



United States Department of Agriculture

Navy Timber Sale

Record of Decision



Forest Service
Alaska Region

Tongass National Forest
Wrangell Ranger District

R10-MB-632d

August 2015

Key acronyms and other terms used in this Record of Decision:

ADEC: Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
AFRPA: Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act
ANCSA: Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act
ANILCA: Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act
AYC: Alaska yellow-cedar
BA: Biological Assessment
BE: Biological Evaluation
BLM: Bureau of Land Management
BMP: Best management practice
CEQ: Council of Environmental Quality
CFR: Code of Federal Regulation
CZMA: Coastal Zone Management Act
DEIS: Draft Environmental Impact Statement
DHC: Deer habitat capability
DWM: Down woody material
EFH: Essential fish habitat
EPA: Environmental Protection Agency
ESA: Endangered Species Act
FASTR: Financial Analysis Spreadsheet Tool – RV
FEIS: Final Environmental Impact Statement
FIA: Forest Inventory and Analysis
Forest Plan: Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan, 2008
FSM or FSH: Forest Service Manual or Forest Service Handbook
GHG: Greenhouse gas
GIS: Geographic information system
IRA: Inventoried roadless area
IDT: Interdisciplinary team
LTF: Log transfer facility
LUD: Land use designation
MBF: Thousand board feet
MIS: Management indicator species
MMBF: Million board feet
NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
NFMA: National Forest Management Act
NFS: National Forest System
NHPA: National Historic Preservation Act
NMFS: National Marine Fisheries Service
POG: Productive old growth (forest)
RAW: Reasonable assurance of windfirmness
ROD: Record of Decision
SEIS: Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
SIO: Scenic integrity objectives
TTPA: Total trees per acre
TTRA: Tongass Timber Reform Act
USDA: United States Department of Agriculture
USFS: United States Forest Service
USFWS: United States Fish and Wildlife Service
VCU: Value comparison unit
WAA: Wildlife analysis area

Cover photo: View of Navy Peak and Cannery Point

File Code: 1950
Date: August 11, 2015

Dear Planning Participant:

I am pleased to announce that the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Navy Timber Sale project on the Wrangell Ranger District, Tongass National Forest has been signed. This ROD replaces the decision signed in March 2009. The ROD is available for review at the Ketchikan Forest Supervisor's Office and Wrangell District Office, and online at http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=14556. Hardcopies and CDs of the document are available upon request.

This decision makes about 13.1 million board feet of sawlog and utility timber available for harvest from about 1,252 acres of commercial forest land on Etolin Island and requires construction of about 0.6 mile and reconstruction of 0.8 mile of National Forest System road, and construction of 2.7 miles of temporary road.

The draft ROD was available for public review prior to this final decision, pursuant to the Predecisional Administrative Review Process. Two objections were received during the 45-day objection filing period. The Reviewing Officer has reviewed the draft decision, in accordance with 36 CFR 218.3(a) and provided instructions to the Responsible Official. I have complied with the instructions from the Reviewing Officer and signed the ROD. Project implementation may commence immediately after the decision is signed.

Copies of this letter have been mailed to those people who have expressed interest in the project through scoping, comments, consultation, or requested to be on the mailing list.

For additional information, please contact Robert Dalrymple, Wrangell District Ranger, at (907)-874-2323.

I want to thank you for your interest in the Navy project.

Sincerely,



M. EARL STEWART
Forest Supervisor, Tongass NF



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Navy Timber Sale

Record of Decision

United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service Alaska Region

Lead Agency:

USDA Forest Service
Tongass National Forest

Responsible Official:

M. Earl Stewart, Forest Supervisor
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**For Further
Information Contact:**

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Abstract:

The Responsible Official has selected Alternative F from the Navy Timber Sale Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). This decision makes about 13.1 million board feet of sawlog and utility timber available for harvest from about 1,252 acres of commercial forest land on Etolin Island to contribute to the Tongass National Forest timber sale program. The harvest of this timber will require construction of about 0.6 mile and reconstruction of 0.8 mile of National Forest System road, and construction of 2.7 miles of temporary road.

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Navy Timber Sale

USDA Forest Service
Wrangell Ranger District, Tongass National Forest, Alaska Region

Introduction

This Navy Timber Sale Record of Decision (ROD) documents my decision to select Alternative F (hereafter called the Selected Alternative) from the Navy Timber Sale FEIS. The ROD was available as a draft for public review under the project-level predecisional administrative review, or “objection process” (Title 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B) from April 24, 2015 to June 8, 2015.

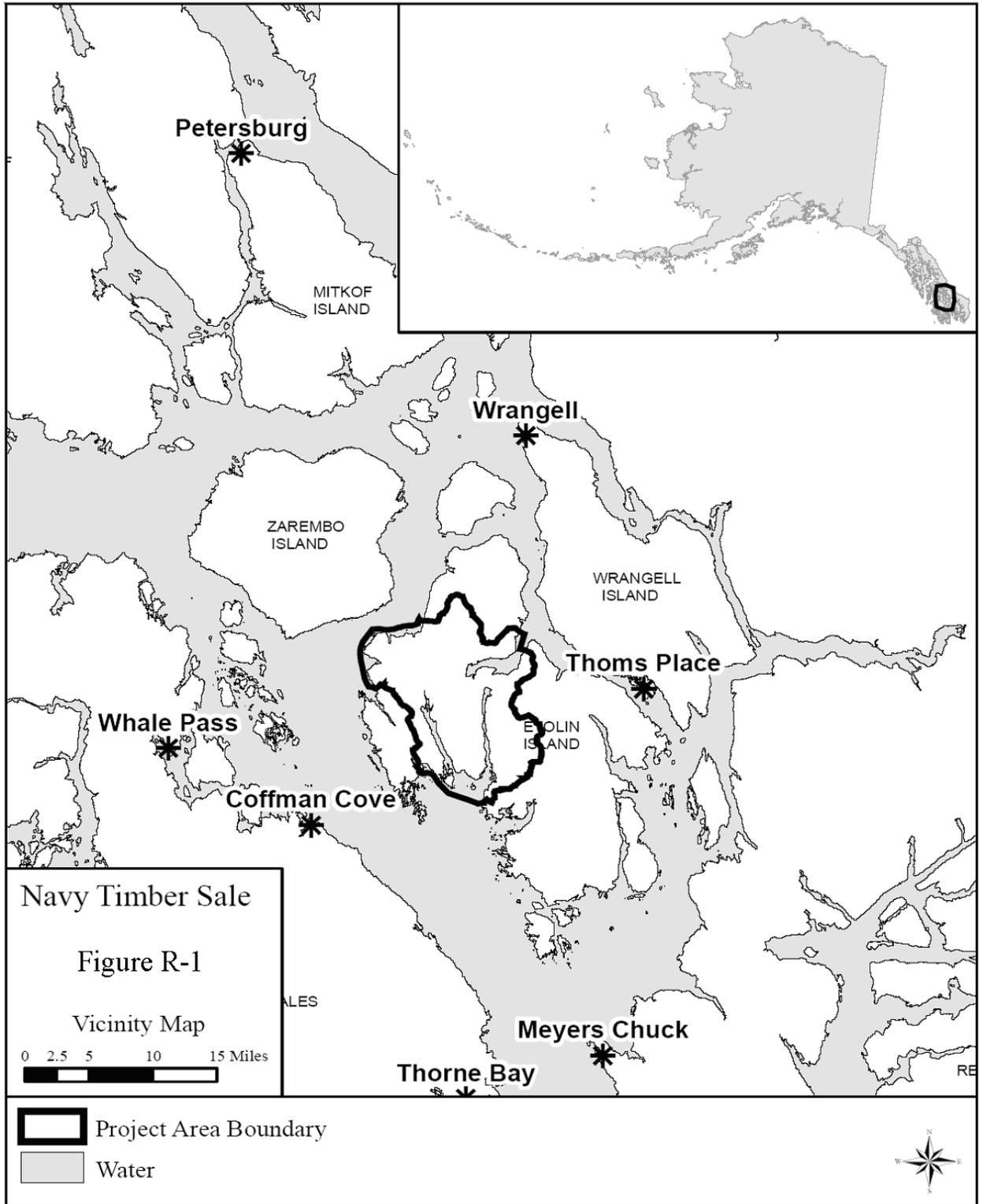
The Record of Decision describes my rationale for the decision, including the purpose and need, the key issues I considered in the decision, the environmental effects of the Selected Alternative, my consideration of public comments, and consistency with the Forest Plan and other applicable laws and regulations. The unit cards and road cards are an integral part of this decision because they document the specific resource concerns, management objectives, and mitigation measures to govern the layout of the harvest units and construction of roads. These cards will be used during the implementation process to ensure that the project is implemented within applicable Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines and that resource effects will not be greater than those described in the FEIS. Similar cards will document any changes to the planned layout which may occur during implementation.

Decision

The Selected Alternative makes about 13.1 million board feet of sawlog and utility timber available for harvest from about 1,252 acres of commercial forest land in the Navy Timber Sale project area on central Etolin Island, approximately 22 miles south of Wrangell, Alaska, to contribute to the Tongass National Forest timber sale program. The harvest of this timber will require construction of about 0.6 mile and reconstruction of 0.8 mile of National Forest System road, and construction of 2.7 miles of temporary road. See vicinity map (Figure ROD-1, below), and Selected Alternative map (Figure ROD-2 on page R-31).

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Figure R-1
Navy Timber Sale Vicinity Map



I released the Navy Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) with a Record of Decision in 2009. That decision was subsequently appealed and remanded. This 2015 Record of Decision replaces my previous decision for this project.

I postponed the release of this ROD until now for several reasons. I wanted to know the outcome of the litigation regarding the Tongass National Forest exemption to the roadless rule. I felt that delaying the decision until the new objection process was in place would give the interested public an opportunity to participate in a collaborative decision-making process before the ROD was signed. The delay also allowed for a careful review of any new information since the FEIS was released in 2009.

Based upon my review of public comments, the analysis contained in the FEIS, the project record and the new information documented in Appendix ROD-3, I have selected Alternative F as the Selected Alternative. The Selected Alternative is displayed in Figure ROD-2 at the end of this Record of Decision.

I am incorporating the project design criteria and measures to minimize adverse environmental effects of the Selected Alternative as part of my decision. These are described in the Unit Cards (Appendix ROD-1) and Road Cards (Appendix ROD-2). I am satisfied that these are practicable and effective in avoiding or minimizing environmental effects.

Additional goshawk surveys done in the project area in July 2015 disclosed the presence of two juvenile goshawks in Unit 75. As a result, Unit 75 will be deferred from initial sale offerings until additional surveys can be completed in 2016 to determine if a nest is nearby. If any new nests are discovered, the appropriate Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines will be applied and any timber sale contract implementing the project will be modified through appropriate provisions, if warranted.

Features of the Selected Alternative

The Selected Alternative will harvest timber on approximately 1,252 acres of commercial forest land, which is expected to contribute approximately 13.1 million board feet (MMBF) of sawlog and utility volume to the Tongass National Forest timber sale program.

Timber harvest will occur under even-aged management prescriptions (clearcuts or clearcuts with reserves) or uneven-aged management prescriptions (single-tree selection) using cable, shovel, or helicopter yarding. Design features for timber harvest units in this decision are described in detail on the Unit Cards in Appendix ROD-1 and incorporated into this decision.

The harvest of this timber will require construction of approximately 0.6 mile and reconstruction of 0.8 mile of National Forest System road, and construction of 2.7 miles of temporary road. The existing road system and the Anita Bay log transfer facilities will be used to transport the timber off the island. Design features of the National Forest System roads for this decision are described in

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detail on the Road Cards in Appendix ROD-2 and incorporated into this decision. Temporary roads are included on the Unit Cards in Appendix ROD-1.

All new National Forest System roads will be placed in storage and closed to public motorized use after timber sale activities are completed. Temporary roads will be decommissioned and allowed to revegetate after harvest.

All timber harvest and road construction will occur outside of 2001 inventoried roadless areas.

Summary of Decision Rationale

The Selected Alternative meets the stated purpose and need for the project. It will produce a supply of timber for the timber industry with minimal effects to the environment. It addresses the key issues as a whole by providing a supply of timber, maintaining old-growth forest habitat, and not entering any 2001 inventoried roadless areas.

The Selected Alternative meets the Forest Plan direction and conforms to the National Forest Management Act as well as all other applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects from project activities are consistent with the goals, objectives, and standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan. I have found that the protection and mitigation measures in Appendix ROD-1, Unit Cards, and design criteria in Appendix ROD-2, Road Cards are effective in reducing environmental impacts based upon the Forest Plan analysis and experience in using these measures.

In summary, I find that the Selected Alternative provides the best mix of beneficial resources for the public, within a framework of existing laws, regulations, policies, public needs and desires, and the capabilities of the land. None of the alternatives can provide benefits for and meet the needs of all members of the public. My decision includes the evaluation of the trade-offs between effects to resources, desired products, and social values.

A detailed discussion of the factors I considered in making my decision is presented below.

Purpose and Need

I looked at how each alternative responded to the purpose and need for action (fully described in the FEIS Chapter 1) of offering timber for harvest to meet the needs of the industry. I have determined that the Selected Alternative best meets the purpose and need within Forest Plan direction without entering any 2001 inventoried roadless areas (IRAs). The purpose and need is to respond to goals and objectives of the Forest Plan, and help move the project area toward the desired conditions. The Selected Alternative will:

- Provide a diversity of opportunities for resource uses that contribute to the local and regional economies of Southeast Alaska.

- Support a wide range of natural resource employment opportunities within Southeast Alaska's communities.
- Manage the timber resource for production of sawtimber and other timber products from suitable forest lands made available for timber harvest, on an even-flow, long-term sustained yield basis and in an economically efficient manner.
- Contribute an estimated 13.1 MMBF of timber in order to seek to meet the annual market demand for Tongass National Forest timber and the market demand for the planning cycle.

Key Issues

An important consideration in making my decision is how each alternative addressed the key issues developed from public scoping. After carefully reviewing the issues (FEIS Chapter 1), I find that the Selected Alternative best addresses these key issues when considered as a whole.

Issue 1: Timber Supply and Demand

I considered the need to manage the timber resource in the Navy analysis area in order to produce an even-flow of sawtimber and other wood products on a sustained yield and economical basis from the Tongass National Forest. The Selected Alternative provides about 13.1 MMBF toward meeting annual market demand.

I evaluated the concerns for providing for economical timber sale offerings within the context of fluctuating timber markets, the amount of timber volume currently available for offer from the Tongass National Forest, and the relative effects of the Selected Alternative, and find that the Selected Alternative provides the best balance overall.

The current timber industry in Southeast Alaska is in a state of transition to young-growth harvest. The Selected Alternative will contribute timber volume to meet industry needs. Although there is currently no young-growth timber mature enough for harvest in the Navy project area, the Selected Alternative contributes to the supply of timber needed to maintain the timber industry during the transition to young-growth management. A reliable supply of economically viable timber is critical to maintain the expertise and infrastructure of the existing timber industry during the transition to young-growth management.

The Selected Alternative could support an estimated 52 to 63 annualized jobs, including logging, sawmilling, transportation and other services. Although it provides the lowest timber volume of the FEIS action alternatives and supports the least number of jobs, it is the most economical alternative because it primarily uses the existing road system, builds the fewest miles of road, and uses the least amount of costly helicopter yarding.

The financial efficiency analysis used for the Navy project provides only a relative comparison of values between the alternatives. The financial efficiency

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analysis at the planning stage relies on past markets and costs and may not reflect future market conditions at the time of offer, since timber markets and values are extremely volatile. The value of the timber will only be known at the time the appraisal is completed and contract offered.

The results of the financial efficiency modeling using historical timber costs and values in the Financial Analysis Spreadsheet Tool – RV (FASTR) model indicate a deficit value based on past market performance for all alternatives. However, the Selected Alternative is the most economical of the action alternatives and it is likely to have a positive value if current market conditions continue to improve.

It is important to have this timber volume available to offer as market conditions improve. Navy timber sales will not be advertised until they appraise with positive values.

Issue 2: Wildlife Habitat Fragmentation

I carefully considered the effects to wildlife habitat. Some commenters expressed concern that further timber harvest may reduce the large patches of old-growth forest in the project area, thereby reducing the preferred habitat for old-growth associated species. They also had specific concerns for habitat connectivity in the area between Anita Bay and Burnett Inlet.

I chose Alternative F as the Selected Alternative because it has the least effect on interior habitat and coarse canopy, and large patches of old-growth habitat of all the FEIS action alternatives, since it harvests the fewest acres of habitat. It will result in an estimated 1.4 percent reduction in productive old-growth forest (POG) within wildlife analysis area (WAA) 1901. No harvest or roads occur within the beach buffer, which will retain its integrity as wildlife habitat.

Fifty-five percent of the harvest area (692 of the 1,252 acres) in the Selected Alternative will be partially harvested using a single-tree selection prescription removing approximately 30 percent of the basal area. This leaves the remaining 70 percent to continue to provide habitat components and retain old-growth characteristics within the stand.

The Selected Alternative design reduces impacts to wildlife habitat in the area between Anita Bay and Burnett Inlet, as compared to Alternatives B, C, and D. Alternative E did not propose harvest in this area. This area has experienced timber harvest and road construction and use since the early 1980s. While the Selected Alternative will harvest some timber in the area, it contains features to minimize the negative effects to wildlife. Reserve trees within the harvest units will create future multi-layered forest habitat. Tree retention in Unit 67 is increased, and a portion of Unit 70 is deleted, in comparison to Alternatives B, C, and D, to maintain part of the low-elevation corridor.

Because of the continuing concerns about additional timber harvest in this area, I reviewed the area and found that it consists of a mosaic of vegetation types. When the remaining old-growth forest stands, the unmanaged lower-productivity old-growth forest stands, and the partial-harvest stands in the

Selected Alternative are all considered together, I find that this area provides wildlife habitat connectivity. This area will continue to function as wildlife habitat and serve as a travel corridor with implementation of the Selected Alternative, as much of the natural habitat remains.

I have also determined that the Selected Alternative maintains enough old-growth forest to provide the full range of matrix functions in order to meet the Tongass Conservation Strategy.

Issue 3: Inventoried Roadless Areas

I considered the effects to roadless area values, which were analyzed by alternative in the FEIS. These included direct effects from proposed units and roads within the IRA boundaries, and indirect effects such as temporary sight and noise disturbance and the loss of interior habitat values within the IRAs from activities occurring outside of but adjacent to the IRAs.

The FEIS analysis used the Forest Plan 2008 roadless inventory because the Tongass exemption from the roadless rule was in place during the FEIS analysis. In 2011, the Alaska Federal District Court vacated the Tongass exemption from the Roadless Rule. To comply with the roadless rule, the alternatives were reassessed in the new information analysis (Appendix ROD-3) using the 2001 Roadless Rule inventory boundaries. The differences between the 2008 Forest Plan roadless inventory and the 2001 Roadless Rule inventory are also discussed in Appendix ROD-3.

In March 2014, the District Court's ruling was reversed by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, remanding the case back to the District Court. In August 2014, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals granted another hearing, held in December 2014 before an eleven-judge panel to rehear the appeal of the 2011 District Court decision. The Ninth Circuit Court has issued its en banc decision in *Organized Village of Kake v. USDA, 11-35517*, upholding the Alaska District Court's reinstatement of the roadless rule, which remains in effect and applies to the Tongass.

I chose the Selected Alternative because it does not have any direct effects on IRAs, since it does not harvest timber or build roads within any IRA under either the 2001 or the 2008 inventory. Approximately 1 percent of the IRAs could be indirectly affected by sights and sounds of activities occurring outside of, but adjacent to, the IRAs, although these are expected to be minor and of short duration.

Environmental Effects

I considered the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the alternatives in making my decision. All alternatives are consistent with the Forest Plan. The Selected Alternative has the least overall effect of the action alternatives, since it harvests the least timber volume and builds the fewest roads. The FEIS and project record display the effects, both positive and negative, resulting from the action alternatives.

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While I reviewed all of the resource effects in addition to the key issues, the public raised some specific concerns, which I will address below. More information on these effects is summarized in Appendix ROD-3 and the FEIS.

Alaska yellow-cedar decline: There is concern for Alaska yellow-cedar decline and the regeneration and persistence of Alaska yellow-cedar in stands where it is present. I have examined the silvicultural prescriptions and determined that appropriate measures are provided by the Selected Alternative to ensure establishment of Alaska yellow-cedar in regenerated stands where appropriate. These measures include the retention of cedar seed-trees and cedar inter-planting. This information has been clarified on the unit cards in Appendix ROD-1 and in the addendum to the Silviculture resource report. Recent research publications regarding Alaska yellow-cedar decline have been considered and are included in the project record. The Alaska yellow-cedar is currently in a 12-month review period by the USFWS for potential listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Windthrow: There is concern for windthrow following harvest. I have reviewed the unit design and silviculture prescriptions and find that the risk of future windthrow will be minimized with the use of clearcutting, windfirm buffers, or the use of single-tree selection harvest that retains 70 percent of the basal area to maintain a wind-resistant canopy.

Areas with high windthrow concerns are identified on the unit cards. Reasonable assurance of windfirmness (RAW) buffers will be designed for riparian management areas if needed for protection during implementation.

Watershed effects: I considered the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Selected Alternative combined with past harvest on watershed resources. The Selected Alternative has the fewest acres of harvest and miles of road construction in true watersheds (an area that contributes surface and subwater to a single point) of the action alternatives. The project design and implementation guidelines will limit watershed effects.

Goshawk nesting habitat: The Selected Alternative has the least effect on high-probability goshawk nesting habitat of any action alternative. The Biological Evaluation determination for the goshawk is “May adversely affect individuals but not likely to result in a loss of viability in the planning area nor cause a trend toward federal listing.” A 233-acre buffer surrounding a group of three inactive goshawk nests adjacent to harvest units 67, 72, 73, and 74 exceeds the Forest Plan Standard and Guideline of 100 acres of POG, providing additional protection for that nest area. The Selected Alternative also avoids harvest near the other known goshawk nesting areas in WAA 1901.

Deer habitat: The Selected Alternative has a minor effect on deer habitat, having the least effect of the action alternatives. The 2011 direction for the deer model was used to estimate the effects on deer habitat and the results are similar to those in the FEIS. The reanalysis using the 2011 direction for the deer model estimates that deer habitat capability will be reduced by about 2 percent from the existing condition due to activities in the Selected Alternative, with a cumulative

reduction of 13 percent from historical capability in WAA 1901. Deer deep-snow winter habitat would be reduced directly and indirectly by approximately 2 percent and cumulatively by 24 percent from historic conditions.

Wolf population sustainability: In order to assess the effects on wolves, three analyses were recalculated: 1) Deer density to estimate the effects on the wolves' primary food source; 2) Road density to evaluate the effect of increased roads on the potential hunting/trapping pressure; and 3) Harvest of wolves to estimate current hunting/trapping pressure on wolves. Based on the results of these analyses (summarized in Appendix ROD-3), the Selected Alternative would have the least effect on wolf populations of the action alternatives. Even during the life of the sale, road densities in WAA 1901 would meet the Forest Plan wolf road density standard and guideline. Wolf populations would remain sustainable on Etohin Island with the implementation of the Selected Alternative.

Soil stability: The Selected Alternative has the least effect on steep slopes of the action alternatives, since it has the fewest potentially affected acres. All areas with slopes greater than 72 percent will have a site stability analysis prior to implementation, and unstable slopes will be avoided to minimize adverse impacts to soil and water resources.

Botany: The Selected Alternative has the least effect on sensitive plants of the action alternatives since it affects the fewest acres of habitat. There may be minor effects to rare plants and Alaska Region sensitive plants. The Biological Evaluation finding is "May adversely affect individuals but not likely to result in a loss of viability in the planning area nor cause a trend toward federal listing" for several species. Detailed information is in the Biological Evaluation and summarized in the FEIS, Chapter 3. Measures are included in this decision, described in Appendix ROD-1, Unit Cards, to reduce the possibility of invasive plant species that may compete with native species.

Recreation: The Selected Alternative would have the least effect to recreation and scenery resources of the action alternatives. Implementation of the Selected Alternative would not noticeably decrease or change the current recreational opportunities or scenery.

Climate change: Climate change is an important consideration, however, the magnitude of this project is so small compared to the factors that contribute to climate change that foreseeable effects would be small if measurable at all for all alternatives. The Forest Plan FEIS discusses climate change factors (p. 3-11 to 3-20) and discloses the risk of possible effects. The Tongass National Forest will continue to monitor potential effects of climate change through the existing Forest Plan monitoring programs, and other studies that are occurring regionally and nationally. Appendix ROD-3 describes some of the climate change considerations and studies which are ongoing at various levels across the nation's forests, including the Tongass.

Alternatives

Alternatives Considered in Detail

Five action alternatives and the no-action alternative were considered in detail in the FEIS. These alternatives were designed to address key issues developed from scoping comments. I found these alternatives provided a reasonable range of alternatives for the analysis.

Each action alternative was designed with different emphases to address the key issues, while meeting the purpose and need of providing timber volume.

Alternative F was designed to avoid harvest and road building in inventoried roadless areas. Each of the alternatives is summarized below and described in detail in the FEIS Chapter 2. Table R-1 provides a summary comparison of the alternatives.

During the analysis of new information since the FEIS was published, each action alternative was analyzed with higher-resolution GIS mapping data which resulted in minor acreage differences from those published in the FEIS. Timber volumes in the FEIS were estimated from stand exam plots, which provide a general gross volume estimate. More-intensive timber cruise plots were done since the FEIS, which provided more-precise defect information with more-accurate net timber volume estimates. This resulted in new net volume estimates for the action alternatives. In addition, road reconstruction completed since the FEIS has reduced the amount of reconstruction under the alternatives (Table R-1).

Alternative A - No Action, proposed no new timber harvest or road construction in the project area. It does not preclude timber harvest from other areas or from the project area in the future. This alternative represents the existing condition and serves as a baseline for comparing the action alternatives. This alternative displays the effects from the current condition of the area.

Alternative B was the proposed action. Alternative B responded to Issue 1, Timber Supply and Economics, by providing logical extensions to the existing Anita Bay road system and using uneven-aged management in helicopter units to improve economics. This alternative proposed timber harvest on approximately 3,212 acres. The use of higher-resolution GIS data resulted in an 8-acre reduction, for a total harvest area of approximately 3,204 acres. This alternative produced 45.5 MMBF of timber volume estimated from stand exam data, and 31.4 MMBF of net cruised timber volume. This alternative proposed timber harvest and road building within 2001 IRAs.

Alternative C emphasized Issue 1 by focusing on timber supply, maximizing the available amount of timber while meeting Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines, and using uneven-aged management in helicopter units. This alternative proposed timber harvest on approximately 6,107 acres. The use of higher-resolution GIS data resulted in a 13-acre reduction, for a total harvest area of approximately 6,094 acres. This alternative produced 87.5 MMBF of timber volume estimated from stand exam data, and 62.0 MMBF of net graded

cruised timber volume. This alternative had the most harvest units and roads within 2001 IRAs.

Alternative D, identified as the preferred alternative in the DEIS, also emphasized Issue 1, by focusing on economics. This alternative proposed timber harvest on approximately 2,369 acres. The use of higher-resolution GIS data resulted in an 8-acre reduction for a total harvest area of approximately 2,361 acres. This alternative produced 37.2 MMBF of timber volume estimated from stand exam data, and 26.6 MMBF of net cruised timber volume. This alternative proposed more-economical units, with greater use of conventional yarding methods, than the proposed action. This alternative proposed timber harvest and road building within 2001 IRAs.

Alternative E responded to Issue 2, Wildlife Habitat Fragmentation. This alternative proposed timber harvest on approximately 3,326 acres. The use of higher-resolution GIS data resulted in a 2-acre increase for a total harvest area of approximately 3,328 acres. This alternative produced 38.4 MMBF timber volume estimated from stand exam data, and 24.5 MMBF of net cruised timber volume. No harvest was proposed in the area between Anita Bay and Burnett Inlet. It proposed only small-sized clearcut units and uneven-aged management on most of the units. Road construction was minimized by using a higher proportion of helicopter yarding. This alternative proposed timber harvest and road building within 2001 IRAs.

Alternative F is the Selected Alternative as described above. Alternative F was designed to avoid harvest and roadbuilding in inventoried roadless areas. It proposed timber harvest on 1,251 acres. The use of higher-resolution GIS data resulted in a 1-acre increase for a total harvest area of approximately 1,252 acres. This alternative produced 18.3 MMBF of timber volume estimated from stand exam data, and 13.1 MMBF of net cruised timber volume. This alternative responded to Issue 3, Inventoried Roadless Areas, by not harvesting timber or constructing roads in inventoried roadless areas.

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Table R-1
Comparison of Alternative Design and Issues by Alternative (updated 2014)

Category	Alt. A	Alt. B	Alt. C	Alt. D	Alt. E	Sel. Alt. F
Estimated harvest acreage and volume:						
Total acres of harvest	0	3,204	6,094	2,361	3,328	1,252
Acres of cable/shovel yarding	0	1,282	2,519	1,255	554	643
Acres of helicopter yarding	0	1,922	3,575	1,106	2,772	609
Total net cruise volume (saw/utility, MMBF)¹	0	31.4	62.0	26.6	24.5	13.1
Cable/shovel yarding (sawlog only, MMBF)	0	18.4	36.6	18.2	8.0	8.6
Helicopter yarding (sawlog only, MMBF)	0	9.6	18.8	5.6	13.9	3.1
Acres harvested by silvicultural system²						
Even-aged management	0	1,207	2,185	1,180	487	559
Two-aged management	0	0	268	0	0	0
Uneven-aged management	0	2,005	3,654	1,189	2,839	692
Roads and log transfer facilities (LTFs):						
Miles of NFS road construction	0	6.6	12.1	4.8	2.2	0.6
Miles of temporary road construction	0	5.8	13.6	5.0	2.7	2.7
Miles of proposed road reconstruction	0	0.8	2.1	0.4	0.8	0.8
Proposes construction of Mosman Inlet LTF	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Issue 1: Timber supply and economics						
Total net cruise volume MMBF)	0	31.4	62.0	26.6	24.5	13.1
Indicated bid value (\$/MBF ³)	0	(\$75.68)	(\$56.73)	(\$51.56)	(\$42.90)	(\$14.16)
Direct employment (job equivalent) ⁴	0	126-151	248-298	107-128	98-117	52-63
Road costs (construction/reconstruction)/MBF	0	\$83	\$82	\$77	\$42	\$59
Logging costs (stump to mill costs) (\$/MBF)	0	\$574	\$563	\$548	\$555	\$513
Issue 2: Wildlife habitat fragmentation						
Acres of POG habitat in WAA 1901 post harvest	60,750	59,169	57,689	59,263	59,889	59,906
% reduction in POG habitat for WAA 1901	0	2.6%	5.0%	2.4%	2.4%	1.4%
Acres of interior POG in WAA 1901 post harvest	24,642	23,051	22,013	23,280	23,702	24,044
Acres of coarse canopy old growth in WAA 1901 post harvest	3,654	3,286	3,255	3,341	3,421	3,583
Issue 3: Inventoried roadless areas (2001 IRAs)						
Acres of timber harvest within the IRAs	0	2,200	4,463	1,094	2,219	0
Total miles of road construction within the IRAs ⁵	0	6.3	16.8	4.3	1.7	0
Acres of IRA affected (direct and indirect effects) ⁶	0	5,963	12,117	3,120	6,272	566
% Acres of IRA affected	0	11%	22%	6%	12%	1%

¹ MMBF = million board feet; sawlog and utility.

² Estimated acres by silvicultural system, as shown in the FEIS. Total acres by silviculture system vary slightly from total harvest acres by 1 to 13 acres due to GIS updates.

Even-aged includes: clearcut; clearcut w/ 15% reserves; clearcut w/ 50% reserves;

Two-aged includes: clearcut w/ 15% reserves; Uneven-aged includes: single-tree selection.

³ MBF = thousand board feet

⁴ Based on a range of volume from all allowable export to markets outside Alaska, to all sawlogs (hem/spruce) processed locally.

⁵ Includes NFS and temporary road construction

⁶ Acres affected by alternative includes the zone which is 1,200 feet from existing and proposed roads, and 600 feet from all harvest units including the helicopter units. Alt F only has indirect effects since no project activities occur within IRAs.

Source: GIS; FASTR v 10212013

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Nine alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed analysis throughout the planning process. These are presented in the FEIS Chapter 2, pages 2-17 through 2-20, under Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study. Three additional proposals by appellants were considered during the 2009 informal appeal resolution but also eliminated from detailed analysis. These are described in Appendix ROD-3.

After the March 4, 2011 Federal District Court, District of Alaska ruling that the Tongass is no longer exempt from the 2001 Roadless Rule, I also considered modifying Alternatives B through E by dropping proposed units and roads within 2001 inventoried roadless areas, but chose to eliminate this from detailed analysis. The volume and economic results of modifying Alternatives B through D would not address any additional issues not already addressed by Alternative F, and modifying Alternative E was most similar to the TWS and SEACC proposals, which were considered but eliminated during the informal appeals resolution process.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

The Council on Environmental Quality defines the environmentally preferred alternative as “the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA's Section 101”. Ordinarily, this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative which best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources.” 40 CFR 1505.2(b) requires that one or more environmentally preferable alternatives be disclosed. The environmentally preferable alternative is not necessarily the alternative that will be implemented, and it does not have to meet the underlying need for the project. It does, however, have to cause the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protect, preserve, and enhance historical, cultural, and natural resources. I have reviewed the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of each alternative. I have determined that Alternative A, the no-action alternative, is the environmentally preferable alternative. This alternative is environmentally preferable because it would result in no environmental effects and thereby best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources on the National Forest. Alternative A does not meet the purpose and need, but it does provide me with a baseline to measure the direct and indirect effects of the action alternatives.

Of the action alternatives, I have identified Alternative F as the environmentally preferred alternative because it has the fewest acres of timber harvest, constructs the fewest miles of road, and would result in the fewest environmental impacts. In addition, it does not enter any 2001 IRAs.

Public Involvement

The Navy Timber Sale project included an extensive public involvement process, as documented in the FEIS Chapter 1 and in the project record. I want

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to thank the individuals, organizations and agencies that participated and provided comments that helped to shape this analysis. The public and agency comments received during scoping helped me to define the key issues, which in turn helped to develop the alternatives. Public comments on the DEIS were addressed in the FEIS and responses to those comments are presented in FEIS Appendix B. These responses were also reassessed in light of any new information and documented in Appendix ROD-3.

Appeals to the 2009 Decision

Some members of the public also exercised their rights to an administrative review of the 2009 Record of Decision through the appeal process. Four appeals to the 2009 Record of Decision on this project were submitted under the 36 CFR 215 appeal regulations. These raised a variety of appeal points, including range of alternatives, habitat connectivity and fragmentation, yellow-cedar, highgrading, clearcutting, climate change, deer model and wildlife, market demand and financial analysis, Forest Plan, old-growth reserves, roads and roadless areas, subsistence, and watershed, among others. I offered to meet with the appellants to see if an informal resolution could be reached that would resolve their concerns and still meet the objectives of this project. One appellant declined to participate. The other appellants and interested parties participated in discussions and provided some proposals. However, a mutually agreeable resolution was not reached and no appeals were withdrawn. The appeals then went to formal resolution.

I carefully reviewed the points raised during the 2009 appeal period and reviewed the Forest Service responses to the appeals. Further analysis was included to address or clarify issues raised in the 2009 appeal points pertaining to activities in this 2015 Record of Decision, and resource reports have been updated accordingly. This information is summarized in Appendix ROD-3 and updated reports were added to the project record. Information on the unit and road cards for the Selected Alternative (Appendices ROD-1 and ROD-2) has been clarified as well. The project record includes all of the 2009 appeals points and responses.

In making my decision, I considered the proposals presented by some of the appellants during the informal appeal resolution discussions in 2009. These proposals focused on deleting timber harvest units that 1) were within inventoried roadless areas, 2) were within the area between Anita Bay and Burnett Inlet, and 3) had an Alaska yellow-cedar component. Also proposed was 4) removing all culverts when putting roads into a storage status rather than using waterbars for erosion control. I feel that the Selected Alternative best responds to these concerns while still providing timber volume. The Selected Alternative avoids harvest and roadbuilding within inventoried roadless areas. The Selected Alternative partially addresses the Anita Bay/Burnett Inlet concern by increasing retention in Unit 67 and dropping a portion of Unit 70 as compared to Alternatives B, C, and D. All alternatives, including the Selected Alternative, include seed tree retention in some units to help maintain or increase the cedar component in regenerating stands, as shown on the unit cards.

I considered the appellants' fourth proposal point – the suggestion to remove all culverts from roads that will be put into storage. I have decided that the best time to determine whether to remove culverts from roads is at the time of road storage activity to best address site-specific conditions. In some cases, leaving the culvert in place with supplemental erosion control will cause less disturbance than pulling culverts from the roadbed. Roads with Objective Maintenance Level 1 planned for road storage after timber harvest activities are complete will be evaluated for erosion potential, and measures will be implemented to reduce sediment delivery and reduce the risk of crossing failure and stream diversion. This may include the removal of drainage structures and bridges, or construction of water bars, rolling dips or other measures necessary to protect resources. See Appendix ROD-2, Road Cards. This method has been successfully employed on the Tongass and is consistent with best management practices (BMPs).

Predecisional Administrative Review Process (Objection Process)

On January 21, 2014, I sent a letter to the people on the project mailing list notifying them that the Navy Timber Sale decision was now subject to the project-level predecisional administrative review process under Title 36 CFR Part 218. The project-level predecisional administrative review process gives the public an opportunity to object to the proposed decision prior to it being finalized. This process replaced the appeals process that was previously in place for the 2009 Record of Decision, and is further described under Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process (Objection Process) on page 24 of this ROD.

Mitigation

The analysis documented in the FEIS disclosed the possible adverse effects of implementing the actions proposed under each alternative. These effects were mitigated or reduced through the use of Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines. Specific mitigation measures are listed on the unit and road cards in Appendix ROD-1 and Appendix ROD-2. These are also discussed in FEIS Chapter 2, pp. 15-17 and Chapter 3, pp. 57-58.

Monitoring

Monitoring of the Selected Alternative will be done both during implementation (project-specific monitoring) and as part of the Forest Plan monitoring program. Project-specific monitoring is identified in Appendix ROD-1, Unit Cards and Appendix ROD-2, Road Cards. The Navy FEIS Chapter 2, pp. 16-17 and Chapter 3, pp. 58 and 107 also describes project-specific monitoring activities.

Project Record

The project record for this project includes the DEIS and FEIS, the Forest Plan, reports containing analyses by resource with supporting documentation, public communication and comments, all material incorporated by reference and other critical materials produced during the environmental analysis of this project.

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The project record is available electronically upon request from the Wrangell Ranger District.

Map Disclaimer

The USDA Forest Service makes no warranty, expressed or implied, including the warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose, nor assumes any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, reliability, completeness or utility of these geospatial data, or for the improper or incorrect use of these geospatial data. These geospatial data and related maps or graphics are not legal documents and are not intended to be used as such. The data and maps may not be used to determine title, ownership, legal descriptions or boundaries, legal jurisdiction, or restrictions that may be in place on either public or private land. Natural hazards may or may not be depicted on the data and maps, and land users should exercise due caution. The data are dynamic and may change over time. The user is responsible to verify the limitations of the geospatial data and to use the data accordingly and use constraints information.

Consistency with the Forest Plan and other Applicable Laws and Regulations

As the Responsible Official, it is my responsibility, prior to making a decision, to ensure that this project is consistent with the Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended, and other applicable laws and regulations. The Forest Plan describes in detail Forest-wide management direction, goals, objectives, research needs, desired conditions, and standards.

I have determined that the Selected Alternative is consistent with the Forest Plan and other applicable laws and regulations. The Selected Alternative will meet Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines, and will contribute toward reaching Forest Plan goals and objectives. The Selected Alternative is consistent with all land use designation standards and guidelines. I also find that my decision to implement the Selected Alternative is consistent with all applicable laws and regulations including NFMA, NEPA, ANILCA, ESA, and the other laws presented in more detail below.

My decision is consistent with Forest Service policy outlined in agency directives. By providing timber for offer and supporting jobs, the Selected Alternative also contributes to the USDA Investment Strategy for Creating Jobs and Healthy Communities in Southeast Alaska.

Findings Required by Law and Regulation

Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980; Section 810

Subsistence Evaluation: The decision on the Forest Plan concluded that “implementation of the Forest Plan may result in a significant restriction to subsistence use of deer due to the potential effects of projects on the abundance and distribution of these resources, and on competition for these resources” (ROD p. 61). This is based on the Forest Plan’s cumulative effects analysis of resource development on subsistence resources under full implementation of the Forest Plan, including this project. A subsistence evaluation was conducted for the six alternatives in accordance with Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) Section 810. An ANILCA 810 subsistence hearing was conducted in Wrangell Alaska in June 2008.

Based on the information in the FEIS and the new information analysis, effects within the foreseeable future from this project alone would not result in a significant possibility of a significant restriction on any subsistence resources.

Finding: In accordance with Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) Section 810, I have made a determination for the subsistence evaluation that the direct effects of the project will not result in a risk of a significant restriction on the subsistence use of any resources, including deer (FEIS p. 3-122). Cumulatively, since additional timber harvest may occur at some future time in the development LUDs in WAA 1901, there may be a significant possibility of a significant restriction on subsistence use of deer in WAA 1901 in the future due to additional reductions in habitat capability. This is consistent with the Forest Plan finding that full implementation of the Plan could lead to a significant possibility of a significant restriction on subsistence use of deer. The potential foreseeable effects, directly and cumulatively, from the Selected Alternative will not have a significant possibility of a significant restriction on subsistence uses for other resources including bears, furbearers, marine mammals, waterfowl, salmon, other finfish, shellfish, and other foods such as berries and roots.

The evaluation determined that:

- **Necessary and Consistent with Sound Management of Public Lands:** I have determined that the Selected Alternative is necessary and consistent with sound management of public lands. In this regard, I have evaluated this project against the National Forest Management Act, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, the Tongass Timber Reform Act, the Wilderness Act, the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan, and the Alaska State Forest Resources and Practices Act. Based on the analysis presented in the Navy Final EIS, the findings I have made in this ROD and the analysis for the Forest Plan, I have determined that the Selected Alternative strikes a balance between meeting the resource needs of the public and protecting the forest resources.

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- **Amount of Public Land Necessary to Accomplish the Proposed Action:** I have determined that the amount of land necessary to implement the Selected Alternative is, considering sound multiple-use management of public lands, the minimum necessary to accomplish the purpose of this project. The entire forested portion of the Tongass is used by at least one rural community for subsistence purposes for, at a minimum, deer hunting. It is not possible to avoid all of these areas in implementing resource use activities, such as timber harvesting and road construction, and attempting to reduce effects in some areas can mean increasing the effects in other areas. The current Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines and LUD prescriptions provide for management or limit activities in many of the area's most important for subsistence uses, such as beaches and estuaries, and areas with high fish and wildlife habitat values.
- **Reasonable Steps to Minimize Adverse Impacts to Subsistence Uses and Resources:** Subsistence use is addressed specifically in a Forest-wide Standard and Guideline, and subsistence resources are covered by the Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines for wildlife, fish, riparian areas, and biological diversity, among others. I have determined that fish and wildlife habitat productivity will be maintained at the highest level possible for the Selected Alternative, consistent with the overall multiple-use goals and improved protection of the Forest Plan.

Bald Eagle Protection Act

I have determined that the Selected Alternative complies with the most recent information for the protection of bald eagle protection requirements in 50 CFR Part 22.26. These are described in Appendix ROD-3.

Clean Air Act of 1970 (as amended)

I have determined that emissions from the implementation of the Selected Alternative will be of short duration and are not expected to exceed State of Alaska ambient air quality standards (18 AAC 50). This includes any smoke associated with biofuels used for heating commercial buildings and residences.

Clean Water Act (1977, as amended)

I have determined that the project activities meet all applicable State of Alaska Water Quality Standards. Section 313 of the Clean Water Act and Executive Order 12088 of January 23, 1987 addresses Federal agency compliance and consistency with water pollution control mandates. Agencies must be consistent with requirements that apply to "any governmental entity" or private person. Compliance is to be in line with "all Federal, State, interstate, and local requirements, administrative authority, and process and sanctions respecting the control and abatement of water pollution."

Clean Water Act Sections 208 and 319 address nonpoint source pollution caused by activities such as timber harvest. Soil and water conservation practices are recognized by EPA as the primary control mechanisms for nonpoint source pollution on National Forest System lands. The site-specific application of best

management practices (BMPs), with a monitoring and feedback mechanism, is the approved strategy for controlling nonpoint source pollution as defined by Alaska's Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Strategy (ADEC 2007). In 1997, the State of Alaska approved the BMPs in the Forest Service's Soil and Water Conservation Handbook (USFS 2006) as consistent with the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Regulations. The BMPs are incorporated into the Tongass Land Management Plan. My finding is based in part on the fact that annual Tongass National Forest BMP monitoring results consistently report a high success rate at applying BMPs (USFS 2005-2012).

A discharge of dredge or fill material from normal silvicultural activities such as harvesting for the production of forest products is exempt from Section 404 permitting requirements in waters of the United States, including wetlands (404(f)(1)(A)). Forest roads, as defined by US Army Corps of Engineers guidance, are exempt from Clean Water Act Section 404 permitting if they are constructed and maintained in accordance with BMPs to assure that flow and circulation patterns and chemical and biological characteristics of the waters are not impaired (404(f)(1)(E)). The BMPs that must be followed are specified in 33 CFR 323.4(a). These specific BMPs are incorporated into the Alaska Region BMPs under BMP 12.5. I have determined that all roads approved in this project are exempt from Section 404 permitting requirements in waters of the United States, including wetlands (404(f)(1)(A)).

The Forest Service has issued National BMPs (April 2012). Directives for using these BMPs are currently in development. Currently, this project cites the Alaska Region BMPs, which are fully described in FSH 2509.22. A crosswalk between the current Alaska Region BMPs and these National BMPs has been placed in the project record for reference. The Navy Timber Sale will implement the most up-to-date BMP guidance.

Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (as amended)

A biological assessment was prepared for this project. I concur with the finding of "May affect, but is not likely to adversely affect" the federally listed species. An updated biological assessment was sent to the National Marine Fisheries Service as part of the Section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act. NMFS concurred with the findings on September 7, 2012.

Two fish species, the lower Columbia River coho salmon and the green sturgeon, were added as Threatened to the Alaska list on March 2013. A finding of "no effect" was made for these species since no critical habitat occurs in Alaska; NMFS concurred that therefore no consultation was required for these species. On November 4, 2013, a Final Rule was published in the Federal Register, delisting the eastern distinct population segment Steller sea lion, effective December 4, 2013 (78 FR 66139). This species will continue to be protected under provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Federal Cave Resource Protection Act of 1988

I have determined that the activities of the Selected Alternative will not have a direct, indirect, or cumulative effect on any significant cave resource in the Navy

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project area, since these features do not exist. There are minor occurrences of carbonate rock and associated cave resources in the Navy project area, but these will not be adversely affected by the Selected Alternative.

National Forest Transportation System Final Administrative Policy and Final Rule

The Final EIS and this ROD are prepared to be consistent with the National Forest System Transportation Final Administrative Policy and Final Rule (2001), as well as the Tongass National Forest Level Road Analysis (2003), the 2005 Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212) (FEIS p. 3-133), the Wrangell Ranger District Road Analysis (2006), and the Wrangell Ranger District Access and Travel Management Plan (ATM) (2007). I have determined the proposed road system is “the minimum road system needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands” (36 CFR 212.5).

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

The Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation Act requires the Forest Service to consult with the National Marine Fisheries Service on projects that may affect essential fish habitat (EFH). The potential effects of the project on EFH are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS. Chapter 3 also includes a description of the EFH in the project area, a description of the proposed activities, and a description of the measures that will protect these essential habitats (FEIS pp. 3-154 to 156). I have reviewed the potential effects of the project on EFH discussed in the FEIS Chapter 3 and have determined that this project may adversely affect EFH (FEIS p. 3-155).

National Marine Fisheries Service was formally consulted on the project. They concurred with my findings that the Navy Timber Sale “May adversely affect EFH because of cumulative effects of past harvest” and submitted recommendations. These recommendations were considered in evaluating the potential effects of all of the alternatives on EFH. Information on applicable BMPs, standards and guidelines, and design measures and criteria to minimize effects to EFH are presented in Appendices ROD-1 and ROD-2, and in Chapter 3 of the FEIS. I have reviewed Appendix ROD-3 and there is no new information that would prompt a reevaluation of EFH.

Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972

Actions authorized in the Selected Alternative will not have a direct, indirect, or cumulative effect on marine mammals. All marine wildlife guidelines, including special prohibitions on approaching humpback whales in Alaska as defined in 50 CFR 224.103 will be followed during project implementation. These marine mammal viewing guidelines are administered by the National Marine Fisheries Service and enforced by the Coast Guard, and are deemed sufficient for their protection.

National Forest Management Act of 1976 (as amended)

The National Forest Management Act requires several specific determinations in the Record of Decision. These are consistency with the governing Forest Plan, a

determination of clearcutting as the optimal method of harvesting, if used, and specific authorizations to create openings over 100 acres in size.

Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended)

Based on the discussion that follows, I have determined that this decision is consistent with the Forest Plan as amended.

The Forest Plan was completed with the signing of the Record of Decision on January 23, 2008 after the issuance of the Navy Draft EIS (November 2, 2007).

The decision for the Forest Plan contains transition language for the Navy Timber Sale project, which was already being planned, referred to as Category 2 projects. Category 2 projects are projects that the Responsible Official reviewed and determined “are consistent with the goals and objectives of the amended Plan”. The environmental effects of the Navy project have been disclosed to the public through site-specific project-level environmental documents. Navy and the other projects in Category 2 were also assumed to be implemented in the environmental analysis.

I have reviewed the Navy project and incorporated the new direction and analysis for the amended Forest Plan to the extent this can be done without causing major disruptions in the implementation of the project.

Clearcutting as the Optimal Method of Harvesting

Based on the information presented in the FEIS and Forest Plan direction, I have determined that clearcutting is the optimal method of harvesting where it is applied. Site-specific information and rationale where clearcutting is optimal is presented in the silvicultural prescriptions. Clearcutting (an even-aged method) has been prescribed in this project to preclude or minimize the occurrence of potentially adverse impacts from windthrow where the potential is moderate to high, to remove or reduce mistletoe infestations, and to reduce wounding due to logging damage to adjacent trees.

Harvest Openings Over 100 Acres in Size

I have determined that there will be no created openings in excess of 100 acres with the harvest of the Selected Alternative units.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (as amended)

Under the provisions of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, I have made a determination of “No Historic Properties Affected”. There will be no effects to sites listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Heritage resource surveys were conducted in the analysis area in accordance with the Regional Inventory Strategy. By following the provisions of the Programmatic Agreement between the Forest Service, Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, this action complies with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. No effects on known heritage resources are anticipated.

The State Historic Preservation Officer was consulted, in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA and 36 CFR Part 800. Therefore, I have complied with the consultation process with the State Historic Preservation Officer.

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Native communities have been contacted during this process and reports provided for comment.

Tongass Timber Reform Act (TTRA) of 1990

I have determined this project is in compliance of the relevant provisions of TTRA. Any timber harvested under the Selected Alternative will provide part of the timber supply to the Tongass National Forest's timber program as stated in Section 101 of TTRA - "... the Secretary shall, to the extent consistent with providing for the multiple use and sustained yield of all renewable forest resources, seek to provide a supply of timber from the Tongass National Forest which (1) meets the annual market demand for timber from such forest and (2) meets the annual market demand from such forest for each planning cycle."

No commercial timber harvest will occur within 100 feet of any Class I stream or any Class II stream flowing directly into a Class I stream, as required in Section 103 of the TTRA.

Applicable Executive Orders

Executive Order 11988 (Floodplains)

Per Executive Order 11988, I have determined that the Selected Alternative avoids all floodplains.

Executive Order 11990 (Wetlands)

I have determined that the long- and short-term adverse effects associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands in the implementation of the Navy Timber Sale will be avoided to the extent possible. The techniques and practices required by the Forest Service serve to maintain the wetland attributes, including values and functions. In some areas, soil moisture regime and vegetation composition or structure may be altered; however, these altered acres would still be classified as wetlands and would function as wetlands in the ecosystem. Where wetlands cannot be avoided, road construction will adhere to BMPs, which include at a minimum the Federal baseline provisions in 33 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 323. There will be approximately 5 acres loss of wetlands due to road construction for the Selected Alternative.

Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice)

The FEIS analyzed environmental justice to determine whether a disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental impact on minority populations, low-income populations, or Indian tribes was likely to result from the proposed action and any alternatives. The Executive Order specifically directs agencies to consider patterns of subsistence hunting and fishing when an agency action may affect fish or wildlife. I have determined that no communities are identified as being adversely affected in this area and that none of the alternatives would have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on the health of the environment of the minority, low-income, or Indian populations that use the Navy Timber Sale area.

Executive Order 12962 (Aquatic Systems, Recreational Fisheries)

Per Executive Order 12962, I have determined that the Selected Alternative minimizes the effects on aquatic systems through project design, application of standards and guidelines, BMPs, and site-specific mitigation measures. In the Navy project area, opportunities for recreational fishing are limited. For the Selected Alternative, recreational fishing opportunities would remain essentially the same as the current condition, because aquatic habitats are protected through implementation of BMPs and riparian standards and guidelines.

Executive Order 13007 (Indian Sacred Sites)

Executive Order 13007 directs Federal agencies to consider the protection of American Indian sacred sites and allow access where feasible. In a government-to-government relationship, the tribal government is responsible for notifying the agency of the existence of a sacred site. A sacred site is defined as a site that has sacred significance due to established religious beliefs or ceremonial uses, and which has a specific, discrete, and delineated location that has been identified by the tribe. I have determined that tribal governments or their authorized representatives were consulted and they did not identify any specific sacred site locations in the project area.

Executive Order 13112 (Invasive Species)

A risk assessment completed for the FEIS evaluated the status of invasive species in the project area and the effects from the proposed activities on them. I have included specific measures in Appendix ROD-1, Unit Cards to minimize the introduction and spread of invasive plant species in the Selected Alternative.

Executive Order 13175 (Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments)

Executive Order 13175 directs Federal agencies to respect tribal self-government, sovereignty, and tribal rights, and to engage in regular and meaningful government-to-government consultation with tribes on proposed actions with tribal implications. I have complied with this Order and have consulted with and provided information to the following federally recognized tribal governments about this project:

- Wrangell Cooperative Association
- Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
- Organized Village of Kake
- Petersburg Indian Association

In addition, I have consulted with and provided information to the following corporations about this project:

- Sealaska Corporation
- Kake Tribal Corporation

A detailed list of this consultation is in Chapter 1 of the FEIS.

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Executive Order 13186 Migratory Birds

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (amended in 1936 and 1972) prohibits the taking of migratory birds, unless authorized by the Secretary of Interior. The law provides the primary mechanism to regulate waterfowl hunting seasons and bag limits, but its scope is not just limited to waterfowl. The migratory species that may stay in the area utilize most, if not all, of the habitats described in the analysis for breeding, nesting, and raising their young. The effects on these habitats were analyzed for this project. I have determined that the decision will not have a significant direct, indirect, or cumulative effect on any migratory bird species in the project area. There may be moderate direct effects on individuals or small groups and their nests from the harvest of timber or the disturbance caused by harvest and related activities.

Executive Order 13443 (Facilitation of Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation)

Executive Order 13443 directs Federal agencies to facilitate the expansion and enhancement of hunting opportunities and the management of game species and their habitat. The analysis considered and disclosed the effects on hunting activities. I have determined that the Selected Alternative will maintain hunting opportunities by adhering to the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines that maintain habitat for hunted species.

Federal and State Permits

Federal and State permits necessary to implement the authorized activities are listed at the end of Chapter 1 in the FEIS.

Results of the Objection Process Pursuant to 36 CFR 218

As this project implements a land management plan, the Navy Timber Sale draft ROD was subject to review and objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B regulations (the objection process). Notification of the availability of the Navy draft ROD (online or hard copy), as well as the 2009 FEIS, was mailed to all people and organizations that commented during any prior designated opportunity for public comment. A legal notice of opportunity to object was published on April 24, 2015 in the *Ketchikan Daily News*, the Forest's newspaper of record. Two objections were received during the objection filing period - one from Greenpeace/Cascadia Wildlands Project, and one from Southeast Alaska Conservation Council/Wrangell Resource Council. One letter supporting the project was received.

Twenty-one objection points were identified, covering a broad range of issues, including changes to the Wrangell economy, timber demand and related calculations, limited export policy, local economies, Queen Charlotte goshawks, analysis of deer habitat capability and wolves, fragmentation and OGRs, transportation and BMPs, marine fisheries, and climate change. Objectors also

felt that the draft ROD did not adequately consider potentially new information available since the 2009 FEIS was completed, including recent wildlife studies and economic circumstances, among others.

The Forest Service's review of the objection points focused on ensuring the Navy Timber Sale meets current requirements and determining whether changes are warranted to improve upon the analysis and decision based on the objections submitted.

Review of Literature Submitted

The objectors to the Navy draft Record of Decision submitted additional literature as exhibits with their objections for the Forest Service to consider. Navy IDT personnel reviewed this literature to determine the applicability of the submitted documents, including any information that may not have previously been considered in the FEIS or draft Record of Decision to the project area, proposed activities, and potential effects to project area resources. In summary, the literature review resulted in the following: some references submitted were already used by resource specialists in their analysis; others, while potentially relevant at a Forest-level scale, were not applicable at the project level and therefore had not been used; and finally the majority were deemed not applicable for various other reasons.

Documentation of this review and evaluation of the references submitted, and our determination of their applicability to the project area and analysis is in the project record. In summary, although some of the literature was applicable, it had already been used to inform the analysis, and I found that the literature submitted did not contribute additional insight or data relevant to a project-specific analysis, or constitute relevant information not previously considered in the FEIS or updated information upon which this decision is based.

Attempts to Resolve Objections – Objection Resolution Meeting

After receiving the objections to the Navy Timber Sale draft ROD, the Responsible Official extended an invitation to the objectors for a resolution meeting to discuss their objections and potential solutions. The objectors declined to participate in a resolution meeting, either in person or via conference phone. As such, no resolution was reached with the objectors at that time.

Full objection content and the Forest Service responses to objections are available in the project file and on the Tongass National Forest website (http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=14556). Further detail regarding Forest Service responses to, and attempts to resolve, the objections are discussed in the Reviewing Officer's letter to the objectors. I am satisfied we have adequately addressed the concerns raised to date regarding potential effects of the project on the resources in the project and analysis areas. These public comments helped to improve the analysis, ultimately resulting in a better-informed final decision.

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Written Response to Objections and Instructions to Forest

After a deliberative and extensive review of concerns raised by objectors, on July 23, 2015 the Reviewing Officer, Regional Forester Beth Pendleton, issued a letter to the objectors that responded to their objection points.

The letter also provided me with instructions to address and update certain areas in the analysis that were brought up during the objection process. Specifically, this letter instructed me on the following:

1) Prepare a supplement/addendum to the BA/BE for the Navy project that includes the following items:

a. Documentation and review of the updated survey and nest monitoring information obtained during the 2015 season.

Forest response: An updated BE which includes updated survey and nest monitoring information was completed and is in the planning record. The BE determination of “may adversely impact individuals, but not likely to result in a loss of viability in the Planning Area, nor cause a trend toward federal listing” has not changed. As documented in the updated BE, goshawk monitoring was conducted in the project area from 2004 through 2007 with additional monitoring in 2009. As part of ongoing monitoring, in July 2015 surveys were conducted along the road for Alternative F units, including monitoring of two historic (inactive) nest sites within the Camp Carl goshawk buffer in the Anita Bay/Burnett Inlet area. A third inactive nest in a dead tree in the same area is now missing. While no new goshawk nests were discovered, two large fledglings were found in Unit 75, which is west of the Camp Carl territory. In addition, a new nest belonging to a sharp-shinned hawk was found in within the Starfish goshawk buffer. Forest Plan Raptor Nest Protection Standards and Guidelines apply; however, the nest is already protected due to its location within the goshawk buffer and no units were affected.

These areas will continue to be monitored in 2016 along with Selected Alternative roads. I am deferring Unit 75 in the Selected Alternative from implementation until the follow-up surveys in 2016 are completed. If any new nests are discovered, the unit will be dropped, the appropriate Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines will be applied, and any timber sale contract implementing the project will be modified through appropriate provisions, if warranted.

This updated information is included in the Navy project record.

b. A review of the relevance of the new literature cited by the objectors (Sonsthagen 2012 and Smith 2013).

Forest response: The Sonsthagen 2012, and Smith 2013 reports submitted by the objectors have been reviewed for relevance to the project. Sonsthagen 2012 studied metapopulation characteristics and trends throughout coastal British Columbia (BC) and Southeast Alaska. Sonsthagen concludes that assemblages of northern goshawk within the

Alexander Archipelago and BC exhibit characteristics of both source-sink and rescue-effect models, indicating the availability of sufficient habitat connectivity at a landscape level.

The Smith 2013 paper evaluates the Tongass Conservation Strategy, and raises questions regarding the sufficiency of Forest Plan conservation measures in contributing to viable populations. These points are being considered at a wider, regional scale for the Forest Plan Amendment; however, this paper was not applicable at the project scale to inform the analysis or decision.

Although these two reports were not available prior to the FEIS for Navy, I find that this literature did not provide additional relevant data or information applicable to the Navy project-specific analysis. The reports have been placed in the project record.

c. Revised maps of the Etolin Island WAAs, current harvest units, POG, and designated nest buffers should be developed for the project record and referenced in the BA/BE.

Forest response: This information was already considered and in the planning record, but was not presented in a single map. The updated BE includes maps showing POG and the buffers surrounding goshawk nest locations, as well as land use designations, value comparison units, wildlife analysis areas, roadless areas, Etolin Island wildlife corridors, managed stands and ROD units. While the 2015 goshawk surveys disclosed the possibility of a new nest in Unit 75, I find that the updated BE did not result in additional information and conclusions not previously evaluated in the FEIS or considered in this decision.

d. An update to the cumulative effects analysis for goshawks, based on all of the above information.

Forest response: The cumulative effects analysis for goshawks was reviewed based on the updated BE. Information from 2015 surveys, and consideration of additional recent literature did not result in any changes to the cumulative effects analysis or conclusions for Navy, as presented in the BE, FEIS, or ROD.

2) Validate the habitat connectivity information in the Anita Bay pinch point area after review of the goshawk nest buffers and partial harvest prescriptions for the harvest units in this area.

Forest response: Habitat connectivity in the Anita Bay/Burnett Inlet area has been of particular interest throughout the Navy project. I have validated the habitat connectivity information in the FEIS. Additional maps included in the updated BE depict the location of the partial-harvest units in relation to the goshawk buffers, and the type of POG in this area. The goshawk nest buffer area between Anita Bay and the head of Burnett Inlet contains about 233 acres surrounding two known, inactive nests. As shown on the map in the updated BE, over half this buffer is comprised of high-POG (129 acres),

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with lesser amounts of medium-POG (34 acres) and unproductive forest (61 acres) and a very small amount of low-POG and young growth (3 and 5 acres respectively). The rest of the area does contain other old growth, including low-productivity old growth that provides connectivity for other species as well, except perhaps during times of severe snow events.

Units 70, 72, 73, and 74 in the area north of the Anita Bay/Burnett Inlet nest buffer will implement partial-harvest prescriptions, with either 15 percent or 50 percent retention. Unit 67 east of the nest buffer has 50 percent retention to retain part of the low-elevation POG corridor. Unit 75, west of the Anita Bay/Burnett Inlet nest buffer, will implement a single-tree-selection prescription. However, I am deferring Unit 75 from implementation until additional goshawk surveys establish that there is no nest in the area. Partial-harvest prescriptions, as well as the 233-acre nest buffer, will help retain connectivity in the Anita Bay/Burnett Inlet area. As seen on the maps in the updated BE, much of the existing connectivity will remain through the combination of the goshawk buffer and remaining old-growth stands, unmanaged lower-productivity old-growth stands, and the partial-harvest prescriptions, and I find that this retains habitat connectivity for both goshawks and other species in the Anita Bay/Burnett Inlet area.

3) Review any new reports or other publications relative to wolves in Southeast Alaska for relevancy to the Navy project, and update any supporting documents if warranted.

Forest response: I reviewed the new reports and publications for new information relative to wolves for relevancy during the preparation of the draft ROD and during the response to objections on the draft ROD. Besides the literature referenced in the draft ROD, recent information included ADFG management reports, personal contacts, and exhibits provided by the objectors during the objection period.

The results of this review are in the Navy project record. No new information was disclosed that changed the analysis or conclusions for the Selected Alternative; rather, where information was relevant to Etolin Island, the Navy conclusions were validated by the updated information.

Summary

In response to this letter and instructions, I have completed the addendum to the Biological Evaluation (BE) and updated the identified information. As a result of updated information, I am deferring the implementation of Unit 75 pending the results of additional goshawk surveys. I have reviewed connectivity information related to goshawk nest buffers and harvest prescriptions in the Anita Bay/Burnett Inlet area, and reviewed available information relating to wolves on Etolin Island. I have followed the procedures set forth in FSH 1909.15, Section 18.1 in my review and consideration of the information in the addendum and its effect on my decision. I have concluded that this review of new information did not disclose any significant new information or changed circumstances relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed

action or its impacts in a manner not previously considered, and a correction, supplement, or revision to this environmental document and decision is not necessary.

Process for Implementation

Appendices ROD-1 and ROD-2 contain the Selected Alternative unit and road cards, respectively. These cards are an integral part of this decision because they document the specific resource concerns, management objectives, and mitigation measures to govern the layout of the harvest units and construction of roads, and are hereby incorporated into this decision. These cards will be used during the implementation process to ensure that the project is implemented within applicable standards and guidelines and that resource effects will not be greater than those described in the FEIS. Similar cards will document any changes to the planned layout, which may occur during implementation.

Minor changes are expected during implementation to better meet on-site resource management and protection objectives. Minor adjustments to unit boundaries are also likely during final layout to improve logging system efficiency. This usually entails adjusting the boundary to coincide with logical logging setting boundaries. Proposed changes to the authorized project actions will be subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act the National Forest Management Act, and other laws concerning such changes.

This project will be implemented in accordance with Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2430 and Forest Service Handbook FSH 2409.18 direction for timber sale project implementation. This direction provides a bridge between project planning and implementation and will ensure execution of the actions, environmental standards, and mitigations approved by this decision, and compliance with the Forest Plan and all applicable laws, policy and direction. The current applicable BMPs will be applied to the Selected Alternative.

Changes made during implementation will be reviewed, documented, and approved by the Responsible Official through the Tongass Supplement to FSH 1909.15-2009-1. In determining whether and what kind of NEPA action is required for changes during implementation, the Forest Supervisor will consider the criteria in the Code of Federal Regulations (40 CFR 1502.9(c)), and Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, sec. 18 to determine whether to supplement or revise an existing environmental impact statement. I will determine whether the proposed change is a substantial change to the Selected Alternative as planned and already approved, and whether the change is relevant to environmental concerns. I will consider connected or interrelated changes to particular areas or specific activities in making this determination. The cumulative impacts of these changes will also be considered.

The implementation unit and road cards (Appendices ROD-1 and ROD-2), as approved by this process, are incorporated into the timber sale contract. The sale administrators and road inspectors then enforce the contract requirements with the operators.

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The implementation record for this project will display the following:

- Each harvest unit, transportation facility, and other project components as actually implemented,
- Any proposed changes to the design, location, standards and guidelines, or other mitigation measures for the project, and
- Authorization of the proposed changes.

Implementation of all activities authorized by this Record of Decision will be monitored to ensure that they are carried out as planned and described in the FEIS.

Implementation Date

Implementation of this decision may commence immediately after the decision is signed. There is not a requirement to publish notification of the final decision.

Contact Information

For additional information concerning this decision, contact Robert Dalrymple, District Ranger, Wrangell Ranger District, P.O. Box 51, Wrangell, AK 99929, or call (907) 874-2323.

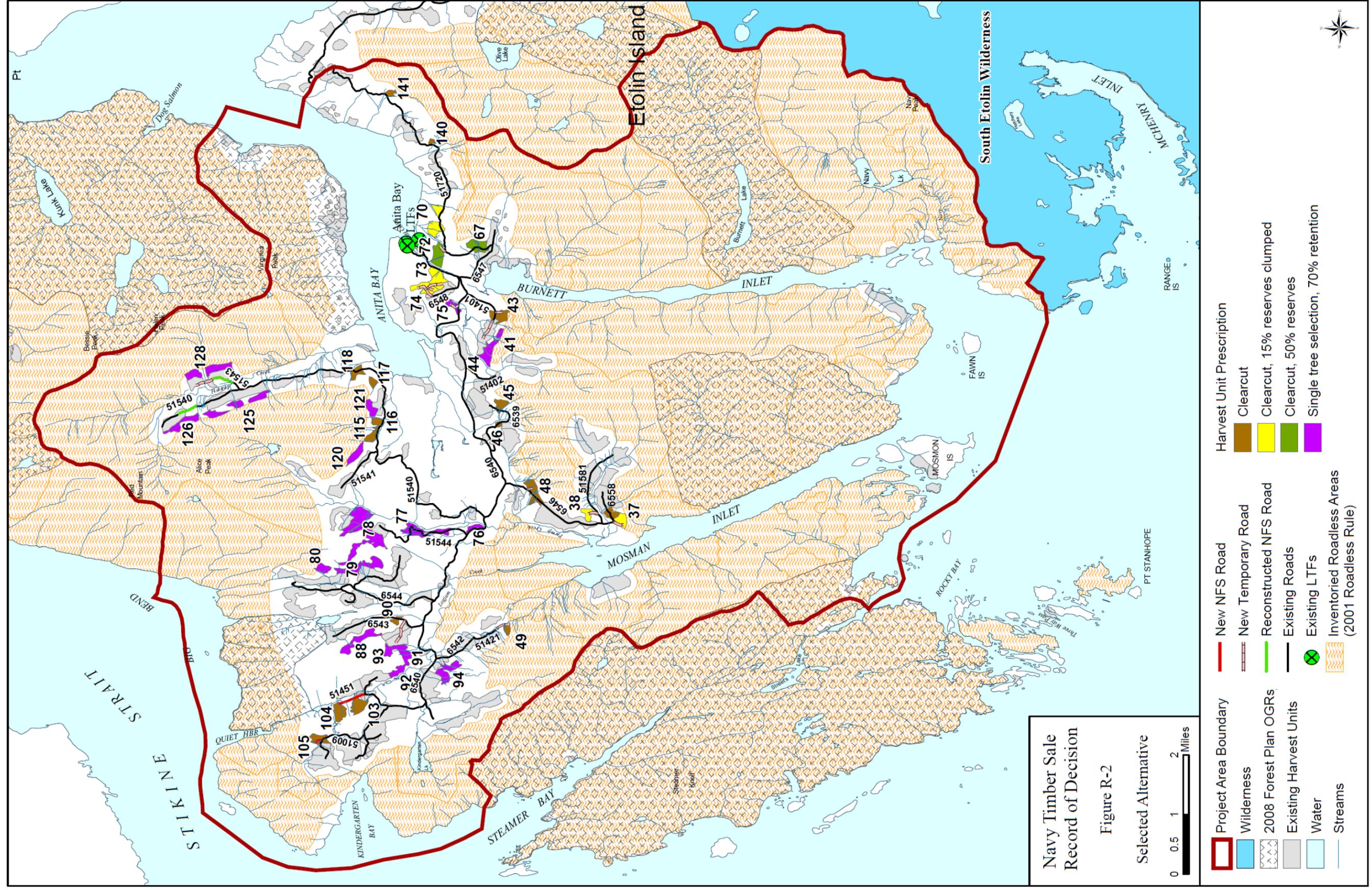
Responsible Official



M. EARL STEWART
Forest Supervisor



DATE



Navy Timber Sale
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Figure R-2
Selected Alternative

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

- | | | |
|------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Project Area Boundary | New NFS Road | Harvest Unit Prescription
Clearcut |
| Wilderness | New Temporary Road | Clearcut, 15% reserves clumped |
| 2008 Forest Plan OGRs | Reconstructed NFS Road | Clearcut, 50% reserves |
| Existing Harvest Units | Existing Roads | Single tree selection, 70% retention |
| Water | Existing LTFs | |
| Streams | Inventoried Roadless Areas
(2001 Roadless Rule) | |

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