

**PRINCE OF WALES ISLAND AREA PLAN
AMENDMENT
(THE INCLUSION OF THE
SOUTHWEST
PRINCE OF WALES ISLAND AREA)**

Background: The Prince of Wales Island Area Plan (POWIAP) was first adopted in 1985 and then revised in 1998. The Southwest Prince of Wales Island Area Plan (SWAP) was developed in the late 1980's and amended in 1988. This POWIAP amendment rescinds the SWAP and amends the POWIAP to include the area that was formally part of the SWAP.

Since the adoption of the SWAP there have been fundamental changes that have affected the planning area. These include changes to the region's economic base, the technology of timber harvest, the type and intensity of commercial fishing practices, and, very significantly, land status and land ownership. Over this period of time the region has become increasingly less dependent on timber harvest and there is little use of the A-frame logging method. Large acreages of federal land have been conveyed under Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) to the native corporations within the planning area. The U.S. Forest Service has revised the Tongass Land Management Plan, changing the patterns of desired land management and making many areas unavailable to logging that were previously authorized for this use. Commercial fisheries have also changed significantly, with declines in commercial crabbing and changes in the method of halibut harvest with the introduction of the Individual Fishing Quotas. These and other factors have changed the basic assumptions used in the preparation of the initial SWAP, making it much less useful as the basis for Department of Natural Resources (DNR) decision making and forcing its reevaluation. The Department recognizes the dynamic nature of economic conditions, policy, and technology change within regions and provides for the reevaluation of area plans on a 15 to 20 year cycle. The SWAP fits within this reevaluation planning horizon.

Revision Structure: This Plan Amendment rescinds the current SWAP and revises the current POWIAP to include the planning area of the 1988 SWAP. The effect of this action will be to add four additional regional management units to those now described in Chapter 3 of the POWIAP, bringing the total number of management units now included in the POWIAP to 19. There are other changes as part of this amendment that must also be made to accommodate this structure, but they are relatively few in number and are mostly related to explaining the amendment process. In order to avoid reprinting the whole POWIAP but maintain a clear record of the changes that are being enacted, a separate, stand alone report has been prepared. This report constitutes the Plan Amendment and is attached.

Plan Revision: The plan revision rescinds the SWAP and amends the POWIAP through the addition of four regional management units. Each regional management unit contains a description of the area within the management unit as well as a description of the type and amount of state land and the overall plan management strategy for state lands. It is followed by a Resource Allocation Table that describes each state upland or tideland unit, identifies a plan designation, and describes management intent of these units. If there are specific management requirements affecting a unit, these are also described. In addition to this information, the Amendment contains an explanation of its relationship to the POWIAP and a description of the plan designations that are used in the Amendment since they differ from those used in the POWIAP. The plan designations used in this Amendment are those used by DNR in area plans developed since 2000.

This Amendment does not, however, change or affect the management of units and or the area-wide policies for the lands already contained within the 1998 POWIAP. The management direction in this Amendment including the revisions to chapter 2 of POWIAP shall only be applied to the Southwest Prince of Wales Island Area.

Possible Courses of Action: There are three possible courses of action: these include not doing anything (do-nothing alternative), revising the SWAP as a separate area plan, and incorporating the four additional management units into the current POWIAP.

- The do-nothing alternative is not viable because of the changes that have occurred within the planning area related to the economy, timber harvest methods, the federal management plan for the Tongass National Forest, and the very considerable changes in land ownership since the initial preparation. These changes have undercut the basic assumptions used in initial plan preparation and the current SWAP is no longer useful to the Department as the basis for its decision making.
- While the SWAP could be revised as a separate plan, there are several reasons why this is less than desirable. The current plan contains a large number of regional management units (large regional areas) and it is difficult to discern DNR's overall management intent with so many regions. The basis for the determination of forestry and habitat units has also changed from that used in the 1980's. Now more specific areas occupied by Log Transfer Facilities (LTF's) and sensitive habitat resources are identified in DNR area plans as opposed to the large expanses of areas like those affected by the 1988 SWAP designations. The specific locations of these uses are now known with more precision.

- Finally, there is an advantage in linking the revised Southwest Prince of Wales Island area with the overall management plan for the Prince of Wales Island. Essentially one document will cover the planning area and the areawide policies in Chapter 2, which have been undated, will apply throughout. This should make for more consistent resource management and more efficient DNR decision making. The preferred course of action is to consolidate the area now covered by the SWAP into the POWIAP planning area, for the reasons described above.

Recommendation: The preferred alternative is to consolidate the current Southwest Prince of Wales Island planning area within the POWIAP boundary and thereby have a single *area plan* that covers the whole of Prince of Wales Island.

This course of action, and the recommendations contained in the attached report, 'POWIAP Amendment (The Inclusion of the Southwest Prince of Wales Island Area)' is determined to be in the overall best interest of the state.

Two implementation actions accompany the Amendment: a Mineral Order (Opening) and a Land Classification Order.

- The Mineral Order (MO 1080) opens 130,360 acres of state tidelands that adjoin many areas of the coast that are classified Crucial Habitat by the current 1988 SWAP. The location of important habitat areas has shifted, based on newer and more comprehensive information, and some of the Crucial Habitat areas in the 1990 SWAP are no longer included in this revision. The requirements for mineral closing have also changed since the preparation of the original plan. AS 38.05.185(a) states that the DNR Commissioner may not close an area of 640 acres or more without making a finding that "mining would be incompatible with significant surface uses on the state land". Such a finding cannot be made and continuation of the mineral closures is inconsistent with the direction described in this part of statute.
- Land Classification Order (SE-98-001A02) rescinds the current classifications within the SWAP planning area and reenacts land classifications throughout this area according to the plan designations described in the Amendment.

Evaluation of AS 38.04.065(b) Requirements: This section of statute requires that certain factors be considered as part of a 'plan revision'. A Plan Amendment is considered a type of plan revision. These requirements, and action considerations of the requirements, are described below.

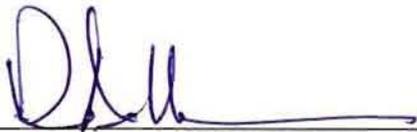
- Multiple Use and Sustained Yield. The planning area was thoroughly evaluated for its multiple use values and the distribution of uses reflected in the recommended plan designations represents, to DNR, the best distribution of these values within the planning region. The selected management approach satisfies the consideration of sustained yield.
- Evaluation of physical, economic, and social factors. These factors were considered in determining plan designations and management intent for each of the state land units. Extensive resource research of tideland and upland areas preceded the identification of plan designations. The economic factors influencing the planning area were also considered and played a large part in the assignment of plan designations. Social factors were identified in initial scoping meetings and were under further consideration during the public review process.
- Planning and classification for settlement. Because of the relatively few upland parcels within the planning area, a comprehensive land disposal program cannot occur. However, these parcels were evaluated for their settlement potential and several parcels, or parts of these, were identified for remote settlement.
- Land inventory. A land inventory was prepared as part of the Amendment.
- Alternative present and future uses. State land units were evaluated for possible present and future uses and were assigned plan designations based upon a consideration of how the parcel is used currently and its best future use. In general, areas were designated Forestry if there was a current authorization for a Log Transfer Facility or if a LTF is identified in the Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Forest Service and State of Alaska (ADL 107516). Areas were designated either Shoreline Development or Waterfront Development if the current use was residential or commercial/industrial or if adopted plans indicated the preference for such uses in the future. Areas were assigned Wildlife Habitat (and Harvest) if they demonstrated the presence of sensitive habitat resources that met the requirements of such uses in Chapter 2 of the POWIAP or were important for either commercial or personal use.

- Adjacent non-state lands. Land status information was reviewed during plan revision; most adjacent lands are either owned by native corporations/organizations or are within the Tongass National Forest.
- Potential conflicts between mining and surface uses. This potential conflict was evaluated and a Mineral Order (Opening) is recommended since inconsistencies between surface uses and mining could not be discerned in tideland areas now classified Wildlife Habitat.
- Public participation. The public was given the opportunity to comment on this amendment. Interdisciplinary considerations were evaluated in the preparation of plan designations. Agencies participated in the development of these designations and reviewed the initial designations.

Approval

I have reviewed the Plan Amendment and find that it is in the best interests of the state to proceed with the preferred alternative which is more specifically described in the report, Prince of Wales Island Area Plan Amendment (The Inclusion of the Southwest Prince of Wales Island Area). I hereby approve this Plan Amendment.

The date of issuance for this decision shall be May 29, 2008.



b Tom Irwin, Commissioner
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

5/29/08
Date