

FINAL Minutes: Board of Forestry Teleconference Meeting Tuesday, February 23, 2021: 8am – 4:30pm

Call to Order and Roll Call. Tim Dabney, Acting State Forester, called the meeting to order from Fairbanks at 8:03. No teleconference sites were connected, because everyone called in from their own home or office. The public notice included connection information for anyone to call in or connect to the WebEx teleconference.

Present: **Chris Stark, Denise Herzog, Bill Morris** (Fairbanks), **Nathan Lojewski** (Anchorage), **Eric Nichols** (Ketchikan), **Mike Post** (Anchorage) and **Mark Vinsel** (Washington). A quorum was established.

Also present telephonically:

- **Anchorage:** Alison Arians (minutes), Ben Mulligan (ADFG Habitat), Brent Goodrum (Deputy Commissioner, DNR), Corri Feige (DNR Commissioner), Ashley List (DOF), Curtis Knight (DOAg), Chris Beck (ATI)
- **Fairbanks:** Jeremy Douse (DOF), Todd Nichols (ADFG Habitat), Andrew Allaby (DOF)
- **Soldotna:** Hans Rinke (DOF)
- **Ketchikan:** Paul Slenkamp (MHT), Clarence Clark (AFA)
- **Juneau:** Jon Wendel (DEC), Kate Kanouse (ADFG Habitat), Joel Nudelman (DOF), Sally Schlichting (SEACC), Mary Gramling (LAW), Kyle Moselle (OPMP), Greg Albrecht (ADFG), Chris Tcimpidis (NRCS), Anthony Mallott (Sealaska), Jaeleen Kookesh (Sealaska)
- **Palmer:** Stephen Nickel (DOF), Trevor Dobell (DOF), Sylvia Kreel (OPMP)
- **Craig:** Mark Minnillo (ADFG)

Other call-in locations, or unknown:

Diane Campbell, Karen Peterson

Approval of agenda. No changes were suggested to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes. By unanimous consent, the Board reviewed and approved the December 8, 2020 minutes with no corrections. Mark Vinsel made a motion to approve, Denise Herzog seconded. Unanimous approval.

Announcements.

Tim Dabney announced our new Board Member, Mike Post, who introduced himself. Lives in Anchorage, has a degree in Environmental Forestry & Biology. Owns Tall Trees, Inc. tree care and removal business.

Funding, legislation, and regulations

Ben Mulligan, ADF&G

Governor's budget has come out, and Habitat section remained unchanged. Fairbanks has some more RSA work so we're bringing on an extra person there. Staffing issues on the admin side, but hoping to get up to 100% soon. Habitat section is rolling along pretty well. Legislation: nothing directly or indirectly impacting us currently. No legislation on permitting.

Jon Wendel, DEC

Bills we are keeping track of: HJR 9 and SJR11, which deals with cruise ships. Canada expected to ban large vessels from entering Canada. Both of those bills are asking passenger Vessel Service Act to bypass Canada. Governor's budget shows some slight decrease to DEC, but pretty similar to what we had last year. Not too much change.

Tim Dabney, DOF

For FY2022, DOF remains flat & stable in Governor's budget. Governor has made an infrastructure bond proposal. SB74. It's a key piece of Dunleavy's plan for moving forward. Out of a \$356 million bond, \$20 million would go to statewide fire break program. Would be a huge boost for forestry, Alaskans, and protecting our

communities by increasing and improving fuel breaks around the state. If this goes through, the next step for the bond package is to go to a vote to the people in a special election.

Current FY, DOF got its first CIP funding for fuels reduction: \$5 million for a 5-year program. Planning underway for that—big focus. Have reclassified one of our positions to a hazardous fuels program manager, filled that position. New fuels program manager is Darren Finley. Promoted to Forester III, from Soldotna Forester II, and is now in Palmer.

Very difficult to get a new position (PCN), but we've been struggling to deal with federal grant funding. With Commissioner's assistance, we got a new PCN from DNR for this position. Joel Del Rosario is reclassifying this to be a federal accountant, which will be a huge help in getting our accounting for federal grants in order.

Funding sources that continue:

- Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) projects with USFS, including Kosciusko and Vallenar sales, and vegetation management in Chugach National Forest that we will do this season.
- Recently entered into 2 GNAs with BLM: fuels break development west of Delta (military range), community wildland fire protection plans for Copper River Valley.
- Authority for vegetation management/fuels hazard management for military: Sikes Act on Ft. Wainright and forest inventory. Shoulder season crew was able to do that work.

Tri-fold brochure is completed. Added to minutes appendix.

Legislation:

1. Timber sales' Best Interest Findings and FLUPs, allowing only one opportunity to appeal. SB85, HB98. Also improves language for negotiated timber sales.
2. Temporary workforce: EFF (emergency firefighters) that help us during fire suppression, but we can't use them to do general fund work, like fuels reduction work. Hoping to have that changed so that we can use GF, which would be a good employment opportunity. We can only hire them when there is high fire danger—not a very stable job for people in rural Alaska. Significant employment opportunity where we could hire a seasonal EFF to do fuels work, so they would have a more stable situation.

Questions:

Chris Stark: Only one bite at the apple for SB 85. Do you have this written up? A background document to describe why we are doing this?

**Tim: Yes. Alison will send the white paper on SB 85 to Chris and the Board.

Tier 3 Waters, Earl Crapps, DEC

Section management with wastewater discharge for DOW, Tier 3 waters representative.

What are Tier 3 waters?

Derived from Clean Water Act, defined in federal and state regs. Highest level of protection that is given a water, classified as "outstanding national resource" water. No additional degradation or pollution is allowed to be introduced. Policy in state regulation since 1996, but implementation methods introduced in 2018 and approved by EPA. In November 2018 DEC posted guidance for Tier 3. Policy now states that designation needs to occur through legislative action.

Questions from last meeting:

Designated wetlands are considered waters of the US, and are subject to Tier 3.

Permitting: DEC DOW assumed that program, so DOW would be responsible for that permit. If a federal permit, the state has the authority to certify that through 401 process. This document states that the federal permit meets all state water quality standards. Can do that without modification or with modification through our 401 certification.

Clean Water Act and anti-degradation and Tier 3 refer to both point source and non-point source pollution.

Questions:

Mark Vinsel: Have there been any new waters submitted for Tier 3 in the last year?

EC: No. We told the 5 previous nominations that they have to go through the legislature. DEC is no longer accepting nominations—have to go to Leg directly.

Stark: Avenue to introduce must go directly through legislators, not citizen's initiative?

EC: Anyone can nominate a water body, but the designation has to be submitted through the legislature.

Stark: Department isn't accepting nominations?

EC: Any water can be nominated, but the nomination has to be taken to the Legislature for action or non-action.

Stark: Who do I take it to who isn't a legislator? What official entity do I take it to?

EC: Because the designation has to go through the legislature, you have to go through a process to get it to a legislative action. Could go through the Governor, legislative committee, for introduction as a legislative bill.

Stark: For Tier 3 Waters, how are we dealing with ground water, where most streams actually come from?

EC: Under Clean Water Act, groundwater doesn't apply. Just waters in the US, which does not include groundwater.

Denise: What is the current status of those 5 nominations, or any new ones that come to the legislature?

EC: I'm not aware of any movement of the bills currently. Nothing specific now. We notified the 5 nominations of the policy, but no further action.

Roadless Rule

Pending litigation, Mary Gramling, LAW

DC Circuit of Appeals has stayed the court case for 2 years while rulemaking was completed. In October 2020 the USDA promulgated the Tongass Exemption rule, so the state requested that the state requested that it be put back on the calendar for argument, since the Tongass rulemaking only addresses Tongass, not other arguments (including Chugach NF). Other parties tried to moved to dismiss the case as moot because it was no longer needed because of the rulemaking. No set date for the DC circuit to rule on those motions.

2020 decision (rulemaking) has been challenged by several groups (environmental advocacy). USDA's answer to that complaint was due yesterday. Requested that the litigation be stayed for 120 days. Biden asked agencies to review legislation that was done during previous administration. Indicated that they were implementing that process—they have the executive order to review it. State will likely intervene in this case.

One case is likely to be stayed; the other is currently stayed and we will get a decision in the near future on this.

Implementation, OPMP-coordinated timber sales, Kyle Moselle, DNR OPMP

Budget changes for OPMP—increases to monitor federal decisions. Alaska Roadless Rule: 2020 exempted Tongass from prohibiting roads and timber harvest. Watching for indicators of how this is going. Early indications is that USFS is being very cautious on inventorying roadless areas. Biden administration has said this is a previous action it intends to review, and the final rule is under litigation. I'm hoping that the Roadless Rule will be guided by the Tongass plan. Federal administrative change—district staff kept elevating plans to regional leadership. During the wintertime, not a lot going on. I am seeing some indication that mineral exploration activities are going up for some sort of approval/concurrence, rather than just following forest plan recommendations.

Questions Part I:

Chris Stark: This exemption was going to free up mining—I don't understand this. One of the lawsuits that Mary sent me said that mining was not affected, or muni expansion.

KM: 2001 RR is not industry-specific, it's activity specific. So any road construction, reconstruction or maintenance in areas called roadless are prohibited, with 7 exceptions. It doesn't say mining gets a free pass.

Eric Nichols: You can mine, as long as you don't need to build a road?

KM: Is a road necessary? If the miner is saying a road is necessary to explore and locate minerals, USFS has broad discretion to determine whether that is a need. There has been no example of allowing a road to be built—so far they have only considered helicopter access to be reasonable in the Tongass.

Chris Stark: Could you send the Board the 7 exceptions?

**KM: Yes, will send them to Alison. They are in the 2001 Roadless Rule. Will also send the rule change, because they no longer legally apply. (See info in the Appendix)

Link: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/roadmain/roadless/2001rule/finaldocuments>

Mark Vinsel: Since the Alaska Roadless Rule didn't include the Chugach, is the Chugach still subject to 2001 Rule?

KM: Yes, but that is subject to the state's appeal in DC Court. We say that it violates provisions of ANILCA as applied to Chugach.

OPMP received an increment to expand its federal review program. It's reviewing BLM resource management plans, oil and gas lease sales, and federal rules. Contracted with Jade North for training on reviewing federal actions. Also reviewing timber sales in the Tongass. Sylvia Kreeel in Juneau office is reviewing timber sales. I encourage you to reach out to her for future presentations. Twin Mountain 2 timber sale—42 MMBF of old growth within Thorne Bay ranger district. USFS should release EIS in March 2021. Other project is Central Tongass project in Petersburg and Wrangell districts—recreation, habitat improvements, forest management over next 15 years. Project scoped in 2019. FEIS is on hold—reevaluating how they do large landscape scale projects.

Questions Part II:

Mark Vinsel: Unclear about the working of federal funding and timber. Central Tongass project is landscape scale that would include some timber harvest. In a project like that, would timber harvest have to pay all of the costs that would also include the habitat or recreation improvements? Or could mixed funding take care of all those things?

KM: USFS still has the ability to retain timber receipts for use on the forest. Like we saw with Big Thorne and other projects where USFS could fund restoration pieces of the project.

Mark Vinsel: The timber harvest itself doesn't have to pay for ALL the other pieces?

KM: That's more of a program-specific question—I don't know the answer to that.

Chris Stark: Can a federal Tongass timber sale lose money legally? If the projects have a large scope, all those aspects of the scope are part of the bill and scope. Can a federal timber sale lose money?

KM: That is a specific question to USFS—should invite the USFS to answer that question.

Chris Stark: You can't give me an answer?

KM: I could tell you how I interpret this, but I encourage you to go to the source, with USFS.

Tim Dabney: Has been answered by current USFS folks in the past—we could invite the USFS to participate in future meetings.

Eric Nichols: Can you give me an idea of the number of comments for demand analysis? How broadly does OPMP respond to the comments?

KM: That's what OPMP brings to the process. We bring together resources and subject matter experts, DEC, Habitat, and put forward a consolidated set of comments. We'd look to DOF staff to weigh in on those topics for the state. OPMP coordination would be an additional task to the DOF staff. That is added workload. RSAs can be established with DOF or ADFG Habitat to offset the costs to review and look at units, draft the comments.

Eric: The timber sale that appraises deficit—the state can go in and look at it from the economic standpoint.

KM: Theoretically we could do that. I'd be looking to our subject matter experts.

Eric: Would be coordinated through OPMP?

KM: Yes, in addition to ADFG comments, etc.

Mark Minnillo: Is OPMP going to coordinate all federal timber sales, or just certain ones?

KM: Right now we've just selected the 2 I mentioned. We're not looking at all of them, but not sure how big that workload would be. If you have one you're concerned about, let Sylvia know. We would make that consideration by a case-by-case basis. Wouldn't get involved if only one agency would be concerned, or no policy consideration. Otherwise, could get involved.

Tim Dabney: Using OPMP allows the state to provide the USFS comments with one voice, rather than multiple state agencies that could be confusing.

Mark Minnillo: One set of comments from the state is a good way to go. I don't think I know of a federal sale that doesn't have policy issues, or that isn't of interest to more than one agency. As a state commenter, it's good to know up front who I'm sending comments to.

KM: OPMP coordinated all Tongass timber sales under a different funding mechanism. When that funding was lost, we got out of it for Tongass. This new funding is a much broader program—federal actions statewide. Not just timber sales. Oil & gas, federal rulemaking of all kinds. I don't think there will be so many sales on the Tongass that it would threaten the program. Sylvia Kreel is your point of contact—please let her know.

Annual Report

2020 FRPA compliance monitoring, Joel Nudelman, DOF

Alison will send out a copy of the new report, and attach it to the Appendix. Packet photos didn't come out very clear. A couple of minor changes in Region II.

Description of Regions. I: coastal rainforest, east side of Kenai Peninsula, II: Southcentral, west side of Kenai, III: Interior and west.

Visit every private, muni and trust operation to ensure that BMPs are followed to protect fish passage and water quality. 2020: 53 total inspections. 18 private/muni/trust land. See compliance rating package, Appendix.

No inspections on Kodiak this year because of COVID.

Averages were really good in Region I. Everything averaged 4 and 5 except "install curbs and filter fabric," which we worked on. A couple of areas where corrective action needed to be done—log stringer bridges. A few low ratings on timber harvest BMP related to proper skidding techniques that was improved after site visit.

Averages over the last five years: ratings have been pretty good—our ability to get out on site is really important. Usually we do operator training every year, which we didn't do this year, but we did work closely with operators, and one training with agency staff.

Next year, Naukati, Bay View Sale, reviewing Sealaska lands, Kodiak and Afognak.

Region II: Only rated 3 BMPs on one inspection on Poppert Milling project.

Low ratings end up getting improved upon over time, as we provide operator training.

2021 should be busier in Kenai and Mat-Su.

Region III: Includes photo of new Maisch logging road. He is scheduled to go out there later this week to have a tour of his road.

Questions:

Bill Morris: 3.8 ratings: was that spread across inspection areas, or was that one individual operator?

Joel: That was the average of 6 inspections—that was an issue with a single operator who had those low ratings.

Greg Albrecht: I know you're familiar with issues in Yakutat this last season—unpermitted structures, harvest before flagging. Are they conveyed to the Board?

Joel: Yes, This year we had no notices of violations. Those are conveyed to the Board. Yakutat was a brand-new company, had never installed a culvert on a fish stream. If something like that were to happen again, that would definitely be a violation. They were given a warning because they were a new operation. We wanted to get them on the right track, and get them to understand the process of working around fish streams.

Annual agency FRPA reports to the Board

DEC Division of Water, Jon Wendel, DEC

Site inspection of areas authorized under discharge system. DEC should do inspections on forest practices for LTFs and road construction. FRPA site inspections: DEC couldn't do those this year because of COVID ; inspectors weren't traveling. We are still interested in inspection. Joel and I have talked about having a DEC staff accompany Joel for road construction and BMPs for soil stabilization and erosion. Plan reviews: we are involved in any of those that could have impacts to drinking water system. Conducting inspections on LTFs this year. Not too many in operation. We have two general permits for log sorting facilities. We currently are going through 2021 inspection facilities plans. Special funding opportunities for non-point source funding also in the report.

ADFG Division of Habitat, Mark Minnillo, ADFG

Area Biologist in Craig. Has statutory authority for ADFG and protection of anadromous habitat and fish passage. For FRPA: Habitat section reviews DPOs, provides comments to DOF, and issues fish habitat permits for road construction. In 2020, Habitat reviewed DPOs, 16 fish habitat permits, and 37 updates to Anadromous Waters Catalog (AKSSF funding). In 2020 fieldwork was limited due to COVID. Majority of inspections had consistent numbers, most in Southeast. Look forward to getting in the field more this coming year. Naukati will be busy, hopefully stream inspections continue, surveys work continue.

Questions:

Bill Morris: Several years ago, when I was with ADFG, we first issued a statewide fish habitat permit supporting the fire suppression activities for DOF. I just noticed in your report for interior region that the permit was re-issued. I'm curious—it's been a few years. How is that working for Habitat, and how it's been working for DOF and fire suppression?

MM: I don't know much more about it other than it's been issued. In SE we don't use it.

**Get an update from someone for the next meeting.

Note: Todd (Nik) Nichols emailed a response to this question:

I edited the permit for efficiency with suppression activities. Anadromous waters (871) was added for crossings and both permits were consolidated into one permit. The requirement to contact us (ADFG) no longer includes all waters, just anadromous waters and more aggressive suppression activities. When anadromous (salmon) spawning is involved, this permit will cover it with maybe a verbal emergency stipulation and/or amendment. This permit also covers all associated wildland fire activities (e.g., fuel suppression, training).

Chris Stark: I've been trying to figure out in SE, when ADFG has been doing these AWC efforts, I would like to know the number of times that removes streams from the catalog vs. times they are added. Is the actual streams numbers removed greater than those added? Could you make a summary of how many are removed (miles) and how many are added?

MM: The number added is greater than those removed. For total number of miles, that's something we'd have to put together.

**Chris Stark: I want a spreadsheet so I can see why they are being removed.

Note: Todd (Nik) Nichols answered by email:

There are many more additions than there are deletions to the catalogue (AWC). Most changes/deletions are not complete deletions of the waterbody if they still support anadromous fish. Changes usually involve mapping corrections, changes in hydrography (closed sloughs, changes of lake margins), newly discovered barriers, and unsupported data/new observations that just change the life stage and not the waterbody itself. For instance, some salmon may continue upstream after spawning, so some observations were simply seeing an adult salmon and not multiple fish engaged in spawning activity.

DNR Division of Forestry, Alison Arians, DOF

Statutory guidelines: AS 41.17.047(d) [...] The board shall report annually to the governor on the effectiveness of this chapter [Forest Resources and Practices] and regulations adopted under it, with its recommendations for changes and for needed research and monitoring.

Budget:

State forest practices program budget was static this year.

Governor's FY21 budget for forest practices remains level.

Forest Operations

Increased on non-state land throughout Southeast.

- DOF provided sufficient field presence to ensure that FRPA was effective in protecting water quality and fish habitat in 2020 in Southeast.

Decreased in the Mat-Su and Kodiak-Afognak archipelago.

- Travel to Kodiak-Afognak Islands were suspended due to COVID.

Compliance Monitoring

- Southeast forest practices inspections increased slightly on state operations and on non-state operations compared to last year.
- Compliance monitoring scores remains strong statewide.

Timber Sales

- DOF sold 2.3 MMBF of timber, a decrease from last year.
 - SSE sales expected to return to previous numbers next year.
 - FY20 included planning for large, long-term sales (e.g., Thorne Bay)

Cooperative efforts with the US Forest Service

- Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) in Interior Alaska
- Young-growth inventory and conversion in Southeast Alaska
- Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) agreement
 - Kosciusko Island currently being harvested.
 - Vallenar Timber Sale awarded in February, 2019; Vallenar Road improvements completed at the end of 2020.
 - Beetle-killed hazard fuel mitigation in the Chugach National Forest; will be done this coming summer.

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- Vallenar Timber Sale awarded in February, 2019; Vallenar Road improvements completed at the end of 2020.
- Beetle-killed hazard fuel mitigation in the Chugach National Forest; will be done this coming summer.
- State Forest Action Plan completed
- Sykes Act Agreement: DOF began forest inventory on Ft. Wainwright in 2020
- Tongass Roadless Rule
- DOF COVID Response
- Recreation and Forestry Partnerships
- Fire Prevention

Statement of FRPA effectiveness and recommendations for changes to correct problems:

- Overall, FRPA was effective in protecting water quality and fish habitat, while providing for continued timber and fishing industry opportunities.
- DOF had enough field presence to implement the Act
 - no notices of violation.
- Strong results from the compliance score sheets
 - preventing problems through DPO review, training, and field consultations
- DEC listed no impaired waters due to forestry activities on FRPA lands.
- At current levels of funding, the effectiveness of the Act depends on a low level of current activity, experienced landowners and operators, and a high level of compliance.

Fiscal Year vs. Calendar Year reporting. Alison Arians, DOF

Could we line up all reporting dates by fiscal year, instead of having some data collected by FY (timber data) and some by CY (FRPA data)? **No.**

- FRPA compliance monitoring data is collected by calendar year to coordinate with time frames for submitting DPOs (detailed plans of operation) in Region I, which is required in 11 AAC 95.220(d).
- Timber data is reported by fiscal year to coordinate with the annual budget cycle and CIP (Capital Improvement Project) terms.

[11 AAC 95.220. Detailed plan of operation](#)

(d) For operations conducted in Region I, the detailed plan of operations will be accepted only for those portions of the operation that the operator states will be completed by December 31 of the year for which the plan is submitted. If an operation in the detailed plan of operations is not completed by December 31 of the year for which the plan is submitted, and the operator plans to continue the operation, the detailed plan of operations must be renewed and reflect any change in or addition to the operations.

Proposed schedule for BOF Annual Report 2021 (next year)

- Nov/Dec: **BOF winter meeting**. Discuss topics for letter to Gov.
- Dec: Alison drafts letter (w/o compliance data), sends draft to BOF.
- Mid-Jan: DOF, DEC, and ADFG complete FRPA reports. Alison adds compliance monitoring info to letter.
- Early Feb: packets to BOF
- Late Feb: **BOF spring meeting**. Review annual reports and make edits to letter to Gov.
- Early March: send report to Governor, Legislators

Mark Minnillo: Was able to get this done in time.

Board agreed to this schedule for next year.

Forest Management

Mental Health Trust exchange update & forestry activity, Paul Slenkamp, MHT

MHT has been very busy. Not a lot going on in the northern areas, but southern southeast very busy. Land exchange has been going really well. The BOF has been very helpful facilitating this exchange. We've been working on this since 2017, the Exchange Act. We are in the appraisal process now—value for value exchange, and value is established by appraisal process. USFS has appraisers that review all the the work. Different appraisal phases, illness of appraiser has slowed things down, but hope to get the appraisals soon to review.

Kasaan timber sale in process. Small sale in Yakutat, about finishing that. Icy Bay timber sale closed, finishing that. Some timber harvest is already occurring on early phase land exchange MHT land. Without that land exchange and timber sale offered, sawmill would not be operating.

Silver Cove timber sale—working on contract now. Same as Naukati Timber sale process. We were successful in starting Naukati very efficiently. \$5.8 RSA to DOT for Silver Cove Road. Log stringer bridges, resurfacing existing road. Alcan Timber is working on that. Appreciative of BOF for their help with the land exchange.

Good Neighbor Authority Update: Kosciusko Sale, Paul Slenkamp, MHT

That sale not operating now for the winter. We were able to get all the units approved through the process. New process. Operating on federal lands is challenging, but one of the things that has happened was that the first time the USFS (landowner) has actually made a profit on it.

Purchaser layout on the sale, which proved to be problematic, required a lot of agency interface, mostly because the federal lands are under NEPA process, so the federal agency has to determine whether any prescriptions meets the environmental analysis & assessment. We spent months meeting weekly to address issues. Difficult prescriptions for management tools that made it quite complicated. Worked through them all, and Alcan should be able to start harvesting in a couple of months.

Regional Forester update: Coastal. Hans Rinke

FRPA

- Detailed Plans of Operation (DPO) are being received and reviewed within the region
- Working with Operators and Landowners on renewal of DPO's from previous field seasons in Region 1

Forest Management

- Sold Bayview timber sale in late January (574 acres at 14.4mmbf)
- Demand for personal use timber and fuelwood has been consistent throughout southcentral
- Many operators in the Mat Su Valley are working on spruce beetle salvage projects on private lands

Interagency Collaboration

- USFS--Good Neighbor Agreement timber sales (Vallenar and Kosciusko)
- ADFG--Willer Kash forest road improvements through Pittman Robertson funding
- USFS—Grant funded fuels reduction and forest health projects Western Bark Beetle, Western States Wildland Urban Interface

Fire Management

- Consolidated dispatch strategic planning
- McGrath Area agency scoping effort underway with BLM regarding future service delivery
- Pursuing the use of daily satellite imagery through Planet
- Palmer crew facility, efforts underway in comparative analysis of potential facility location

Staffing

- Currently the Coastal Region has 15 vacancies, including foresters, dispatchers, and initial attack firefighters. Recruitment efforts are underway to fill these positions.

Questions:

Chris Stark: 15 positions out of how many?

HR: 83 positions.

Nathan Lojewski: Is that satellite data in color? Statewide?

Jeremy: Visible bands and also Near IR

Nathan: Could we put that on the public website?

Jeremy: Not sure. This year it's a pilot project—not sure what we can put out there yet.

Regional Forester Update: Northern. Jeremy Douse, DOF

Northern region sales:

- Berg Birch for Aurora Energy Solutions out on new Maisch Logging Road.
- Seven Mile Island (winter road)
- Canyon East Mixed #2 & Boundary Spruce (both Over the Counter sales) will get out there this spring.

Roads: Pittman Robertson funding. Pittman-Robertson funds for 10 miles of road upgrade to Cache Creek Road, and Fortune Creek bridge replacement. This will open up large part of TVSF that has been closed to access. Also 12 miles of Standard Creek Road.

- 10 Miles of road upgrade to Cache Creek road
- Fortune Creek Bridge Replacement
- 12 Miles of road upgrade to Standard Creek road

New Maisch Logging Road. 5 new miles of road to a loop—Nenana Ridge to Ruffed Grouse Road, out to Parks Hwy. Opens 150 acres of scheduled timber sales, additional public access, and personal use firewood cutting.

Serves people in Anderson and Nenana.

- Approximately 5 miles
- 750 acres of scheduled timber sales
- Additional public access
- Personal use firewood cutting

Forest Inventory

- FIA – southwest unit
- McIntire Stennis Capacity Grant. Miho Welton (new Inventory Forester) is working on birch regeneration and site prep. Working on a grant with UAF.
 - CAFE plot remeasurement
 - Birch regeneration and site preparation

Cooperative Agreements

- Fort Wainwright – Forestry Support
- BLM-GNA – Delta River West, Copper River CWPP

Fire Management

- Consolidated Dispatch – Northern Forestry Dispatch Center
- Fuels –
 - Old Murphy Dome - maintenance
 - Delta River West – fuel break
 - Anderson – shaded fuel break
 - Vista Gold – shaded fuel break

Staffing

- Hired a new fuels position
- Northern Region has 12 vacancies in IA, crew positions
 - Fairbanks FMO,
 - White Mountain Superintendent
- All forester positions are currently filled
- FIA permanent staff filled. Seasonal staff hiring.

Northern Rail Extension 2010

- Analyzed already in an EIS
- DOF Provided comments
- Bridge across the Tanana Constructed in 2014
- Alaska To Alberta Rail: [AS 42.40.460](#)

- Grade separated crossings are preferable but expensive
- There is a stronger argument for at grade crossings if a road has a legal status, an issued easement or an RS 2477
- Reviewed 5 year schedule, inventory and topography layers to develop a rough transportation plan. Identified most likely crossing areas that would be needed in the future.
- DOF submitted 23 easement applications (10 Delta Area, 13 Tok Area)

**Alison mentioned the white paper on the consolidated dispatch project, and asked Jeremy if she could share it with the BOF. She will send it after the meeting and add it to the Appendix.

Questions:

Chris Stark: projects marked “shading”, what is that?

JD: Shaded fuel breaks.

Mark Vinsel: can you describe grade separated projects?

JD: A RR bridge that goes above the road.

Bill Morris: FIA work on Ft Wainwright—is that all north of the Tanana River?

JD: I think it also includes Tanana Flats training area. I don’t know where all the plots are, but pretty sure it includes those.

Bill Morris: Can we see the location of the plots?

JD: That’s the army’s data—should contact Dan Rees, the garrison forester, for that data.

Nathan: Do you have any comments on how consolidated dispatch will affect fire response?

JD: At the beginning of the season, it’s going to take a little getting used to. FMOs will have to make phone calls to dispatchers. Shouldn’t impact response, but there will be some quick lessons learned. Going through a number of simulations before that.

Effectiveness Monitoring. Alison Ariens, DOF

Statutory Guidelines: AS 41.17.047(c) The board, working with the department, the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Department of Fish and Game, other affected agencies and parties, and the forest-dependent industries, shall conduct an annual survey of research needs related to forest practices.

Meeting held January 2021.

Participants

- DOF, ADFG, DEC, USFS, USFWS, Board of Forestry, Sealaska
- Invited for next time: NRCS

Funding Opportunities

- Sustainable Salmon Funding (mid-April)
- Challenge Cost-Share Grants (??)
- ACWA Grants (2023)
- NRCS Grants?

Compliance Monitoring

Monitoring BMP implementation to ensure clean water & fish passage

- USFS (Tongass)
- DOF & ADFG & DEC (Statewide state, private, muni, trust lands)
- USFWS

Corrective actions/management recommendations included:

- Culvert installations on drainages
- Work on log bridges

- Erosion control improvement
- Riparian buffers implemented
- Disconnecting road ditches from streams
- Improving road surfaces

Monitoring BMP implementation to ensure clean water & fish passage

- USFS (Tongass)
- DOF & ADFG & DEC (Statewide state, private, muni, trust lands)
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Corrective actions/management recommendations included:

- Culvert installations on drainages
- Work on log bridges
- Erosion control improvement
- Riparian buffers implemented
- Disconnecting road ditches from streams
- Improving road surfaces

Effectiveness Monitoring Updates

ADFG

- Windthrow in SE Alaska

DOF

- Road Condition Surveys planned: East Icy Bay Chugach Corp., Sealaska Corp.
- Forest Inventory publicly available
- Fish Mapper: DOF culverts on ADFG system

USFS

- Closed (stored/inactive) roads
- Invasive plant species control, detection, and mitigation
- Stream buffer windfirmness
- Management of young growth riparian/floodplain stands
- Fish passage

USFWS

- Fish passage
- Water quality monitoring
- Restoration work on culverts

Recommendations & Priorities

- Continue monitoring implementation of BMPs
- Stream restoration
- Prediction of and effectiveness of riparian buffer management
- Invasive plant species control, detection, and mitigation
- Management of young growth riparian stands
- Road condition surveys for all timber harvests
- Reforestation implementation standards and site preparation

Next meeting: October 2021

Questions:

Chris Stark: Looked at statutes and see where I fit in: interested parties.

Forest Legacy program. Ashley List, DOF

In December, the Division of Forestry assumed the Forest Legacy Program from the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR).

Purpose:

This is a cooperative program through USDA Forest Service State & Private Forestry. The purpose is to conserve important forest lands that are susceptible to conversion to non-forest use. Timber harvest, recreation, and other forest activities are allowed on Forest Legacy properties. The program acquires properties from willing sellers.

History in Alaska:

DPOR initiated the Forest Legacy Program in Alaska in 2002 and used it to acquire inholdings and properties adjacent to State Park units between 2003 and 2008. They completed 5 projects for a total of almost 5,000 acres on 7 tracts or real property. Six of the properties are owned in fee, and the other is a conservation easement. One property is owned by the City of Homer, and the rest are owned by the State.

Process:

The Program is funded nationally by the Land and Water Conservation fund and requires a 75:25 match; project funding is competitive. Conservation land trusts typically identify projects and provide the match. Once the properties are acquired, the State is responsible for monitoring in perpetuity. That is the current status of the Program in Alaska—monitoring to ensure compliance with the original Forest Service terms. That mostly means ensuring the properties are not converted from non-forest use through trespass actions.

Current Status:

DOF is transferring information from DPOR.

Future:

Going forward, DOF will monitor the existing properties and the program will largely be in maintenance status. Forest Legacy is a tool that could be used to acquire inholdings in State Forests to keep them as working forest lands, for example, if in the future an inholding was likely to become a residential subdivision.

Questions:

Nathan: That program was under DPOR, and it's now under DOF: you have to take on their workload? Without any funding?

Ashley: I'm hoping it's not too much of a workload—most of them are next to or in state parks, so they will be monitoring them. Most of them are so remote, except for Chena Rec area. Homer—have staff there. We are hoping that it won't be too bad.

Mark Vinsel: If you were to acquire an inholding, does it automatically become part of a SF?

Ashley: that would be a separate process. Not sure whether the management will be more like ILMA. Good question.

Tim: Will work on that in future.

Lunch

All Board members back on.

Public Comment

No public comments.

Update on Sealaska Forestry. Anthony Mallott, Sealaska CEO

President and CEO of SEALaska. Since 2014, with Sealaska since 2006. And going back to early 90s if you count internships that Jaeleen Kookesh and I had. Appreciate the opportunity to tell our story.

A big action, and we want to tell you directly. How we explain it depends on who has in-depth understanding of the industry vs. community member. We have been having discussions with contractors, employees, congressional delegation, and community leadership.

From the very beginning, it was neither conservation or anti-industry; that's not what drove us to this. BOF could imagine the pathway to get to this decision: 6 years operating as the largest operator out of the Tongass. We felt alone in this, we, too, are asking USFS to sell wood. A single large operator was going to struggle without other partners. Worked diligently with other partners, including state, MHT, University, collaborating with them. As we struggled with infrastructure decline, workforce decline, at the end, we weren't seeing a clear future. Were not going to be able to stretch our remaining old growth to our remaining second growth. We started harvesting in 1980, 40 years ago, which puts our second growth out at least 20 years. The Lands Bill couldn't help us—a very long gap between remaining old growth and second growth. Remote camp logging, other difficulties. Industry declining because of USFS's inability to get timber sales. It was an eventuality whether to make the decision this year or 3 or 4 years out. Timing made sense strategically.

We are still land managers, we are still actively managing. We are continuing silvicultural efforts, getting treatment efforts ready. Natural resource staff will remain with us. Looking at about half our employee base staying on throughout this transition. Made this point to Congress, legislators, and community leaders. The only thing off the table is industrial old-growth logging. Healthy forest stewardship, opportunities for natural harvest, tourism, etc. We have a high priority for training on POWI during this transition. Hydaberg, Klawock, Kasaan, Craig. Priority to make sure people understand that we are still managing to second growth transition. Special focus on workforce development.

Questions:

Eric Nichols: Represents Forest Industry. Our concern is the timber base remaining to perpetuate the industry until we can get to the second growth. Do you anticipate coming back into the timber market once the second growth is ready?

AM: It is the plan to support the industry and transition to second growth—for ourselves and our Village Corps. They will also be working to transition to second growth. It's a long way out, so I probably won't be able to commit to that myself, but that is the current plan. I hope you'll see us still at the Landowners meetings, etc.

Eric Nichols: You have some older second growth in there that could be made available during this time frame. What about those areas? Could those be available?

AM: We are in the analysis stage of wood on the Kosciusko sale. We see the pathway to supporting the transition, but we haven't done the transition. We will continue to work to coordinate with the USFS on this.

Eric Nichols: The timber there will soon be too large to mechanically process it. Keep that in mind.

AM: The magic of second growth is the ability to plan a more economical harvest. We are watching what Yakutat is doing. They have done as good a job as possible with what they have. We want to prove the feasibility of second growth. If you have other opportunities to promote workforce development, we prioritize them. We'd like to continue to have those dollars coming in. For example, more skilled workers—bringing as much training to local as possible through Klawock training school.

Phytosanitary inspections for timber exports. Curtis Knight, DOAg

Several staff available for certifications, training up others so we have some depth.

- The Alaska Division of Agriculture (AK-DOA) in cooperation with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), facilitates the export of agricultural plants and plant products for international markets via phytosanitary (plant health) inspection and certification.
- The intent is to certify that the agricultural commodities for export meet the plant health requirements of the country of destination.
- Depending upon the importing country, import requirements may vary.
- Contact an Authorized Certification Official (ACO) to determine current import requirements and schedule an inspection.
- Neither USDA-APHIS-PPQ nor AK-DOA require certification of any exports, rather provides the certification of plants and plant products as a service to exporters.

95% of export program is log exports. 4% peony cut flowers.

Certification process:

- Please submit applications (PPQ Form 572) two weeks in advance of your intended inspection date if possible.
- Notify the ACO accordingly (two weeks advance) that you intend to export and approximate dates of vessel ETA for loading.

6 ports in China.

2020 certifications: cargo for 28 vessels certified by DOAg staff. 127 MMBF

Mostly spruce & western hemlock, highest log volume in last 10 years was in 2020.

Questions:

Nathan: in the past, someone said there was only one inspector, but you listed more—does the ACO designation mean we have 3 people?

CK: ACO is the certification, plus inspections needed. Doug Warner is retired, but he is on call. Mia is in Palmer, and can issue certificates. I'm hopeful to get a position in Fairbanks and pest specialist out last year. Working on building our capacity for covering these inspections. The peony industry is growing—that will be interesting.

Windthrow prediction in riparian buffers . Greg Albrecht, ADFG

Followup to previous presentation in 2019.

Wind exposure Index and GIS analysis and results.

Followup to work from looking through USFS dataset to see if there are correlations with blowdowns. Can blowdown be predicted using a Wind Exposure Index? Looked at wind vectors, GIS analysis, adjacent to clearcuts. Buffer tool created by GIS analyst. Measured fetch from non-forested area—looked for windthrow on each side. Flagged sites when both sides had windthrow from trees falling down from the other side and knocking them over. Also removed areas with helicopter logging because very little windthrow. Results: Not terribly significant or meaningful results—an upward trend, but not significant.

How important is fetch? Looking at Wind Exposure class numbers: 4s and 5s—less than 50m of fetch—a lot of trees left—much less windthrow. Mean percent windthrow for low fetch was quite low, vs. those with greater fetch. Fetch definitely plays a role. If it's a 5 or 4 with no fetch, there is a much lower chance of forest blowdown. Windthrow events: Lower windthrow in areas with less fetch.

Couldn't consider:

- site specific buffer prescriptions. Which was a problem, but didn't have them. Couldn't tell if the forester on the ground had implemented feathering, RMA border shape and topography.
- V-notches
- Individual tree characteristics,

- Site-specific wind patterns.
- Soils

Conclusions:

- 4s and 5s Wind Exposure class slightly higher blowdown
- Fetch plays an important role
- RMAs near selective harvest have minimal windthrow
- Relationship between WEC and blowdown isn't significant to warrant use of the tool by itself.
- Habitat will consider these conclusions when commenting on DPOs and consider asking for voluntary action to reduce windthrow where site-specific evidence supports high risk.

Questions still to address:

- How much windthrow is too much?
- How well do site-specific provisions work? Can be a frustrating game trying to predict and prevent.
- 2020 storms

Questions:

Eric Nichols: I can't tell you how many buffers I've laid out. Years ago, I was able to make variations with the buffers, but now we see very straight-edged buffers. Varying width would be good. Might want to open some areas in the RMZ to let some wood through. Species height affect blowdown? Which is more stable and less likely to come down in a windstorm? The way the rules are set up now, our hands are tied. I think there are other things out there with more flexibility that could reduce the amount of blowdown.

GA: Appreciate the comment. It's not a simple thing to do. I think that as habitat biologists working with DOF and variation regs, I think that there could be room to do that if the landowner was in agreement—could thin buffer here, leave low merch timber other places. I think we can do that. I will pursue that in comments and in on-the-ground site visits. This is a simplistic model that won't add much value.

Mark Vinsel: I'm wrestling in my head about whether it harms the buffer; whether it matters if 50% of the buffer comes down. The purpose of the buffer is to provide wood into the stream. Big wind events do provide these blowdowns. Wouldn't this blowdown provide successional stages? Have you seen examples of where the blowdown trashed the stream and it wasn't OK for anadromous fish?

GA: Some streams are considered "wood poor," and those could use wood being blown into. Other places, like Yakutat on blowdowns on low gradient streams that needed to cut the timber to allow streams to flow. I agree—what is "significant" blowdown. Even 50% of the trees blowing down might not be a bad thing. But hard to know without being site-specific.

Mark Vinsel: Upper Situk River that happened—some issues with fishermen.

Bill Morris: Thanks for running with this for the last year or so. Appreciate the information.

GA: Thanks for your dialog and interest.

Chris Stark: Thanks for the fine work that was done. Is it time to revisit Region I buffer zones?

Eric: Can of worms. So much of the USFS is locked up. What are you trying to accomplish here?

Chris Stark: Did you compare this with blowdown with streams that had no harvest?

GA: No, I don't have control sites, but helicopter logged areas can be used as a proxy.

Chris Stark: Sometimes natural blowdown, you still go in and clean up the stream?

GA: No. There was a grant given to the City of Yakutat with some hydrology studies. They cut notches in the logs, but I don't know anything else beyond that. I wouldn't call it stream cleaning. I believe it was in very low gradient sections of the creek with 80% to 90% of buffer trees falling in.

Bill Morris: Being able to address these on a site-by-site basis. Do you see adequate variance flexibility?

GA: Yes, I think so. Options for feathering, etc., as warranted.

Andrew Allaby: How would this compare to Interior Alaska?

GA: Couldn't really comment on the comparison.

Trails Issues Update. Chris Beck, Alaska Trails Initiative

Some new opportunities in the last 2 weeks for more and better trails.

One More Day: Average length of stay for visitors to New Zealand. For Alaska visitors, only 9.1 days. If we had half of a typical year visitors, would be millions more \$\$.

Sharing uses: forestry & recreation.

An Alaska Long Trail. Why?

Long Trails are *magic* – creating more value than the sum of their parts. Alaska is way overdue in stitching together a world class long trail, in the spirit of the Pacific Crest & Continental Divide Trails in the US, and similar trails in Portugal, New Zealand, Japan, Iceland, Africa...

- In 50 years, 30,000 have hiked the full Appalachian Trail; *Three million visitors* hike a portion of the trail each year.
- *100% Increase* in growth in John Muir Trail Park Service permits 2011 to 2015.
- *Growing Interest*: hiking was the fastest growing activity for independent and cruise out of state travelers from 2011-2016.

Why this route? Lots of the trail already exists. A pleasant mixture of wild but not too wild. Theme of whole trail: primarily long-term to include a hiking trail, but lots of people also interested in multiple use. A corridor with a braided set of uses.

- Momentum & landowner support
- Economic Impact – near to communities.
- Manageable Costs – many portions already exist
- “Goldilocks Factor” – wild but not too wild
- Wow Factor – spectacular country
- Flexible – options for a 4-season/multi-user route

2 weeks ago, Governor's job creating infrastructure bond. A piece of that is \$13.2 million for recreation trail construction. Working with GO and legislature. TVSF is poster child for this.

Press Release: Dunleavy Introduces Job Creating Infrastructure Bond

February 5, 2021 (Anchorage, AK) – Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy today introduced a job-creating \$356 million infrastructure proposal – [Senate Bill 74](#) – the first statewide bond proposal in nearly 10 years. Upon passage by the Legislature, the general obligation bond will go to a vote of the people.

“This statewide bond package is essential to **stabilizing our economy and putting Alaskans back to work following the economic upheaval caused by the pandemic,**” said Governor Dunleavy. Not only will this proposal create jobs, it will improve critical infrastructure for all Alaskans.”

The proposal totals \$356,405,952 and leverages a federal match of \$1,003,471,000. Projects of interest included in the general obligation bond include:

\$13.2M to Fairbanks to Seward Multi-Use Recreation Trail Construction

\$20M to Statewide Firebreak Construction Program

Nenana – Fairbanks Multipurpose Roads Project

Northern Segment of the Alaska Long Trail

Project Objectives

- 37 new miles of forestry roads through TVSF
- Connects and expands the current road system
- Completes a motorized/non-motorized trail link to the Parks Highway near Nenana, including two looped sections of road.

Project Benefits - Doubles Road Investment Value

- Opens up additional locations for timber harvest
- Provides excellent recreation opportunities for day-trip recreationists who are returning to their starting point in Fairbanks or Nenana,
- Creates on key section of the Alaska Long Trail
- Creates safe alternative transportation routes for recreational travel during active timber harvest,

Nenana – Fairbanks Multipurpose Roads Project

Northern Segment of the Alaska Long Trail

Project Details and Budget

- 37 miles of unpaved forestry roads (12' wide, naturally surfaced, full bench, with 3% outsloping) x \$60,000 per mile = \$2,220,000
- 2 bridges @ \$150,000 ea = \$300,000 (Bridges will be for multi-use recreation, not for logging trucks. Trucks can access timber via other roads directly from the Parks Hwy.)
- Design and environmental review: \$100,000
- Project oversight and management (10%): \$262,000
- Total: \$2,882,000

AK Trails & Partners

Strategies to Approve the GO Bond

1. Persuasive, Accurate Support Materials

- “One Pager” – overview of Long Trail mission, vision, benefits, projects –
- Project Descriptions by Region/Legislative District – spread the benefits

2. Legislative Outreach

- Long Trail team contacts with local legislators
- Presentations to Legislative committees

3. Partner Outreach –

- Requests to partners – **advisory boards and commissions**, tourism organizations, local governments, economic development organizations, trail users – to express support to the Legislature

Documents that were sent out late to the BOF because of the last-minute bond proposal are added to the Appendix.

Questions:

Bill Morris: questions about water crossings?

Jon Underwood: Bonanza Creek, and one is unnamed Creek near Nenana—this may need a bridge, may just need a culvert.

Will Putman: Long Trail goes through Nenana, which is a tribal community. Tribe located there. Besides the local tourism benefit—tribe could be involved in cultural benefits there. Overall effort—conversation with the tribes of Nenana.

CB: Good point. Have been working with the tribe and with the Nenana Mayor.

Nathan Lojewski: Likes the concept of the long trail. Not sure if the letter would be for this chunk, or for the whole project. I don't know about other areas landowners.

CB: Fairbanks to Nenana for this letter, through TVSF only.

Mike Post: If this project goes through, is there a plan to how to maintain it?

CB: Volunteer efforts.

Alison Arians: Roads can be constructed to need less maintenance, also timber sales will be a built-in maintenance when timber harvest occurs.

Jeremy Douse: Identifying material sites to put some rock on the roads. Loggers have to maintain the roads—most have road graders. Some DOF maintenance, as well.

Chris Stark: Makes a motion to approve the letter.

Mike Post: Would like to learn more about this. I don't approve of bonds in general.

Nathan: I don't know if we've heard that DOF supports this.

Jeremy: We have a core mission of forest management and fire suppression. It fulfills managing the timber resource. Recreation is a secondary use of the state forest. It's already happening a lot. As long as these are logging roads where we can get to timber stands, we are in favor of them.

Nathan: Do we need bridges for logging roads?

Jeremy: I can't really answer that—I haven't looked at the specific bridges yet.

CB: Bridge is more a secondary function. Doesn't need to be build to logging standards to take advantage of logging roads to go back out to Parks Highway.

Mike Post: Is it a road or a trail?

Alison Arians: Would be a timber road.

Denise: When you mention road closures, do you mean this would be winter-use?

Jeremy: We ask people to stay off during the spring when the roads are fragile. But this is looking for all-season use.

Chris Stark: Withdraws the motion because of concerns.

Bill Morris: When we gave our support for Rosie Creek Trails, there was an acknowledgement of logging here in the future. Public use would have to shift.

Eric Nichols: If you put 2 bridges in the middle—make them crossable by fire equipment and logging trucks.

Bill Morris: Unnamed Creek one might not be necessary. Bonanza Creek bridge could be made more stable.

Nathan: Would be willing to support this. Would need to see something written up about the bridges and the maintenance.

Mark Vinsel: Without Mike's support of the Bond measure, we couldn't support it.

CB: Governor's bond proposal—resources of the state are limited, capital improvement grant that would be match.

Alison Arians: Will draft up another document that includes the details on the project about the particular measure. Only heard about this project 1.5 weeks ago; first draft, appreciate comments.

Mark Vinsel: The state has not been able to apply for things because of a lack of matching funds. This would be a huge amount of match. Could leverage over a \$billion of funds.

Eric Nichols: These have to be set up for forestry roads—include logging bridges. Need to address trucking issues and most efficient means. Need to have a truck get across the road. Put that into the letter.

NRCS forestry program summary. Chris Tcimpidis, NRCS

No news yet on comments to NRCS about non-industrial forest lands.

Proposed change to:

1. Landowners who own fewer than with over 45,000 acres of forest land, and
2. Do not own or operate an industrial mill for processing wood products; or

3. Meet criteria established for a nonindustrial private landowner by NRCS in a State in consultation with the State Technical Committee.

State Conservationists, in consultation with State Technical Committees, will determine localized criteria for industrial scale mills. This will ensure that family forest landowners with portable saw mills are considered for NRCS financial and technical assistance. Additional information is available in the public notice.

Current NRCS Programs:

- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) - A program to build on existing conservation efforts while strengthening current operations. Provides annual payments and Enhancement payments.
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – a voluntary program producers make conservation work for them. Landowners are provided financial assistance and technical assistance to plan and implement improvements.
- Regional Conservation Partnership Programs (RCPP) – A program that partners with other groups to offer value-added contributions to expand the collective ability to address on-farm, watershed and regional natural resource concerns. NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners to implement projects.
- Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Partnership

A landowner can't just come into our office and ask for a grant—they have to have a forest management plan in place. Needs to have set of requirements in the plan.

EQIP for Alaska Native lands

- 2014-2020
 - 121 contracts
 - \$40 million invested
- 2020
 - 20 Contracts
 - \$6.8 million invested

NRCS 2020 Stats

- EQIP
 - 72 Contracts funded
 - 118,000 acres
 - \$9.1 million
 - 84% to Historically Underserved landowners
- CSP
 - 2 New Contracts Funded for \$27,271
- RCPP
 - 1 new project awarded for \$2.6 million (Hoonah Native Forest Partnership).
- Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)
 - 33,000 plus acres applied
 - 162,000 plus acres of conservation plans written or updated
 - 30,380 staff hours
 -

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

PRINCE OF WALES ISLAND (POW), Alaska - Jan. 25, 2021 – “A public/private forestry project in Southeast Alaska was recently selected to receive nearly \$660,000 in federal funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the [Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership](#).”

This was 1 of 8 projects funded this year! The project will restore habitat for wildlife, fisheries, stimulate the local economy and maintain or improve subsistence use.

NRCS to invest \$422,028 in technical and financial assistance and Tongass National Forest will invest \$237,632 for restoration activities on adjacent federally managed lands.

Questions:

Chris Stark: Who was there before you?

CT: Samia Savell served as the forestry expert for the state for many years. We haven't had a forester in NRCS in Alaska for 5 years. Mitch Michaud was the previous forester.

Hiring a new State Forester

Alaska Forest Association comments on hiring. Clarence Clark, AFA

Thanks for the opportunity. I own a small consulting firm, timber sale layout, etc. I am a member of the AFA, and a member of the timber committee. Trade association to represent the timber industry statewide. Promotes and maintain a healthy forest industry. What we would like to see:

Has experience in/with the concepts, not just knowledge of:

- Active forest/timber management.
- All landowners managing forests through sustained yield.
- Economic engine for communities in Alaska, including remote communities.
- Experience working with federal entities, BLM and fire in Interior, USFS in SE, understanding GNA process.
 - DOF entering into shared stewardship agreement with USFS.
 - Stewardship contracting. Timber receipts stay on the ground locally, for forest management locally, not to Washington DC.
 - Challenge Cost share agreements like Young Growth inventory, mentoring young foresters.
- Believe that timber sale receipts should be used locally to save water quality, provide recreation opportunities, subsistence opportunities.

DOF preparation, BOF process and next steps. Alison Arians, DOF

Recruitment

- Position was posted on Workplace Alaska for 30 days and advertised nationwide.
- Recruitment closed February 8

The Board of Forestry has:

- reviewed resumes and cover letters of all applicants,
- determined which candidates did not meet the MQs,
- determined which candidates should be advanced to an interview,
- prepared the interview questions, and
- scheduled interviews.

Still to go:

- conducting interviews,
- deciding which candidates will proceed to reference check,
- determining process for reference checks,
- carrying out reference checks, and
- deciding which two or more candidates to submit to Commissioner Feige.

Next steps

Commissioner Feige

- consults with wildland fire representative from Alaska Fire Chiefs Association, and
- select new State Forester, OR
- asks Board of Forestry for a new list.

Annual Report & BOF Letters

Process for submitting BOF letters/comments w/o in-person meeting. Alison Arians

- A decision of the Board, so governed by Open Meetings Act (AS 44.62.310-.312).

- All meetings of the Board must be open to the public; must provide reasonable notice of its meetings.
- Though cumbersome, no provision for doing business via email.
- In future, if comments or letters are needed immediately, should hold an emergency meeting.
An emergency meeting may be held if a majority of the members are given at least 24 hours oral or written notice and reasonable efforts are made to notify all members.

Open Meetings Act white paper from Boards and Commissions. Link below, and added to Appendix.

<https://gov.alaska.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/Open-Meetings-Act.pdf>

Questions:

Chris Stark: Since the letter we already sent is funky, what is its status? Should Nathan make a motion?

Nathan: I could make a motion, but this comment period was open for 30 days. We should educate ourselves on a process that we're going to do in future.

Bill: We just need to have a brief noticed meeting and all approve it.

Alison: I need to pay attention better to what might come up, keep ahead of the comment period.

Tim: Good path forward—if something doesn't align with our BOF meeting. Approve it after the fact? If desired.

Nathan: Moves to approve the letter of comment that we submitted to the NRCS.

Bill Morris seconds.

Eric Nichols: I don't want this to come back to us in the future. I want it very clear in the minutes of why we did this. We understand that we didn't do this properly and know better how to do this in the future.

Chris Stark: Yes, be transparent.

Vote was unanimously in favor.

Review letter to the Governor. Alison Ariens, Board

Denise Herzog: Read the letter, found it thorough, no changes necessary.

Denise made a motion to approve the letter to the Governor.

Chris Stark clarified: is it the letter or report?

AA: The letter.

Mark Vinsel seconded.

Do we send this to the legislature?

AA: Yes. I email it to the Governor and all the legislators.

Unanimous support.

Schedule for submitting report: Send ASAP.

4:10 Wrap-up

Spring meeting date and agenda items

Alison Ariens: Should we do Zoom instead of WebEx?

Eric: Any idea if we could do the fieldtrip? Could put a tentative location in there.

Tim: Ketchikan should be the next spot to go to.

Spring meeting date:

August 2-6 travel. If we can travel, the goal will be to meet Tuesday-Thursday. Will need to do travel waivers and locations.

Chris Stark will be out of state: His term is up in June. If unable to attend, could send an alternate. Could identify someone to replace him.

Agenda items for next time:

Eric Nichols: In Ketchikan, visit Local rangers office
Introduce new State Forester
Forestry fuels management projects
Dispatch consolidation
COVID and fire lessons learned.
Fire season
Governor's bond package
Roadless Rule update
USFS answer about federal timber sales costing money?
Sylvia Kreel and federal timber harvest update?
Wildfire fish habitat permit

Board comments

Tim: Especially liked hearing about Alaska to Alberta RR, and the Long Trail, as well as the windthrow presentation.

Bill Morris: Thanks to Alison for organizing and all the presentations. Great meeting. Enjoy good spirited discussion. I appreciate ADFG and Greg's presentation. I don't have the problems with Teams or Zoom. WebEx not as easy.

Chris Stark: Alison did another wonderful job. Loved the information I got today. This board has got to meet in person someday. I hope we can work through the trails issue.

Denise: Thanks Alison and Tim. WebEx worked pretty well for me, but there was a fair bit of cut-out today. Information was a firehose. Learned a lot. Looking forward to getting trails information, but after we do the interviews.

Nathan: Interested in the Long Trail issue. I didn't have enough information to fully support it. I like the concept of the trail, and we've supported it before. Perhaps if it doesn't take too long, we could have another brief discussion adding a few minutes on to our scheduled meetings next week. Interested in the windthrow stuff in the SE. Will be reaching out to Greg Albrecht in SE. Looking forward to fuel break funding. Also wants to hear about bond fuel breaks on the ballot. Thanks Tim and Alison. WebEx no better or worse.

Mike Post: Thanks to Tim and Alison. Sounds like I made things difficult with the trails project, but would like to know more. Has been great to make it through the first board meeting. Would be nice to meet face to face.

Eric Nichols: Appreciate having Anthony speak to us. We'll be out of the timber industry in the next 20 years. That takes away 50% of the land base here. It will have a huge impact going forward for state lands and MHT. Survival is questionable. Need to have a good program from USFS and DOF that we haven't had in the last few years. It'll be good to have the fieldtrip in Ketchikan. I look forward to meeting everyone in person.

Mark Vinsel: This will be my last meeting. My term expires in June. I feel like I've been in exile for a year down in WA. I plan to be in Alaska 2 months of the year in the future. Compliance monitoring is important. Need to get all agencies on board. I hope the board can get together in Ketchikan. That's how we have great relationships with each other. Thanks for the staff work—Tim and Alison. I'm in a very historic logging area, in western Snohomish County. Almost all my recreation has had to do with logging. I've seen some things that have really ticked me off—limited public access to public rivers and lakes. It would never happen in Alaska. I was really pleased to see the mention of public access along the northern railway extension. If there are train tracks, you can fish on the river and get back to your campsite. I'm not allowed to walk on the train track. The blackberries and no river access is the wrong way to go. That has to be countered with overuse, litter, parking problems, disrespect. Public

has to buy in to these are public lands. Some of the Alaska trees are the best ones out there. Tip my cap to all of you.

Adjourned at 4:35.

Appendix: See attached PDF file

Agenda

DOF annual report tri-fold brochure

Compliance Monitoring Summary 2020

Briefing paper: Consolidated dispatch

Briefing paper: BIFs, FLUPs & Negotiated Sales Legislation (SB 85/HB 98) Long Trail and Governor's Bond

Proposal Documents

Open Meetings