

Public Briefing: HB 105/SB 44

Additional Lands to Southeast State Forest DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



Alaska Department of
**NATURAL
RESOURCES**
January 24, 2011

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DIVISION OF FORESTRY

Background. Pursuant to SCSHB 162(RES), the 25,291 acre Southeast State Forest was established in June 2010. These forest lands will be managed as an integrated unit and according to a state forest management plan. While the lands were previously available for timber harvest before the State Forest was established, the State Forest designation ensures these productive forest lands will remain in state ownership and contribute to the long term viability of the timber based economy in southeast.

An additional 23,181 acres of State lands in the southern southeast have been identified as appropriate for inclusion into the Southeast State Forest. The Department of Natural Resources manages over 159,000 acres of uplands in southern southeast Alaska. Timber management is allowed on approximately one third of this land; the State actively manages this timber base to supply wood to local processors. The 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.

Adding lands to the State Forest will ensure that the State's most suitable lands in Southeast remain available to contribute to timber supply through the State's ongoing timber sale program. Much of the State owned timber land in southeast Alaska was inherited from the U.S. Forest Service and is comprised of young, second-growth stands. Actively-managed second-growth stands provide more timber volume per acre on shorter rotations and can result in improved deer browse than unmanaged stands. We can increase timber yield and associated timber supply from state land by thinning these stands. Thinning is a long-term investment and is only justified if the land will continue to be available for forest management.

Purpose. This bill would add an additional 23,181 acres of State lands to the Southeast State Forest from lands currently available for timber harvest. The Division of Forestry would then be able to manage the 48,472 acres of Southeast State Forest lands for a long-term supply of timber and retain these lands in state ownership for multiple uses.

Proposed Additions to Southeast State Forest The proposed additions to the Southeast State Forest include 23 parcels totaling approximately 23,181 acres (see chart). Approximately 21 percent of these lands are from six parcels that had previously been reserved pending legislative transfer to the University of Alaska. That legislation did not pass freeing these lands for long-term forest management in the State Forest. The legislation includes general use lands on Prince of Wales, Tuxekan, Gravina, Kosciusko, Revillagigedo, Wrangell, Suemez, Mitkof, Kuiu, Dall, and Zarembo Islands. Six of these parcels are adjacent or near existing State Forest parcels. The Division of Forestry worked with the Division of Mining, Land, and Water to identify and exclude lands that are priorities for the state land disposal program.

State Forest Management. The Southeast State Forest will be managed as part of the State Forest System under AS 41.17.200-.230. Lands in the State Forest will continue to be open for multiple uses, including wildlife habitat and harvest and recreational activities. State Forest lands will be managed consistent with the management intent under the current Prince of Wales Island Area Plan, Prince of Wales Island Area Plan Amendment, and Central/Southern Southeast Area Plan. 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 five parcels in the proposed state forest additions (St. Johns Harbor, Eastern Passage, Pat Creek, Pat Creek Uplands and Earl

West Cove). 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.

| SOUTHEAST STATE FOREST ADDITIONS | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Plan Unit | Acreage | General Location | Island |
| Prince of Wales Island Area Plan and Amendment | | | |
| 8b | 617 | Kosciusko Island/ Edna Bay | Kosciusko |
| 7c | 786 | Naukati | Prince of Wales |
| 7b | 345 | Tuxekan | Tuxekan |
| 6a | 597 | Coffman Cove | Prince of Wales |
| 5a | 972 | Whale Pass | Prince of Wales |
| 13b | 523 | Kitkun Bay | Prince of Wales |
| 12b | 1,002 | Indian Creek | Prince of Wales |
| 11c | 280 | Thorne Bay South | Prince of Wales |
| D-01 | 1,063 | Port Delores | Suemez |
| D-02 | 985 | Hook Arm | Dall Island |
| Central/Southern Southeast Area Plan | | | |
| K01, K02 | 1,885 | Neets Bay | Revillagegedo |
| K11 | 332 | Leask Cove | Revillagegedo |
| K25 | 1,487 | North Gravina Island | Gravina |
| P23 | 1,264 | Favor Peak (E Mitkof) | Mitkof |
| P25 | 467 | South Mitkof | Mitkof |
| P27 | 1,040 | Woodpecker | Mitkof |
| P28 | 867 | Frederick Point | Mitkof |
| U02 | 652 | Rowan Bay | Kuiu |
| W02 | 1,266 | St. Johns Harbor | Zarembo |
| W08 | 1,411 | Eastern Passage | Wrangell Is. |
| W10 | 2,601 | Pat Creek | Wrangell Is. |
| W12 | 2,320 | Earl West Cove | Wrangell Is. |
| W27 | 419 | Pat Creek Uplands | Wrangell Is. |
| TOTAL | 23,181 | 23 parcels | |

Shaded parcels are from prior University Land bill