



**MEMORANDUM**  
**DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

**State of Alaska**  
**FORESTRY STATE OFFICE**

TO: Representative Cathy Munoz  
Chair CRA

DATE: April 11, 2012

FILE NO:

FROM: John "Chris" Maisch  
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SUBJECT: Follow-Up CSSB-159 Access  
Questions

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During yesterday's hearing (4/10/12) there were several questions and concerns expressed over the topic of access and how a state forest designation would treat this topic.

One of the strong points of the state forest system is the development of a range of access options for management of the various resources in the state forest. The primary emphasis is on forest management, but other multiple uses are also encouraged and facilitated by the access development for the timber management program. As an example in the Tanana Valley State Forest a range of all-season and winter-only roads have been constructed over time. These roads are frequently built by purchasers of timber sales in the forest and are part of the contractual requirements of the timber sale contract. The state identifies center lines and major crossing structures at streams, along with basic design criteria and adjusts the timber sale base value rates for the appraised value of these infrastructure improvements. A quote from the 2002 Haines State Forest Management Plan illustrates this point:

*"The primary source of maintenance of state-owned timber harvest access roads, including bridge maintenance and replacement, is through timber sale contracts." (Plus timber sales often pay for initial road construction, too).*

These practices reinforce the zero fiscal note that is associated with this legislation; access is primarily developed by the commercial timber sale program with occasional investment of other previously appropriated DOF funds on key infrastructure needs.

There was also concern expressed about traditional means of access and ensuring that current users, including in-holders of private lands, will continue to enjoy the same level and type of access. When a state forest is approved via legislation, a forest management plan must be completed within three years of the effective date (AS 41.17.230). One of the key topics addressed by the plan is access and this is developed in conjunction with the public and key interest groups associated with the forest and its current uses. Again, a quote from the Haines plan underscores this point:

*"Traditional means of access as well as access to traditional use areas will be maintained in the State Forest. The statute establishing the State Forest (AS 41.15.300) includes as a primary purpose the "continuation of other beneficial uses including traditional uses and other recreational activities" "*

Another way the DOF ensures that there are multiple avenues for participation in the management of a state forest is by establishing a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) in the forest management planning process. With the level of interest in the access topic, I would envision a seat on the CAC for the Susitna State Forest being designated for access and for in-holding properties. This will help keep the lines of communication open between the Division and various users of the forest. The CAC for the Tanana Valley State Forest (TVSF) provides excellent advice to managers and serves as a forum for discussing and helping resolve issues of concern to the community.

I'm confident that the concerns expressed on access can be addressed via the formulation of the forest management plan for the Susitna State Forest and implementation of a Citizens Advisory Committee. In the TVSF we have constructed approximately 500 miles of all-season and winter-only roads and have a range of motorized and other uses of the road system. Further more, the management of access in our current system of state forests is working well. This demonstrates our agency's supportive management philosophy in regard to access.

*"Timber harvest in the Tanana Valley State Forest creates timber roads that can provide access to the forest for people using all different modes of transportation, including dogsled, foot, horses, skis, ATVs, and snow machines."*

I've attached excerpts from both the 2002 Haines State Forest and the 2001 Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plans with sections highlighted where access issues are discussed. You will see that the topic is treated extensively and with the goal of developing additional access over time, while accommodating the range of uses the public finds of value in its state forest system.

Attachments:

Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan: 2001 Update, Chapters 1 and 2  
Haines State Forest Management Plan, 2002, Chapter 2