

Forestry

The forest resources of the Southeast Susitna planning area are a mixture of White spruce and Paper birch in the upland areas with cottonwood and Balsam poplar in the lowland areas. Paper birch is the dominant species in this boreal forest type. White spruce has commercial value for sawlogs, houselogs, woodchips, and fuel. The commercial value of the Paper birch is for wood chips and fuel. Some trees with low defect also can be used as sawlogs providing wood for cabinets, bowls, and other products. Much of the birch within the Southeast Susitna is over 70 years old and contains a high percentage of rot or defect. There are some specialty markets for the cottonwood and Balsam poplar but for the most part these species have little commercial value at the present time in this area.

The Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act (AS 41.17.060) sets standards for management of all state forest land for the management objectives of sustained yield and multiple use (AS 41.17.060(b) and (c)). AS 41.15.010-020 and .170(2) set standards for forest protection from fire and other destructive agents. These standards, including those for forest economics, reforestation, fish and wildlife habitat, scenic quality, and other use apply statewide. In addition, the following goals apply specifically to the SSAP area.

Goals

Personal Use Timber. Provide timber to meet the needs of Alaskans. Subject to limits of funding, staffing, and sustained yield, this program will be provided on a demand basis when the operational costs of administering this program are satisfactory.

Economic Opportunities. Provide for economic opportunities and stability in the forest products industry by allowing the use of state uplands in areas designated Forestry.

Support Timber Industry. Continue to perform reviews of private timber harvests for adherence to the Forest Practices Act and provide information and technical expertise in the management of forest resources to this industry.

Wildland Fire Suppression. DOF shall continue to provide wildland fire suppression within the planning area consistent with the requirements of the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan and with statute, which requires the protection of natural resources and certain cultural features.

Management Guidelines

Active programs for forest management, including timber harvesting, and wildland fire management are appropriate within the planning area. The following section lists area-specific guidelines for forest management and wildland fire management. In addition to these guidelines, forest management activities are subject to the requirements of the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act, the Susitna Forestry Guidelines, the biennial Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales for the Mat-Su Area, and any Forest Land Use Plan for a specific area. Opportunities for public comment are provided for each Five-Year Schedule and Forest Land Use Plan. Fire management activities are subject to AS 41.15 and the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan.

Another important component of the state forestry program within the planning area is fire management. A management guideline is included that describes the broad aspects of this program. The implementation of the state fire management program is identified and controlled in detail by the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan.

A. Timber Harvest Guidelines

- 1) All timber harvest activities must be compatible with the general management guidelines of this section and with the management intent statements and land use designations identified in specific management units of this plan found in Chapter 3. Systematic timber harvest programs are to be conducted in areas designated Forestry within the planning area. Forest harvest operations conducted on a parcel of state land intended for subdivision development by DNR can precede actual construction. However, these operations must be consistent with the subdivision plan for the parcel; consultation with DMLW is required before commencing operations.
- 2) All timber harvest operations will be conducted in accordance with the stipulations in the Forest Land Use Plan, the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act (AS 41.17 & 11 AAC 95), the Susitna Forestry Guidelines, the Alaska Land Act (AS 38.05 & 11 AAC 71), and other pertinent state guidelines and laws. The Forest Practices Act provides statewide guidance and policy for managing forestry related activities. The specific layout and other site-specific requirements of a timber sale is addressed through a Forest Land Use Plan (FLUPs), which is prepared prior to any commercial timber harvest or sale (AS 38.05.112).

FLUPs developed for timber sale or harvests in the planning area are to be consistent with the Forestry Management Guidelines of this Chapter and the Management Guidelines specified for particular parcels in Chapter 3. FLUPs shall consider, in their preparation, the sensitive resources and wildlife, or any other significant factors, identified in the Management Guidelines for a parcel.

- 3) Land conveyed out of state ownership for the purpose of settlement, or another form of active land use, shall not be used for commercial timber harvest and sale. Subdivisions or disposals of state land by DNR shall preclude the sale of merchantable timber harvested on lots or parcels conveyed out of state ownership.

The format used to impose this restriction is at the discretion of the DMLW Regional Manager. This guideline is not intended to preclude the cutting of trees or other vegetation as part of the process of land clearing or site development.

B. Sort Yards. Sort yards will be constructed, sited, operated, and monitored in order to minimize the impact on state land and resources. The design, development, and use of these facilities shall be consistent with the Log Transfer Facility Siting, Construction, Operation, and Monitoring/Reporting Guidelines (October 1985), or successors to these standards that may be approved by DNR and ADF&G.

C. Timber Salvage From Rights-of-Way. Timber with commercial or personal use value should be salvaged from lands that are to be cleared for other uses such as roads, transmission lines, material sites, mining, and habitat enhancement projects (AS 41.17.083). The DMLW Regional Manager shall determine the amount and kind of material that is to be salvaged.

D. Personal Use Wood Harvest. When forested lands are available near communities and where personal use harvest is consistent with other purposes for which the land is being managed, DOF will provide wood products for personal use. This program will only be undertaken, however, if it can be effectively and efficiently administered by DOF.

E. Sustained Yield of Forest Resources. Forestland will be managed to guarantee perpetual supplies of renewable resources to serve the needs of all Alaskans for the many products, benefits, and services obtained from them. The annual allowable harvest will be calculated using a volume control method and will be based on the guidelines in Susitna Forestry Guidelines. Only areas designated 'Forestry' and 'General Use' (where the management intent statement for a parcel indicate that timber harvest is appropriate) in this plan are to be included as part of the sustained yield area and in the sustained yield calculation for stands within the SSAP planning area.

F. Salvage of Damaged Trees. Trees damaged due to wind throw, insect, or disease conditions may be salvaged on all land use designations unless management intent statements for specific management units in Chapter 3 specifically prohibit salvage harvest. A Forest Land Use Plan, if required, will provide the rationale for conducting the salvage harvest and describe how the action will not conflict with the management intent for each management unit.

G. Fire Disturbance. The intent of fire management is to identify where wildland fire can be allowed or prescribed burns can be used to reduce costs of fire suppression, reduce the risk of damaging fires, and maintain the natural diversity and productivity of forest stands. Fire suppression will be a priority near residential areas or other forms of active land use, high value recreation use areas, and areas with infrastructure development. Consistent with AS 41.15.010 and AS 41.15.020, DOF will protect forest resources from destructive agents commensurate with the values needing protection. However, where feasible, wildland fires will be allowed to burn and suppression will be limited to decreasing the long-term risk of

damaging fires and to maintaining the natural diversity of forest stands, stand ages, and habitat types. Where allowing wildland fire is not feasible, timber harvest, prescribed burns, and habitat enhancement techniques will be used to disturb the forest and maintain a natural range of forest types and stand ages. Specific fire suppression levels are identified in the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan.

H. Areas Appropriate for Timber Harvest and Maintenance of Timber Land Base.

Systematic programs of timber harvest are intended to (only) occur within areas that are designated Forestry, General Use (where the management intent authorizes such a use), within areas designated Settlement or Agriculture where timber harvest is supportive of settlement and agriculture, or for purposes of forest management (like forest health and wildfire management).

It is not intended that areas designated Forestry are to be redesignated for other purposes or that areas designated something other than Forestry are appropriate for re-designation to the Forestry designation. Changes of the types mentioned above will require a public hearing and public review process through a plan amendment.

I. Coordination with Borough Forest Management Plans and Programs. Prior to the preparation of the Five Year Sales Schedule and the development of a FLUP, DNR should coordinate with the Borough's forest management plan and program to obtain maximum efficiencies and avoid management conflicts over the harvesting of timber and with sensitive land uses.

J. Other Guidelines Affecting Forestry. Other guidelines will affect management practices for timber development support facilities and forestry. See other sections of this chapter.