



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Alaska Region  
Tongass National Forest  
Thorne Bay Ranger District

P.O. Box 19001  
Thorne Bay, AK 99919-0001  
Phone: (907) 828-3304  
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**File Code:**

**Date:** February 9, 2011

## INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE Big Thorne EIS Project

Dear Participating Partner:

The Tongass National Forest, Thorne Bay Ranger District, is about to begin an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Big Thorne Project, located on the eastern half of Prince of Wales Island between the communities of Thorne Bay and Coffman Cove, Alaska. The Big Thorne Project is the multi-year timber sale component of a larger stewardship effort that will include opportunities such as restoration and enhancement activities that will be identified through other environmental analyses. Stewardship opportunities would be developed by combining this project with current and future restoration and enhancement projects. The overall effort will be implemented through the use of various contracting authorities available to the Forest Service, including timber sale, service, and stewardship contracts, by combining some of the timber harvest activities of this project with restoration and enhancement activities to be analyzed separately.

The proposed action would harvest timber from approximately 5,800 acres of forested land using various sizes of timber sales, offered over a period of about 10 years, within the roaded land base on Prince of Wales Island. Approximately 37 miles of National Forest System and temporary roads would be constructed and about 26 miles of existing roads would be reconstructed. Preliminary analysis shows that an estimated 100 million board feet of sawtimber and utility wood could be made available to industry for harvest.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the proposed project and request your comments during the scoping phase of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation process. Your comments on the project proposal will be used as an integral part of the environmental analysis to determine the range of actions, alternatives, and impacts to be considered in the EIS, guide the analysis and documentation, and identify significant issues. The attached scoping document and proposed action map describe the project and the NEPA process in greater detail.

### **NEPA Schedule**

The official comment period will run 30 days from the publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on February 11, 2011. The Forest Service will review and consider all comments received during the scoping period and prepare a scoping report that will define and frame the issues for analysis. The Draft EIS is projected to be published in the early fall of 2011 and it will have a 45-day comment period from the date it is filed with the Environmental Protection Agency. The Final EIS and Record of Decision are expected to be published in late winter 2012.



**How to Comment**

We encourage you to comment on the Big Thorne Project proposal and identify issues, which may be of concern to you. Please try to be specific when identifying a concern. Written comments, emails, and phone calls are welcome at any time; however, to be most useful, comments should be submitted by March 13, 2011.

Please send written comments to:

Thorne Bay Ranger District, Tongass NF  
Attn: Big Thorne Project EIS  
P.O. Box 19001  
Thorne Bay, AK. 99919-0001

Comments may be hand-delivered to:

Thorne Bay Ranger District, Tongass NF  
Attn: Big Thorne Project EIS  
1312 Federal Way  
Thorne Bay, AK 99919-0001

Comments may also be emailed to [comments-alaska-tongass-thorne-bay@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-alaska-tongass-thorne-bay@fs.fed.us) or faxed to 907-828-3309. Please put "Big Thorne Project EIS" in the subject line. In all correspondence, please include your name, address, and organization name if you are commenting as a representative of an organization.

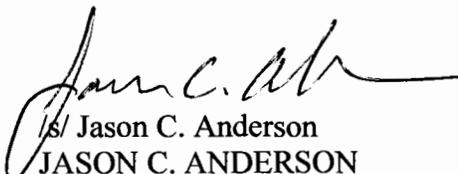
In addition, we encourage you to attend one of the public scoping meetings that will be held at the following locations and times:

Thorne Bay - Ranger District Office	February 28, 2011	6 – 8 pm
Naukati - School	March 1, 2011	6 – 8 pm
Coffman Cove – HarborView Hall	March 2, 2011	6 – 8 pm
Craig – CCA Hall	March 3, 2011	6 – 8 pm

You can provide written comments at the meetings or you can discuss your concerns with a Forest Service representative.

**PLEASE NOTE:** People receiving this invitation will automatically receive a CD copy of the Draft EIS for review and comment and a CD copy of the Final EIS and ROD, when it becomes available. If you desire to receive paper copies instead of CDs, we ask that you fill out the enclosed postcard and send it back. Thank you.

Sincerely,

  
/s/ Jason C. Anderson  
JASON C. ANDERSON  
District Ranger

Attachment

# Big Thorne Project EIS

## Scoping Document



The Tongass National Forest, Thorne Bay Ranger District, is starting an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Big Thorne Project, located on the eastern half of Prince of Wales Island between the communities of Thorne Bay and Coffman Cove, Alaska. The Big Thorne Project is the multi-year timber sale component of a larger stewardship effort that will include opportunities such as restoration and enhancement activities that will be identified through other environmental analyses. Stewardship opportunities would be developed by combining this project with current and future restoration and enhancement projects.

### **Project Purpose**

The purpose of the Big Thorne Project is to implement the Tongass Land Management Plan, aligned with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Strategic Plan FY 2010–2015 and the Tongass National Forest transition strategy. The USDA Strategic Plan identifies key priorities and desired outcomes, such as the goals of rural prosperity and preservation and maintenance of forests, as well as means and strategies to achieve them. This project will help to provide an economically viable, reliable, long-term supply of timber that will support jobs for the communities of Southeast Alaska and facilitate the transition to a sustainable forest industry based on young-growth management. Forest restoration and enhancement activities on Prince of Wales Island will be integrated during project implementation to further accomplish the goals of the Strategic Plan. These activities could include the repair of road culverts that do not meet current standards for the passage of fish; recreation activities such as trail improvement; and wildlife and fisheries habitat improvement such as thinning or stream restoration.

### **Proposed Action**

The Forest Service is proposing a multi-year timber sale project as part of a larger stewardship effort. The proposed action would harvest timber from approximately 5,800 acres of forested land within the roaded land base on Prince of Wales Island using various sizes of timber sales, offered over a period of about 10 years (see attached map). About 90 percent of these acres are in Phase 1 lands and approximately 600 acres are in Phase 2 lands of the Tongass Timber Sale Program Adaptive Management Strategy. The Phase 2 acres would be reserved for small timber sales. The Adaptive Management Strategy (described in detail in the 2008 Tongass Land Management Plan Record of Decision), restricts current harvesting to the Phase 1 land base, with the exception of small sales, which may be conducted in Phase 2 lands.

Approximately 37 miles of National Forest System and temporary roads would be constructed and about 26 miles of existing roads would be reconstructed. Preliminary analysis shows that an estimated 100 million board feet of sawtimber and utility wood could be made available to industry for harvest. Existing log transfer facilities would be used as needed. Harvest would include helicopter, ground-based, and cable yarding systems and could include even-aged, even-aged with reserves, two-aged with reserves, and uneven-aged harvest prescriptions to achieve stand objectives.

All proposed activities would meet the standards and guidelines of the Tongass Land Management Plan.

While the Forest Service is proposing timber harvest in this project area and other areas on Prince of Wales Island, a collaborative process for this project area has been proposed by stakeholders and would seek to identify and develop restoration and enhancement projects. The projects from this collaborative effort will be integrated with this timber sale project during implementation to provide stewardship opportunities. The effects of the reasonably foreseeable restoration and enhancement projects will be considered in this analysis, but are not part of this proposed action.

The restoration and enhancement activities will be generated from other planning documents, including but not limited to: the Cobble Landscape Assessment, Luck Lake Watershed Restoration Plan, the Prince of Wales and Surrounding Islands Access Travel Management Plan, and possibly others. In addition, because this project extends over several years, the Forest Service will integrate the project during implementation with future restoration and enhancement projects, including projects developed as a result of the Prince of Wales Island Young Growth Thinning Feasibility Study now being conducted. Examples of specific restoration and enhancement opportunities would include roads and transportation activities (e.g., repairing “red pipes” or bridges, erosion control, vegetation removal, or road relocation); recreation activities (e.g., campground and trails improvements, picnic sites, or vegetation management); young-growth stand improvement; and wildlife and fisheries habitat improvement projects (e.g., beach fringe thinning, or placement of large woody debris in streams).

## **Possible Alternatives**

The proposed action, as described above, includes an estimated 100 million board feet from approximately 5,800 acres within the roaded land base of east-central Prince of Wales Island. Scoping comments will be used by the Forest Service to develop a range of alternatives in response to significant issues. A no-action alternative will be analyzed.

## **Preliminary Issues**

Preliminary potential issues which may be analyzed in the EIS include: the potential effects of the project on the Southeast Alaska timber supply, supporting the timber industry during the transition from old-growth harvest to young-growth management, road management, economic and rural stability, subsistence, deer, watersheds and fish, scenery, and inventoried roadless areas.

## **Decision to be Made**

The responsible official for the decision on this project is the Forest Supervisor, Tongass National Forest. The responsible official will decide whether or not to authorize timber harvest and associated road construction on Prince of Wales Island in the Big Thorne Project area.

## **NEPA Schedule**

The comment period will run 30 days from the publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on February 11, 2011. The Forest Service will review and consider all comments received during the scoping period and prepare a scoping report that will define and frame the issues for analysis. The Draft EIS is projected to be published in the early fall of 2011 and it will have a 45-day comment period from the date it is filed with the Environmental Protection Agency. The Final EIS and Record of Decision are expected to be published in late winter 2012.

## How to Comment

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### Addresses

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### Scoping Meetings

In addition, we encourage you to attend one of the public scoping meetings that will be held at the following locations and times:

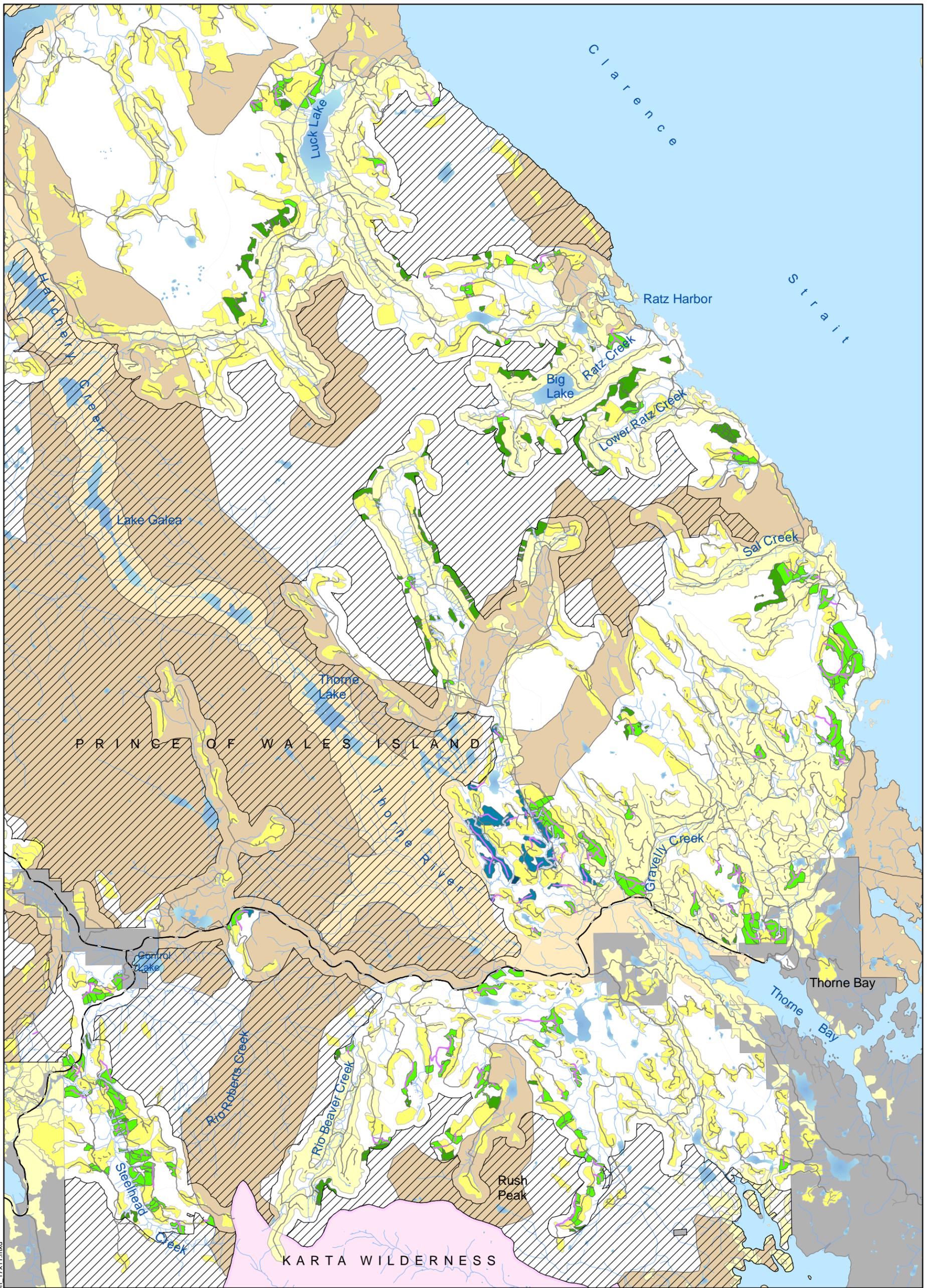
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You can provide written comments at the meetings or you can discuss your concerns with a Forest Service representative.

### **Additional Information**

Questions about the proposed project or the EIS may be directed to:

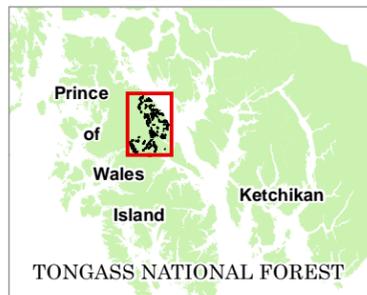
Jason Anderson District Ranger Thorne Bay Ranger District 1312 Federal Way Thorne Bay, AK 99919-0001 (907) 828-3210	or	James Kelly Team Leader Thorne Bay Ranger District 1312 Federal Way Thorne Bay, AK 99919-0001 (907) 828-3220
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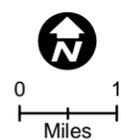
- |  |                            |                          |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Proposed Roads &amp; Harvest Units</b>  | Development LUD            | Class 1 & 2 Streams      |
| System & Temp Roads                        | Old-Growth Habitat LUD     | State Highway            |
| <b>Phase 1 Harvest Units</b>               | Wilderness LUD             | NFS Road                 |
| Ground/Cable                               | Other Non-Development LUDs | Decommissioned Temp Road |
| Helicopter                                 | Non-NFS Land               | Non-NFS Road             |
| <b>Phase 2 Harvest Units (small sales)</b> | Past Harvest > 30 years    |                          |
| Ground/Cable                               | Past Harvest ≤ 30 years    |                          |
| Helicopter                                 | Lake                       |                          |
|  | Inventoried Roadless Area  |                          |

AREA OF DETAIL



**Proposed Action**

*BIG THORNE EIS*  
TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST



31 January 2011