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PRESS RELEASE

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Timber harvest to limit public traffic on Vallenar Bay Road

(Ketchikan, AK) – The Alaska Division of Forestry will be imposing public vehicle restrictions on Vallenar Bay Road on Gravina Island near Ketchikan starting September 1.

The intermittent restrictions will be in effect during harvest operations over the next three years, and are intended to help ensure the safety of both the public and a contractor conducting timber harvests associated with the Vallenar Bay Good Neighbor Authority Timber Sale in the Tongass National Forest and Southeast State Forest, as well as a timber sale on University of Alaska lands on the north end of Gravina Island, said Greg Staunton, the division's Ketchikan Area forester.

The Vallenar Bay Road was built in 2016-18 to provide access for timber harvest and to accommodate coordinated commercial forest traffic. It is a one-lane road approximately eight miles long, beginning at the old sawmill area at the Gravina Island Industrial Complex. It has seen notable public use for remote recreation and deer hunting on Gravina Island, located across the Tongass Narrows from Ketchikan. The road system is accessed by the Ketchikan Airport ferry.

The road will be restricted to commercial and administrative traffic associated with timber harvest operations. The public is discouraged from using the road during periods of road construction, log hauling, cutting, or logging occurring on or near the road, to protect public safety, equipment and the value of the timber.

Restrictions will cover the entire road, although portions may be opened when the contractor, Alcan Timber Inc., is not operating. Pedestrian use of the road is not restricted.

The timber sale area includes approximately 481 acres in multiple units of young and old-growth timber on the north end of Gravina Island, approximately five miles west of the Ketchikan International Airport. The division is administering a portion of the sale under the Good Neighbor Authority for the U.S. Forest Service. Alcan Timber Inc. bought the timber offered in the sale in February 2019.

When hauling operations and road building are not occurring, access restrictions will be limited to protect only specific portions of the road. Specific sections of Vallenar Bay Road or spur roads connecting to it may be physically blocked to traffic with limited advance notice. Local businesses must coordinate with the division and Alcan Timber, Inc. before they use the road.

Signs conveying traffic restrictions will be posted at the start of Vallenar Bay Road and associated spur roads, and will indicate the citizens band radio channels the contractor is using to regulate traffic flow and communicate right-of-way on the road.

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