



File Code: 1950
Date: January 6,
2015

Dear Interested Party:

This letter is to introduce you to a proposed permitted commercial activity on National Forest lands anticipated to begin in May 2015, with the potential to be renewed annually.

The Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, Sitka Ranger District, is conducting an analysis for the proposal to authorize the commercial collection of spruce tips for use by the Baranof Island Brewery Company (BIBCO).

I am requesting your comments on the proposed special forest products authorization and potential for this project to affect historic, religious, and culturally significant properties, as well as personal, recreational, and other commercial interests. This letter is to inform you about the project and to request your comments on the proposed actions as part of the scoping as described in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation process.

As part of the analysis, the Sitka Ranger District will review potential effects of the proposed action on the, cultural, ecological, recreational, and natural resource use within the project area. The analysis will be completed in an Environmental Analysis (EA), with a proposed completion date and decision memo signed by May 1, 2015.

Project Location

Harvest of spruce tips would be permitted in all available areas of the Sitka Ranger District except for administratively closed areas. Administratively closed areas on the Sitka Ranger District include wilderness areas, research natural areas, developed recreation sites (cabins and trails), wild and scenic river corridors, and developed recreation areas (Starrigavan and Harbor Mountain).

Proposed Action

The Sitka Ranger District is proposing to authorize the Baranof Island Brewing Company an initial commercial harvest of 2,000 pounds of spruce tips, with the potential to increase harvest to up to 10,000 pounds, on Forest Service managed lands. An annual review will be completed to assess the effects of the harvest on tree growth, aesthetics, and access via roads and trails. The authorization would be permitted under the management of a specific Special Forest Products permit. Harvest of spruce tips would include only the new growth of spruce branches and harvesting which typically occurs in April or May. Harvesting on National Forest system lands may be done by employees of BIBCO or members of the public authorized by BIBCO under special provisions of this permit. Permitted harvest activities would be monitored annually either



during or after the harvest season by the Forest Service. Permitted activities may be subject to changes each year depending on the findings of the monitoring.

Purpose and Need

The Forest Service has received a proposal by the BIBCO to authorize the commercial harvest of between 2,000 and 10,000 pounds of spruce tips from National Forest System lands. The Forest Service is authorized to allow the commercial harvest of special forest products per 36 CFR 223.1.

Public Participation

The Baranof Island Brewing Company Spruce Tips Special Forest Products Permit project will be listed in the Schedule of Proposed Activities (SOPA) beginning January 1, 2015. An Environmental Assessment will be prepared to analyze and disclose effects of this proposal. Your comments will be considered during the analysis. A decision, as a result of the analysis, will be made by the Responsible Official which will be me, Sitka District Ranger.

The Baranof Island Brewing Company EA and draft decision will be completed and mailed to those who have submitted comments, and to those who have requested to be included on the project mailing list. A copy of the completed environmental analysis and the draft decision is planned to be mailed in May 2015. Regular updates to the project, including scoping letters, draft the EA, and draft decisions, can be found at

http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=45851.

The project implements land management plans and is not authorized under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act and is subject to 36 CFR 218.7 parts (a) and (b). Instead of an appeal period, there will be an objection process before the final decision is made and after the final environmental analysis document and draft decision are mailed (reference 36 CFR 218). In order to be eligible to file an objection, specific written comments related to the project must be submitted during scoping or any other public comment period that is specifically requested on this EA (218.5). Individual members of organizations must have submitted their own comments to meet the requirements of eligibility as an individual. Objections received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only. Names and addresses of those who comment and/or file objections will become part of the public record.

For more information on how the objection process works for projects and activities implementing land and resource management plans and the requirements, you may read the regulations under 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B on the National Forest Service web site at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-03-27/pdf/2013-06857.pdf>.

At this time, we would like your input based on the Proposed Action. Your comments should be received by February 1, 2015. Comments and requests can be mailed to the above address to Aaron Prussian, Natural Resources Specialist (907) 747-4217, or Thomas Witherspoon, Silviculturist (907) 747-4213, or can be emailed to FS-comments-alaska-tongass-sitka@fs.fed.us with Spruce Tip EA in the subject line. We look forward to your input.

Sincerely,

J. PERRY EDWARDS



Sitka District Ranger



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