

Briefing: HB 162 Southeast State Forest

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



Alaska Department of
**NATURAL
RESOURCES**

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DIVISION OF FORESTRY

Background. The state Department of Natural Resources manages over 156,000 acres of forest land in Southern Southeast (SSE) Alaska. Of this land, timber management is allowed on approximately 49,000 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 25,000 acres of legislatively designated state parks, refuges, and public use areas.

In SSE, demand for state timber exceeds supply. The majority of timber in SSE is on federal land, but federal timber sales have declined drastically. Local mills now depend heavily on state timber for survival. The state is committed to finding long-term solutions by:

- maximizing the sustainable supply of timber from the small state timber base.
- working with the US Forest Service to increase economically feasible federal timber sales, and
- accelerating the transition from old-growth harvesting to harvesting second-growth.

There is broad support for shifting timber harvesting in SE Alaska from old growth to second-growth stands. Actively-managed second-growth stands provide more timber volume per acre on shorter rotations, and have less impact on wildlife. Much of the state timber land was inherited from the USFS with young second-growth stands. We can accelerate the shift to second-growth harvesting and increase timber volume on state land by thinning these stands. However, thinning is a long-term investment, and is only justified if the land will continue to be available for forest management. Legislatively designating a State Forest would ensure that some land will remain available for long-term forest management.

Purpose. This bill would establish a new Southeast 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 Southeast State Forest includes 20 parcels totaling approximately 25,291 acres (see chart). Parcels are General Use lands on Prince of Wales, Tuxekan, Kosciusko, Heceta, Revilla, and Gravina islands, and on the mainland at Crittenden Creek. 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 Southeast 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 Prince of Wales Island and Central Southeast 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.

Municipal Entitlements. The City and Borough of Wrangell boundary encompasses three parcels in the proposed state forest (Crittenden Creek and Bradfield Canal East and West). A State Forest designation will not affect the amount or location of land the Wrangell Borough can select. That determination is based on the maximum total acreage of vacant, unappropriated, unreserved land in the borough boundaries within two years after the date of incorporation (AS 29.65.030). However, a borough would not normally be able to select land within a State Forest. To avoid conflicts with the Wrangell entitlement, the Southeast State Forest bill specifies that the Wrangell Borough may select State Forest land within the borough boundary.

If new municipalities are incorporated before June 30, 2019, lands that were vacant, unappropriated, unreserved land before establishment of the State Forest will be included in the calculation of the municipal entitlement acreage, but may not be selected.

PROPOSED SOUTHEAST STATE FOREST			
Planning Unit	Acreage	General Location	Island
Prince of Wales Island Area Plan			
4a	1,528.21	El Capitan – North	Prince of Wales
4a	600.44	El Capitan – South	Prince of Wales
6a	1,558.11	Coffman Cove – West	Prince of Wales
6a	320	Coffman Cove – East	Prince of Wales
7b	200	Tuxekan – East	Tuxekan
7c	436.89	Naukati – North	Prince of Wales
7c	640	Naukati – South	Prince of Wales
8b	480	Kosciusko/Edna Bay – North	Kosciusko
8b	2,199.84	Kosciusko/Edna Bay – South	Kosciusko
10a	1,257.92	Heceta Island – West	Heceta
10a	752.8	Heceta Island – East	Heceta
11a	744.32	Control Lake	Prince of Wales
11c	2,040	Thorne Bay – North	Prince of Wales
11c	840	Thorne Bay – South	Prince of Wales
Central Southeast Area Plan			
K-04	324.20	Traitors Cove	Revillagigedo
K-33	901.03	Gravina/Vallenar	Gravina
K-41	4,977.38	Gravina/Bostwick	Gravina
W-01	3,087.72	Crittenden Creek	Mainland
W-19	624.15	Bradfield Canal – West	Mainland
W-20	1,778.56	Bradfield Canal – East	Mainland
TOTAL	25,291.14	20 parcels	