreation Area EA, but were not selected. The proposed development near the boat ramp may include: two picnic tables with fire rings, bear-proof garbage cans, and parking for eight vehicles with boat trailers. These developments would utilize an existing cleared area, where day and overnight use has been noted in the past.

- Day Use Site 1 – This site is located on Seal Point, and during numerous site visits and reports, it has been found littered with garbage. It is also presumed that human waste is scattered in the woods near the Point, creating unsanitary conditions. The area has known day use and suspected overnight use. To concentrate use and respond to these impacts, the following improvements are proposed: a three-sided picnic shelter (approximately twelve feet wide and fourteen feet long) with associated fire ring and/or pedestal grill, two to three picnic tables, bear-proof garbage cans, a single-stall bathroom facility, and available parking for four or more vehicles. The NFS 45006 road would end at the Day Use Site 1 parking area. Picnic sites would be accessible only to foot traffic beyond the parking area. Pullouts along the NFS 45006 road may be needed to facilitate traffic patterns.
- Day Use Site 2 – This site is located on Kupreanof Island immediately preceding the causeway to Little Hamilton Island. The area is known to have day and overnight use mainly on an existing flat spot, approximately 1,750 square feet. The following improvements are proposed to address the level of current use: an open-sided picnic shelter (approximately twelve feet wide and fourteen feet long) with associated fire ring and/or pedestal grill, two picnic tables, bear-proof garbage cans, a single-stall bathroom facility, and available parking for four or more vehicles. Vehicle access would be limited to the NFS 6000 road and adjoining parking area; the existing spur road leading to this site would be closed to vehicular traffic and redesigned to serve as a trail.
- Gravel Trail – The proposed trail lies adjacent to Day Use Site 2, circling a wooded area that is approximately two and a half acres in size. This four-foot wide and 1,000 linear-foot gravel loop trail would meander through the trees, providing access to the beach at its far end. With the potential increase in recreation or logging traffic on the road, the trail would allow a safe area to recreate.

The alternative to develop facilities in the Seal Point Recreation Area has had positive support during years of public scoping. The residents of Kake would continue to have the opportunity to be involved during the design phase of development, to preserve the ecological and cultural significance of the area. The facilities are intended to provide accessibility at levels that meet or exceed required standards for a variety of physical abilities and ages in these settings. Maintaining or enhancing the character of the Seal Point Recreation Area is an expected outcome of this alternative. See Appendix B for the Proposed Action Alternative Maps.

### **Mitigation**

The Forest Service must apply Best Management Practices (BMPs) that are consistent with the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Regulations to achieve Alaska Water Quality Standards. In 1997, the State approved the BMPs in the Forest Service's Soil and Water Conservation Handbook as consistent with the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Regulations (USDA Forest Service 2006b). This Handbook is incorporated into the Forest Plan. Information and documents regarding the Forest Plan may be accessed at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/projects/tlmp/index.shtml>.

If any previously undiscovered sensitive plant or animal species or cultural site is encountered at any time prior to or during implementation of this project, the area should be protected and any disturbance containing the population or site (and similar habitats in that vicinity) should be avoided. The appropriate resource specialist or archaeologist on the District will be notified immediately to evaluate the recommended avoidance or mitigation measure.

There are no other known site-specific mitigation measures necessary in order to implement this project, outside of Forest Plan standards and guidelines and the Alaska Region BMPs.

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

To proceed with Alternative 2, various permits, licenses, or certifications will be required from federal and state agencies. A U.S. Department of the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) permit, file number 2-970546, Hamilton Bay 3, which authorized the construction of the Seal Point boat ramp in 1998, will need to be modified before the project moves forward. In addition, the following approvals would be obtained: adherence to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act; certification of compliance with Alaska Water Quality Standards (Section 401 Certification); and nationwide permit 36, Boat Ramps (33 CFR Part 330).

### Applicable Laws and Executive Orders

Below is a partial list of federal laws and executive orders which may pertain to this project. While most pertain to all federal lands, some of the laws are specific to Alaska. Activities proposed in this project comply with all applicable federal laws and executive orders.

Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA) of 1971	Executive Order 12898 (environmental justice)
Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980	Executive Order 11593 (cultural resources)
American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978	Executive Order 13175 (consultation and coordination with Indian tribal governments)
Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1980	Executive Order 13084 (consultation and coordination with Indian tribal governments)
Bald and Golden Eagle Act of 1940 (as amended)	Executive Order 13186 (responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds)
Clean Air Act of 1970 (as amended)	Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1996
Clean Water Act of 1977 (as amended)	Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972
Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972 (as amended)	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (as amended)
Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (as amended)	National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (as amended)
Executive Order 11514 (environmental quality)	National Forest Management Act (NFMA)
Executive Order 11988 (floodplains)	National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended)
Executive Order 11990 (wetlands)	
Executive Order 12962 (aquatic systems and recreational fisheries)	
Executive Order 13112 (invasive species)	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990

**Alternatives Comparison Table**

This section provides a summary of the effects of implementing each alternative. Information in the table is focused on activities and effects where different levels of effects can be distinguished qualitatively among alternatives.

**Table 1. Comparison of Alternatives**

<b>Resource</b>	<b>No Action Alternative</b>	<b>Proposed Action Alternative</b>
Recreation	With potential increased use due to road improvements, and without appropriate facilities and waste disposal, recreation opportunities of these areas may degrade over time.	With potential increased use due to road improvements, appropriate facilities and waste disposal systems are expected to enhance recreation opportunities of these areas over time.
Scenery	With potential increased use due to road improvements, and without appropriate facilities and waste disposal, scenic integrity of these areas may degrade over time.	Facilities development at Day Use Sites 1 and 2 could be designed to meet Forest Plan direction. Visual impacts of proposed boat ramp improvements may require adopting a different SIO than the Forest Plan prescribes. Development requires long term commitment to regular maintenance and may trigger increased public concern for scenic integrity of surrounding areas.
Heritage	Negligible	No sites are located in the project area, therefore, negligible effects are anticipated. Past monitoring of the surrounding area suggests that recreational use has had no effect to known historic properties.
Timber Management Activities	Vehicles associated with the present site would have a negligible effect.	Increased vehicle use associated with the proposed activities may have a minor effect.
Fisheries and Watershed	Negligible	No fish streams were found within the proposed project area; therefore, no effects to fisheries and watershed resources are expected. Eel grass beds will be avoided where practicable.
Soils and Wetlands	Negligible	All of the proposed activities are dedicated uses of the soil resource; no activities are proposed on any terrestrial, non-tidal wetlands.
Wildlife	Negligible	Negligible impacts to wildlife resources are expected.
Subsistence	Negligible	Abundance and distribution of, access to, and competition for subsistence resources is expected to remain the same.

Resource	No Action Alternative	Proposed Action Alternative
Invasive plant species	Invasive species are likely to remain within the project area which is an existing disturbed site.	Overall risk for spreading invasives into new areas is moderate due to minimal site disturbance.
Sensitive plant species	No sensitive plants were found within the project area.	No sensitive plants were found in the project area. Proposed activities may adversely impact individuals, but are not likely to result in a loss of viability in the planning area or cause a trend to federal listing.
Transportation	Negligible	Minor impacts from dust and noise are expected during construction.

**Negligible** effects may or may not cause observable changes to natural conditions; regardless, they do not reduce the integrity of a resource.

**Minor** effects cause observable and short-term changes to natural conditions, but they do not reduce the integrity of a resource.

**Moderate** effects cause observable and short-term changes to natural conditions, and/or they reduce the integrity of a resource.

**Major** effects cause observable and long-term changes to natural conditions, and they reduce the integrity of a resource.

## ENVIRONMENT AND EFFECTS

This section provides information about the current condition of the Seal Point Project Area, and the potential impact of each alternative on specific resources. Effects are qualified to clearly display differences between alternatives. If necessary, the means by which negative effects to resources will be reduced or mitigated are also described.

Environmental consequences are the effects of implementing an alternative on the physical, biological, economic, or social environment. Direct environmental effects are those occurring at the same time or place as the proposed action. Indirect effects are those that occur at a later time or are spatially removed from the activity. Cumulative effects result from the incremental effects of the actions proposed by this project, when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency or person undertakes the action. For the purpose of this analysis, the words “impacts” and “effects” are synonymous.

Reasonably foreseeable future actions near the Seal Point Recreation Area include timber harvest, expansion of the recreation area, and road maintenance.

### Recreation

Kupreanof Island has limited day-use developed recreation facilities. Kake residents and the visiting public have access to a number of Forest Service trails along the road system, but

there are no day-use picnic areas that can accommodate larger groups. The Seal Point Recreation Area has current recreation use, but the amenities, including a boat ramp and two cleared parking areas, are inadequate for multiple users. Additional facilities are proposed to enhance the recreation experience of all users.

### **Alternative 1 – No Action**

#### **Direct and Indirect Effects**

The site would remain undeveloped, with occasional overnight camping and regular day use.

#### **Cumulative Effects**

Increased traffic on the newly paved highway, directly accessing the Seal Point Recreation Area, may likely increase use in the near future. As a result, negative impacts to the three areas described in the Management Concerns and Objectives section in the recreation resource report (Christensen 2012), may also likely increase over time. Littering and improper disposal of human waste would likely continue in the vicinity of Seal Point. The boat ramp may continue to degrade, becoming more of a safety issue and could eventually become unusable. If the Little Hamilton Log Transfer Facility (LTF) were to be utilized in the future, potential conflicts may occur between recreation users and timber operators.

### **Alternative 2 – Proposed Action**

#### **Direct and Indirect Effects**

The proposed action could have a short-term direct impact on the use patterns at the Seal Point Recreation Area. Construction activities could affect recreation users due to increases in dust, noise, smell, and visual distraction. Other public concerns during this phase of development could include road closure or limited access to Seal Point and the boat ramp. Traffic conflicts with construction equipment may be present.

Any new developments would require proper and timely maintenance. The Forest Service does not employ permanent recreation staff in Kake; however, the seasonal trail crew from the Petersburg Ranger District annually evaluates and addresses trail condition and health and safety needs. In 2011, a developed recreation technician visited two times during the summer to pick up garbage at the trailheads and in the Seal Point Recreation Area.

The Forest Service would need to ensure regular weekly or bi-weekly visits to the Seal Point Recreation Area. Responsibilities would include, but are not limited to: collecting trash, cleaning and sanitizing the bathrooms, brushing and maintaining the trail, and reporting vandalism. To accomplish these duties, the Forest Service could increase visitation by the developed recreation staff from the Petersburg Ranger District, and/or contract with the

City of Kake or other entity in Kake. Residents of Kake have offered their support for maintaining the facilities. Costs for either option would need to be included in the long-range maintenance planning for the site. In addition, if the proposed changes are implemented, durability would need to be designed into the facilities, due to prevalent wind and snow conditions, and to minimize the inevitable impacts of regular use and possible vandalism.

The proposed action recommends two new toilets that would require regular emptying and maintenance. Two feasible options are being discussed: a concrete vault toilet and a removable basket system. The City of Kake has a pumper truck that could accommodate waste removal at the end of the high use season. The removable baskets would require more frequent emptying, perhaps as often as each week. Costs for both alternatives would need to be included in future budgets.

### **Cumulative Effects**

Renovations to the NFS 45006 road, which leads to Seal Point, would create a safer and more comfortable drive to Day Use Site 1. This road is planned to be resurfaced in the spring of 2012, thereby improving access and likely increasing use to the proposed development. These improvements, along with a potential new trail, picnic and day use areas, and improvements to the boat ramp, could create user conflicts. Most of these conflicts would be associated along the road and relate to access, available parking and passing. Due to the small population living in the area and the resultant low amount of traffic, these conflicts are expected to be manageable and not significant.

The main concern of the existing boat ramp is its limited use only during the higher tide cycle. Renovations to the ramp are necessary to make it accessible at a wider tide range. The proposed renovations to the boat ramp may increase recreation and subsistence fishing on saltwater.

Potential conflicts may occur between recreation users at the improved Seal Point Area, and timber operations utilizing the Little Hamilton LTF. This issue could be addressed with signage and appropriate turn-outs along the NFS 6000 road. Boat ramp access and parking should be designed to minimize traffic conflicts between recreational vehicles and log trucks.

Currently, there is not obvious site degradation due to user impacts or overuse. Although use is likely to increase, it is not expected to exceed standards for recreation in the area. Improvements to the existing recreation sites fit with the planned level of recreation development for the area.

## Scenery

The Tongass National Forest Land & Resource Management Plan provides scenery management direction and Standards and Guidelines for land use and development issues based on the Scenery Management System (USDA Forest Service 1995). The Built Environment Image Guide provides direction and guidance for design decisions such as choosing a scale and style of development that is appropriate for various land character settings (USDA Forest Service 2001).

The site is only accessible by boat, or by road from Kake; access by float plane rarely occurs here. The site is not viewed from ferry or cruise ship travel routes. It is viewed by small boat operators traveling between Keku Strait and Hamilton Creek Estuary, and by drivers on the Kake to Seal Point road, which is currently being upgraded by the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA). Seal Point is a popular day-use recreation area for Kake residents, who have requested a functional boat ramp and picnic area development since at least the 1990's.

The Forest Plan Land Use Designation (LUD) for Day Use Site 2, located on Kupreanof Island, is Timber Production. The Scenery Management standards and guidelines for this LUD direct that *"Timber management activities may dominate the scenic character of the landscape. Apply Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines for the Low Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO) in the foreground distance zone of Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas (VPRs) and the Very Low SIO for all other areas."* The Plan goes on to say that, *"...less visible evidence of activities is acceptable (USDA Forest Service 2008a, p. 3-119, Scenery). ...Management activities should use naturally established form, line, color and texture found in the landscape. Facilities [should be sited and designed to] borrow from naturally occurring patterns... and should not be visually dominant when viewed in the background distance zone"* (USDA Forest Service 2008a, p. 4-58, IIC).

A Low SIO refers to landscapes where the valued landscape character appears moderately altered. Deviations begin to dominate, but they borrow valued attributes such as size, shape, color, and local architectural styles. They are complimentary to the valued landscape character.

A Very Low SIO refers to landscapes where the valued landscape character appears heavily (but not extremely) altered. Deviations may strongly dominate the view. They may not borrow from valued attributes, but must at a minimum be shaped and blended with the natural terrain so that elements such as roads, landings and structures do not dominate the view.

The boat ramp and Day Use Site 1 are located on Little Hamilton Island, which falls within the Semi-Remote Recreation LUD. The Scenery Management standards and guidelines for this LUD direct that we “*Design resource activities to remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape. Activities may repeat form, line, color, or texture common to the landscape. Apply Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines for the Moderate Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO)*” (USDA Forest Service 2008a, p. 3-67, Scenery).

A Moderate SIO refers to landscapes where the valued landscape character appears slightly altered. Noticeable deviations must remain visually subordinate to the viewed landscape.

The Forest Plan recognized that within this LUD there may be cases where facilities associated with concentrated recreation development may not feasibly meet a Moderate SIO, and states that the NEPA decision document should determine the specific SIO appropriate to the development, and prescribe design guidelines necessary to meet this scenery objective. This may be necessary with development of the proposed boat ramp reconstruction.

### **Alternative 1 – No Action** **Direct and Indirect Effects**

The no action alternative would introduce no new development for recreation use. Existing site modifications such as fire rings made by individuals for their own recreation use are not very evident. Day Use Site 1 would continue to meet an SIO of Moderate as it does now; the boat ramp and Day Use Site 2 would meet an SIO of Low, primarily due to the nearby NFS 6000 road and associated timber management. The Low SIO for the boat ramp deviates from Forest Plan direction which sets an objective of Moderate SIO for this LUD, however these impacts would diminish over time as vegetation takes over, until logging and associated road maintenance activity resumes. Without site improvements, human use of the area may continue to degrade its appearance due to the lack of bathroom facilities, and inadequate litter containment and removal. Site erosion due to increased human use from road improvements would not likely become a management concern.

### **Cumulative Effects**

Implementation of the no action alternative would maintain the existing condition of Moderate to Low scenic integrity for this area. Current site modifications for recreation use, such as stone fire rings, are visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape. However, the cumulative effects of past timber management and road building activities visually dominate the viewed landscape in some places. This alternative does not address the issues of litter and human waste disposal on site.

## **Alternative 2 – Proposed Action**

### **Direct and Indirect Effects**

Development of the proposed action alternative would provide a shelter, cooking and/or campfire amenities, seating, parking, and an outhouse at each of the day use sites. A fully-accessible gravel loop trail with picnic table would begin near, but separate from, Day Use Site 2, and would be connected with this site's parking pad. Ideally, the outhouse at Day Use Site 2 would be located between the day use site and the parking lot/trailhead so it may be accessed by trail users without infringing on the privacy of the day use site, and vice versa. Vehicle access would be limited to the NFS 6000 road and adjoining parking area; the existing spur road leading to Day Use Site 2 would be closed to vehicular traffic and redesigned to serve as a trail.

Shelters, seating, and cooking/campfire amenities offer opportunities to work with natural materials and with local cultural styles of architecture and perhaps embellishment. These structures could be designed to not only fit well with the natural environment as traditional Tlingit structures do, but could also include design features such as small carved images on posts that show respect for local culture, and encourage pride in this special area. The investments of time and materials necessary for this design approach would need to be weighed against the need for durability and risk of vandalism.

Parking at the day use sites would accommodate four or more vehicles. The Seal Point access road would be blocked off to vehicle access beyond the parking area, and space provided for turning a vehicle around when parking is full.

Development at the boat ramp would improve the boat ramp surface and grade, and provide parking for eight vehicles with trailers. In order to achieve an appropriate grade for the boat launch, reconstruction would involve developing a gravel jetty level with the road surface at least 16 feet wide and 300 feet long within the footprint of the existing ramp. This area would be sloped to drain, but would appear relatively level. At the end of this jetty, roughly 150 feet beyond the adjacent tree line, the launch ramp would slope downward at a 12% grade toward the water. This portion would be surfaced with pre-fabricated interlocking concrete panels. The bottom of the ramp would meet the beach near the +2' tide line, and from there would continue as a compacted gravel surface approximately 70 feet farther, until meeting grade at about the +1' tide line. If built, this boat ramp would appear more massive than the existing one, which has a low profile and a slope similar to nearby beaches.

Proposed amenities at the boat ramp include one or two picnic tables with associated cooking or campfire amenities on gravel pads. Picnic areas would be connected to the parking area by a short gravel pathway. Heavy wood tables and low-profile

cooking/campfire amenities would minimize the visual intrusion of this development on the overall landscape. Heavy metal fire rings with a cooking grate may work best here, allowing users a safe place for construction of larger warming fires if desired on return from a boating trip, but also the option to cook a warm meal in good weather.

Rock and gravel used in site construction would be taken from existing active borrow pits. No measurable change in visual impacts is anticipated in these areas. Disposal of overburden and brush is proposed to occur on several spur roads, out of sight from the recreation areas and their access roads.

Implementation of the proposed action would require long-term commitment to site maintenance. A pack-it-in pack-it-out policy could be established for trash, but if bathrooms are provided without trash cans, trash might end up in the toilet. If trash cans are provided, they would likely need to be bear-proof (against black bears), and a maintenance agreement would be needed with the City of Kake or another local entity to provide regular trash removal. Outhouse design would need to fit well with proposed shelter designs, and be of a type that the Petersburg Ranger District or a local entity could fit readily into their maintenance schedule.

At Day Use Sites 1 and 2, if new picnic shelters, tables, and other amenities are sited so as to not be visually dominant, and are designed to borrow from colors, materials, and textures found in the characteristic landscape, and architectural styles are chosen that compliment the landscape and the cultural setting, then they would be consistent with standards set forth in the Built Environment Image Guide, and would satisfy Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for Scenery Management in both the Timber Production and Semi-Remote Recreation LUDs. The boat ramp with its long jetty would impact scenery to a greater degree. If the gravel and side slope (riprap) rock are white limestone, it would be highly visible from both the water and the NFS 6000 road. Visual impacts could be reduced with the use of darker rock materials that match local beach rock. If dark gravel and riprap were used, the ramp facility would likely meet an SIO of Low; with white gravel and white riprap on the sides it would likely meet an SIO of Very Low for a long period of time. Dark riprap and white gravel (which local recreationists are accustomed to seeing) might be a compromise, but would still be quite visible from the water.

### **Cumulative Effects**

With selection of the proposed action alternative, the cumulative visual effects of past timber management activities combined with the level and style of recreational development proposed would likely meet a Moderate SIO at Day Use Site 1, and a Low SIO at Day Use Site 2 and the boat ramp; no change from the existing condition. Selecting an

alternative which meets an SIO of Low at the Boat Launch means accepting a lower standard for long-term scenery management than the SIO of Moderate set forth in the Forest Plan. This is an acceptable management choice if the decision document adopts the Low SIO as the new scenery management objective for this location and prescribes design guidelines necessary to meet this scenery objective. Reconstruction of the boat ramp should use rock on the side slopes that match the dark color of the adjacent beach rock. It is understood that the color of crushed rock available in this area is nearly white, and it may be the only reasonable choice for gravel surfacing. However, if a dark crushed rock is also available, that would be the preferred choice. This alternative would require commitment to long term litter removal and outhouse maintenance by the Petersburg Ranger District and Kake to keep the area looking its best in the years to come.

Development of this recreation area may trigger increased public interest in and concern for future scenery management within the viewsheds of the individual sites.

### **Heritage**

The Area of Potential Effect (APE), as defined in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, is the geographic area(s) within which a federal project may directly or indirectly affect the character of cultural resources eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. For this project, the APE includes a portion of Little Hamilton Island known as Seal Point. Little Hamilton Island is off the western shore of Kupreanof Island on the north shore of Hamilton Bay; the two islands are connected via a causeway formed by the National Forest System (NFS) 6000 and 45006 roads. Project activities are proposed for coastal and forested lands on the east side of the road beginning north of the causeway and extending south to Seal Point.

#### **Alternative 1 – No Action**

##### **Direct and Indirect Effects**

Potential effects to cultural resources due to human use come primarily from vandalism. Sites can be dug up, looted, or destroyed. Concentrated recreation use at a site can also cause indirect effects such as site trampling, increased erosion, and disturbance and displacement of cultural artifacts. For example, trampling the surrounding area can result in site erosion or plant cover loss, thereby exposing the site to weathering.

The cultural resource survey did not result in the identification of any new sites and no known historic properties are in areas proposed for project activities. Past monitoring of the Seal Point recreation area has resulted in the conclusion that recreational use has had no effect on known historic properties.

## **Cumulative Effects**

Cumulative effects on cultural resources occur through natural erosion, weathering, and decay, as well as from land development and increased visitation. Increases in recreation use may expedite erosion and could lead to vandalism. Monitoring known sites would identify site changes and enable early mitigation to reduce cumulative effects. Site interpretation that includes a strong stewardship message could help to prevent future negative site impacts. Since no sites are located in the project area, cumulative effects are not anticipated. No cumulative effects are expected to occur to sites nearby the project area.

### **Alternative 2 – Proposed Action**

#### **Direct and Indirect Effects**

The direct and indirect effects are anticipated to be the same as the no action alternative.

#### **Cumulative Effects**

The cumulative effects are anticipated to be the same as the no action alternative.

#### **Timber Management Activities**

The Seal Point Recreation Enhancement project area is divided into two sections by a causeway connecting Kupreanof Island with Little Hamilton Island. The proposed project area is located approximately 900 feet to the east of the Little Hamilton Log Transfer Facility (LTF).

A LTF includes the site and structures used for moving logs and timber products from land-based transportation forms to water based transportation forms (or vice versa). A Marine Access Facility (MAF) is a broader term used to describe the LTF plus any other infrastructure present at a site for marine access such as an onsite boat ramp or dock facility. The Little Hamilton LTF was last used to transfer volume harvested under the Shamrock EIS up to the year 2003.

The Little Hamilton LTF was built in the early 1980's as a transfer point for harvested timber for tow to the mill site. The transfer point consists of a concrete deck set atop steel beams and pilings. The site encompasses an area adequate for maneuvering log trucks and equipment used to unload logs from trucks. An area approximately 900 feet long by 150 feet wide located southeast of the transfer site serves as upland log storage.

### **Alternative 1 – No Action** **Direct and Indirect Effects**

Under the no action alternative, the proposed project area would remain unchanged from its current footprint consisting primarily of the existing boat ramp. Vehicles associated with the present site would pose little to no impedance to log trucks moving to and from the LTF during periods of use.

The Little Hamilton LTF is the closest point of embarkation for volume from harvest activity on National Forest System lands from the Kake road system. Log truck activity passing through the current site en route to the Little Hamilton LTF would be dependent on future harvest activities from current or other future stewardship/timber sale projects. The LTF could also serve as a point of debarkation and storage of equipment used to implement future harvest activities. Roads used for haul including the NFS 6000 road would continue to be maintained under stewardship/timber sale contract provisions and regularly scheduled road maintenance.

### **Cumulative Effects**

The proposed project area footprint would remain unchanged from its current condition. Road maintenance of the NFS 6000 road would continue under regularly scheduled maintenance and contract provisions during periods of harvest activities.

### **Alternative 2 – Proposed Action** **Direct and Indirect Effects**

Under the proposed action alternative, the recreation site would be enhanced with the addition of infrastructure related to day use of the current facility including adding covered picnic areas, fire rings, toilet facilities, and a pedestrian trail. The proposed enhancement also includes improvements to the existing boat ramp and the creation of additional parking space. Increased vehicle activity associated with these improvements could conflict with simultaneous future harvest related activities. The amount of log truck activity passing through the proposed project area is dependent on a number of factors such as:

- Location of the mill (the Kake vicinity as opposed to an “off island” site)
- Size of the timber sale or amount of volume harvested from one sale
- Duration or length of a particular timber sale
- Amount of personnel and equipment present on a sale (one truck driver as opposed to multiple trucks operating simultaneously)
- Amount of production an operator could achieve each day based on machine capabilities, skill level, or mechanical conditions of machines used for logging

- Weather conditions restricting logging activity such as snow, or extreme dry conditions that would force mandatory shutdowns due to fire concerns

### **Cumulative Effects**

The proposed project area footprint would expand from its current condition. Periodic use of the Little Hamilton LTF during periods of harvest activity and related truck activity passing through the proposed site would continue, though increased visitor use associated with the enhancement of the proposed Seal Point site and related passenger vehicle use would be expected to increase at the site and along the Kake to Seal Point road. Road maintenance of the NFS 6000 road would continue under regularly scheduled maintenance and contract provisions during periods of harvest activities. Normal operating sounds related to periodic truck activity, offloading of trucks, storage of volume, and transfer of volume from land to water methods of transportation would occur at the LTF and as trucks pass through the proposed site.

### **Fisheries and Watershed**

The Seal Point Recreation Area is located approximately 2.5 miles west of the mouth of the Hamilton River and Cathedral Falls Creek. Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) is the water and substrate necessary for fish spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity. For EFH, “fish” refers to federally managed fish or shellfish species and their prey. Freshwater EFH includes streams, rivers, lakes, ponds, wetlands and other bodies of water currently and historically accessible to salmon. Marine EFH in Alaska includes estuarine and marine areas from tidally submerged habitat to the 200-mile exclusive economic zone.

#### **Alternative 1 – No Action**

##### **Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects**

No fish streams were found within the proposed project area, therefore, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to fisheries resources are anticipated if no action is taken within the Seal Point Recreation Area.

#### **Alternative 2 – Proposed Action**

##### **Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects**

This project would not have an effect on spawning or rearing areas of fish because no fish streams are present in the project area. A slight increase in sport and subsistence fishing by Kake residents is likely to occur which could increase the fishing pressure in the surrounding area of the boat ramp. This impact may have some effect on future stock levels but the effect is expected to be negligible. There would be an impact to 130 feet of the intertidal

zone where the boat launch would be extended but this impact is also expected to be negligible. There are no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to fisheries resources anticipated from the implementation of this project.

The boat ramp extension would take place within the intertidal zone and impact less than 0.2 acres. Eelgrass populations discussed in the Issues section would need to be avoided where practicable. Potential effects on marine EFH by the reconstruction and extension of the boat ramp may be diminished habitat for managed species and their prey due to increased turbidity during construction activities and loss of habitat where the ramp extension occurs. These actions are expected to be minor and have a very low likelihood of negatively affecting marine EFH in the project area. Significant impacts to EFH are likely to occur only from unforeseen events.

### **Soils and Wetlands**

Soils and wetlands are a fundamental part of the forest ecosystem. Soil quality is guided by the Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service 2008a, pp. 4-64 to 4-65) and the Region 10 soil quality standards (R10 SQS). The R-10 SQS limits detrimental soil conditions to a percentage, generally 15 percent, of an activity area (USDA Forest Service 2006a, p. 2). It is assumed that if the Region 10 soil quality standards are met, then soil productivity will be maintained. Soil quality standards only apply to lands in the productive land base. Recreation facilities such as shelters and trails are dedicated uses of National Forest System land and are not subject to the R10 SQS (USDA Forest Service 2006a, p. 5). Best Management Practices (BMPs) are in the soil and water quality handbook and guide the Forest Service in minimizing construction and facility impacts to the soil resources.

Regulations implementing Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) (33 U.S.C. 1344) directs the Forest Service to avoid alteration of and new construction on wetlands wherever there is a practical alternative (33 CFR 323). All wetlands should be avoided to the extent practicable.

#### **Alternative 1 – No Action**

##### **Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects to the Soil Resource**

If the no action alternative were selected, there would be no effects to the soil resource.

#### **Alternative 2 – Proposed Action**

##### **Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects to the Soil Resource**

All of the proposed activities are dedicated uses of the soil resource and are not subject to the soil quality standards.

All activities would have to implement BMPs to prevent soil erosion and maintain soil quality.

Although these proposed facilities and trails are a dedicated use, they are not irreversible or irretrievable uses of the land. Most trails and cabin sites can be rehabilitated, replanted, and returned to their natural condition.

### **Alternative 1 – No Action**

#### **Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects to the Wetlands Resource**

If the no action alternative were selected, there would be no effects to the wetlands resource.

### **Alternative 2 – Proposed Action**

#### **Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects to the Wetlands Resource**

There are no activities proposed on any terrestrial, non-tidal wetlands. The improvement and elongation of the boat ramp impacts tidal waters.

The boat ramp is currently 36 feet wide and 478 feet long totaling about 0.40 acres. This activity would make the boat ramp about 130 feet longer using prefabricated concrete pavers. This would be a total area of 0.48 acres of fill in section 10 waters (33 U.S.C. 403).

### **Wildlife**

In compliance with Forest Plan standards and guidelines, the effects of the proposed action to management indicator species (MIS), threatened, endangered, or sensitive species (TES), proposed species, and migratory birds that may occur in the project area are assessed (USDA Forest Service 2008a, pp. 4-89 to 4-100). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) do not list any species as proposed but they have designated species as candidate. Therefore, the assessment addresses threatened, endangered, and sensitive (TES) and candidate species that are likely to occur in and around the project area.

The analysis also considered effects to the old-growth reserve system as designated in the Forest Plan. There would be negligible effects on the old-growth reserve system because activities would not occur within non-development land use designations (LUD), change non-development LUD boundaries (minor modifications to old-growth LUD boundaries as a result of precise mapping are considered a “correction in map errata”), and/or reduce the total amount of productive old-growth (POG) habitat acres within non-development LUDs.

Thirteen wildlife MIS have been identified for the Tongass National Forest (USDA Forest Service 2008b, pp. 3-230 to 3-241).

Table 2 summarizes the effects of the proposed activities on TES and candidate species, MIS and other species that may occur in the project area. The Effects Analysis assesses the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed action on fish and wildlife resources in the project area.

**Table 2. Summary of effects of the proposed activities to wildlife species that occur or are more likely to occur on the Tongass National Forest or in adjacent waters.**

Species/Issue	Presence		Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects	
	Species Present in Project Area <sup>1</sup>	Species Habitat Present in Project Area	Level of Influence <sup>2/</sup> Determination	Reason for Determination/ Level of Influence
<b>Threatened and Endangered<sup>3</sup></b>				
Humpback Whale	Yes	Yes	Negligible/ no effect	Would not significantly increase marine disturbance or alter habitat that could affect streams or the marine environment.
Steller Sea Lion (western/ eastern)	Yes	Yes	Negligible/ no effect	Would not significantly increase marine disturbance or alter habitat that could affect streams, the marine environment, or haul outs or rookeries.
<b>Candidate<sup>3</sup></b>				
Kittlitz's Murrelet	No	No	Negligible/ no effect	Would not alter recently deglaciated areas or scree slopes.
Yellow-billed Loon	No	Yes	Negligible/ no effect	Would not significantly alter shoreline habitat.
<b>Sensitive</b>				
Aleutian Tern	No	Yes	Negligible/ no effect	Would not significantly alter shoreline habitat.
Black Oystercatcher	No	Yes	Negligible/ no effect	Would not significantly alter shoreline habitat.
Dusky Canada Goose	No	Yes	Negligible/ no effect	Would not reduce or alter lake habitat.
Kittlitz's Murrelet	No	No	Negligible/ no effect	Would not alter recently deglaciated areas or scree slopes.
Queen Charlotte Goshawk	Yes	Yes	May affect individuals but is not likely to cause a listing or a loss of viability	Would not alter productive old-growth habitat. However, goshawk habitat does exist near proposed project area. Project activities could cause nest abandonment if active nests exist within the surrounding forest.

**Table 2 (continued). Summary of effects of the proposed activities to wildlife species that occur or are more likely to occur on the Tongass National Forest or in adjacent waters.**

Species/Issue	Species Present in Project Area <sup>1</sup>	Species Habitat Present in Project Area	Level of Influence <sup>2</sup> / Determination	Reason for Determination/ Level of Influence
<b>Management Indicators</b>				
American Marten	Yes	Yes	Negligible	Would not reduce or alter productive old-growth forest.
Bald Eagle	Yes	Yes	Negligible	Would not reduce or alter productive old-growth forest in coastal areas.
Black Bear	Yes	Yes	Negligible	Would not reduce or alter productive old-growth forest or riparian areas.
Brown Bear	Yes	Yes	Negligible	Would not reduce or alter productive old-growth forest or riparian areas.
Brown Creeper	Yes	Yes	Negligible	Would not reduce or alter productive old-growth forest.
Hairy Woodpecker	Yes	Yes	Negligible	Would not reduce or alter productive old-growth forest.
Mountain Goat	No	Yes	Negligible	Would not reduce or alter cliffs, alpine and subalpine, or productive old-growth forest.
Red-breasted Sapsucker	Yes	Yes	Negligible	Would not reduce or alter productive old-growth forest.
Red Squirrel	Yes	Yes	Negligible	Would not reduce or alter young growth or productive old-growth forest.
River Otter	Yes	Yes	Negligible	Would not reduce or alter productive old-growth forest along coastal, estuary or riparian areas.
Sitka Black-tailed Deer	Yes	Yes	Negligible	Would not reduce or alter productive old-growth forest.
Vancouver Canada Goose	Yes	Yes	Negligible	Would not reduce or alter productive old-growth forest along coastal, estuary or riparian areas.
<b>Other</b>				
Migratory Birds	Yes	Yes	Negligible	Would not reduce or alter productive old-growth forest, or any other terrestrial habitats.

<sup>1</sup> "Yes" if the species is known or is likely to occur in the project area or in marine waters adjacent to the project area. "No" if the species has not been documented or is not likely to occur in the project area.

<sup>2</sup> Level of influence of the effects for management indicator species includes "negligible", "minor", "moderate", or "major". Levels of influence are defined in the "Fish and Wildlife Resource Report" (USDA Forest Service 2009). Determinations are only required for listed and sensitive species.

Determinations for threatened and endangered species include “no effect”, “not likely to adversely affect”, or “likely to adversely affect” (Bosch 2004). Determinations for candidate species include “no effects”, “not likely to jeopardize proposed species, or adversely modify proposed critical habitat”, or “likely to jeopardize proposed species, or adversely modify proposed critical habitat”. Determinations for sensitive species include “no impacts”, “beneficial impacts”, “may impact individuals but not likely to cause a trend to federal listing or a loss of viability”, or “likely to result in a trend to federal listing or a loss of viability” (Bosch 2004).

<sup>3</sup> There will be negligible/no effect to other listed or candidate species because these species do not or rarely occur and/or key habitats are not present in or around the project area.

## **Subsistence**

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act provides for “the continuation of the opportunity for subsistence uses by rural residents of Alaska, including both Natives and non-Natives, on the public lands” (ANILCA, Public Law 96-487, Sec. 801). Subsistence opportunities can be affected through a change in the abundance or distribution of a resource, a change in access, or a change in competition. Subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering activities occur within the project area.

### **Alternative 1 – No Action**

#### **Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects**

Increased access to the Seal Point Recreation Area on the newly paved highway would potentially increase access to subsistence opportunities in the near future. If the no action alternative is selected, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects are expected to affect the subsistence resources. Competition for subsistence resources is also not anticipated to be affected by this access.

### **Alternative 2 – Proposed Action**

#### **Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects**

The direct, indirect, and cumulative effects are anticipated to be the same as the no action alternative.

## **Botany**

### *SENSITIVE PLANT SPECIES*

A Biological Evaluation was completed to analyze the possible effects of the proposed activities on threatened, endangered, and sensitive plants. The only plant federally listed or proposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska is *Polystichum aleuticum*, C. Christensen, which is endangered. It is only known from Adak Island and is not expected to occur in the project area.

A thorough survey was conducted by a qualified botanist at the approximate time of year when sensitive species are most commonly identified, and no sensitive plants were found. Although unlikely, it is possible a sensitive plant exists in one of the areas that missed detection. Most of the areas proposed for development have had previous disturbance and generally do not contain appropriate habitat for any of the sensitive species since the areas have been changed from their natural condition. There are no previously documented sightings of sensitive plants in the project area.

#### *GENERAL VEGETATION*

The following general habitats (or plant communities) occur in the project area: gravel and rock substrate (existing roads), alder and shrub thickets, spruce/hemlock forest, forest edge and beach fringe.

#### *INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES*

An invasive species is one whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic, environmental, or human health harm. The primary concern for invasive species in the project area is the risk of spread to new areas via vehicle or boat. The area is already vulnerable to invasives because of the disturbance and light regime.

Several species of common invasive plants were found when the area was surveyed in June 2011. Two species identified as high priority on the Tongass were found: oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) and reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*). These species are a high priority to treat only where the possibility of control is likely. In many areas, like roadsides, the species are so prevalent that treatment is not practical. This is the case in the project area. The roadsides surrounding the project area contain both species of invasive plants as well as near the city of Kake.

The strategy for this area that is already infested with invasives is to prevent new populations of high priority species from becoming established and limiting the existing invasive species to their current footprint. This is accomplished by detecting new invasive plants early when their population is still very small and more easily controlled. This strategy is often referred to as Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR).

#### **Alternative 1 – No Action**

##### **Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects**

Under the no action alternative, plant habitat would remain the same as the current condition. No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects are expected if the project were not implemented.

## **Alternative 2 – Proposed Action** **Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects**

The proposed action may adversely impact individuals, but is not likely to result in a loss of viability in the project area or cause a trend to federal listing.

Construction activities would create the biggest risk of introducing new invasive species. Increased use and foot traffic in the area would also increase the risk for spreading invasive species. Potential vectors of spread during project construction would be vehicle and foot traffic into the immediate area. Monitoring the sites after implementation would lower the risk of new invasive plants becoming permanently established in the area. With monitoring, and Early Detection Rapid Response, (EDRR) the overall risk of invasive species spread is low to moderate.

### **Transportation**

National Forest Transportation System roads are constructed to provide access to the National Forest System (NFS) lands and are intended to be maintained for the long term. The demand for roads has primarily been a function of the demand for access to timber resources. The NFS roads in the analysis area were originally built for logging and the associated administration, though substantial recreational use occurs throughout the area.

Roads have the potential to: affect fish habitat, soils, and water quality by increasing erosion and landslide potential; change recreation use and opportunities; alter scenery; increase legal and illegal wildlife harvest; degrade air quality; and generate noise. In recognition of these concerns, the proposed alternative does not require new road construction. The use of the area's existing roadways and previously cleared sites offers the opportunity to reduce impacts to previously undisturbed ground.

## **Alternative 1 – No Action** **Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects**

Under the no action alternative, the issues of improved safety for the boating public, and improved access to recreation and subsistence opportunities at Seal Point and in Hamilton Bay, would not be addressed.

## **Alternative 2 – Proposed Action** **Direct and Indirect Effects**

The existing road to Seal Point, the NFS 45006 road, (roughly 0.30 acre) is scheduled for resurfacing in the spring of 2012. Local rock sources will be used from existing rock pits adjacent to the NFS 6040 or 6030 roads for this project. For the proposed recreation

enhancement project, turnouts along the NFS 45006 road, as well as an area to turn around toward the end would be constructed. Approximately 0.83 acre would be cleared, grubbed, and/or graded. This figure includes converting existing clearings to parking and re-grading the boat ramp. Locations have been suggested for brush and waste soil disposal along the NFS 6040 and 6000 roads (see Figure 3.1 in Appendix B).

The ramp road would junction with the main road at a right angle, providing the easiest trailer access and would minimize potential conflicts with logging traffic associated with the Little Hamilton Log Transfer Facility.

### **Cumulative Effects**

The proposed action would result in improved recreation facilities for the community of Kake. The boat ramp improvements would allow boat ramp and haul out to occur at a wider tidal window than currently possible. A more effective ramp could improve safety for search and rescue personnel, potentially eliminating the need to boat in the sometimes hazardous waters of Keku Strait. Search and rescue response time could also improve, since a trailered boat can be hauled faster than a boat can travel in rough seas.

Construction and use of the site would likely result in increased traffic on the roads leading from Kake to the project area (the Kake to Seal Point Road, and the NFS 6040 and 6000 roads).

### **Other Resources**

The proposed action was also evaluated by the Petersburg Ranger District Silviculturist and Hydrologist, and no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects are expected to affect these resources as a result of the proposed action.

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## APPENDIX A – Consultation and Preparers

The Forest Service consulted the following individuals, Federal, state and local agencies, tribes and other concerned citizens during the development of this environmental assessment:

### Federal, State and Local Agencies

USDA Forest Service	Federal Aviation Administration
Alaska Department of Fish and Game Div. of Habitat	Federal Highway Administration
Alaska Department of Fish and Game Div. of Wildlife Conservation	Haines Public Library
Alaska Department of Fish and Game Div. of Mining, Land, and Water	Hollis Public Library
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	Hyder Public Library
Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation	Kake City Schools
Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources	Kake Public Library
Alaska Dept. of Transportation	Kasaan Community Library
Alaska Office of the Governor	Ketchikan Public Library
Alaska State Historic Preservation Office	Kettleson Memorial Library – Sitka
Alaska State Representative Peggy Wilson	Pelican Public Library
Alaska State Senator Burt Stedman	Petersburg Public Library
Bureau of Land Management	National Marine Fisheries Service
Center for Biological Diversity	National Park Service
City of Kake	NOAA Office of Policy and Strategic Planning
City of Kupreanof	Office of NEPA Policy & Compliance
City of Petersburg	Southeast Alaska Regional Subsistence Council
City of Wrangell	Southeast Conference
Craig Public Library	Tenakee Springs Public Library
Environmental Protection Agency – Region 10	Thorne Bay Community Library
	U.S. Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

U.S. Geological Survey

U.S. Coast Guard

U.S. Representative Don Young

U.S. Department of the Interior – Office of  
Environmental Policy & Compliance

U.S. Senator Mark Begich

U.S. Department of Energy

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

University of Alaska

Wrangell Public Library

### **Native Organizations**

Kake Tribal Corporation

Organized Village of Kake (OVK)

Central Council Tlingit and Haida Tribes of Alaska

Sealaska Corporation

Sealaska Heritage Institute

Petersburg Indian Association

### **List of Preparers (IDT)**

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Carol Jensen – Landscape Architect, Scenery Specialist

Jane Smith and Gina Esposito - Archaeologists

Stephen Lombard – Forester

Heidi Lombard – Fisheries Biologist

Jacqueline Foss – Soils Scientist, Wetlands Specialist

Jason Dungan – Wildlife Biologist

Mary Clemens – Botanist

Logan Wild – Engineer, Transportation Specialist

### APPENDIX B – Maps

Figure 2.1 – Seal Point No Action Alternative Map

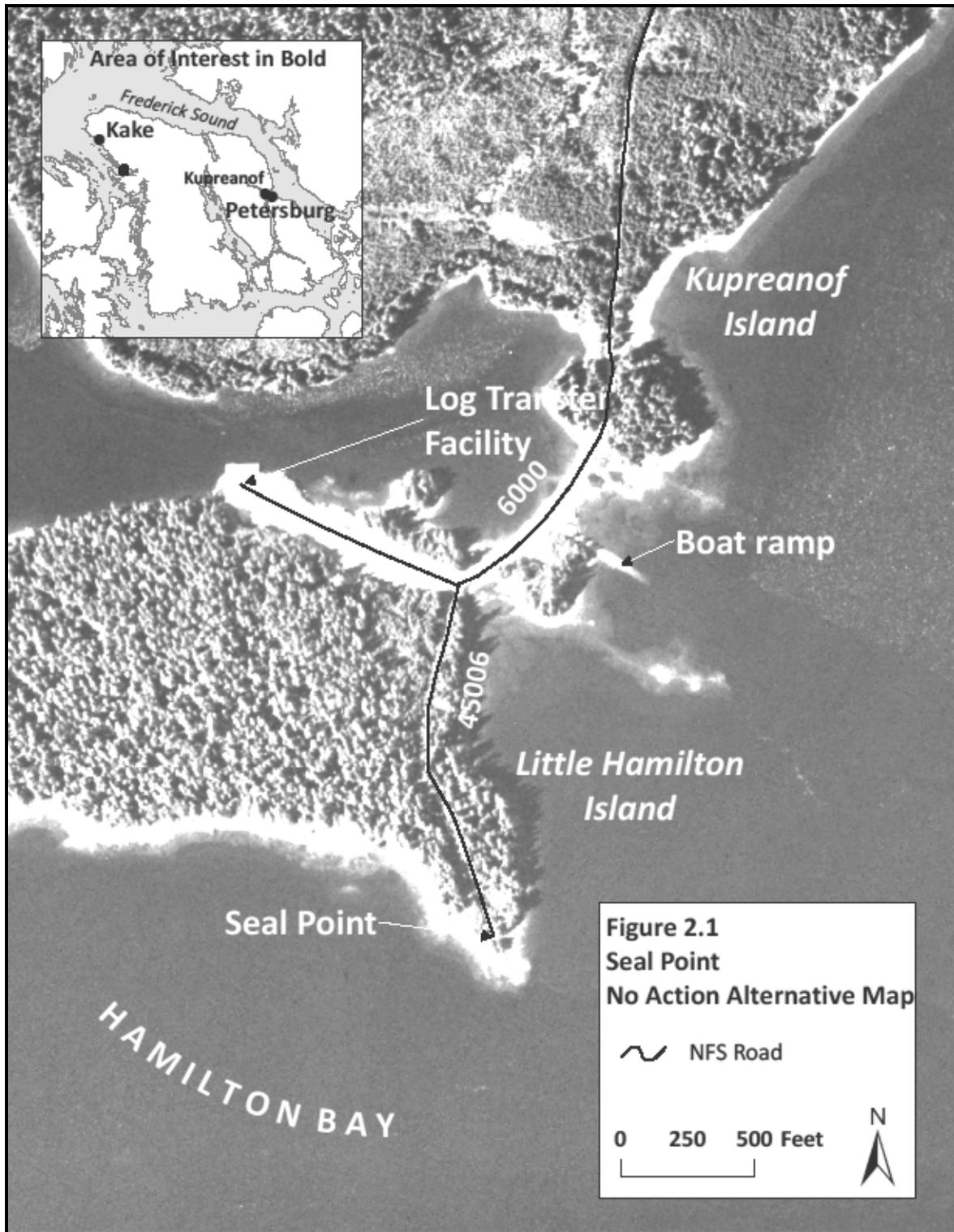


Figure 2.2 – Seal Point Proposed Action Alternative Map

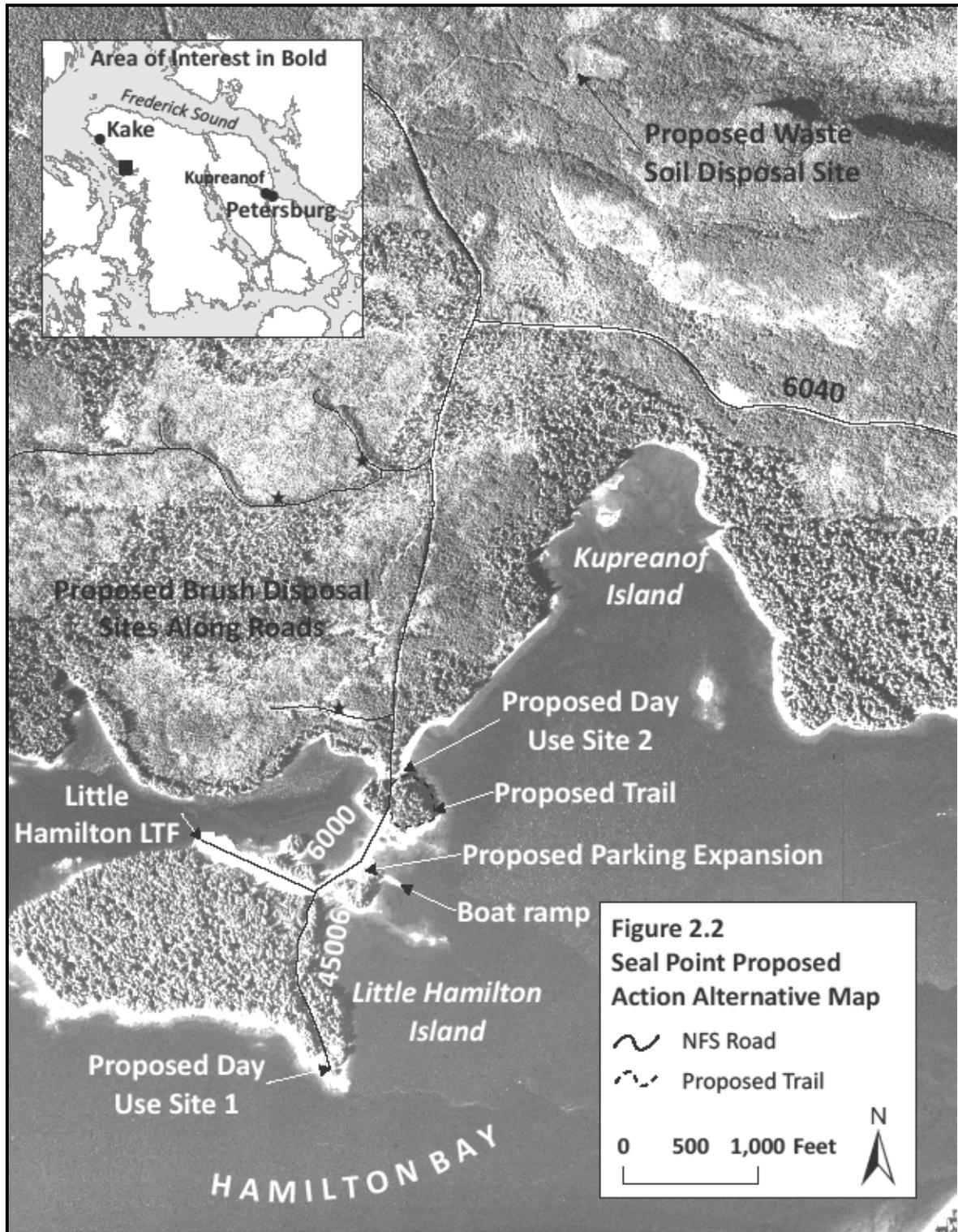


Figure 2.3 – Seal Point Proposed Action Alternative Boat Ramp and Parking Map

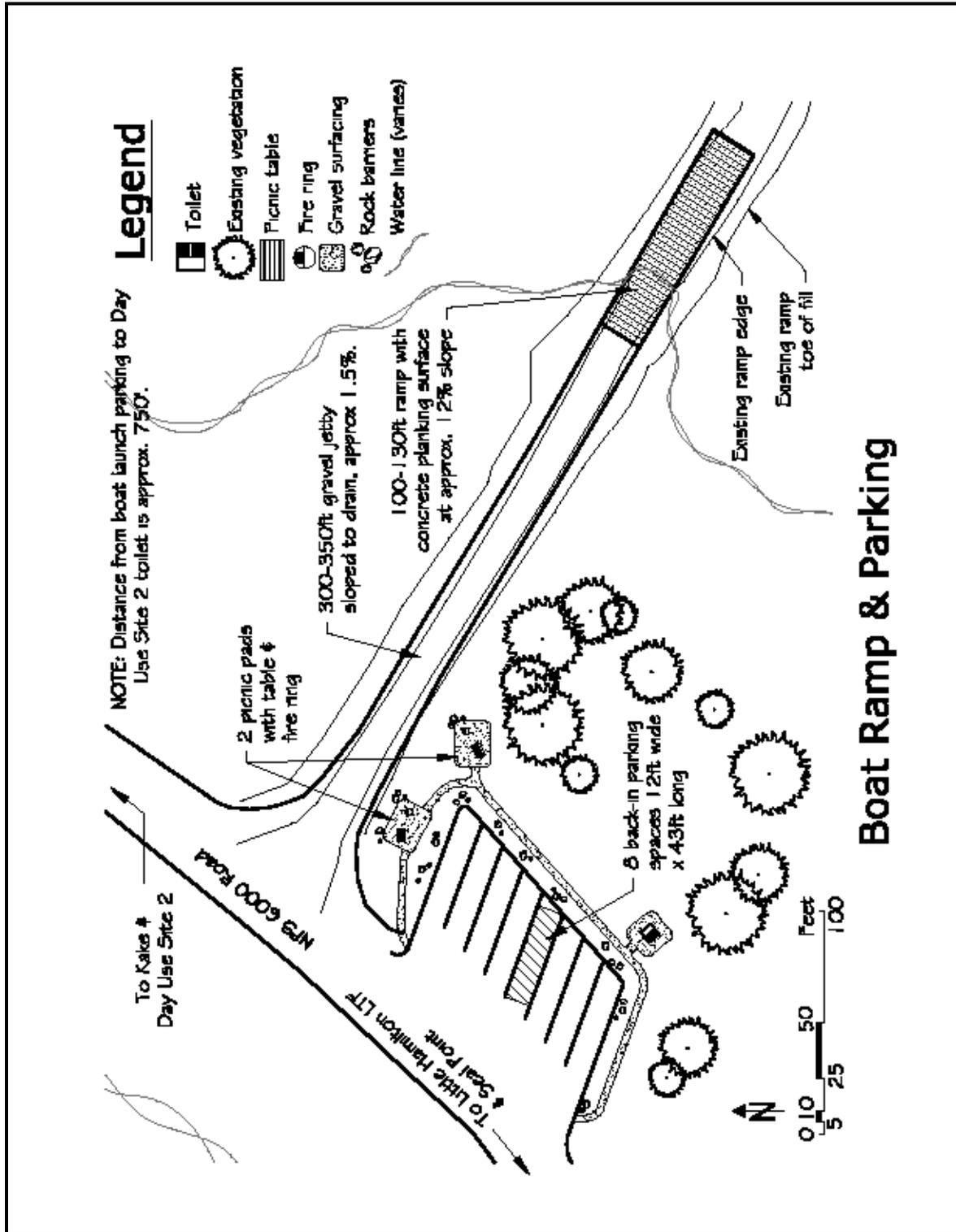


Figure 2.4 – Seal Point Proposed Action Alternative Day Use Site 1 Map

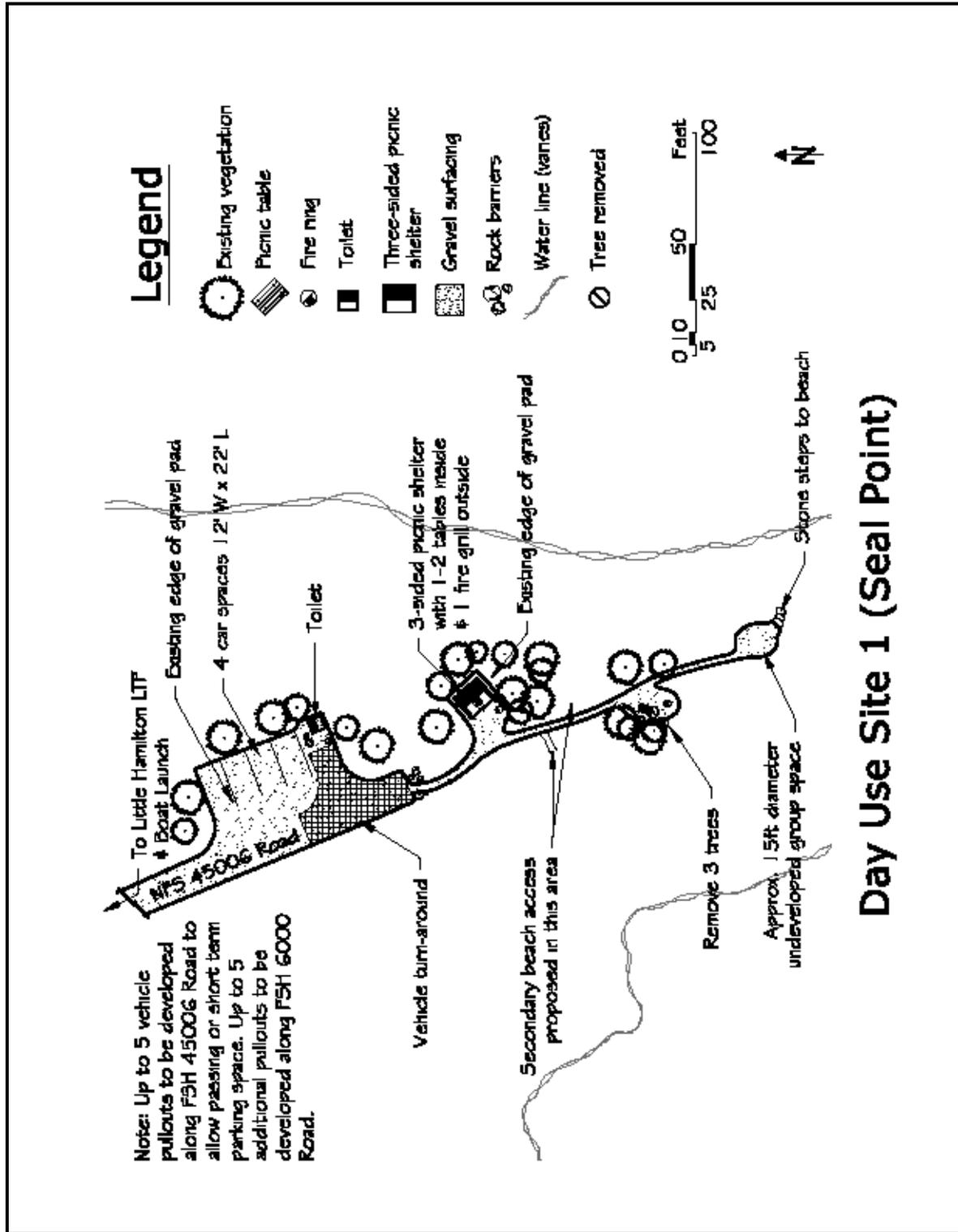


Figure 2.5 – Seal Point Proposed Action Alternative Day Use Site 2 Map

