Public Briefing: SB-159

Proposed Susitna State Forest

February 13, 2012

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES -- DIVISION OF FORESTRY

Background. The state Department of Natural Resources manages over 9.5 million acres of forest land in the Matanuska and Susitna Valleys. Of this land, timber management is allowed on approximately 2.1 million acres. The state actively manages this timber base to supply wood to local processors. Remaining land is designated primarily for other uses including land sales, recreation, water resources, and fish and wildlife habitat, including over 3.1 million acres of legislatively designated state parks, refuges, and public use areas.

In the region, demand for state timber sales is steady and growing and personal use sales for fuelwood have also increased. Local mills depend heavily on state timber for their raw material supply and there is a growing interest in the use of wood in the form of roundwood, chips or wood pellets for commercial, public school, and residential space heating.

There is also a need to more actively manage lands and vegetation to promote a variety of forest ages to provide for diverse and healthy habitats for wildlife. At the same time, active management will also help reduce wildland fire risk by breaking up large fuel types and encouraging initial regeneration by hardwood species.

The state is committed to long-term management solutions by:

- maximizing the sustainable supply of timber from the state timber base;
- developing access and encouraging a broad range of multiple uses on state forest lands including motorized uses;
- providing economic opportunities to the communities, businesses and residents of the region.

Legislatively designating a State Forest would ensure that some land will remain available for long-term forest management and the region will retain large open spaces of public lands for the range of benefits residents of the region currently enjoy.

Purpose. This bill would establish a new Susitna State Forest from state lands presently used for timber harvest. The Division of Forestry will be able to manage the State Forest for a long-term supply of timber to local processors, and retain the land in state ownership for multiple uses.

Proposed State Forest Land. The proposed Susitna State Forest includes 33 parcels totaling approximately 763,200 acres (see chart). The parcels are Forestry classified lands located in 14 large management blocks listed below. The Division of Forestry worked with the Division of Mining, Land, and Water management to identify and exclude lands that are priorities for the state land disposal program.

State Forest Management. The Susitna State Forest would be managed as part of the State Forest System under AS 41.17.200-.230. Lands in the State Forest would continue to be open for multiple uses, including wildlife habitat and harvest and recreational activities. State Forest lands would be managed consistent with the management intent under the current Susitna Matanuska and the Southeast Susitna Area Plans. Changes to management intent would require public and interagency review through adoption of a State Forest Management Plan under AS 41.17.230. The States Forest Resources Practices Act (FRPA) would apply to management activities on the forest and is designed to protect both fish habitat and water quality. (AS 41.17.010 - .955.) A forestry inventory was completed in 2010 for approximately 75% of the acreage and work is ongoing to complete the project. An interim forest inventory report and maps are available at http://forestry.alaska.gov/whatsnew.htm.

PROPOSED SUSITNA STATE FOREST			
Parcel	**Acreage**	**General Location**	**Block**
Susitna-Matanuska Area Plan			
P-13a	18,100	Kroto Creek East	East Petersville
P-13b	49,600	Kroto Creek West	West Petersville
P-13c	3,300	Amber Lake	West Petersville
U-26a	35,400	Yentna River West	Yentna
R-03a	6,500	Nakoshna River	Yentna
R-03b	33,600	Skwentna River North	West Skwentna
U-26b	15,500	Skwentna River North	West Skwentna
R-03c	5,100	Hayes River	West Skwentna
M-07a	24,200	Canyon Creek	South Skwentna
M-07b	187,000	Mount Susitna	Mount Susitna
M-07c	2,500	Theodore River	Mount Susitna
M-07d	5,800	Alexander Creek West	Alexander Creek
U-24a	10,300	Alexander Creek East	Alexander Creek
U-04a	500	Kroto Slough	Susitna
U-04b	155,800	Kahiltna River	Susitna
U-07e	104,100	Skwentna Village	East Skwentna
B-10	15,200	Yenlo Creek	East Skwentna
S-35	12,800	South Fork Montana Creek	Talkeetna
Southeast Susitna Area Plan			
U-01a	1,200	Sheep Creek North	Talkeetna
U-01b	6,500	Sheep Creek South	Kashwitna
U-01c	5,800	Kashwitna River	Kashwitna
U-01d	13,900	Little Willow Creek North	Willer-Kash
U-01e	18,600	Willow Creek North	Willer-Kash
U-01f	10,500	Deception Creek	Houston
W-01g	600	Houston	Houston
H-06a	800	Houston	Houston
H-32	500	Houston	Houston
H-06b	3,000	Houston	Houston
P-03	600	Little Susitna North	Houston
P-02	1,600	Little Susitna North	Houston
S-03a	300	Deshka Landing	Red Shirt Lake
S-03b	13,300	Deshka Landing South	Red Shirt Lake
S-03c	700	Susitna Village	Red Shirt Lake
TOTAL	**763,200**		