

Alaska Lands Update

monthly updates on Federal management
actions for the people of Alaska

Southeast Alaska Cabin
Photo Credit: Alaska Photo Library

Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas, Department of Natural Resources, State of Alaska
3700 Airport Way Fairbanks, AK 99709

TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST SUSTAINABLE CABIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM LEGAL NOTICE

The legal notice starting the only 30-day comment period for the Tongass Sustainable Cabin Management Program appeared in the Ketchikan Daily News on October 13, 2012.

The complete legal notice follows.

The Tongass National Forest plans to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Forest Sustainable Cabin Management Program. The scoping document (follow on page 2) and further information is available on the internet at: http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=39863 for public review and comment. Copies of the scoping document are available upon request from Sue Jennings, either at sjennings@fs.fed.us or 907 723-0477.

The Tongass National Forest, is proposing to remove nine public recreation cabins and convert three to shelters due to poor condition, low use, and funding. The twelve cabins are on Admiralty National Monument (ANM), and Ketchikan-Misty (KMRD), Petersburg (PRD), Sitka (SRD), Wrangell (WRD), Thorne Bay (TBRD), and Yakutat (YRD) Ranger Districts. The cabins proposed for removal are Red Alders, Beaver Camp, and Checats Lake (KMRD); DeBoer Lake (PRD); Maksoutof Lake and Rezanof Lake (SRD); McGilvery (TBRD); Binkley Slough (WRD), and Square Lake (YRD). The cabins proposed for conversion to three sided shelters are Distin Lake (ANM), Big Goat (KMRD), and Harvey Lake (PRD). Nine of the cabins are in designated Wilderness areas: Beaver Camp, Big Goat, Binkley Slough, Checats, Distin Lake, Maksoutof Lake, McGilvery, Red Alders, and Rezanof Lake.

A few of these cabins are beyond repair. Many are dilapidated and have not been used for years. When the cabins were available for rent they had little or no use. The cabins may be removed by burning, left to decay, or dismantled and moved. If these cabins are removed or converted, 143 cabins and 43 shelters will remain on the Tongass for public use.

There are two alternatives being considered at this time: the proposed action and the no action.

As required by federal regulation, this notice begins the only 30-day comment period for the proposed action to be analyzed and documented in an environmental assessment [36 CFR Part 215.5 (iv)]. Written, oral and electronic comments will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of this notice in the Ketchikan Daily News, the newspaper of record for the Forest Supervisor of the Tongass National Forest. The purpose of this comment period is to provide the opportunity for the public to provide input on a proposed action prior to a decision by the Responsible Official, Forrest Cole. The decision based on the planned

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environmental analysis may be subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215. Individuals or non-federal organizations that submitted written comments or otherwise expressed interest in this particular action during this comment period will have standing to appeal this decision. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this analysis.

Written comments shall be submitted to:

Forrest Cole
Forest Supervisor
Federal Building
Ketchikan, AK, 99901-6591
Fax - (907) 228-6215
or
comments-alaska-tongass@fs.fed.us
8:00 - 4:30 M-F, except holidays. ♦

The **COMMENT** deadline for Scoping for this proposed Environmental Assessment is Tuesday, November 13, 2012.

You are commenting on two alternatives, the **no action alternative, where all of the cabins proposed for removal or conversion remain** and the **proposed action, where the proposed cabins are removed or converted**.

The Environmental Assessment has not been done yet and there will be no other opportunity to comment.

Based on public comment, the environmental assessment, and site-specific information, Forest Supervisor, Forrest Cole will determine which, if any, of the specified cabins to remove or convert to three-sided shelters. They will not analyze or propose removal or conversion of any cabin not on the scoping list.

Tongass Recreational Cabin Scoping Letter

The Tongass National Forest is seeking comments on a proposal to remove or convert twelve cabins throughout the forest. Nine public recreation use cabins are proposed to be completely removed and three cabins are proposed to be removed and the site converted to shelters in order to develop a sustainable recreation cabin program. The cabins in the proposal were chosen due to poor condition, low use, and funding and are located on Admiralty National Monument, and Ketchikan-Misty, Petersburg, Sitka, Wrangell, Thorne Bay, and Yakutat Ranger Districts.

For many years, the Tongass has tried to determine how best to manage about 150 recreation cabins on ten ranger districts. Funds to operate and maintain these cabins come from a mix of appropriated dollars and rental fees. In 2005, the Tongass conducted a recreation facility analysis (there is a LINK to this document at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/tongass/home/?cid=fsbdev3_069287) and set a 5-year action plan for 2006 to 2011 to define a recreation cabin niche. As part of this plan, we removed three

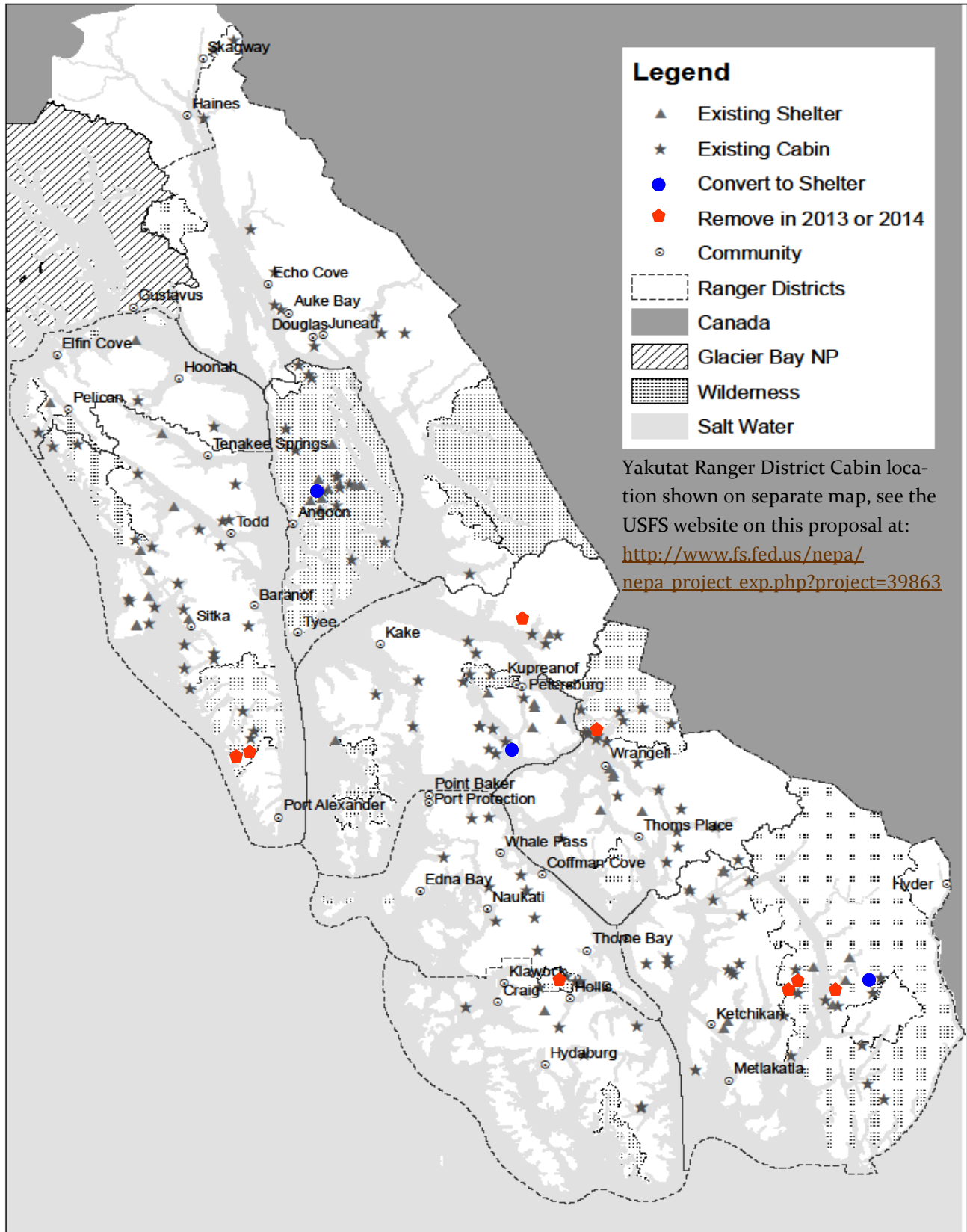
cabins and converted two to shelters, which cost less to maintain.

In 2010, the Tongass contracted a firm to assess the cabin program and suggest a financially sustainable program. The initial report recommends changing cabin fees, eliminating cabins with little or no use, and changing operation and maintenance strategies. The current program costs about \$1.16 million annually. The cabin rental fees return less than 50% of the annual costs.



District	Cabin Name	Year	Wilderness?	days of use FY11	Condition -
Petersburg RD	DeBoer Lake	2013	No	0	Stove, foundation, roof, windows, flooring, etc. need repairs. No fees collected for past 2 years.
Wrangell RD	Binkley Slough	2013	Yes	0	Good condition, but used only once in last 2 years. Water access from slough to cabin is reduced each year. Cabin use is low due to bad access due to Stikine River moving away from cabin. Log jams .
Sitka RD	Maksoutor Lake	2013	Yes	0	In a state of advanced disrepair and collapse.
Sitka RD	Rezanof Lake	2013	Yes	0	In a state of advanced disrepair and collapse.
Prince of Wales Island	McGilvery	2013	Yes	0	Falling apart, filled with mold, mildew; remote from trail, poor structural integrity.
Ketchikan - Misty RD	Red Alders	2013	Yes	0	Unusable, filled with 6-8" silt, subject to flooding.
Ketchikan - Misty RD	Beaver Camp	2013	Yes	0	Stove, deck, roof, woodshed need repairs or replacement.
Yakutat RD	Square Lake	2013	No	0	Roofing, foundation supports, stovepipe, windows, stairs in poor condition.
Ketchikan - Misty RD	Checats Lakes	2014	Yes	0	Roof deck, skirting need repairs.
Ketchikan - Misty RD	Big Goat	2014	Yes	0	Roof, doors, windows, floor, stove, boardwalk need repair or replacement - replace with survival shelter on this hardened site.
Admiralty Natl Mon.	Distin Lake	2014	Yes	0	Poor condition dirt floor, door collapsing- replace with survival shelter.
Petersburg RD	Harvey Lake	2014	No	12	Complete building replacement needed - replace with survival shelter.

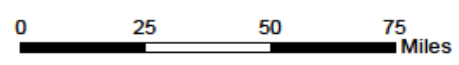
Tongass Recreation Cabin Proposal



Legend

- ▲ Existing Shelter
- ★ Existing Cabin
- Convert to Shelter
- ◆ Remove in 2013 or 2014
- Community
- - - Ranger Districts
- Canada
- ▨ Glacier Bay NP
- ▤ Wilderness
- Salt Water

Yakutat Ranger District Cabin location shown on separate map, see the USFS website on this proposal at: http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=39863



Tongass Recreational Cabin Scoping Letter (cont'd)

(Continued from page 2)

Cabin removals will consist of removing non-burnable material and burning the cabin in place, except for the McGilverly cabin. After non-burnable material removal, the McGilverly cabin, on Prince of Wales, will be left to decay.

Nine of the twelve cabins are in Wilderness areas. There are specific steps that must be followed, including approval from the Regional Forester. Section 1315(d) of ANILCA requires that the Secretary of Agriculture inform the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, and the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the intent to remove an existing, or to construct a new public use cabin or shelter in Wilderness. The notice of a proposed action will allow the agency to meet the Congressional notification requirement as stated in ANILCA Section 1315(d) and FSM 2323.13b – Shelters (2) [Supplement No.: R-10 2300-2008-2]. Removal of Wilderness cabins will follow Wilderness guidelines. Conversion to shelters will be either through modification of the existing cabin, or replacement.

For additional information regarding this action contact: Sue Jennings, P.O. Box 309, Petersburg, AK 99833; (907) 772-5864; by email at comments-alaska-tongass@fs.fed.us. Maps and more information can be found at the project website online at: http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=39863.

As required by Forest Service notice, comment, and appeal regulations found at 36 CFR 2 15, this notice initiates a 30-day comment period for this action. The regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period. The purpose of this comment period is to provide an opportunity for the public to provide meaningful input on a proposed action prior to a decision by the Responsible Official. Individuals or nonfederal organizations who submit written comments or otherwise express interest in this particular action during the comment period specified at 36 CFR 215.6 have standing to appeal this decision.

Written, oral and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar day following the publication of this notice in the Ketchikan Daily News, the newspaper of record for the Tongass National Forest. Notices will appear in other newspapers in the communities where the cabins are pro-

posed for removal or conversion, however, the 30-day comment period will be based on the Ketchikan Daily News.

Persons submitting comments must provide the following information: Name and Address, (telephone number if possible) Title of the proposed action, Specific comments (36 CFR 215.2) on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision, and Signature or other verification of identity upon request. Identification of the individual or organization that authored the comments(s) is necessary for appeal eligibility. An electronic username is insufficient for electronic comment submittals.

Scanned electronic signatures will be accepted. Comments may be submitted by USPS: Forrest Cole, Forest Supervisor, Federal Building, Ketchikan, AK, 99901-6591; Fax – (907) 228-6215; or by email at comments-alaska-tongass@fs.fed.us.

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(H) HOUSE APPOINTMENT

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www.dnr.alaska.gov/commis/cacfa

AS 41.37.160 The Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Management Areas in Alaska is established in the department [Natural Resources]. In the exercise of its responsibilities, the commission shall consider the views of citizens of the state and officials of the state.