

STATE OF ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF FORESTRY

NORTHERN REGION DELTA AREA

FOREST LAND USE PLAN

PROPOSED TIMBER SALE

CLIFF HANGER
NC-1395-D ADL-418520

December 9, 2009

PUBLIC DRAFT REPORT

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INTRODUCTION: The purpose of this Forest Land Use Plan (FLUP) is to provide sufficient information for reviewers to ensure that the best interest of the State will be served by this proposed timber sale. Pursuant to AS 38.05.35(e) and AS 38.05., and the applicable regulations, the Delta Area Office of the Division of Forestry has made a Preliminary Finding and Decision to offer for sale approximately two hundred twenty thousand board feet of timber. The timber to be offered is located 28 air miles Southeast of Delta Junction and is 5 miles north of the Alcan Highway. The sale has one unit to be harvested having 25.6 acres. The sale is located in the NW¼SE¼, NE¼SW¼, SE¼NW¼ Section 7, Township 12 South, Range 15 East, Fairbanks Meridian, Alaska.

The public is invited to comment on any aspect of the proposed sale. A copy of the decision and Forest Land Use Plan for the proposed sale may be obtained by visiting the Delta Area Office at Milepost 267½ Richardson Highway from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, or on the Internet at <http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/forestry/timber/delta.htm> . Comments should be mailed to P.O. Box 1149, Delta Junction, Alaska 99737 or by email at steve.joslin@alaska.gov . For further information call the Delta Area Office at 895-4225.

Objections or comments pertaining to the above proposed action must be received in writing by the Delta Area Office before 4:30 PM on January 12, 2010 in order to ensure consideration. To be eligible to appeal decisions, a person must comment during the comment period.

If no adverse comments or comments requesting substantive change are received, the Preliminary Finding and Decision will be issued as a Final Finding and Decision on or after January 12, 2010. If adverse comments or comments requesting substantive change are received, the Final Finding and Decision, including any changes, will be issued on or after January 22, 2010, along with notification of appeal rights and procedures.

The State of Alaska complies with Title II of the American Disabilities Act of 1990. The State is prepared to accommodate individuals with disabilities by providing auxiliary aids when requested. Individuals with audio impairments who wish to respond to this proposed action by telephone may call the Northern Region Information Counter in Fairbanks between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday, at TTY (907) 451-2770.

1. **SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SALE:** This sale would harvest approximately 25.6 acres of white spruce sawtimber from Tanana Valley State Forest lands on the west side of the Tanana River located 0.3 miles east of the Cummings Road and 5 miles north of the Alcan Highway. There is existing access to the proposed sale that will be improved.
2. **LOCATION OF PROPOSED SALE:** The proposed sale is 28 air miles southeast of Delta Junction and is on the southwest side of the Tanana River. The sale is within Unit 10C of the Tanana Valley State Forest (TVSF).
3. **STATUTORY AUTHORITY:** This sale is proposed to be sold by authority of AS 38.05.035(e) (Best Interest Findings); AS 38.05.110-120 (Alaska Land Act Statutes); 11AAC 71 (Timber Sale Statutes and Regulations); AS 41.17.010-.950 and 11 AAC 95 (Forest Resources and Practices Statutes and Regulations). This sale was listed in two previous Five-Year Harvest Schedules for the Delta Area.

4. TITLE AND CLASSIFICATION: The acquisition authority for the proposed sale area is GS 809. The proposed sale is within Unit 10C of the TVSF. There are no title restrictions on the parcel. The primary land classification is Forestry in Unit 10C of the TVSF, per Classification Order NC-82-065. Management intent is more specifically addressed in the TVSF Management Plan (TVSFMP). The case file ADL 418520 and NC-1395-D constitute the administrative record for this proposed sale.
5. PLAN RESTRICTIONS ON FOREST MANAGEMENT: Proposed boundaries near the Tanana River will be required to comply with buffer restrictions specified in the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act.
6. SUSTAINED YIELD AND ALLOWABLE CUT: The Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act (AS 41.17.060 (c)) and Article VIII Sec. 4 of the State Constitution require that the State forest land be managed on a sustained yield basis. Sustained yield is defined in the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act (AS 41.17.950(25)): "Sustained Yield" means the achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high level annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of forest land and water without significant impairment of the productivity of the land and water, but does not require that timber be harvested in a non-declining yield basis over a rotation period.

The Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) is the amount that can be harvested from forest land managed for forestry purposes in a year under sustained yield management. The AAC in the Delta Area is based on a ten-year average as determined by the Parsons and Associates, Inc. report titled "Tanana State Forestry Lands Periodic Sustained Yield Analysis". This sale complies with sustained yield/allowable cut principles outlined in the Delta Area Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales for FY 2008-2012. The AAC for the Delta Management Area is approximately 5,092 acres. The AAC will not be exceeded for this proposed sale.
7. ESTIMATED VOLUME OF TIMBER IN PROSED SALE: The sale has an estimated volume of 220,000 board feet of white spruce sawtimber.
8. DESCRIPTION OF HARVEST UNIT DESIGN: The sale consists of one unit totaling approximately 25.6 acres. The boundary is located along naturally and man made vegetative type changes. Mature spruce trees will be left around the sale periphery to serve as future seed tree sources. The sale is designed to harvest all the spruce larger than 8 inches DBH. All other trees are to be protected.
9. BOROUGH LAND: The propose sale is not within a borough.
10. LEGAL DESCRIPTION: The sale is located in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 7, Township 12 South, Range 15 East, Fairbanks Meridian, Alaska.
11. USGS QUAD PROPOSED SALE IS LOCATED ON: Mt. Hayes D-2.
12. LIST NON-STATE LAND WITHIN 600' OF PROPOSED SALE: The proposed sale is within 600 feet of non-state land. The unit sale boundary is about 300 feet from agriculture Tract 12A as shown on the attached sale map. Tract 12A is generally 3 miles in length and 0.5 miles wide but it also has a 40 acre parcel that extends to the north near the sale area.

The sale boundary will be marked with pink "Timber Harvest Boundary" flagging and blue

tags. The land owner will be notified and provided a copy of this report and proposed sale map during the public review period and given an opportunity to comment.

13. PROPOSED SALE ACCESS ROUTES: The proposed sale is generally all-season accessible with existing access. The primary access route is Cummings Road which is subject to seasonal flooding from the Gerstle River. Flooding sometimes washes out the road and becomes impassable. Road repairs frequently are delayed until the water subsides. Repairs have been completed by a variety of users and agencies, including timber sale contractors.

The sale can be accessed starting at 5.0 mile on the Cummings Road, going east on a secondary section line easement road for 0.25 miles, and then north 0.25 miles onto a spur road along an east edge of Tract 12A and then northeast about 300 feet to the sale boundary. The spur access road is narrow and can become impassable to logging trucks due to wet weather, spring breakup and snow.

The existing spur road was constructed as a fire break in 1984 in response to a fire on Tract 12A. The spur was subsequently used in the 1990's to access a timber sale on the north side of the Tanana River during the winter. The spur road going to the sale will be widened and improved.

An all-season accessible spur road may be constructed in the sale unit to harvest the sale. The spur road location will be at the discretion of the purchaser subject to the approval of DOF (Division of Forestry).

14. ROAD CONSTRUCTION DESCRIPTION: The only new construction proposed for this sale is the potential all-season spur road within the sale boundary and shown on the attached sale map. The spur road within the sale will be constructed to the all-season spur road standard as described in Appendix F of the TVSFMP.

The spur road accessing the sale located on the east side of a 40 acre portion of Tract 12A will be widened and improved to a secondary all-season road standard as described in Appendix F of the TVSFMP. This road clearing width will be widened towards the east (away from Tract 12A), from approximately 25 feet to about 100 feet. DOF plans to move the road bed towards the east, away from the private property. Roads will be constructed by removing the trees, vegetative mat, and constructing the road using cuts and fills with earth-moving equipment. This road will be used to access additional timber sales in the future.

The timber sale contract may require some maintenance of existing roads such as: grading Cummings Road, brush removal along road edges, ditching or gravel placement in wet spots along the roads. If the Cummings Road washes out from flooding, the timber sale contractor will not be required to repair it.

The proposed access routes, other than Cummings Road, have little potential to erode due to the relatively level land. The access roads are not expected to have erosion that could not be mitigated and will be left open after the sale to facilitate additional forest management of the area. DOF will be responsible for erosion control after the sale is terminated. Erosion control does not include flood damage to Cummings Road from the Gerstle River.

15. TOPOGRAPHY AND SOILS: The proposed sale is on flat bench adjacent to the Tanana River. The soil in the proposed sale is sandy silt of 1-5 foot depth over gravel and sand.
16. WATER RESOURCES AND FISHERIES: Water bodies near the sale area include the Gerstle and Tanana Rivers. The Gerstle River has been flooding annually along Cummings Road and at times has crossed the road into the west edge of the 40 acre dog leg portion of Tract 12A located near the proposed sale. No flooding was noticed in the proposed sale boundary or along the access route, except for Cummings Road. The Gerstle River goes dry during the winter months in the vicinity of the sale starting in October or November until May. During the summer, the Gerstle is a navigable, glacial stream, and classified as a high value resident fish water body (Type III-B).

A historic high water side channel of the Tanana River is adjacent to the east boundary of the sale has infrequent flooding. The nearest active side channel of the Tanana River is 750 feet from the proposed sale. The Tanana is a navigable, glacial stream, and classified as an anadromous and high value resident fish water body (Type III-B). Salmon and other resident fish species migrate through the Tanana River. The river supports a variety of resident fish species including arctic grayling, northern pike, whitefish species and burbot.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Habitat (Habitat), conducted a site inspection of the historic high water side channel adjacent to the proposed sale on September 17, 2009. Habitat sent DOF a memo and photos of the inspection on September 18, 2009. The memo stated, "The channel was dry and contained an active ATV trail. Vegetation was tallest and denser at the upstream end of the channel, grading younger and less percent cover toward the downstream end. Terrestrial vegetation present in the channel included moss, horsetails, grasses, forbs including yarrow, balsam poplar, willows and spruce seedlings were growing in the channel. No flotsam was observed on the stems of the willows or balsam poplar. Based on these observations, it is my determination that the approximately 30 foot wide channel is not currently within the limits of ordinary high water and is therefore not subject to FRPA riparian standards." Based on these observations, there are no adverse effects anticipated upon the fishery from the proposed sale at this time.

17. WATERSHED MANAGEMENT: The proposed sale is not anticipated to alter the watershed.
18. WATER QUALITY: There are no foreseeable adverse effects on water quality.
19. RECREATION: Recreational use of this area is minimal. Trapping and hunting are the only current recreation activities in the area. Based on responses observed in nearby areas, the timber sale can be expected to increase density of young hardwood stems used as moose browse and increase woody and herbaceous cover beneficial to early-successional wildlife. The increased sunlight penetration onto the forest floor and soil disturbance should be beneficial to production of rose hip, high bush cranberry, and other fruit eaten by ruffed, spruce, and sharp-tailed grouse.

Trappers frequent timber harvest areas because of the improved access. Larry Dorshorst and Dean Cummings, Jr., trappers with 30 years of local experience, report that about three years after an area is harvested, there is an increase in the vole population that provides more food for furbearers such as marten, fox and mink to feed on.

20. CULTURAL RESOURCES: There are no known cultural, historic or prehistoric sites in the sale. If any additional historic or archaeological sites are encountered, DOF will immediately inform the State Historic Preservation Officer and take action to protect the findings.
21. SUBSURFACE RESOURCES: There are no known subsurface resources in the sale area.
22. WILDLIFE: Most common species of wildlife that are normally found in interior Alaska forests inhabit the area. There are no known critical or important wildlife areas in or near the proposed sale or access routes. There is no harvest planned for any of the deciduous trees on the sale. All the mature balsam poplar trees will be protected for cavity nesting birds. Timber sale operators will be encouraged but not required to leave dead standing white spruce for cavity nesting birds.

The timber sale harvest will afford more sunlight to the forest floor and will increase the production of browse species for moose. The increase in sunlight will also enhance the production of a variety of berries and seeds eaten by grouse and other animals.

23. USES OF FISH AND WILDLIFE: Trappers and moose hunters have used the proposed sale area. There is no known subsistence, recreational or commercial fishing in or near the sale area.
24. PERSONAL USE TIMBER: Personal use of timber will be allowed in the units after the close of the sale.
25. TOURISM: There is no known tourism in the proposed sale area.
26. ADJACENT LAND USES: There are no other known adjacent land uses in or near the proposed sale except for the private land noted in item 12 above.
27. AGRICULTURE: Agriculture tract 12A is adjacent to the proposed sale and shown on the attached maps. There is currently no known farming operations on the Tract and it is heavily overgrown with brush and trees. Very limited farming is occurring on the surrounding agriculture tracts.
28. TIMBER STAND COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE: The unit is predominantly comprised of mature white spruce sawtimber. There is approximately 10-20% mixed species of aspen, birch, balsam poplar and black spruce in the unit.
29. STAND SILVICULTURE: The Delta Area goal for regenerating harvest areas that were predominantly mature white spruce is to establish a mixed species forest of hardwoods and white spruce, with white spruce being the predominate species. Old stands are to be rejuvenated to a fully stocked mixed stand of young healthy trees while retaining some residual trees resulting from partial harvest. Young forests provide future crop trees and food for wildlife. Residual trees provide seed sources, nesting sites, and other benefits which are explained in the paragraph below.

A combination of environmental and economic factors has influenced the Delta Area to favor moderate to heavy partial harvests in combination with natural seeding. Partial harvests result in a wide range of the number of sapling to pole-sized trees per acre. The average harvest area has about 20 saplings and pole-sized mixed species trees left per acre. Some acres

have no trees left and other sites have up to 100 saplings and pole-sized trees per acre left after harvest. The strong winds in the Delta Area combined with summer drought which typically occurs during the summer solstice period, cause a very high mortality of white spruce seedlings that germinated in May or early June. Partial harvesting allows some shading during the 20+ hour sunlight period and slows wind velocities to moderate the effect of desiccation of germinates and increases their survival rate.

This sale area will be partially harvested. The sale will allow the contractor to harvest spruce over 8 inches DBH. The mature sized balsam poplars will be protected from damage during the harvest to serve as cavity nesting trees and woody debris in the future. Mature white spruce will be left around the perimeters of the harvest units to provide seed sources for regeneration. Portions of the sale may be scarified to aid in warming the soil and improving regeneration of white spruce. Scarification can also improve the regeneration of woody shrubs and deciduous trees for wildlife browse and cover. The forester will make a final determination for the need to scarify any particular area within the sale after the harvest is completed. Any areas that are expected to be deficient in meeting the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act standard of 450 trees established by the 7th year will be planted with white spruce seedlings.

Sale areas with partial harvests are anticipated to have intermediate harvests of the residual white spruce pole timber. Intermediate harvests have occurred between 20 to 50 years after the initial harvest. Intermediate harvests provide opportunities to regenerate vegetation that is important to wildlife and will warm the soil to improve forest health.

30. SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR THE PROPOSED SALE AREA:

1. Harvest the commercial sawtimber before any significant loss occurs.
2. Return the site to a young productive mixed stand forest to include balsam poplar, birch, aspen, and white spruce.
3. Provide timber products for the industry and the State and local economy.

31. ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

There are four possible alternatives to consider for this sale area. A discussion of each of the four alternatives follows:

A. To continue the sale as proposed:

This alternate meets the objectives of DNR's constitutional mandate and is consistent with the land classification. Additional employment opportunities will occur associated with harvest operations, saw milling and value-added processing.

B. To modify the sale by making it smaller or larger:

The estimated volume and acreage of timber to be harvested as stated in this Forest Land Use Plan (FLUP) is designed to accommodate the existing and future markets in the vicinity of Delta Junction. The sale is of an adequate size to cover the costs to mobilize, access and harvest the sale. The sale boundaries are located in a manner to

minimize the potential for wind-throw and meet the silvicultural objectives. Moving the boundaries inward would increase the risk of wind-throw to mature white spruce. Decreasing the size of the sale would make the sale less feasible to the State and the Purchaser.

C. Defer the sale to a later date:

Deferring harvest to a later date would fail to meet many of the objectives of the sale. In addition to the economic loss to the State and the local timber industry, there would be an extended risk to the timber in the sale from wildfire, insect infestations, windthrow and other natural processes associated with over-mature timber. The value of the timber will decline within the next 15 years for both the industry and the State.

D. Not offer this sale:

This alternative would result in not meeting any of the objectives outlined for this management action. Utilization of the forest resource would not be achieved. There would be no contribution to the State and local economies.

PRELIMINARY FINDING AND DECISION

The purpose of this decision is to determine if the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry, will make available timber located in the proposed "Cliff Hanger" timber sale. After due consideration of all pertinent information and alternatives, the DNR has reached the following **Preliminary Decision: To offer the sale as propose in Alternative 1.** In addition, the DNR finds that this preliminary decision satisfies the objectives as stated in this document and it is in the best interest of the State to proceed with this action.

Signature on File



Al Edgren

Delta Area Forester

December 8, 2009

12-8-09
Date