

Chapter 1

Purpose and Need

Chapter 1

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Chapter 1

Purpose and Need

Introduction

The Central Kupreanof Timber Harvest project area is located on the western portion of Kupreanof Island, on the Petersburg Ranger District of the Tongass National Forest, Alaska Region (Region 10) of the Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (see Vicinity Map, Figure 1-1).

This chapter discusses the background of the Central Kupreanof Timber Harvest. The actions analyzed in this FEIS are designed to implement the direction contained in the 2008 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). It includes the steps taken to identify environmental issues and public concerns related to implementation of the project.

Document Structure

The Forest Service has prepared this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. This Environmental Impact Statement discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts that would result from the proposed action and alternatives. The document is organized into four chapters:

Chapter 1. Purpose and Need: The chapter includes information on the history of the project proposal, the purpose of and need for the project, and the agency's proposal for achieving that purpose and need. This section also details how the Forest Service informed the public of the proposal and how the public responded.

Chapter 2. Alternatives: This chapter provides a more detailed description of the agency's proposed action as well as alternative methods for achieving the stated purpose. These alternatives were developed based on significant issues raised by the public and other agencies. This discussion also includes mitigation measures. Finally,

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this chapter provides a summary table of the environmental consequences associated with each alternative.

Chapter 3. Affected Environment and Environmental Effects: This chapter describes the environmental effects of implementing the proposed action and other alternatives.

Chapter 4. References and Lists: This chapter provides a glossary, references, a list of preparers consulted during the development of the environmental impact statement, a list of FEIS recipients and an index that provides page numbers by document topic.

Appendices: The appendices provide more detailed information to support the analyses presented in the environmental impact statement.

Additional documentation, including more detailed analyses of project-area resources, may be found in the project record located at the Petersburg Ranger District.

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The purpose and need for the proposed action responds to the goals and objectives identified by the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan, and helps move the area toward the desired conditions as described in the Forest Plan. The Forest Supervisor is the Responsible Official for this action and will decide whether or not to harvest timber from the Central Kupreanof Timber Harvest area, and if so, how this timber will be harvested. The decision will be based on the information that is disclosed in the environmental impact statement. The Responsible Official will consider comments, responses, the disclosure of environmental consequences, and applicable laws, regulations, and policies in making the decision and will state that rationale in the Record of Decision.

Proposed Action (Alternative 2)

The proposed action, as published in the Federal Register, provides for multiple timber sale opportunities and would result in the production of approximately 40 million board feet (MMBF) of timber from approximately 2,025 acres of forested land. Up to 11.1 miles of National Forest System (NFS) roads and 7.0 miles of temporary roads may be necessary for timber harvest. Through two field seasons and the interdisciplinary process, the proposed action has been adjusted to respond to on the ground conditions and resource concerns while remaining within the scope of the original proposed action. The Proposed Action for this project still provides for multiple timber sale

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opportunities and will result in the production of approximately 46.8 MMBF (about 39.4 MMBF of sawlog and 7.4 MMBF of utility) from 2,506 acres of forested land. Up to 7.3 miles of new NFS and up to 3.9 miles of temporary road would be constructed for timber harvest. A range of alternatives, responsive to significant issues, has been developed and includes a no action alternative.

The interdisciplinary team has identified several projects within the project area that could serve as stewardship opportunities along side the timber harvest proposal. These projects consist of:

- Recreation- maintain hiking trails in the area and perform annual cabin maintenance for the cabin located in Big John Bay.
- Silviculture and Wildlife- precommercially thin 325 acres of second growth.
- Transportation- perform maintenance on 94 miles of open road. Maintenance would include blading, brushing, and clearing culverts.
- Fisheries/Hydrology- any fisheries or hydrology projects are tied to the analysis and decisions to be made with the PRD ATM EA.
- Invasive Plants- handpulling a small population of spotted knapweed, with the possible inclusion of other weed populations if they were discovered.
- Microsales- timber sales consisting of dead or down timber which has been proposed by a prospective purchaser, and the District Ranger agrees to offer for bidding using an informal advertisement and short bid form. The maximum size of a Microsale would be 50 MBF.

These projects will be analyzed as common to all action alternatives. A complete description of the projects can be found in Chapter 2 (pages 7 and 8), and map of these projects is also provided in Chapter 2 (Figure 2-5).

The Purpose of the Central Kupreanof Timber Harvest project is to:

- Manage the timber resource for production of sawtimber and other wood products from suitable lands made available for timber harvest on an even-flow, long-term sustained yield basis, and in an economically efficient manner.

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- Seek to provide a timber supply sufficient to meet the annual market demand for Tongass National Forest timber and the market demand for the planning cycle.
- Provide for a diversity of opportunities for resource uses that contribute to the local and regional economies of Southeast Alaska.

Appendix A of this document provides information on how this project relates to the overall Tongass National Forest timber sale program, and why the project is being scheduled at this time.

The Decision Making Process

National Forest planning takes place at several levels. Decision-making begins with long-range planning at the national level, continuing down through the regional and forest levels to the project level. The Central Kupreanof project is part of this hierarchical planning process. This EIS is a project-level analysis; its scope is confined to issues associated with the Central Kupreanof project area. This EIS does not attempt to address decisions made at higher levels. It does, however, implement direction provided at those higher levels.

Decisions to be Made

Based on the environmental analysis in this EIS, the Forest Supervisor will decide whether and how to implement activities within the Central Kupreanof Project Area in accordance with Forest Plan goals, objectives, and desired conditions. The decision may include the following:

- The location, amount, and method of timber harvest, road construction, marine access facilities, and silvicultural practices.
- Road management objectives for constructed, reconstructed and existing roads associated with the timber sale.
- Any necessary project-specific mitigation design, mitigation measures and monitoring requirements.
- Whether to implement the Projects Common to all Action Alternatives, including a Microsale program along existing NFS Roads 6030, 6040, 6314, 6314S, 6326, 6328, 6334, 6336, 6339, and 6367.

- A determination of whether there may be a possibility of a significant change in subsistence uses and access.

Description of the Project Area

Central Kupreanof is located on the Petersburg Ranger District of the Tongass National Forest. The project area is on Kupreanof Island, approximately 30 air miles northwest of Petersburg. The northern end of the project area begins about 9 miles southeast of the Community of Kake and will utilize the Kake road system. It includes approximately 152,517 acres, and its boundaries follow the boundary of value comparison units (VCUs) 429, 438, 426, 436, and 427.1.

The project area contains portions of the Castle, Rocky Pass, North Kupreanof, and South Kupreanof Inventoried Roadless Areas. Approximately 123,297 acres of inventoried roadless area are included within the project area boundary.

Past, Recent, Current and Future Management Activities in the Central Kupreanof Area

Listed below is a short summary of past, current and future management activities within, or adjacent to, the Central Kupreanof project area. For a complete listing of all projects up to the summer of 2009 see Appendix C in this document.

Past Management Activities

Managed Stands

Timber harvest has previously occurred on about 4,615 acres within the project area. Harvest in the area began in 1967. The most recent timber harvest took place in 2002.

Road Management

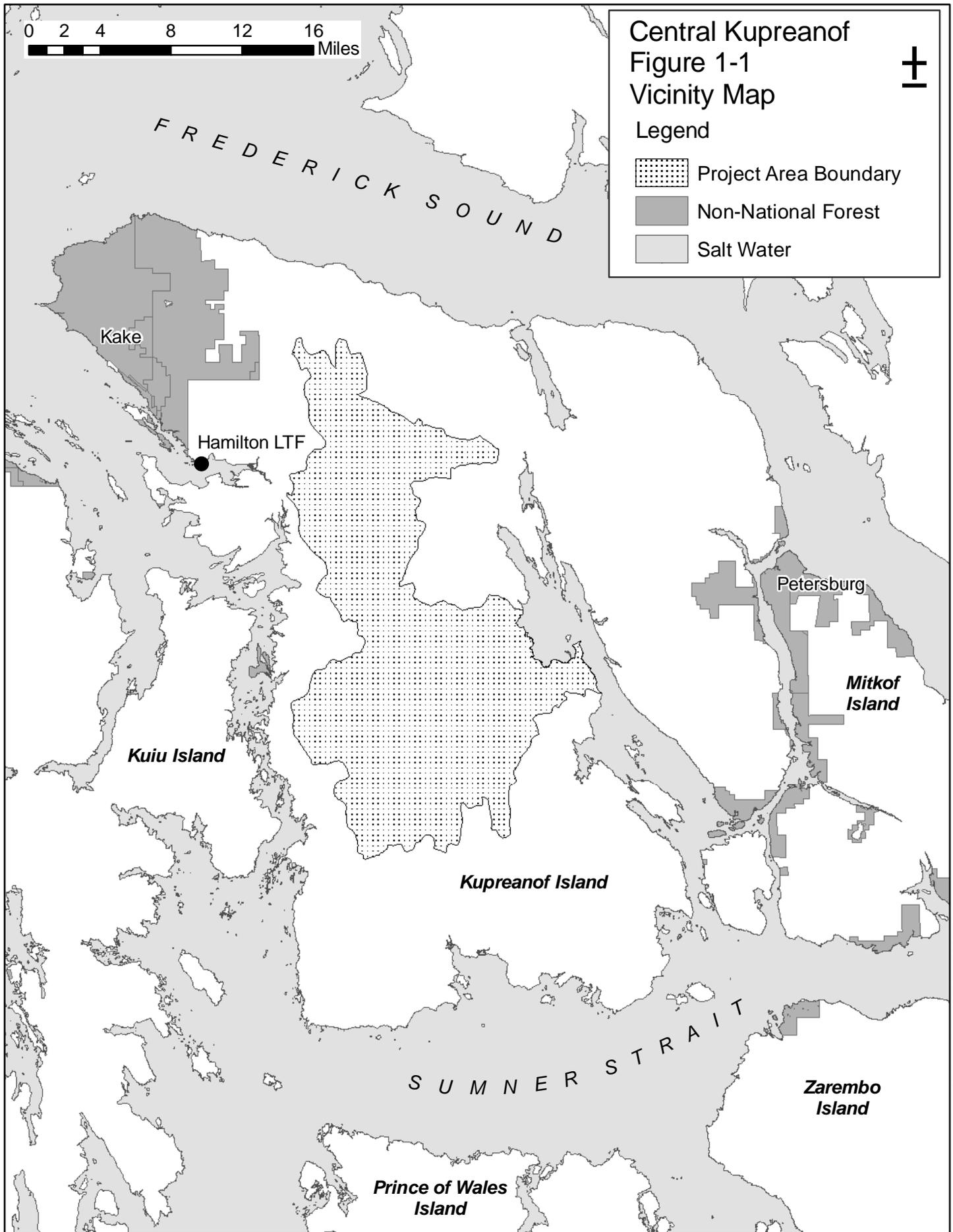
There are approximately 79 miles of existing road in the project area. Currently 64 miles of road are open to motorized vehicles. Road maintenance and use of existing rock sources are ongoing.

Fishpasses

The Upper Keku fishpass is within the project area. This structure was completed in 1985 to provide fish passage for Steelhead trout and Coho salmon. The Keku fishpass is upstream from the Irish Creek fish pass.

Thinning

As of the summer of 2009 there have been 1,110 acres of precommercial thinning completed within the project area.



Recent and Current Management Activities

The Kupreanof Island Analysis (September 2000) looked at current conditions on Kupreanof Island, effects of management activities island-wide, future desired conditions and possible future projects.

On the Lindenburg Peninsula of Kupreanof Island, timber harvest activities have been taking place since 1997. The remaining units in the South Lindenburg and Finger Point Timber Sales were harvested beginning in the summer of 2006 and continued through the summer of 2008. The Tonka Timber Sale is currently in the planning process with a DEIS scheduled to be published in the fall of 2009. The road system for this area does not connect to the proposed project area.

In October of 2006, the Scott Peak Project Area Record of Decision approved the harvest of approximately 8.3 million board feet (MMBF). Located in the northeast corner of Kupreanof Island, on the opposite side of Duncan Canal, the road system for this area does not connect to the proposed project area.

In the foreseeable future, there may be harvest of remaining timber units from the Bohemia and Todahl Backline sales. These units are also located in the northeast corner of Kupreanof Island, west of Portage Bay.

Petersburg Ranger District ATM EA

The Central Kupreanof Timber Harvest EIS and the Petersburg Ranger District Access and Travel Management Plan Environmental Assessment (PRD ATM EA) have been analyzed concurrently since 2006. The public scoping comments for both projects have been considered in the analysis for both projects. The Petersburg Ranger District ATM project considers the access management objectives for the existing National Forest System (NFS) roads for the entire Petersburg Ranger District. The Central Kupreanof project considers the road management recommendations for the existing National Forest System roads and proposed NFS roads, needed to access timber for the Central Kupreanof project area, as described in Chapter 3. The Central Kupreanof project also analyzes the temporary roads needed for timber access.

The Central Kupreanof project is not dependent on the outcome of the decision for the PRD ATM EA. Currently the road management objectives for the existing NFS roads within the Central Kupreanof project area are the same for both projects, and have been analyzed that way.

A decision for the Central Kupreanof project is expected to occur prior to the decision on the PRD ATM EA. If so, the decision on the road management objectives for the existing roads will be incorporated into the decision for the PRD ATM EA. If the decision for the Central

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Kupreanof project happens to occur after the decision for the PRD ATM, then the decision on the existing NFS roads within the Central Kupreanof project area will incorporate the decision for the PRD ATM.

Future Management Activities

The Forest Plan identified two potential power transmission corridors that would link the city of Kake to the Tyee transmission line that currently serves Petersburg and Wrangell. The Kake – Petersburg Intertie Study (KPTL) Final Report, which was prepared for the Southeast Conference, was completed in July 2005.

There are two to three small timber sales associated with the 6367 Small Timber Sale CE, consisting of approximately 60 total acres of partial harvest on Forest System lands, just north of the project area. This will likely occur in 2008 through 2010. Microsales may occur in the project area or adjacent to the project area on Forest System lands. There are units in this area that will be suitable for pre-commercial thinning in the future. Nothing specific is planned at this time. Other than the proposed project, there are no ongoing or planned large scale timber sales within the Central Kupreanof project area at this time. Road maintenance within the project area is ongoing.

The Federal Highway Kake to Seal Point Access Project is ongoing with field investigation to support bridge replacements and road construction. There was an Environmental Assessment completed for this project in August of 2002.

Relationship to the Forest Plan

Chapter 2 of the Forest Plan discusses the Forest-wide multiple use goals and objectives for the Tongass National Forest. The concept of multiple use is applied at the Forest level. Not every acre or every management prescription will achieve all goals for all resources. The goals are reached at the Forest level by providing a mosaic of land and resource conditions based on the 19 Land Use Designations described in Chapter 3 of the Forest Plan. Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan contains the Standards and Guidelines that guide the protection or management of each resource. Standards and Guidelines were designed so that all activities are integrated to meet land allocation objectives.

Many of the Standards and Guidelines applicable to the activities proposed in the Central Kupreanof Project Area are listed under “Design Criteria” in Chapter 2 of this EIS, and on the Unit and Road Cards in Appendix B.

Forest Plan Land Use Designations (LUDs)

The Forest Plan provides land and resource management direction for the Tongass National Forest, by designating areas appropriate for various activities through the use of Land Use Designations (LUDs), seven of which occur in this project area.

Each LUD provides for a unique combination of activities, practices, and uses. Areas of the Forest are allocated to land use designations for different uses. Each LUD has a management prescription. Each prescription includes goals, objectives, and a desired condition, as well as management practices, and Standards and Guidelines by resource. A brief description of the primary focus of each LUD as it relates to the Central Kupreanof project is listed below. Each LUD provides for a variety of resource uses to varying degrees. Each management prescription is much more complex and the full description of these management prescriptions are in the Forest Plan, Chapter 3.

The amended Forest Plan improves the network of small Old-growth Reserves (OGRs) through work completed by an interagency team. Biologists from the State of Alaska, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Forest Service reviewed nearly 300 small Old-growth Reserves identified in the 1997 Forest Plan and recommended reconfigurations for many of them. The amended Forest Plan finalized the location of the majority of the small OGRs; therefore, project-level reviews are not necessary, except as outlined in the Forest plan, Appendix K. No additional review was necessary for the small Old-growth Reserves within the Central Kupreanof project area.

The Central Kupreanof Project Area includes seven of these land use designations - Timber Production, Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation, Modified Landscape, Special Interest Area, Remote Recreation and Wilderness. The locations of each land use designation on Kupreanof Island, including the Central Kupreanof Project Area, are shown on Figure 1-2.

Timber Production LUD

The Timber Production LUD makes up approximately 72% of the National Forest System lands in the project area. The focus of the Timber Production LUD is to emphasize sustained, long-term timber production. Timber harvest activities are located and designed to meet timber objectives. See pages 3-116 through 3-121 of the Forest Plan for an expanded description of this LUD.

Old-growth Habitat LUD

Approximately 12% of the National Forest System lands in the project area are allocated to the Old-growth Habitat LUD (Table 1-1) in the Forest Plan. The focus of this LUD as related to the Central Kupreanof project is to maintain areas of old-growth forests and their associated natural ecological processes to provide habitat for old-

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growth associated resources. See pages 3-57 through 3-62 of the Forest Plan for an expanded description of this LUD.

Semi-remote Recreation LUD

Approximately 10% of the National Forest System lands in the project area are allocated to the Semi-remote-Recreation (Table 1-1) in the Forest Plan. The goal of this LUD is to provide natural or natural-appearing setting for semi-primitive types of recreation and tourism. See pages 3-63 through 3-68 in the Forest Plan for an expanded description of this LUD.

Modified Landscape LUD

Approximately 5% of the National Forest System lands in the project area are allocated to the Modified Landscape LUD (Table 1-1) in the Forest Plan. Management within this LUD focuses on sustained, long-term timber production while minimizing the visibility of development in the foreground distance zone. This recognizes the scenic values of forested lands as viewed from identified Visual Priority Travel Routes and Use Areas (Forest Plan, Appendix F) and provides for modifying timber harvest practices accordingly by reducing the effects to scenery. See pages 3-109 through 3-115 in the Forest Plan for an expanded description of this LUD.

Remote Recreation LUD

Less than 1% of the National Forest System lands in the project area are allocated to the Remote Recreation LUD. This LUD is managed to provide extensive, unmodified natural setting for recreation and tourism. See pages 3-45 through 3-50 in the Forest Plan for an expanded description of this LUD.

Special Interest Area

Less than 1% of the National Forest System lands in the project area are allocated to the Special Interest Area LUD. The Hamilton River Red Cedar Special Use area is the only special use area in this project and provides the people of Kake a place to harvest redcedar for cultural use. See pages 3-40 through 3-44 in the Forest Plan for an expanded description of this LUD.

Wilderness

Less than 1% of the National Forest System lands in the project area are allocated to the Wilderness LUD. Wilderness LUDs are managed to ensure that Wilderness ecosystems are mostly free of the effects of civilization. See pages 3-7 through 3-25 in the Forest Plan for an expanded description of this LUD.

Table 1-1. Forest Plan Land Use Designations within the Central Kupreanof Project Area¹		
Land Use Designation	Kupreanof Island	Central Kupreanof Project Area
Non-development LUDs²		
Special Interest Area (Hamilton River Red Cedar Area)	84 acres	84 acres
Remote Recreation	18,943 acres	24 acres
Old-growth Habitat	102,341 acres	18,990 acres
Semi-remote Recreation	84,430 acres	16,116 acres
Wilderness	44,000	12 acres
Total acres	249,798 acres	35,226 acres
Development LUDs		
Modified Landscape	48,880 acres	7,666 acres
Timber Production	307,648 acres	109,601 acres
Total acres	356,528 acres	117,267 acres
Non-National Forest System Land	58,470 acres	0 acres

¹Total LUD acres vary from total project area acres due to slivers.

²Non-development LUDs generally do not permit timber harvest or road construction. Development LUDs allow these activities under certain conditions.

Timber Sale Program Adaptive Management Strategy

In an effort to balance competing demands for timber production and preservation of undeveloped areas, the Timber Sale Program Adaptive Management Strategy was approved in the Record of Decision for the 2008 Forest Plan. Under this strategy, the operation of the timber sale program will be implemented in three phases, as determined by actual timber harvest levels.

Phase 1

Phase 1 includes most of the roaded portion of the suitable land base, along with most of the lower value inventoried roadless areas. The moderate and higher value roadless areas are excluded. The Phase 1 portion of the land base could sustain a level of timber harvest of about

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150 MMBF. The scheduled timber sale program will generally be confined to this land base until such time as the level of timber harvest reaches at least 100 MMBF for two consecutive years. Personal use of timber, Microsales, salvage sales, small commercial timber sales generally less than one MMBF, young-growth management projects, and the roads associated with these activities, would be allowed in development LUDs outside of the Phase 1 portion of the suitable land base.

The Central Kupreanof project area is contained entirely within suitable lands identified as Phase 1.

Phase 2

Phase 2 includes Phase 1 lands as explained above and most of the moderate value roadless areas. The Phase 2 portion of the suitable land base could sustain a level of timber harvest of about 200 MMBF. The scheduled timber sale program will generally be confined to this land base until such time as the level of timber harvest reaches at least 150 MMBF for two consecutive years. Personal use of timber, micro sales, salvage sales, small commercial timber sales generally less than one MMBF, young-growth management projects, and the roads associated with these activities, would be allowed in development LUDs outside of the Phase 2 portion of the suitable land base.

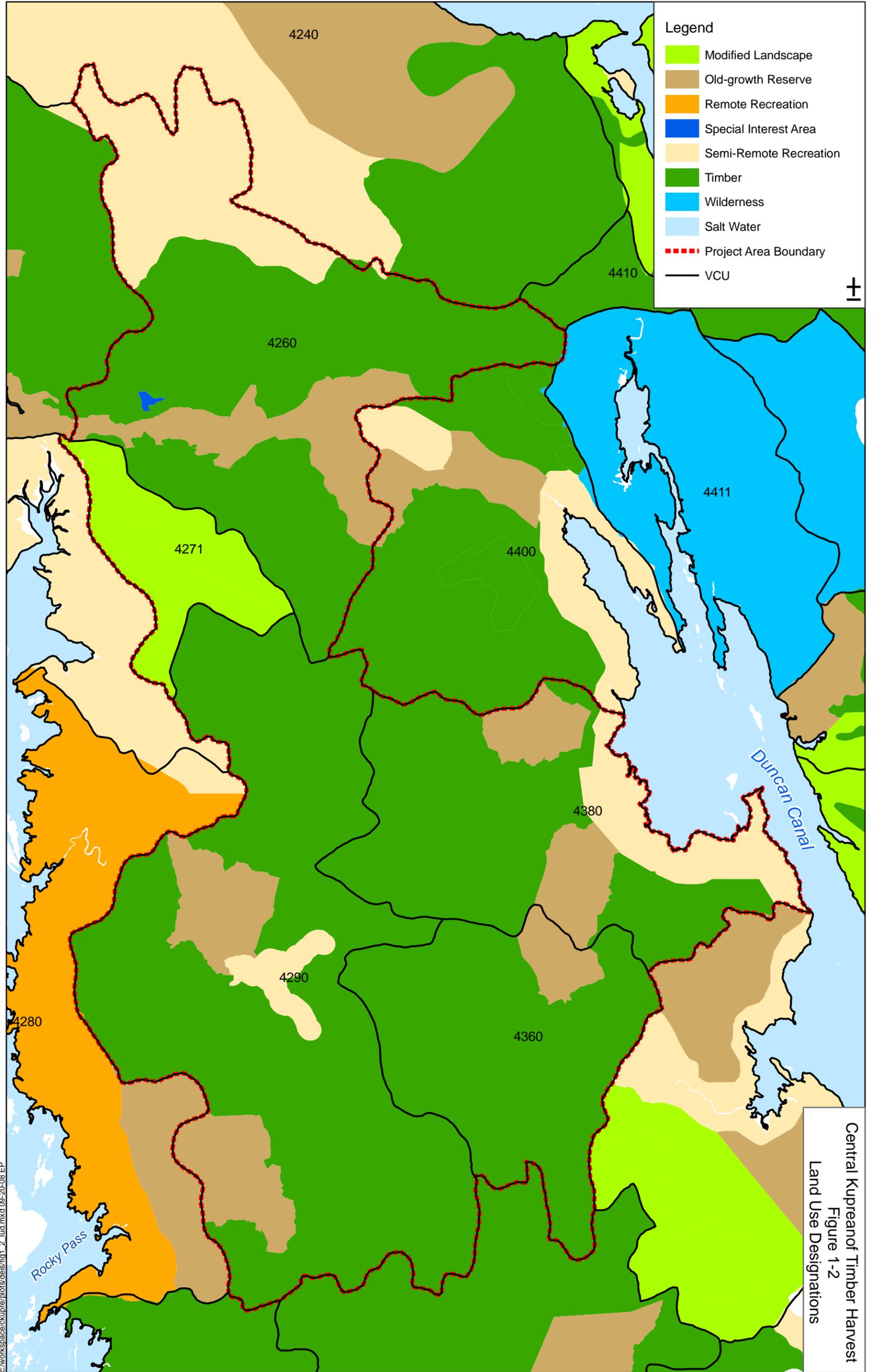
Phase 3

Phase 3 includes the remaining suitable land base including all of the Phase 1 and 2 lands and the higher value Inventoried Roadless Areas within development LUDs.

2008 Forest Plan

The 2008 Forest Plan improves the network of small old-growth reserves through work completed by an interagency team. Biologists from the State of Alaska, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the Forest Service reviewed nearly 300 small old-growth reserves identified in the 1997 Forest Plan and recommended reconfiguration for many of them. The amended Forest Plan finalized the location of the majority of the small OGRs. No review is necessary for the small old-growth reserves within the Central Kupreanof project area.

The 2008 Forest Plan approved expansion of Geologic Special Interest Areas to protect nearly 47,000 acres of newly identified karst lands that are most vulnerable to disturbance from development. No Geological Special Interest Areas were identified in the Central Kupreanof project area.



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Central Kupreanof Timber Harvest
Figure 1-2
Land Use Designations

Public Involvement

Public involvement is a key component of the planning process. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) defines scoping as “an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action” (40 CFR 1501.7). Among other things, the scoping process is used to invite public participation, to help identify public issues, and to obtain public comment at various stages of the environmental analysis process. Scoping begins early and is a process that continues until a decision is made. Comments received at other levels of the planning process, such as for the Forest Plan and the landscape level analysis, were also considered. The following paragraphs describe the public involvement activities that have occurred for the Project Area analysis.

Public Mailing

Public scoping began in October 2006, and was repeated in January of 2008. Each time a newsletter identifying the Project Area and requesting information on site-specific concerns was mailed to approximately 260 people and agencies who: requested to be on the project mailing list, previously expressed interest in timber sale proposals, and either own property or conduct business near the Project Area, and local, state and federal agencies and federally recognized tribal governments.

The project mailing list is frequently updated to accommodate requests for additions, deletions, and address changes.

The Forest Service received 35 comments in response to these mailings. While some comments supported the proposed timber sale, most expressed concerns about additional road construction, uneconomic timber harvest, disturbance to wildlife, access to subsistence activities, clearcutting as a harvest method, and the cumulative effects of additional harvest on previously harvested watersheds.

Open Houses

Open houses that included information about the Central Kupreanof Timber Harvest project were held on May 5, 2008 in Petersburg and July 7, 2008 in Kake. The open house, in Petersburg was advertised in the *Petersburg Pilot*, the local weekly newspaper in Petersburg, and on *KFSK Public Radio* in Petersburg. Flyers were posted on bulletin boards throughout Petersburg. The open house in Kake was also advertised by flyers posted in Kake as well as announcements broadcasted across the local CB channel.

Notice of Intent

A Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement was published in the *Federal Register* on December 27, 2006.

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The Draft to Final EIS- Comments and Availability

After the Draft EIS was made available to the public, the Environmental Protection Agency published the Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS in the *Federal Register* on December 19, 2008. Notices were also published in the *Ketchikan Daily News* on December 23, 2008, and in the *Petersburg Pilot* on December 25, 2008. The 45 day public comment period for the Draft EIS ended on February 2, 2009. A total of 13 comments to the DEIS were received. Central concerns included stream crossings, the wildlife habitat analysis, market demand, range of alternatives and silvicultural prescriptions and practices.

Following the public comment period for the Draft EIS, the comments received were reviewed and included in the analysis for the Final EIS. Comment letters and comment responses are located in Appendix D of this document.

Consultation

The Forest Service is committed to working closely with other agencies at all stages of planning. The agency is responsible for coordinating reviews of the project by several other agencies. In some cases, the reviews are required because another agency has authority to issue permits for certain proposed activities. In other cases, the reviews allow interaction with other agencies with responsibilities for certain environmental conditions, like clean water or healthy wildlife populations. This interagency cooperation helps identify the means to avoid or mitigate possible harmful environmental effects. In many cases, an ongoing professional dialogue is maintained with these agencies throughout the planning process.

The following are agencies that have been consulted about this project:

- Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
- Alaska Office of History and Archaeology
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Between the Draft and Final EISs for the Central Kupreanof project specialists worked with the State to resolve project level concerns identified in the State's comment letter.

Consultation with Federally Recognized Tribal Governments and Tribal Corporations

Consultation with federally recognized tribal governments included government-to-government and staff level communications.

Throughout the span of the Central Kupreanof Timber Harvest the District Ranger and archaeologists communicated with the Organized Village of Kake, Petersburg Indian Association, Wrangell Cooperative Association, Sealaska Corporation, Tlingit/Haida Central Council, and Kake Tribal Corporation. Archaeologists on the Petersburg Ranger District work regularly with the Organized Village of Kake (OVK) on a number of issues and provide frequent updates detailing Forest Service projects. Archaeologists met with representatives from OVK to discuss archaeological work in the Central Kupreanof area and present information regarding the proposed timber harvest in the project area. The District Ranger has also discussed, with OVK potential project opportunities associated with this project. In a meeting in May of 2008 OVK indicated they were interested in discussing further stewardship contract opportunities, particularly roadwork opportunities and invasive plant treatments.

The District Ranger met again with the Organized Village of Kake on March 25, 2009 to discuss concerns in the Central Kupreanof DEIS, including red stream crossings and benefits of the proposed project to the community of Kake. The council was concerned Kake would see no benefits from this project and would rather see the trees left standing for subsistence use.

Regular consultation will continue throughout the planning of this project and beyond.

ANILCA Section 810 Subsistence Hearings

In accordance with ANILCA Section 810, subsistence meetings were held for the Central Kupreanof project. Legal notices of the subsistence meetings were published in the newspaper of record, The Ketchikan Daily News, and the Juneau Empire on January 29, 2009 as well as in the local paper, The Petersburg Pilot on February 5, 2009.

On March 17, 2009 a federal subsistence hearing was held in Kake, Alaska. Twelve people signed in and eight people testified. Concerns included the project would not benefit the residents of Kake and therefore leaving the forest standing would be more beneficial in terms of subsistence uses.

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On March 25, 2009 a federal subsistence hearing was held in Petersburg, Alaska. Six people signed in and four people testified. Those testifying felt this project would change their subsistence use of the area and were concerned a restriction on the use of deer would occur.

Written copies of testimonies received at both meetings are located in the project record.

Significant Issues

Significant issues are used to formulate and design alternatives, prescribe mitigation measures, and analyze significant effects. Significant issues for the Central Kupreanof Timber Harvest have been identified through public and internal scoping. Similar issues are combined where appropriate. Issues can arise from a variety of sources, including:

- Issues, concerns, and opportunities identified in the Forest Plan,
- Issues identified for similar projects (past actions)
- Current internal issues,
- Changes in public uses, attitudes, values, or perceptions,
- Issues raised by the public during scoping, and
- Comments from other government agencies.

Measures of the significance of an issue are based on the extent of the geographic distribution, the duration of the related effects, or the intensity of interest or resource conflict surrounding the issue. For an issue to be considered significant at the project level, it must be relevant to the specific project so that it can be appropriately addressed at the project level. Some issues have already been resolved through national level direction or analyzed at the Forest Plan level.

Once a significant issue is identified, measures are developed to analyze how each alternative responds to the issue. Measures are chosen that are quantitative (where possible), predictable, responsive to the issue, and linked to cause and effect relationships. These measures describe how the alternative affects the resource(s) at the heart of the issue. Monitoring and mitigation of the anticipated environmental effects of the project are also designed to be responsive to significant issues.

These issues are addressed through the proposed action and the alternatives.

Issue 1 – Timber Supply and Sale Economics

Issue statement: Optimizing volume and net return on timber harvest will provide for flexibility, in both the long and short term, for offering economically viable timber sales.

This issue relates to the viability of the local economies, both on Kupreanof Island and within Southeast Alaska. It concerns proposed timber sales, the potential employment and revenues generated by the project, and the ability of smaller companies to compete for timber sales in the project area. It also relates to the availability of a timber supply and overall ability to respond to ever-changing future markets. This issue addresses both maximizing timber harvest and “best” economics. While looking at financial efficiency analysis is one tool to gauge economics, a greater number of units/larger volume available allows for greater diversity and flexibility in responding to future market demands and to appropriately package potential sales. Also, with the 2008 Forest Plan decision and implementation of the adaptive management strategy, timber economics must consider maximizing opportunities in the Phase 1 land base.

Units of Measure

The unit of measure to compare alternatives will include timber volume measured in million board feet (MMBF), logging costs per thousand board feet (MBF), indicated bid in dollars per MBF, employment in number of direct job years, direct income based on projected employment, and logging systems by harvest method (acres). The unit of measure will also include a qualitative discussion of an alternative’s ability to provide for greater diversity and flexibility in responding to future market demands and packaging a variety of potential sales.

Issue 2- Inventoried Roadless Areas

Issue statement: Timber harvest and building roads in inventoried roadless areas will reduce roadless acres within the project area and may affect roadless values.

This issue relates to timber harvest and the related construction of new roads to facilitate timber harvest in inventoried roadless areas. Additional roads and harvest would result in reducing acres of roadless area in the project area, and could affect roadless values as identified in the 2003 Forest Plan SEIS. Nationally, inventoried roadless areas are considered to have valuable qualities. Several comments were received from the public concerning management of roadless in the project area. Three of the four inventoried roadless areas within the project area may be directly affected by proposed activities.

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Unit of Measure

Comparison of alternatives will include acres of inventoried roadless areas affected, percent of inventoried roadless areas affected, and the effects to the roadless values of each inventoried roadless area as identified in the 2003 Forest Plan SEIS.

Issue 3- Road Management/ Access

Issue statement: Road building, reconstruction and closures associated with the timber sale may change access within the project area.

The construction and use of forest roads is the focus of much concern on both a national and local scale. Comments ranged from requesting no more new roads and closure of most existing roads to requests to increase access by new roads and opening more existing roads. Decisions made from the analysis in this EIS will include proposed road construction in each alternative (new construction and reconstruction), use of existing NFS roads, and the status of these roads after timber harvest.

Roads influence wildlife populations, water quality, subsistence use, and the type of recreational opportunities available. Concerns were also expressed over the ability to maintain open roads. The District will look at road management objectives across the district, including the entire Kake Road System during the Petersburg Ranger District Access and Travel Management Environmental Assessment (PRD ATM EA). Recommendations for roads not associated with the proposed activities have been carried forward and analyzed through the District's ATM by 2009.

Units of Measure

Comparison of alternatives will include miles of road (NFS and temporary) constructed, miles of reconstructed road, miles of road to be left open, miles of road to be closed associated with timber harvest activities, miles of new NFS and temporary road to be constructed in inventoried roadless areas, cost of maintenance for open roads, reconstruction, and new (NFS and temporary) road construction.

Comments on Other Resources

Each comment received during scoping was considered a potential issue. Some concerns and suggestions brought up by the public were considered but determined not to be alternative-driving issues. Some of these issues are already addressed through other processes or in the Forest Plan, through protection via Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines or through LUD designations (see Design Criteria Common to All Action Alternatives in Chapter 2 and unit cards in

Appendix B), or their resolution is beyond the scope of this project. Where possible, suggestions about the Central Kupreanof Timber Harvest project were incorporated into the design of the Proposed Action and alternatives (see Chapter 2 of this FEIS). Some concerns and suggestions for the analysis of the timber sales were considered but eliminated from detailed analysis for the reasons listed below. Issues considered further but eliminated from detailed analysis are discussed in Chapter 2 of this FEIS under the heading- Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis.

The following issues were considered but determined not to be alternative driving issues. The rationale for why these issues were determined to be non-significant is included below. As needed, resource effects related to these concerns are discussed in Chapter 3.

Fisheries/ Hydrology/ Watersheds

Comments expressed concerns about the impacts of harvest and road building in the headwaters of the Castle River watershed; and of timber harvest and road building on fisheries and hydrological functions in general. Ultimately, proposed harvest units and road building would affect less than one percent (0.3%) of the headwaters of this watershed.

Particular concerns were expressed about cumulative effects of such proposed activities in project area watersheds. Currently, there are no watersheds that require a watershed analysis as described in Appendix C of the Forest Plan. In fact, very little harvest has taken place in any watershed within the project area (Hamilton has had the most past harvest with 5.1% affected). Also, the project unit pool is spread out across the project area and doesn't propose any concentration of harvest in any one watershed.

Recreation

Impacts to recreation opportunities are expected to be minimal with the proposed action and therefore recreation is not a significant issue.

Wildlife

Local residents have expressed concern for the possible effects timber harvest may have on wildlife and, in particular, on deer habitat. An alternative was looked at that responded to deer habitat concerns but eliminated from further study because estimated effects on deer habitat within the project area were minimal.

Design elements of the deer habitat alternative were brought forward into the proposed action. Specifically, units in areas of concentrated past and proposed harvest were dropped or prescribed with 50 percent retention to facilitate potential travel corridors. Also, units were dropped to promote additional connectivity between small old growth reserves. In response to the reduction of volume, additional units with no deer habitat or wildlife issues were added to the proposed action.

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No Timber Harvest

This issue is addressed in the Forest Plan and through the No Action Alternative. The majority of the Project Area is allocated to the Timber Production LUD, where timber harvest is permitted.

Cedar Composition

Current levels of timber harvest on the Tongass are not expected to have an adverse affect on the quantity or composition of cedar (or any species) in the future. In many cases where single tree selection or two-aged management is applied, the amount of residual cedar left is proportional to the amount prior to harvest. Since both cedars are shade intolerant, overstory removal of hemlock could release cedar if advanced regeneration is present. Silvicultural treatments in young growth stands, such as precommercial thinning, pruning, and commercial thinning, typically emphasize release of cedars to maintain species composition and because they are valuable crop trees for future harvest.

Plants

Initial field surveys show plants are not a significant issue. Rare and sensitive species will be considered and applicable Forest Plan direction applied to their protection.

Socioeconomics

Socioeconomics is addressed through the Forest Plan and therefore is not a significant issue. Further, there are no permitted outfitter/guides within the project area and there hasn't been for several years. Recreation, scenery, and subsistence concerns are routinely analyzed for projects.

Subsistence

Subsistence was considered as an issue for this project. Upon further review of the field data and public comments, the concern with subsistence pointed more to hunter access and both increased and decreased access associated with the proposed road building and closures. Access has been identified as a Significant Issue. The use of the PRD ATM process will address access for the larger Kake road system by 2009.

Federal and State Permits, Licenses and Certifications

Prior to implementation of the proposed timber sale, various permits need to be obtained from other Federal and State agencies. Some permits are already in place for the Central Kupreanof project; others would have to be obtained.

No wetlands permits are necessary from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers because roads built in wetlands are for silvicultural purposes and will follow the 33CFR 323 guidelines to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands.

A storm water discharge permit would be acquired by the timber sale contractor. A permit for Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (Section 402 of the Clean Water Act) is held by the US Forest Service.

Permits will be needed from the Corps of Engineers and the State of Alaska if large amounts of fuel are stored in the project area for helicopter yarding. The timber sale contractor would acquire these permits.

Applicable Laws and Executive Orders

Shown below is a partial list of Federal laws and executive orders pertaining to project-specific planning and environmental analysis on Federal lands. While most pertain to all Federal lands, some of the laws are specific to Alaska. Disclosures and findings required by these laws and orders are contained in Chapter 3 of this FEIS.

- Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971
- Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980
- American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978
- Archeological Resource Protection Act of 1980
- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (as amended)
- Cave Resource Protection Act of 1988
- Clean Air Act of 1970 (as amended)
- Clean Water Act of 1977 (as amended)
- Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (as amended)
- Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (as amended)
- Executive Order 11593 (cultural resources)
- Executive Order 11988 (floodplains)
- Executive Order 11990 (wetlands)
- Executive Order 12898 (environmental justice)
- Executive Order 12962 (aquatic systems and recreational fisheries)
- Executive Order 13007 (Indian sacred sites)

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- Executive Order 13112 (Invasive plant species)
- Executive Order 13175 (government-to-government consultation)
- Executive Order 13443 (hunting heritage and wildlife conservation)
- Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) of 1974 (as amended)
- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1996
- Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (amended 1936 and 1972)
- Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (as amended)
- National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 (as amended)
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended)
- National Transportation Policy (2001)
- Organic Act of 1897
- Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899
- Tongass Timber Reform Act (TTRA) of 1990
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, amended 1986

State of Alaska

Under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), coastal states may develop coastal management plans, subject to approval by the Secretary of Commerce. Upon approval, Federal agency activities that affect any land or water use or any natural resource of the state's coastal zone must be consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with the enforceable policies of the state's coastal management plan. The Alaska Coastal Management Plan (ACMP) has been approved by the Secretary of Commerce. If a Federal agency determines that an activity in Alaska has coastal effects, it must evaluate the activity for consistency with the applicable enforceable policies of the ACMP, and submit a consistency determination to the State for review. To make the process more efficient, categories of activities may be evaluated

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and reviewed together under what is called a "general consistency determination" (GCD). Upon approval of a GCD, activities within that category do not require an individual consistency determination or review. The Forest Service has developed a GCD for timber harvest activities conducted on the Tongass National Forest, and the State of Alaska has agreed that Tongass timber harvest activities are consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the ACMP. The timber harvest activities, including associated use and construction of roads and use of the Little Hamilton permitted LTF, proposed in the Central Kupreanof Timber Harvest EIS fall within the scope of the GCD.

Due to limits on the types of activities that qualify for a GCD, and provisions of the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act (FRPA), certain activities are outside the scope of the GCD and will continue to require individual ACMP consistency review. The GCD does not apply to any activity that requires a State or Federal authorization under any authority other than FRPA. Nor does it apply to any activity related to the planning, construction modification, or removal of any structure or facility intended for use by the general public. Specifically, it does not apply to logging camps or construction of log transfer facilities that require State or Federal permits, or to construction or reconstruction of roads that require such non FRPA permits. Any Tongass timber sale that involves activities not covered by the scope of the GCD continues to require an individual consistency determination if those activities have reasonably foreseeable effects on coastal uses or resources, but the scope of that determination and consistency review will be limited to those portions of the project not covered by the GCD.

The Projects Common to all Action Alternatives are considered outside the scope of the GCD. However, in consultation with the State it has been determined these activities, except the potential removal or fixing of red fish crossings, do not affect the coastal zone and do not require any individual ACMP consistency determination or review. Implementation of potential red fish crossing work is dependent upon road management decisions made during the PRD ATM process, and will go through its own ACMP review and consistency determination.

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Availability of the Project Record

An important consideration in preparation of this FEIS has been reduction of paperwork as specified in 40 CFR 1500.4. In general, the objective of the EIS is to furnish enough site-specific information to demonstrate a reasoned consideration of the environmental impacts of the alternatives and how these impacts can be mitigated. The project record contains supporting material that documents the NEPA process and analysis from the beginning of the project to the publication of the Final EIS. The project record is located at the Petersburg Ranger District office in Petersburg, Alaska. Reference documents, such as the Forest Plan and the Tongass Timber Reform Act, are available for review at public libraries and Forest Service offices throughout Southeast Alaska, including the Petersburg Ranger District. The Forest Plan is available on CD-ROM and on the Internet (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/>).