UNIT 8: STEAMBOAT

MANAGEMENT INTENT

Management intent for state lands in this unit will be determined by management decisions on Forest Service uplands. If the U.S. Forest Service is unable to reach the timber at Ulitka Bay by road from Kelly Cove, then the Department of Natural Resources strongly urges the Forest Service to either change the upland management strategy, or develop a sophisticated transfer facility that occupies the absolute minimum space possible, thereby avoiding significant conflicts between timber transfer and use of Ulitka Bay by the fishing industry. This is the only unit in the planning area where the department recommends major changes in upland management because of problems encountered on the tidelands. The department makes this recommendation for the reasons discussed below.

In poor weather, there are roughly 50 acres of sheltered anchorage space in Ulitka Bay. This bay is the first harbor available to the offshore fishing fleet. Ulitka Bay is too small to accommodate all the fishing vessels and fish packers now wishing to anchor there. During the fishing season, an average of 12 fishing vessels and four to six fish packers anchor in Ulitka Bay. When the seine fleet is in, there are up to 50 vessels crowded into Ulitka Bay. The overflow is forced to run four to six miles to Little Steamboat Bay, Hole-in-the-Wall, or Steamboat Bay. When active, a timber transfer facility, a floating camp, and a log sorting, storage, and rafting area, currently identified by the Forest Service as the only economically feasible alternative to transfer logs, could use roughly 20 to 30 acres of the suitable anchorage space in the bay. When the timber transfer and related facilities are operating, more than half the fishing vessels now using Ulitka Bay at peak periods could be forced to run to alternate sites four to six miles away. Of the alternative anchorage sites, only Steamboat Bay, which is the furthest away and has the least satisfactory anchorage, is likely to have space during peak fishing periods. Conflicts between anchored fishing vessels and log raft movements in Ulitka Bay could be exacerbated as space available for fishing vessels anchorage is further reduced. Unfortunately, the conflict in Ulitka Bay is not limited to log transfer facilities and anchorage space; there are also significant geoduck beds in the bay that could be affected.

Ulitka Bay is the area of most serious conflict, and the adjacent uplands should therefore receive the most serious consideration for a management change that would not allow timber harvest. If the Forest Service does not change the management intent for the uplands around Ulitka Bay, it will be very difficult and expensive to mitigate conflicts between use of the area as an anchorage, and timber transfer and associated facilities. If the department does permit log transfer and associated facilities in Ulitka Bay, it will require significant mitigation measures that may make harvesting the timber from the surrounding uplands uneconomic.

The conflict between small timber transfer facilities and associated activities along the north shore of Noyes Island and the near-shore troll fishery is significant. However, the limited use expected for these transfer facilities and the possibilities for mitigation means that troll fishermen would lose the use of parts of the area, or experience conflict with timber transfer activities, only during the few seasons when the facility is in

operation. Thus, while the Forest Service should consider not harvesting timber from the uplands in this area, the conflicts here are not as significant as those in Ulitka Bay.

Use of Little Steamboat Bay for log transfer and associated facilities would also cause a significant conflict with anchorage use by the hand troll fleet and vessels not able to find space in Ulitka Bay. Steamboat Bay provides an alternative to anchoring in Little Steamboat Bay, so it is desirable to avoid conflict by not harvesting timber from the uplands adjacent to Little Steamboat, but it is a lower priority than avoiding conflict in Ulitka Bay.

The Forest Service intends to access timber adjacent to Steamboat Bay from a ridge top road and haul it south to a timber transfer facility in Kelly Cove. This will reduce tidelands use conflicts in Steamboat Bay to a minimum. Therefore, the department will not urge the Forest Service to delete the uplands in this area from its timber harvest schedule.

The State of Alaska may request the Forest Service to include stipulations in its timber sale schedule to control the timing of timber harvest entries and accelerate harvest in order to reduce overall impacts on commercial fishing activities.

MANAGEMENT INTENT BY SUBUNIT

This unit is divided into four subunits. Ulitka Bay (8a), North Noyes Shoreline (8b), Little Steamboat Bay (8c), and Steamboat Bay (8d). If the Forest Service does not change its upland management intent for this area, the Department of Natural Resources will manage the tidelands and submerged lands in each subunit as described below.

ULITKA BAY (8a)

Ulitka Bay will be managed to maintain its current use as a safe anchorage for the seine and troll fleets and the associated fish buyers and packers. Other uses will not be allowed to significantly block or restrict the fishing fleet's anchorage use of Ulitka Bay and force significant numbers of vessels to be exposed to the greater hazard and expense of using more distant and less suitable anchorages.

There is no designation for forestry in Ulitka Bay. The department has not determined whether a transfer and associated facilities will in fact be allowed in this subunit. Therefore, facilities will be treated as an "other" use to be allowed or disallowed after site-specific analysis of a proposed facility. The management guidelines for this subunit give specific criteria that will be used, in addition to those found in Chapter 2, to evaluate a proposal for a transfer facility or a floating camp in Ulitka Bay.

NORTH NOYES SHORELINE (8b)

The North Noyes Shoreline subunit will be managed to maintain fish and wildlife habitat and harvest while allowing two small-scale timber transfer facilities. Siting, design, and use of the timber transfer facilities will reduce conflicts with the near-shore troll fishery and impacts on geoduck beds. Timber harvest activities in this subunit should be supported from a float camp located in Steamboat Bay or Little Steamboat Bay.

LITTLE STEAMBOAT BAY (8c)

Since this area is an important anchorage, other activities will be timed, and log transfer and associated facilities will be sited and designed to reduce conflicts with the fishing fleets' use of the bay for anchorage.

STEAMBOAT BAY (8d)

This subunit will be managed for continued use as an anchorage for fish packers, fish buyers, fish processors, and fishing vessels. It will also be managed to protect the significant fish and wildlife habitat values, recreation values, and subsistence values. An area in the northeastern part of the subunit is designated for forestry as a primary use. This area will be managed to accommodate a floating camp associated with timber harvest on the uplands adjacent to this and other subunits.

Forestry is designated a secondary use (f2) on the shoreline of Noyes Island east of Point Incarnation to the eastern boundary of the subunit to accommodate potential A-frame logging.

The northern portion of Noyes Island is identified as a favorable mineral prospect and is blanketed by old mining claims. Existing information indicates that, if development occurs, Steamboat Bay would be the preferred location for mineral transfer activities. Mining is designated a secondary use along the southeastern shore at the head of Steamboat Bay to accommodate access for exploration. Conflicts with habitat values will be minimized.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY USES

Refer to the land use designation map for primary and secondary uses and fish and wildlife ratings.

PROHIBITED USES

- Mineral location in mapped crucial fish and wildlife habitat and harvest areas.
- Filling state tidelands and submerged lands for residential purposes.
- Floathomes in mapped crucial fish and wildlife habitat and harvest areas.
- Subunit 8d only - log transfer facilities, log storage, log rafting, and log sorting.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Refer to Chapter 2 for guidelines common to this and all management units. The following guidelines apply to the specific subunits indicated:

ULITKA BAY (8a)

Analysis of Alternatives to a Log Transfer Site in Ulitka Bay. Before an application for a tidelands lease, permit, or easement for an LTS in Ulitka Bay is acted on, the applicant must submit an analysis of the alternatives to the site in Ulitka Bay. Specifically, the option of constructing a road to an LTS at Kelly Cove must be analyzed and shown to be not feasible and prudent.

Log Transfer Site in Ulitka Bay. A log transfer facility will be allowed in Ulitka Bay only if the analysis required by the guideline above shows there is no feasible and prudent alternative to an LTS in Ulitka Bay, and if the requirements of Fish and Wildlife Guideline E: "Non-Designated Uses In Crucial Fish And Wildlife Areas" are met. Before authorizing the use of state lands for a facility, the results of the site specific analysis required by the above guideline will be made available to the public, and public hearings will be held in Craig and Klawock in accordance with AS 38.05.035(e). This analysis should be coordinated with the Corps of Engineers permitting process and the coastal consistency finding process.

Operating a Log Transfer Facility in Ulitka Bay. To minimize conflicts with the fishing fleet, an LTF will not be permitted to operate in Ulitka Bay at the same time an LTF is operating in Little Steamboat Bay.

Siting a Float Camp in Ulitka Bay. If feasible, timber operations adjacent to Ulitka Bay will be supported from a float camp in Little Steamboat Bay or Steamboat Bay. If it is not feasible to support timber operations adjacent to Ulitka Bay from a camp in Little Steamboat Bay or Steamboat Bay, then a camp will be allowed in Ulitka Bay and will be sited to avoid impacting the area used as an anchorage by the fishing fleet.

Siting Other Logging Support Facilities. The area allocated for construction of a floatplane dock and other facilities associated with camp development will not exceed 1.5 acres. Fill will be minimized and will not exceed 1,000 cubic yards.

Developed Recreation Facilities in Crucial Habitat and Harvest Areas. Based on available information, developed recreation facilities are initially determined incompatible within mapped crucial fish and wildlife areas. A specific proposal for a developed recreation facility may be considered for compatibility based on its design or on new habitat information.

NORTH NOYES SHORELINE (8b)

Log Transfer Facilities and Log Storage. A permit, lease, or easement for LTFs or in-water log storage will encompass no more than twenty acres each.

Avoiding Conflicts Between Log Transfer and Trollers. Log rafts will be limited to the minimum size feasible and be required to be removed frequently in a manner that avoids conflicts between trollers and log transfer, storage, sorting, and rafting.

Developed Recreation Facilities in Crucial Habitat and Harvest Areas. Based on available information, developed recreation facilities are initially determined incompatible within mapped crucial fish and wildlife areas. A specific proposal for a developed recreation facility may be considered for compatibility based on its design or on new habitat information.

Use of Steamboat Bay for a Floating Camp. If feasible, a float camp that supports operations on uplands adjacent to the North Noyes Shoreline subunit should be located in the area designated in Steamboat Bay for forestry as a primary use. If it is not feasible, the camp may be located in Little Steamboat Bay.

LITTLE STEAMBOAT BAY (8c)

Log Transfer Facilities and Log Storage. A permit, lease, or easement for LTF's or in-water log storage will encompass no more than twenty acres each.

Logging Support Facilities. The area allocated for a floatplane dock and other facilities associated with camp development will not exceed 1.5 acres. Fill will be minimized and will not exceed 1,000 cubic yards.

Timing of Log Transfer Facility Use. An LTF will not be in operation in Little Steamboat Bay at the same time an LTF is in operation in Ulitka Bay.

Use of Steamboat Bay for a Float Camp. If feasible, a float camp that supports operations on uplands adjacent to Little Steamboat Bay should be located in the area designated in Steamboat Bay for forestry as a primary use. If this is not feasible, the camp may be located in Little Steamboat Bay.

Developed Recreation Facilities in Crucial Habitat and Harvest Areas. Based on available information, developed recreation facilities are initially determined incompatible within mapped crucial fish and wildlife areas. A specific proposal for a developed recreation facility may be considered for compatibility based on its design or on new habitat information.

STEAMBOAT BAY (8d)

Logging Support Facilities. The area allocated for a floatplane dock and other facilities associated with camp development will not exceed 1.5 acres. Fill will be minimized and not exceed 1,000 cubic yards.

Point Incarnation Village Archaeological Site. An archaeological field survey done in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer and people with local historical knowledge may be required to identify the extent of the Point Incarnation Village site prior to approval of breakout points for A-frame logging.

Conflicts Between Commercial Fishing and A-Frame Logging. Managers will use siting or timing restrictions to avoid conflicts between A-frame logging and purse seine hookoff points and to minimize conflicts with other commercial fishing activities.

Developed Recreation Facilities in Crucial Habitat and Harvest Areas. Based on available information, developed recreation facilities are initially determined incompatible within mapped crucial fish and wildlife areas. A specific proposal for a developed recreation facility may be considered for compatibility based on its design or on new habitat information.

NOTES

- Private patented tidelands exist in Steamboat Bay (cannery site). A floatplane dock and multipurpose dock are located in the bay. The old cannery in Steamboat Bay serves as a supplier to the fishermen. The owners have plans for providing guiding and outfitting services to tourists for wildlife viewing or recreation during other times of the year.

- One heritage site has been identified in this unit:
  AHRS CRG-128 Point Incarnation Village

TIMBER HARVEST INFORMATION

The USFS needs four log transfer sites on northern Noyes Island to provide access to timber on the uplands. It is estimated that 75 million board feet would be transferred at Ulitka Bay. An additional eight million board feet would be transferred at each of the two major drainages east of Ulitka Bay, within Section 10. Eight million board feet would be transferred at a log transfer site in Little Steamboat Bay.

FISH AND WILDLIFE INFORMATION

There are four anadromous fish stream outlets in this unit.

This unit includes a concentrated commercial geoduck resource offshore of Noyes Island (below mean low tide to beyond the 100 foot depth) from the east side of Steamboat Bay to Ulitka Point. The State of Alaska and other entities invested four years of survey effort and several thousand dollars into developing a commercial clam fishery. The area north of Noyes Island was considered the most productive place to initiate this commercial fishery. In 1982, ADF&G estimated 3.4 million clams were concentrated along the north shore between minus 18 feet and minus 60 feet. A conservative annual quota of 60,000 pounds harvested would provide approximately $18,000 to fishermen (based on estimated return of $.30 per pound) and approximately $42,000 - $18,000 to retail markets (based on test marketing prices from $.70 to $3.00 per pound). The management strategy for the fishery is extremely conservative because geoducks are long-lived and slow-growing. Thus removal of specific parts of the area from productivity or harvest would result in a reduced yield and permitted intensity of harvest for the fishery as a whole, possibly making the fishery uneconomic.

The north shore of Noyes Island is a continuation of the intensive seine and troll commercial salmon fishery in the Cape Addington unit. Ulitka Bay is an extremely important anchorage for the commercial fleet during the season. The Ulitka Bay anchorage is especially important as an emergency shelter for the commercial fleet during inclement weather. An average of 12 trollers anchor at Ulitka during the salmon troll season. At times as many as 50 vessels are anchored in Ulitka, depending on where the fish are. Those who cannot find space at Ulitka Bay go to Hole-in-the-Wall, which

is often full, or on to Steamboat Bay. There is no fish buyer at Ulitka Bay, but there are usually four to six packers for the seine fleet and one or two packers for the troll fleet. When the seine fleet anchors in Ulitka Bay, it generally displaces the trollers who move east to Little Steamboat or Steamboat Bay, or try to get into Hole-in-the-Wall.

Little Steamboat Bay is used mainly as an overflow for Ulitka and is also used by a small fleet of approximately 15 handtrollers who fish along the northern shore of Noyes Island. There is a buying station tied up to the dock at the old cannery at the head of Steamboat Bay. There may be three or four packers working the area. The anchorage at Steamboat can accommodate 50 boats or more. However, anchorage at Steamboat can be vert difficult during high winds.

The Department of Fish and Game records data based on Commercial Fishing Districts and Sub-districts. Although these geographic divisions do not directly coincide with the units of the planning area, some figures with interpretations can be applied. For example, the Department of Fish and Game indicates the purse seine fishery, currently the most important fishery in the Noyes Island vicinity, has at peak period involved 246 boats operating off the west coast of Noyes Island. Based on that number of boats, the Department estimates that approximately 1,300 seasonal purse seine fishing jobs are involved. This sub-district provides a major contribution to the fishing industry as indicated by the catch figures stated as percentages (purse seine-caught salmon) of the total Southeast Region: Chum - 7%; Red - 41%; Chinook/King - 25%; Pink - 10%; Silver/Coho - 21%. At peak period, an additional 57 purse seine boats have been recorded fishing along northern and eastern Noyes Island, northern and western Lulu Island, and northwestern San Fernando Island. No information is available to determine how many boats fish in more than one subdistrict. The ex-vessel value of salmon landed in 1982 for the two subdistricts surrounding Noyes Island and the subdistrict encompassing the outer coast of Baker Island amounted to $5.6 million for fishermen, an additional $11.2 million as first wholesale return to processors, and an additional $16.2 million return to the economy in retail (Multipliers were based on the Comprehensive Salmon Plan for Southeast Alaska, 1980.)

Northern Noyes and the passage between Noyes and Baker Island are primary migration routes for salmon bound for Prince of Wales Island streams. Another primary migration route exists along the west coast of Noyes Island for salmon bound for northern Southeast, other areas of southern Southeast, and Canada. Although the west coast fishery is a "mixed stock" fishery, 1982 studies of U.S. - Canada interceptions estimated that only 7 - 11% of the pink salmon harvest were Canada-bound fish, while 64 - 74% of the sockeye harvest were Canada-bound spawners. Interception studies also documented the timing of specific runs. If the U.S. agrees to limit interception rates of Canadian fish, fisheries management flexibility may be reduced to provide specific openings to intercept Alaska-bound fish. Activities which further interfere with limited fishing periods could severely reduce harvest opportunities.

Steamboat Bay is a very high density waterfowl and seabird concentration area on a seasonal basis. The Pt. Incarnation area is noted for its high concentration of abalone.