



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service
Tongass National
Forest

Alaska Region

R10-MB-616

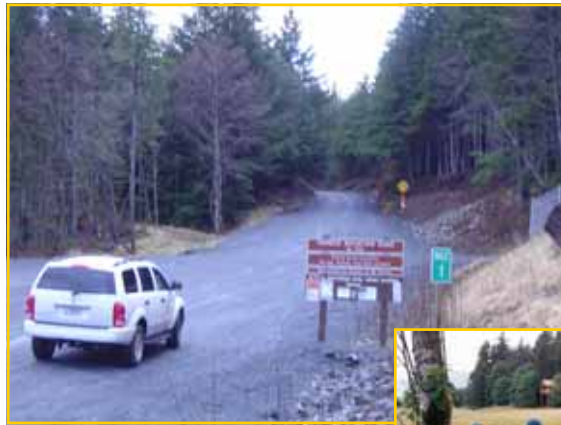
August 2007



Revised Environmental Assessment

Sitka Access and Travel Management

Sitka Ranger District, Tongass National Forest, Alaska



ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

ACMP	Alaska Coastal Management Plan
ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
ANILCA	Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act
ATM	Access and Travel Management
ATV	all-terrain vehicle
BMP	Best Management Practice
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act
EA	Environmental Assessment
EFH	essential fish habitat
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
Forest Plan	Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan
FSH	Forest Service Handbook
FSM	Forest Service Manual
GIS	Geographic Information System
GMU	Game Management Unit
HUC	Hydrologic Unit Code
LUD	Land Use Designation
MIS	Management Indicator Species
ML	Maintenance Level
MP	milepost
MVUM	Motor Vehicle Use Map
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFS	National Forest System
OHV	off-highway vehicle
OML	Objective Maintenance Level
RAP	Roads Analysis Process
RMA	Riparian Management Area
SATP	Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WAA	Wildlife Analysis Area

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DEFINITIONS

Definitions for Forest Road, Road, Passenger Car Road (ML-3 & 4), High-Clearance Passenger Vehicle Roads (ML-2), Stored Road (ML-1), Unauthorized Road, Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Trail, Trail, Closed Pending Repairs, and Decommissioned Road are found in the January 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA document after the List of Tables. Refer to that document (USDA Forest Service 2006) for those definitions.

CHAPTER 1 PURPOSE AND NEED

Introduction

The U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, prepared this Revised Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant federal and state laws and regulations. This Revised EA discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts that would result from Alternative 4, and from additions to the other action alternatives, including the Proposed Action. It also provides the supporting information for a determination to prepare either a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or an environmental impact statement. Additional documentation, including more detailed analyses of project area resources, may be found in the project planning record located at the Sitka Ranger District Office in Sitka, Alaska.

Background

An interdisciplinary team (IDT) of resource specialists conducted effects analysis and prepared the Sitka Access and Travel Management EA, published in June 2006, to evaluate management of the road system on the Sitka Ranger District (Ranger District). In accordance with the National Forest Management Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, the IDT considered the affected area, formulated alternatives, and estimated environmental consequences based on Forest Plan goals, objectives, and standards and guidelines, together with issues raised during scoping. The three alternatives addressed the issues that closing roads to motorized access, especially Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) access, due to resource concerns would reduce important recreational opportunities and access for subsistence. Alternatives included: Alternative 1, No Action; Alternative 2, closure/storage of forest roads that are not needed for resource management in the short term but are needed for long-term management, and decommissioning/converting to trail roads not needed for long-term management; and Alternative 3, closure /storage of forest roads, but actively working toward making all forest roads on the Ranger District open to OHV use.

The Sitka Access and Travel Management EA was published in June 2006. Based on a projected reduction in the road maintenance budget, a new alternative (Alternative 4) was created. Additions related to OHV designated use areas and other off-road access were made to Alternatives 2 and 3 to meet the intent of the Travel Management Rule. Alternative 4 and the additions to the other action alternatives are described in this Revised EA. Environmental analysis was completed for Alternative 4 and for the additions to the other action alternatives by the IDT and is included in this Revised EA. This Revised EA addresses comments received on the 2006 EA; corrections and additions to the June 2006 EA, based on careful consideration of the comments received during the 30-day comment period on the 2006 EA, have been included in this Revised EA. However, where information did not change between the 2006 EA and this Revised EA, the information was not repeated here, and the reader is referred to the June 2006 EA.

Existing Conditions

The Sitka Ranger District of the Tongass National Forest comprises approximately 1.8 million acres. Part of the Alexander Archipelago, the Ranger District encompasses Baranof Island, Kruzof Island, and the southern portion of Chichagof Island, and is bounded on the west by the Gulf of Alaska and on the east by Chatham Strait (Figure 1, Map Section after the Appendices).

There are approximately 372 miles of forest roads on the Ranger District (including roads that cross private land where the government holds an easement).

A description of Forest Plan land use designations (LUDs) related to roads and access was located in the 2006 EA; refer to the 2006 EA (USDA Forest Service 2006) for those descriptions, except for the following correction:

Wilderness (522,615 acres): Use of snowmachines, motorboats, fixed-wing airplanes, and non-motorized methods of surface transportation for traditional activities that are legal and for transportation to and from villages and homesites is allowed (consult ANILCA, Section 1110 and Wilderness and Rec. & Tourism Sections).

Purpose and Need for Action

As stated in the 2006 EA, the purpose of this project is to provide sustainable, efficient, and safe access to the forest resources and recreational opportunities on the Ranger District, and the need for this project is to reduce the number of non-maintained or inadequately maintained roads to better match the level of funding available for road maintenance and to eliminate or reduce risks of adverse environmental impacts and threats to public safety. Refer to the 2006 EA for further information.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action (Alternative 2) would reduce the amount of road open to highway vehicles by approximately 45 miles. These roads would be placed in storage, decommissioned, or converted to trails. Approximately 14.5 miles of unauthorized roads would be added to the Ranger District road system (they would become forest roads) and another 4.5 miles of unauthorized road would be converted to OHV trails. Under the Proposed Action, six road systems would remain open for OHV use (with certain exceptions within each system). A more detailed description of the Proposed Action can be found in Chapter 2 of the 2006 EA.

Decision Framework

Given the Purpose and Need, the District Ranger for the Sitka Ranger District will review the Proposed Action and other alternatives in order to decide how the Ranger District road system will be managed to meet Forest Plan objectives, public needs, and budget limitations. The decision will include changes in road maintenance levels, access, and the type of access

that will be permitted on National Forest System roads on the Ranger District. A finding of the significance of the effects and consistency with standards, guidelines, goals, and objectives of the Forest Plan and other laws and regulations will be included in this decision.

Public Involvement

In addition to the public involvement activities described in the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA, the following activities have occurred.

Public Mailing

The 2006 EA was mailed to 167 individuals, organizations, institutions, industry representatives, federal and state agencies, Alaska Native groups, municipal offices, and businesses. A total of 44 responses were received regarding the EA during or after the 30-day comment period on the EA.

Local News Media

An announcement about the project and public meetings was published in the *Daily Sitka Sentinel* on March 28 and March 30, 2007. Public service announcements were also made on Sitka's Raven Radio (KCAW) prior to public meetings.

Public Meetings

Alternative 4 was described and discussed at a public meeting in Sitka on April 5, 2007 and in Tenakee Springs on March 14, 2007. There were about 20 attendees at the Tenakee Springs meeting and about 40 at the Sitka meeting. During the public meetings, maps illustrating Alternative 4 were available for public review. Following the presentation, the public was provided the opportunity to ask questions. A representative of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources was present at the Sitka meeting to answer questions about State law and fish stream crossings.

Subsistence hearings will be held in Tenakee Springs, Angoon, and Sitka after publication and dissemination of the Revised EA.

Meetings with Native Groups

Forest Service staff met with representatives of the Angoon Community Association on May 18, 2005, Shee Atika Incorporated on June 15, 2005, and Sealaska Corporation on June 24, 2005. Forest Service staff also met with representatives of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska for informational ATM meetings on May 31, 2005 and November 10, 2005.

Consultation with Other Agencies

Several federal and state agencies were sent the 2006 EA for review and many agencies provided comments on the EA.

After further consideration, Sitka Ranger District personnel determined that no permits, licenses, and/or certifications from federal or state agencies are needed for this project.

Issues

Two significant issues were identified in the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA.

Issue 1: Motorized Access for Recreation, Closing Roads to Motorized Access, Especially OHV Access, due to Resource Concerns would Reduce Important Recreational Opportunities on the Ranger District.

Issue 2: Motorized Access for Subsistence, Closing Roads to Motorized Access due to Resource Concerns would Reduce Access for Subsistence on the Ranger District.

The issues remain the same as in the 2006 EA; the reader is referred to the 2006 EA for further description of the issues.

Non-Significant Issues

In addition to motorized access for recreation and for subsistence, the following issues were raised through scoping, agency and tribal consultation, and comments on the 2006 EA: existing roads in the Old-Growth Habitat LUD, fisheries/water quality, public safety, road maintenance costs, the National OHV Plan and the Final Rule, the Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Road Corridors, unauthorized access across private land, crossing of anadromous streams, funding for proposals, and enforcement of closures. These issues are described in more detail below, as are the reasons for considering them non-significant.

Existing Roads in the Old-Growth Habitat LUD

This issue is addressed by the Forest Plan, which allows existing roads to remain open if needed for future management. Roads not needed may be closed. Many roads within the Old-Growth Habitat LUDs have naturally closed due to lack of road maintenance. Some of these roads may be used in the future to perform second-growth silvicultural treatments in previous timber harvest units to meet LUD goals and objectives. Existing OHV use on the existing roads in these LUDs is minimal. The Proposed Action and Alternative 4 preserve motorized access to roads necessary for short-term timber management activities; these alternatives also place roads into storage that are not needed in the short term, but may be necessary for long-term resource uses. See Roads in Old-Growth Habitat Land Use Designations in Chapter 3 of the EA for more information about this non-significant issue.

Fisheries/Water Quality

Comments on the 2006 EA stated that fish and water quality should be given more analysis, and an alternative should be considered to address these resource concerns, and some scoping comments stated that roads that do not have adequate stream crossings should be closed. An additional significant issue was not generated by scoping comments or by comments on the 2006 EA, in part, because protection of fisheries and water quality drove the design of all the action alternatives. Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would result in a reduction in effects of roads on resources by decommissioning or storing roads, and reducing motorized use. These alternatives would result in protection of sensitive resources, such as water quality, fish habitat, and wildlife habitat, and restoration by removing culverts that block fish passage, removing bridges that may collapse and block streams, reducing sediment

input and delivery into streams and wetlands, and reducing disturbance and fragmentation of wildlife habitat. The Forest Service recognizes that fish populations may be negatively affected by road sediment introduced at stream crossings, particularly if maintenance has been insufficient to meet the standards and guidelines outlined in the Forest Plan. Alaska State statute, AS 41.14.870, does not allow motorized vehicle access across anadromous streams without adequate stream crossings. Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would close roads that do not have adequate stream crossings, at least until repairs are made or concerns mitigated. See the Roads in Old-Growth Habitat Land Use Designations and the Fisheries section in Chapter 3 of the EA for more information.

Public Safety

Comments from the public suggest that OHV riders should be allowed to evaluate the safety of an area themselves and be allowed to ride at their own risk rather than close unsafe roads. The public also feels that it is unclear why motorized access users are considered more at risk of using unsafe routes as a result of safety hazards such as landslides than non-motorized users. Landslides and slumps occur periodically on or near roads in the project area, often following storm events. Landslides can block a road or a portion of the road can move downhill. People using the road may not be aware that a recent landslide has blocked the road or that part of the roadbed has moved downhill. The speed at which motor vehicles travel makes occupants of these vehicles much more likely to be injured by crashing into logs, earth and rocks deposited on a road by a landslide or driving off the roadbed that has been lost by a slump or washout than non-motorized users. Hikers are likely to see the problem in time to stop because of their much slower speed. Therefore, motor vehicle users are considered to be at a greater risk than other users. In addition, motorized vehicles add substantial weight on the road surface compared to non-motorized users. While a failing bridge or a culvert could withstand the weight of two hikers (estimated at 400 lbs, but usually split up into two locations), it may not be able to withstand the weight of several ATVs plus drivers (estimated at between 600 to 200 lbs each, concentrated into a small area). Due to weight limits and bridge width, some bridges considered unsafe for the weight and width of most OHVs are still considered safe for foot traffic. Additionally, foot traffic may cross anadromous fish streams in an effort to bypass unsafe bridges and culverts (according to State statute AS 41.14.870) while OHVs may not legally cross anadromous fish streams in an effort to bypass unsafe structures.

Safety standards are set by Forest Service policy. Because of our policies and procedures regarding public safety, we must protect public safety; therefore we cannot allow the public to use identified unsafe roads and bridges. "Ride at your own risk" signage would not absolve the Forest Service of responsibility or liability for allowing use on unsafe roads or trails. Consequently, the action alternatives call for certain roads posing threats to public safety to be closed to motorized use until they can be repaired or decommissioned. See Public Safety in Chapter 3 of the EA for more information.

Road Maintenance Costs

Some comments on the 2006 EA suggested that the Sitka Ranger District should seek more funding for road maintenance. Reduced funding for road maintenance is a result of many factors beyond the Sitka Ranger District's control, such as the budget deficit and national priorities set by Congress, and is a current recognized national trend. The District identifies

the funding needed to maintain the roads each year but is forbidden by law from lobbying Congress for additional funds. The entire Tongass National Forest is faced with reduced funding for road maintenance. To address funding issues and the requirements of the Travel Management Rule, the other Tongass National Forest Ranger Districts are also completing access travel management analyses. This project, including Alternative 4, is being proposed because current funding provided for road maintenance is inadequate to prevent further resource damage to open roads at their current Objective Maintenance Level (OML). As a consequence of the mounting shortfall, under all action alternatives, roads not needed for short-term or long-term resource management would be placed in storage, decommissioned, or converted to trails. This would reduce the cost of road maintenance and reduce ongoing resource damage due to inadequate road maintenance. In addition, the District intends to work with volunteers that are willing and able to help maintain Forest roads. For example, we intend to seek the help of local groups or communities interested in recreational riding to maintain and keep OHV trails open. Road work to open all roads identified in all action alternatives ranges from minimal clearing to areas requiring heavy equipment to correct identified problems or install stream crossing devices.

National OHV Final Rule

The National OHV Rule was released in November 2005. This Access and Travel Management Plan may be modified in the future to comply with the Final Rule. This rule is now officially called the Travel Management Rule.

Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Road Corridors

The Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan (SATP), proposed by the State of Alaska in 2004, included transportation and utility corridors designed to better link the communities in Southeast Alaska. Individual scoping participants believed that certain roads proposed to be stored or decommissioned should remain open to preserve the potential corridors outlined in the SATP. Representatives of the State of Alaska Department of Transportation also requested that the Forest Service maintain and protect the roads aligning with these routes. All of the action alternatives maintain roadbeds or the option of roadbeds in these corridors, as recommended.

Unauthorized Access onto Private Lands

Private landowners have the right to deny access across their land. Therefore, the Forest Service cannot accommodate use on private lands, and the action alternatives do not designate use on private lands. Where the Government has secured or retained public access across private land, this access will be identified on the Motor Vehicle Use Map.

Allow Crossing of Anadromous Streams

Some people who commented on the 2006 EA felt that OHVs should be allowed to cross anadromous fish streams, and/or infrequent crossings by OHVs should be allowed. Alaska State law (AS 41.14.870) prohibits driving motorized vehicles of any sort, including OHVs, across anadromous fish streams without adequate crossings. While the state law is in effect, the Forest Service must abide by the law. The Forest Service is not at liberty to ignore laws protecting water quality; therefore the Forest Service must prohibit the use of these crossings by any and all motorized vehicles until crossings are fixed or the Sitka Ranger District

receives concurrence from the State on crossings. Consultation and site visits with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources has lead to concurrence on some hardened crossings, rock fords or bridges. The Forest Service will continue to survey all anadromous stream crossings on roads identified as potential trails.

Funding for Proposals

Some people who commented on the 2006 EA were concerned that funding would not be available to implement the chosen alternative, and were concerned that the Sitka District is not committed to implementing an alternative when chosen. Appendix A in the 2006 EA and Appendix B in the 2007 Revised EA display the priorities relative to Alternative 3 for opening roads to OHVs that are “closed pending repair.” Note that in Alternative 4, some roads are open due to clearance/concurrence work done by resource specialists with the State of Alaska to allow OHV use on some roads “closed pending repairs” between the 2006 EA and this Revised EA. Maintenance funds are applied to the mainline roads on a rotation schedule, predominately at False Island, Corner Bay, Kruzof, etc. The District plans to request adequate amounts of funding but in reality, partnerships, volunteers, and adopt-a-road programs will need to be considered to support the amount of open roads and potential designated trails under Alternatives 3 and 4. The Sitka Ranger District has a due date of December 2007 to produce a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) that displays roads, trails, and areas open to OHVs. The goal is to address all the “closed until repairs are made” roads by 2009. Regardless of which alternative is selected, there is no guarantee that funds will be available to fully implement the chosen alternative. The District will utilize funding available, and in some cases volunteers, to implement the chosen alternative.

Enforcement of Closures

Several people who commented on the 2006 EA were concerned about enforcement of road closures. When the Travel Management Rule is implemented on the Tongass, the Motor Vehicle Use Map will only display those roads or OHV trails that are open for each specific vehicle type. No other routes will be legally available for motorized travel. The Sitka Ranger District has one law enforcement officer and two forest protection officers assigned to the District. The District recognizes the need for an increased level of law enforcement; however, just as there is not enough money in the budget to maintain all of the roads, there is not enough money in the budget to provide additional law enforcement personnel. When the Travel Management Rule is adopted on the Sitka Ranger District, the MVUM will identify roads, areas, and trails that are open for motor vehicle use. This map will be made available for all forest users at our offices and on-line and will be updated annually. OHV users will be expected to adhere to the law by only riding on routes designated as open on this map. The public can assist the Forest Service in law enforcement by reporting the location of closed areas being used and the time/date of that use to the local Forest Service office. This information can help us in future law enforcement activities.

CHAPTER 2 ALTERNATIVE 4 AND ALTERNATIVE COMPARISON

This chapter compares the alternatives considered for the Sitka ATM project. It includes a description and maps of Alternative 4. This section also presents the alternatives in comparative form, sharply defining the differences between each alternative and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decision maker and the public.

The Forest Service uses the term “Maintenance Level” to describe the level of service provided by, and maintenance required for each forest road. The Objective Maintenance Level (OML) is the proposed maintenance level to be assigned as a result of this document, considering road management objectives, traffic needs, budget constraints, and environmental concerns. Forest roads are assigned to one of four separate Objective Maintenance Levels. Roads assigned to OML-1 are considered closed to passenger vehicles, while roads assigned to OML-2, 3, or 4 are considered open. Alternative 4 calls for changes to the Objective Maintenance Levels on several roads on the Ranger District. These changes are detailed in Table B-1 in Appendix B. A brief description of these OMLs can be found under Definitions in the 2006 EA.

The Responsible Official considers four alternatives in the EA. The Sitka Access and Travel Management EA, dated June 2006, described and considered a No Action Alternative (Alternative 1) and two action alternatives, including the Proposed Action (Alternative 2) and a third alternative (Alternative 3), in detail. Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 will remain the same as described in the June 2006 EA; readers are referred to the June 2006 document for those alternative descriptions. In this Revised EA, a fourth alternative (Alternative 4) is described and considered.

Under the No Action Alternative, no changes to road management would take place in the project area; Alternative 1 is the current condition, basically unlimited off-road travel, which is provided for comparison only. Alternative 1 is not selectable because it violates current regulation and policy. The other alternatives represent different means of meeting the Purpose and Need for this project by responding with different emphases to the significant issues discussed in Chapter 1. The alternatives were designed to fully comply with the Tongass Forest Plan including all applicable Standards and Guidelines. Maps of Alternative 4 are provided within this chapter; maps of Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 are found in the June 2006 EA. For the purpose of displaying all 22 road systems, the Ranger District has been divided into five areas: Indian River, Southeast Chichagof Island, Upper Baranof Island, Lower Baranof Island, and Kruzof Island. Each map displays one of these areas on the Ranger District.

Roads on Non-Federal Land

During scoping for this project, representatives of Alaskan Native groups expressed concern regarding the management of roads that impact Native allotments. Owners of these private lands have requested that roads on their properties not appear on project maps except for where the Ranger District has secured easements. Therefore, certain roads familiar to local users may not be depicted in the maps included in this EA since they are not public routes.

Activities and Definitions Common to All Action Alternatives

In all alternatives, the Travel Management Rule allows motorized vehicle use only in areas designated as open. Depending on the alternative, roads and trails are designated as open to OHVs and/or passenger vehicles. Log transfer facilities (LTFs), rock pits, and sort yards will be open to motorized vehicle use where they are accessible from an open designated road; these areas will be open to OHV use where they are accessible from an open designated trail.

In all alternatives, OHV use is limited to a 50-inch wheelbase or less on the Starrigavan trail system and on Ocean Boulevard (Road 7544). On the remaining OHV designated trails, OHV use is limited to a 60-inch wheelbase or less.

Because the Travel Management Rule allows motorized vehicle use only in areas designated as open, the following areas are proposed to remain open for OHVs. The following actions are proposed in all action alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3, and 4). Analysis related to these proposals has been added to Chapter 3 of this Revised EA and the Project Record.

Designated OHV Use Areas (other than roads and associated road features open to OHVs)

Designated OHV use areas are off-road areas that are made available to OHV riders. Generally, they are areas of past use or natural features which make them resistant to damage from cross-country motor vehicle use. Three designated OHV use areas would be open and available to OHV use in all alternatives (see Table 13 and Figures 28-30 in the Map Section after the Appendices). OHV use would be limited to the areas shown on the maps.

Table 13. Designated OHV Use Areas for All Alternatives

Name	Acres	Access	Season of Use
North Beach	9.3	Trail 31464	Anytime
Harbor Mountain	136.5	Road 7576	Over snow only*
Bear View	5.3	7540FI	Anytime

*See Appendix C for further conditions

Limiting OHV use to these areas is an effort to: minimize damage to soil, watershed, and vegetation; minimize harassment of wildlife and disruption of wildlife habitat, and minimize conflicts among different classes and uses of motor vehicles.

OHV use in the Harbor Mountain area would only be allowed over snow and only when snow conditions and depths described in Appendix C are met. At North Beach, OHV users are and would continue to be allowed to access campsites from the beach only; OHVs could be unloaded and parked no more than 30 feet from the end of the three western-most access points (30 feet in from the tree line). See Figure 28 in the map section for locations of the three access points.

One of these designated areas (North Beach) is sensitive to impacts by OHV use due to the presence of a rare plant. OHVs will be expected to 1) stay away from and off of areas of beach grass, and 2) use the five access points marked on Figure 28 to access trails and campsites. Monitoring will be conducted annually to determine if resource damage is occurring in these areas; if a loss of plants or beach grass is detected, this area would be closed to OHV use.

Off-Road Access for Dispersed Camping

OHV use off of designated open roads and trails for the purpose of dispersed camping is permitted for up to 100 feet on closed roadbeds year-round. Dispersed camping at North Beach would be allowed as described under Designated OHV Use Areas.

Mixed-use Analysis

The Travel Management Rule requires an analysis on OML-3 and OML-4 roads where mixed-use, highway legal passenger vehicles and OHVs, are going to be sharing the roadway. This will require a documented engineering judgment and/or engineering study by a qualified engineer with recommendations to the District Ranger for approval or implementation. With the implementation of the Travel Management Rule, a Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) will be produced to show the NFS roads and the appropriate motorized use allowed. The Sitka Ranger District is scheduled to produce the accompanying MVUM by December of 2007.

Roads that are currently being used by OHVs are anticipated to remain available for OHV use pending the completion of the study and are represented on the OHV maps for all alternatives. A mixed-use analysis will be done for Harbor Mountain Road 7576 because of OHV and passenger vehicle use at the same time.

Ongoing Road Maintenance and Reconditioning

Ongoing road maintenance and reconditioning would continue, to some degree, in all alternatives no matter which alternative is chosen. Maintenance and reconditioning of existing National Forest System (NFS) roads is an ongoing process that occurs on a periodic basis. Normally this kind of road work is determined to fit the category of routine repair and maintenance of roads that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment and may be categorically excluded (FSH 1909.15, 31.12). The maintenance and reconditioning of NFS roads on the project area may occur before, during and after the project analysis. This work is done through separate service contracts to reduce the backlog of deferred maintenance, recondition roads to comply with best management practices, maintain the existing infrastructure for the proposed timber sale or future harvest entries, and other National Forest management activities. The timing of this work may coincide with this project's analysis but is not part of the proposed action or alternatives being considered. Any effects from the road maintenance and reconditioning work are included in the cumulative effects analysis for this project.

Road maintenance consists of superficial periodic repairs to an existing road surface, brushing, and cleaning and repairing drainage features. These tasks are performed to keep the roads in the safe and useful condition for which they were designed. Repairs may be done as annual maintenance.

Road reconditioning is heavier maintenance of an existing road such as culvert replacement, surface rock replacement, and subgrade repair.

Road maintenance and reconditioning consists of performing the work necessary to retain the road's traffic service level. The amount and level of maintenance and repair is dependent upon traffic management objectives and maintenance criteria.

Alternative 4

This alternative places more roads into storage and reduces road maintenance levels than Alternative 2 and 3. This alternative was developed in response to anticipated budget reductions in engineering. Roads deemed not needed for long-term management would be decommissioned or, in some instances, converted to designated trails. This alternative affects 22 separate road systems. Under this alternative forest roads that are not needed for resource management in the short term but are needed for long-term management would be stored (see Table B-1 in Appendix B and Figures 31 through 35 in the Map Section after the Appendices).

There were a number of roads not connected to any large community that had been maintained for passenger cars for which there was little use by that type of vehicle. With no continuing resource activities to augment the maintenance of these roads, the maintenance level was reduced to accommodate the typical usage by high clearance vehicles. Approximately 109.5 miles of roads that are currently identified as open to passenger and high-clearance vehicles would be closed or placed in OML-1. This would bring to total of roads in OML-1 on the Sitka District to 265.9 miles. These 265.9 miles of roads placed in storage would have drainage structures removed and water bars installed if needed for resource protection unless it is converted to an OHV trail.

A total of 4.7 miles of road not needed for long-term management would be decommissioned. Decommissioned roads would have their drainage structures removed and in some instances road surfaces would be scarified and revegetated. Any identified hazards to public safety would also be corrected.

A total of 32.0 miles of roads on the Corner Bay and False Island road systems were reduced from OML-3 to OML-2. However, 1.2 miles of roads in the Corner Bay and False Island road systems were moved to open from closed, OML-1 to OML-2, which reflects current usage and road condition. This results in a total of 59.7 miles of roads in Alternative 4 that are maintained as OML-2 for high-clearance vehicles in Alternative 4.

This alternative also designates which roads would be open to OHV use. There are 43.3 miles of former roads that would become designated trails. As with Alternative 2, this alternative also identifies roads that would be good candidates for future availability as OHV trails once their respective resource concerns are addressed. These are referred to as ‘yellow roads’ or potential designated trails throughout this document. This alternative identifies 59.9 miles that are potential designated trails once their respective resource concerns are mitigated such as through hardened stream crossings, removal of stream obstructions, removal of slide material, or where field-verification identifies fish crossings as having limited or no impact to anadromous fish.

Passenger Vehicle Access

Indian River – Alternative 4 for Passenger Vehicle Access

Due to deteriorating conditions of all bridges in the Indian River system, all roads would be placed in storage and closed to passenger vehicles for public safety. During the road storage process, Road 75001 would be decommissioned because of resource issues.

Southeast Chichagof Island – Alternative 4 for Passenger Vehicle Access

Under Alternative 4 there are no roads open for passenger cars. The 38.0 miles of road identified in Alternative 2 as open to passenger cars would have their operation maintenance level reduced from OML-3 to OML-2 due to reduced road maintenance budgets and limit use by passenger cars. This alternative also places 108.6 miles of road in storage in addition to 6.7 miles of former roads that would be designated trails. This alternative has 57.1 miles of road available for high clearance vehicles in this area. Approximately 2.5 miles of Road 7545 (False Island road system) would be decommissioned due to resource issues.

Upper Baranof Island – Alternative 4 for Passenger Vehicle Access

In Alternative 4, all roads on the Hanus Bay, Kelp Bay, Saook, Appleton Cove, Rodman Bay, Fish Bay, St. John the Baptist, and Noxon Creek systems are closed to passenger vehicles. An unauthorized segment totaling 1.8 miles would be added to the Hanus Bay system as a stored road.

Lower Baranof Island – Alternative 4 Action for Passenger Vehicle Access

The 6.3 miles of the Sitka Local road system would remain open to passenger cars in Alternative 4. The maintenance level has been reduced on Road 7577, the Blue Lake Road (2.2 miles) for safety reasons, but it would still be open to high clearance vehicle use. Approximately 0.5 mile of unauthorized roads would be added to the system as roads accessible to passenger cars.

Roads in the Kizhuchia road system would be closed to passenger and high clearance vehicles. There is a portion of private property that limits access to this small system approximately 1.9 miles from the marine access point. All 7.7 miles of roads in this system would be placed in storage.

The Camp Coogan road system (2 miles) has recently been decommissioned; it is closed to all motorized travel. There are 10.2 miles of Katlian road system currently in storage and closed to passenger and high clearance vehicles.

No changes would be made to the 2.6 miles of the Lisa Creek road system, which is stored.

Kruzof Island – Alternative 4 for Passenger Vehicle Access

Currently there are two remote road systems on Kruzof Island: Mud Bay and Eagle Creek. All roads on the Mud Bay and Eagle Creek systems are closed to passenger and high clearance vehicles. This alternative calls for the storage of approximately 20.1 miles of roads on Kruzof Island. A portion of Road 75961 (0.6 miles) would be decommissioned during storage activities because it was built on very erosive soil and has experienced numerous landslides. Twenty-two unauthorized road segments, totaling approximately 5.2 miles, would be added to this system.

Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Access

Figures 36 through 40 (in the Map Section after the Appendices) depict the OHV access for Alternative 4. An OHV is any motor vehicle that is designed or retrofitted primarily for recreational use off road, including all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), minibikes, off-highway motorcycles, and motorized trail bikes. In all alternatives, the Sitka Ranger District is

limiting OHV use to a 50-inch wheelbase or less on the Starrigavan trail system and on Ocean Boulevard (Road 7544). On the remaining OHV designated trails, OHV use is limited to a 60-inch wheelbase or less.

Indian River – Alternative 4 for OHV Access

Due to deteriorating conditions of all bridges in the Indian River system, all roads are closed to OHV traffic. The first 11.3 miles of Road 7500 and Road 7502 are identified as potential designated trails and are closed until repairs or mitigation of failed bridges is completed.

Southeast Chichagof Island – Alternative 4 OHV Access

The Corner Bay road system would remain mostly open to OHV use with the following exceptions: Road 7541 would be closed after MP 1.0, Road 7543 would be closed after MP 1.5, Road 7621 would be closed after MP 1.1. Road 7623 would be closed. Road 7624 would be closed after MP 0.7. Road 75409 would be open. Road 7540, the Corner Bay Road would be open to OHV to the intersection with the Muri Creek Road 7620. Road 7542 would be closed to OHVs past MP 1.8 as would all of Roads 75422 and 754221. Road 7620 would be closed to OHV traffic past MP 0.9. Roads 7559, 75591, 75410, and 76241 would be closed to OHV use. Road 7520 would be closed to OHV traffic at MP 9.5 along Chatham Straits as would all of Roads 7524, 75241, 7523, 7521, and Road 7522. The first 0.6 miles of 75205 and 752051 would be open for a total of 1.6 miles of designated trails. Roads would be closed because of resource issues and lack of access.

False Island system Roads 7545, 7547, 7552, 75443, 754431, 75461, 75522, and the last 3.9 miles of 7548 are closed to OHV use. Road 7544 would be open to OHV use which includes Ocean Boulevard. Road 7553 would be open to OHVs for the first 0.1 miles, however the remainder of this road and Roads 7553, 75531, 755311, 755312, 75532, 75533, 75534, and 75401 would be closed to OHV use.

The Crab Bay road system has many unimproved fish stream crossings, and would be closed to OHV use. The Oly Creek road system would also be closed to OHV because of its poor condition. The Inbetween system would be closed to OHV use because all log stringer bridges have failed.

Upper Baranof Island – Alternative 4 for OHV Access

With this alternative 15.8 miles of roads of the Appleton Cove system would remain in storage. This includes the addition of three unauthorized road segments totaling approximately 5 miles that are needed for future resource management. In addition there are 3.1 miles of former roads that would now be designated trails. Road 7722E would be open to OHVs as far as a removed bridge at MP 0.9 and Road 7588 would be open as far as a removed bridge at MP 0.4.

There are no designated trails for OHVs on the Hanus Bay road system due to a previous decision on an EIS, to provide wildlife protection.

The majority of roads on the St. John the Baptist road system are identified as potential designated trails. Some stream crossing structures require replacement or permitted stream crossings before this system could be opened to OHV use. Until work is completed, this system would remain closed to OHV access.

All of the roads on the Fish Bay road system would be stored and closed to OHV traffic. They lack acceptable fish crossing structures and are in extremely poor condition; consequently, the roads would be closed to OHV use. Kelp Bay, Rodman Bay, and Saook systems are also in extremely poor condition, and would not be available for OHV use unless future timber sale activities repair or expand them.

The Noxon system would be closed to OHVs until stream crossings are repaired or field-verification identifies fish crossings as having limited or no impact to anadromous fish, and if needed, concurrence received from the State Department of Natural Resources.

The former main access route into Nakwasina, an unauthorized road system, would be added as a potential trail opportunity. This trail would include approximately 4.5 miles, and would be available for OHV use after appropriate stream crossing structures are built or alternative stream crossings are approved.

Lower Baranof Island – Alternative 4 for OHV Access

No changes would be made to the current OHV designations of the Sitka Local road system. The Starrigavan OHV trail would remain open. Harbor Mountain would be available for OHV use during the winter when it has been determined that there is adequate snow coverage on the road surface. OHVs are not allowed on the Blue Lake road and in the Sawmill Creek campground.

While most of the roads on the Katlian system have inadequate fish crossing structures, the first 0.5 mile of 7579 up to the intersection with Road 75797, and the first 2.7 miles of Road 75797 are open to OHV traffic in Alternative 4. The remainder of this road is closed until stream crossings are repaired or field-verification identifies fish crossings as having limited or no impact to anadromous fish. Roads 75791, 75790, and 75792 are closed to OHV use.

The Lisa Creek system would be closed to OHV use and put into storage due to a lack of access through private property.

The first 1.9 miles of Road 7582, along saltwater up to the private property, would be open to OHVs. The remaining 5.8 miles of roads in the Kizhuchia system beyond the private property would be closed to OHV traffic.

The Camp Coogan road system has been decommissioned.

Kruzof Island – Alternative 4 for OHV Access

The majority of the Mud Bay system would remain open to OHV use with a few exceptions. The last 0.7 miles of Road 75911 and Roads 75912, 759122, and 75913 would be closed until improvements to fish stream crossings can be made. The last 0.6 miles of Road 75961 would be decommissioned because it was built on very erosive soil and has experienced numerous landslides, therefore no further resources activities are planned requiring motorized access.

Multiple major stream crossing structures on the Eagle Creek road system have failed and pose a hazard to both public safety and natural resources. This system would remain closed to OHVs until the stream crossings are repaired or mitigated.

Two existing motorized trails, Starrigavan and North Beach, would be maintained as designated trails. Existing non-motorized trails would remain non-motorized.

Mitigation Common to All Alternatives

The mitigation measures described in the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA would be implemented under each of the road management alternatives as needed to protect resources. The following additional mitigation measures would also be implemented under all action alternatives:

- To help control erosion on steeper grades and encourage reduced speed, rolling dips should be maintained along with narrowed clearing limits on NFS Road 7590 and 7591 on the Mud Bay road system.
- Access points and protected beach grass habitat will be signed at North Beach.

Monitoring

Implementation and effectiveness monitoring would be completed for project work approved under any alternative, as would normal Forest Plan monitoring. In addition to the monitoring described in the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA, all action alternatives would include monitoring of designated use areas to determine if OHV riders are staying within the confines of the hardened surfaces and the creation of a monitoring plan to monitor impacts to a rare plant and beach grass at North Beach. Monitoring will be conducted annually to determine if resource damage is occurring at North Beach; if a degradation of rare plants or beach grass habitat is detected at North Beach, this area would be closed to OHV use.

Comparison of Alternatives

This section provides a summary of the effects of implementing each alternative. Information in Table 14 is focused on activities and outputs. Table 15 is focused on effects where different levels of effects can be distinguished quantitatively or qualitatively among alternatives.

Table 14. Comparison of Alternatives

	Alternative 1, No Action	Alternative 2, Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Road Management (maintenance level)				
Storage (miles) OML-1	208.0	229.0	275.9	265.9
High-clearance vehicles (miles) ^{1/} OML-2	122.2	76.7	73.3	59.7
Passenger cars, rough surface (miles) OML-3	37.8	38.0	38.0	5.0
Passenger cars smooth surface (miles) OML-4	3.7	4.0	4.0	1.4
Decommissioned (miles)	0	16.4	0	4.7
Forest road converted to trail (miles)	0	22.4	0	43.3
Unauthorized road added to trail system (miles)	0	4.5	0	4.5
Total (miles)^{3/}	371.7	391.0	391.2	384.5
Unauthorized roads added to road system	0	14.5	19	14.5
OHV Access				
Open (miles)	356.2 ^{4/}	193.2	193.2	105.1
Closed pending repairs (miles); these are potential designated trails/ “yellow” roads	0	101.9	184.4	59.9
Closed (miles)	9.8	90.4	7.9	216.5
Open seasonally (miles) 7576	5.7	5.7	5.7	4.6
Total (miles)	371.7	391.2	391.2	386.1
Designated OHV use areas (number of areas)	0	3	3	3
Note: Numbers are based on GIS analysis and may not be exact. Numbers may not match other tables or add exactly due to rounding.				
1/ High-clearance vehicles includes all vehicles with ground clearance greater than 5 inches.				
2/ An additional 4.5 miles of unauthorized road would be converted to OHV trail under the Proposed Action.				
3/ Totals for the Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 include unauthorized roads added to the system.				
4/ Includes roads without acceptable stream crossings.				

Table 15. Comparison of Resource Effects

	Alternative 1, No Action	Alternative 2, Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Subsistence				
Resource distribution and abundance	No change	No substantial change	No substantial change	No substantial change
Access to resources, short term	No change	Minor decrease	Minor decrease	Minor decrease
Access to resources, long term	No change	Minor decrease	No change	Minor decrease
Competition	No change	No change	No Change	No Change
Old-Growth Habitat LUDs				
Open to passenger vehicles (miles)	7.7	2.1	1.6	0
Open to OHV use (miles)	24.4	4.6 ^{1/}	4.6 ^{1/}	0.7
Closed to OHV use pending repairs (miles)	0	10.0	19.7	10.6
Closed to OHV use (miles)	0	9.8	0.1	15.3
Water Quality				
Roads closed on hazardous soils (miles)	0	32.6	32.5	38.3
Road/stream crossings removed or repaired	0	888	781	1,211
Open roads on RMAs ^{2/} (miles)	26	21.3	21.2	12.7
Roads on wetlands (miles)	89.7	31.9	32.4	16.1
Fisheries				
Fish passage blockages removed (red pipes)	0	40	39	69
Miles of Level 2, 3, 4 Road to Maintain	163.7	118.7	115.3	68.0
Cost of Road Maintenance per year^{3/}	\$219,000	\$187,000	\$192,000	\$106,000
1/ Portions of open OML-2 and OML-3 roads providing access to adjacent developmental LUDs, such as Road 7500.				
2/ RMA = Riparian Management Area				
3/ Estimated using OML-1=\$169/mi/yr, OML-2=\$806/mi/yr, OML-3=\$2,051/mi/yr, OML-4=\$2,051/mi/yr				

CHAPTER 3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Introduction

This chapter briefly describes the affected environment and the environmental consequences of Alternative 4 by significant issue and by other environmental concerns. It also presents the scientific and analytical basis for the comparison of alternatives presented in Chapter 2. Direct, indirect, and cumulative effects are disclosed. Effects are quantified where possible, but qualitative discussions are also included.

The following discussion of resources and the potential effects associated with each of the alternatives takes advantage of existing information included in the Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); other project Environmental Assessments (EAs); project-specific resource reports and related information; roads analyses; and other sources as indicated. Where applicable, such information is briefly summarized and referenced to minimize duplication.

This Revised EA hereby incorporates by reference the June 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA (USDA Forest Service 2006), the project planning record, and the specialist/resource reports contained in the project record (40 CFR 1502.21). The project record for this project includes all project-specific information, including resource reports and other results of field investigations used to support the analysis and conclusions in this EA. The project record is located at the Sitka Ranger District Office in Sitka, Alaska, and is available for review during regular business hours. Information from the record is available upon request.

Analyzing Effects

Environmental consequences are the effects of implementing an alternative on the physical, biological, social, and economic environment. They include direct, indirect, and cumulative effects, and unavoidable adverse effects; the definitions of these effects are explained briefly in the June 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA. These effects are discussed here for Alternative 4.

Available Information

For this EA, all the maps and most of the numerical analyses are based on GIS resource data.

Analysis of the Alternatives by Significant Issue

Two issues were identified as significant for this project and analyzed in detail for each alternative: motorized access for recreation and for subsistence.

Issue 1: Motorized Access for Recreation

Affected Environment

The existing conditions related to recreation have changed slightly between now and when the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA was released. Therefore, only the changes to the affected environment information have been included here. The affected environment information that remains the same as in the 2006 EA has not been repeated here. The reader is referred to the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA (USDA Forest Service 2006) for recreation information on existing condition.

Off-Highway Vehicle Use

Between the 2006 EA and the present, the portion of Road 7544 that follows the shoreline (referred to as Ocean Boulevard) has been determined to be drivable by OHVs without effects to fish; therefore this portion of the road will be open to 50-inch wide OHVs.

Cabins and Campgrounds

Sawmill Creek campground is located off Blue Lake Road 7577, approximately 1.4 miles north of Sawmill Creek Boulevard. The maintenance level for Road 7577 was changed to Maintenance Level 2 (high clearance vehicles) prior to a decision in this EA due to safety concerns. The cost of improving the Blue Lake Road to Maintenance Level 3 (for passenger vehicles) is prohibitive. By staying at Maintenance Level 2, which provides a rougher road surface, we are reducing the road speed while still allowing for high clearance vehicle use. With this change in the existing condition, the Sawmill Creek campground is recommended for high clearance vehicles.

Hiking and Trails

As described above under Cabins and Campgrounds, the existing condition of the Blue Lake Road 7577 has changed from Maintenance Level 3 to Maintenance Level 2 for the reasons described. Thus the Beaver Lake trailhead is accessible to high clearance vehicles. The newly constructed Thimbleberry-Heart Lake trail is also accessible by high clearance vehicles off Road 7577 and from Sawmill Creek Boulevard. Road 7500, which crosses the East Tenakee trail, has failed and failing bridges, but is currently shown as open in the existing condition.

Outfitter/Guide Use

Outfitter/guide use of project area roads has changed slightly and is summarized by area and road system in Table 16. Goat hunting permittees use roads to hike in to their sites and camps.

Table 16. Outfitter/Guide Road Use

Area/Road System	Road	Number of Outfitter/Guides	Identified Uses
Southeast Chichagof Island			
False Island	7540, 7544	2	High-clearance vehicle roads used for biking and hiking tours. Bicycle or foot passage to Sitkoh Lake. One guide uses open vehicle roads for game retrieval in the fall.
Crab Bay	7560	1	Temporary brown bear hunting camp at the saltwater terminus of the old roadbed in Crab Bay
Upper Baranof Island			
St. John the Baptist	7583, 7584, 7585	2	Access to goat hunting at higher elevations in fall and winter.
Fish Bay	7580	2	Access to goat hunting at higher elevations in fall and winter
Nakwasina		2	Access to goat hunting at higher elevations in fall and winter.
Rodman	7586,7587	1	Access to goat hunting at higher elevations in fall and winter.
Noxon	7574	2	Access to goat hunting at higher elevations in fall and winter.
Saook	7539	2	Guided hikes by mid-sized cruise ship companies.
Lower Baranof Island			
Sitka Local	7577	1	Daily bicycle tours in summer. Access to Beaver Lake trail and Sawmill Creek campground.
Katlian Bay	75790, 75797	1	ATV use for retrieval of game in fall and winter
Kruzof Island			
Mud Bay	7590	4	Backpacking and bicycle riding by wilderness therapy institution. Access to recreational cabins. Guided foot and bicycle tours. Guided ATV tours between Mud Bay and North Beach.

Source: Mary Emerick, 2007

OHV Designated Use Areas

There are no official OHV use areas currently designated on the Sitka Ranger District. Use of most off road areas is unregulated on the Sitka District at this time. Rock pits and log transfer facilities (LTFs) along with other off-road locations are areas known to be used by OHVs on the District. The North Beach area, Kruzof Island, does not have topographic features that confine use to the hardened (sand) area. As a result, riders have extended trails through the forest impacting forest floor vegetation. A stream on the east end of North Beach has changed course and a new channel is forming approximately 100 feet in front of the cabin paralleling the beach to the west. The Bear View area near False Island may be susceptible to expansion by riders because it is partially topographically confined, but has islands of vegetation within it. Harbor Mountain has been used as an open riding area during winter months for many years. It is used by ATVs and snowmobiles when sufficient snow depth and conditions allow off road use without damage to the underlying vegetation and soil.

Environmental Effects – Direct and Indirect Effects

Off-Highway Vehicles Use

Except for minor adjustments related to the changes in the existing condition, the effects of Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 related to OHV use have not changed between now and when the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA was released. Therefore, the effects of those alternatives have not been repeated here; see the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA (USDA Forest Service 2006).

Under Alternative 4, approximately 105 miles of roads would remain open to OHV use, approximately 60 miles would be closed until repairs can be made to roads and/or concurrence with the State is reached on stream crossings, and approximately 216 miles would be closed. An additional 5 miles of unauthorized roads would be added to the road system as closed roads. Alternative 4 would limit OHV access to less than 1/2 of the mileage that is currently designated as open. Most of roads that would be temporarily or permanently closed under this alternative, while currently designated as open, are not legally passable due to inadequate stream crossings. Under this alternative, approximately 208 miles would be open to OHV use in the long term, including approximately 43 miles that would be converted to OHV trails, and 4.5 miles of currently unauthorized road being added as an OHV trail.

The road system provides access to a low number of users due to the distance from communities and remoteness; some motorized recreational users will be impacted by road management changes in all action alternatives, including Alternative 4. Due to attempts to keep open, or open in the future, the most highly used or desired roads, the impacts are expected to be minimal. In all alternatives a motor vehicle use map (MVUM) will be updated annually and will be available on the website and at the District Office. This MVUM will identify what roads, areas and trails are open to motorized vehicles. It will be the responsibility of the motor vehicle user to obtain a copy of the MVUM to know where they can drive or ride. Monitoring areas and roads closed to motorized vehicles will be accomplished by a Law Enforcement Officer, and Forest Protection Officers with the assistance of Forest Service Officers.

In all action alternatives, OHV travel on existing closed roadbeds of up to 100 feet beyond open roads and trails for dispersed camping would provide subsistence and sport related camping opportunities where people typically hunt and recreate. This will provide flexibility and keep camping on an already hardened surface.

Cabins and Campgrounds

There would be no change in management for the roads leading to the west Sitkoh Lake cabin and Kook Lake cabin in the Southeast Chichagof Island analysis area under any action alternative. The section of Road 7544 that leads to the west Sitkoh Lake cabin would remain unchanged (high-clearance vehicles) and open for OHV access. The portion of this road that follows the shoreline (referred to as Ocean Boulevard) is now open to OHVs in all alternatives. An access point from Road 7544 to the West Sitkoh Cabin will provide OHV for cabin use. The sections of road providing access to the foot trail leading to Kook Lake cabin would remain unchanged (passenger cars, rough surface) and open for OHV use under all alternatives.

There would be changes in access management for the road leading to the North Beach cabin, which is located in the Kruzof Island analysis area. Road 7591, which provides access to the OHV trail to North Beach cabin, would be closed to passenger vehicles (the road would be stored), but would remain open to OHV use under all action alternatives. There would be no change to the management of Road 7590, which provides access to the trail leading to the Shelikof cabin.

The road providing access to the Starrigavan Creek campground would remain unchanged (passenger cars, smooth surface). The road providing access to the Sawmill Creek campground would be open to high clearance vehicles and closed to OHV access under all alternatives.

Hiking and Trails

There would be no change in management for Roads 7590, which provides access to the Port Mary and Shelikof trails and 7500 which crosses the East Tenakee trail, under either of the action alternatives. Both of these roads would continue to be maintained for high-clearance vehicles and open for OHV access. Road 7500 is not open because of failed and failing bridges

The maintenance level for Road 7577 (Blue Lake Road), which provides access to the Beaver Lake trail and Thimbleberry-Heart Lake trail (in the Lower Baranof analysis area) would remain accessible to high clearance vehicles. The road would continue to be open seasonally. Road 7576, which provides access to the Harbor Mountain-Gavan Hill trail would continue to be open seasonally to passenger vehicles.

Road 7591, which provides access to the North Beach trail, would be closed to passenger vehicles (the road would be stored), but it would be open to OHV use under all action alternatives. Project actions associated with road storage could produce noise that may temporarily diminish the recreation experience for hikers, but this disturbance would be of short duration.

There will be no change to Road 7542, which provides access to the Kook Lake trail, under all of the action alternatives. This road will continue to be maintained for high-clearance vehicles and open for OHV access.

Hunting and Fishing

The risks of adverse direct and indirect impacts to deer are expected to be low under all alternatives (see the Management Indicator Species Resource Report). Effects on deer are not expected to have noticeable effects on recreational hunting in the area. Similarly, in the short-term, legal road access for hunting related to stream crossings will not change under Alternatives 2 and 3 compared to the current condition because anadromous stream crossings are not yet fixed or concurred upon. The Proposed Action and Alternative 3 would, however, have the long-term effect of increasing the miles of roads and trails that are legally passable related to stream crossings for OHV use and, therefore, extend the area available for recreational hunting (by approximately 97 miles under the Proposed Action and approximately 180 miles under Alternative 3). Alternative 4 would reduce the miles of roads and trails open to OHV use by about 90 miles in the short-term, reducing recreational hunting access by OHVs. In the long-term, the Alternative 4 would have 30 miles less legal road

access related to stream crossings than current legal road access, thus, somewhat reducing the area available for recreational hunting by OHVs in the long-term.

The two main road-related issues affecting fish habitat within the project area are road/stream crossings and roads within Riparian Management Areas (RMAs). Providing for fish passage at road crossings of streams is critical for fish movement and water quality. Improperly located or installed culverts, culverts that have failed, or crossings that are not functional can restrict fish movement and decrease water quality through the input of sediment into stream systems (see the Fisheries Resource Report for further discussion). Negative effects to fish habitat affect fish populations, which in turn have the potential to affect recreational fishing. The No Action Alternative would allow for continued improvements to fish habitat based on concurrence with the State Department of Natural Resources. Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would have additional positive impacts on fish habitat in the project area, both in terms of road/stream crossings and roads located within RMAs (see the Fisheries section). All action alternatives would result in the removal or repair of twice as many road-stream crossings without fish passage as the No Action Alternative, and would remove or repair more miles of existing road within RMAs. These improvements would likely have positive effects on fish populations and could result in a small, but positive effect to recreational fishing. As described in the paragraph above, all action alternatives would have the long-term effect of increasing the miles of roads and trails that are legally passable related to stream crossings for OHV use but reduce the roads usable by high clearance vehicles; therefore, the area available for recreational fishing by OHV users would be extended while the area available by high clearance vehicles is reduced. However, most recreational fishing throughout the Tongass occurs by boat in saltwater, so impacts to recreational fishing are expected to be minimal.

Outfitter/Guide Use

Existing outfitter/guide use of the potentially affected road systems was updated and is summarized in Table 16. Except for minor adjustments related to the changes in the existing condition, the effects of Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 related to outfitter/guide use have changed only minimally between now and when the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA was released. Therefore, the effects of those alternatives have not been repeated here; see the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA (USDA Forest Service 2006). Additional effects related to all action alternatives have been added here. The current maintenance level for Road 7577 (Blue Lake Road), which provides access to the Beaver Lake trail, would not impact the outfitter/guide using that road.

Under Alternative 4, as in the other action alternatives, there may be short-term noise disturbance and temporary access limitations while road improvements are taking place. Road improvements and access modifications associated with Alternative 4 would be expected to have small, but positive effects for outfitters and guides that offer fisheries opportunities to clients. Further, general improvements to OHV access may provide future opportunities for outfitters/guides interested in providing OHV opportunities for clients.

Additional effects under Alternative 4 would primarily be limited to those guides who customarily use roads for game retrieval and access to higher elevations in fall and winter. Under Alternative 4, Roads 7580 and 75790 would be closed and Road 7584 would be decommissioned. In these areas, the roads would grow in, affecting access; guides would

need to plan for longer hikes over rougher terrain with heavy loads, and could result in additional spike camps. The majority of the roads currently used by hunting guides would remain open for OHV use. In addition, the total number of guided mountain goat hunts has been lowered beginning in 2007 due to concerns by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Less OHV use related to Alternative 4 may benefit the hunting guides due to less noise and people while they are trying to hunt.

OHV Designated Use Areas

Rock pits and LTFs that are accessible from routes designated as open in each alternative remain open to OHV use because they are part of the road system. Thus, riders would be able to ride in these areas and retain the experiences available in these areas dependent on the alternative chosen. The open riding area at North Beach, Bear View, and Harbor Mountain will generally continue the current usage of these areas by OHVs with some spatial restrictions. Other areas of current off-road OHV use would be closed to OHV riding, affecting the former riders in those areas. The number of riders affected is expected to be limited because the steepness and wetness of the Sitka Ranger District limits the potential locations for off-road riding that does not cause resource damage.

Open riding areas and hill climbs are difficult to maintain and manage safely (Russ Enhes and Dana Bell, National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council, pers. com. April 2003). Designated open areas are difficult to contain. Wherever areas are not topographically or vegetatively contained there is potential for resource effects beyond the area. Hill climbs, such as the cinder chute area on Kruzof Island, were not designated as OHV Designated Use Areas because hill climbs are available in some nearby rock pits, and because the cinder chute area has less topographic containment than other areas with the potential for expansion of the existing slide. Additionally, Kim Matthews, Hungry Valley State Vehicular Recreation Area, found that hill climbs on erosive soils [such as the cinder chute] become too difficult to ride over time due to the development of ruts making the area unusable for most riders (pers. com. April 2003). Because the three areas designated in all action alternatives are hardened by rock, sand, or snow, the direct or indirect effects to resources are anticipated to be limited (see the remaining portion of Chapter 3).

Issue 2: Motorized Access for Subsistence

The following information provides some background on ANILCA and subsistence. The ANILCA section on access (811) states: The Secretary shall ensure that rural residents engaged in subsistence uses shall have reasonable access to subsistence resources on the public lands. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or other law, the Secretary shall permit on the public lands appropriate use for subsistence purposes of snowmobiles, motorboats, and other means of surface transportation traditionally employed for such purposes by local residents, subject to reasonable regulation. ANILCA regulations apply to all alternatives and all locations considered in this EA.

Affected Environment

Except for a correction to Table 6 (now corrected and shown as Table 17 here), existing conditions related to subsistence have not changed between now and when the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA was released. Therefore, the affected environment information has not been repeated here. The reader is referred to the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA (USDA Forest Service 2006) for subsistence information on existing condition.

Deer harvest data compiled for 1995 through 2003 are summarized by WAA, road system, and potentially affected community in Table 17. This table identifies total documented harvest by WAA for each community and also indicates the percentage of total community harvest each WAA accounted for over this period.

Table 17. Documented Deer Harvest by Road System and WAA, 1995 to 2003

Area/Road System	WAA	Deer Harvested ^{1/}			Percent of Total Community Harvest ^{2/}		
		Sitka	Tenakee Springs	Angoon	Sitka	Tenakee Springs	Angoon
Indian River							
Indian Road	3526	27	137		<1	18	
Southeast Chichagof Island							
Inbetween and Crab Bay	3629	27	137		<1	18	
Corner Bay, ^{3/}	3628	5	16		<1	2	
	3627	57	201		<1	26	
False Island and Oly Creek	3308	607	77	114	3	10	6
Upper Baranof Island							
Rodman Bay, Appleton, and Saook	3313	1,004			4		
Hanus Bay	3315	550		140	2		7
Kelp Bay	3731	248	0	57	1		3
Fish Bay	3314	1,097			5		
St. John the Baptist, Noxon, and Nakwasina	3001	3,543	3		15	<1	
Lower Baranof Island							
Lisa Creek	3001	3,543	3		15	<1	
Katlian, Starrigavan Bay, Harbor Mountain, Sitka Local, and Blue Lake	3002	2,804	3		12	<1	
Camp Coogan and Kizhuchia	3003	1,198	3		5	<1	
Kruzof							
Eagle Creek	3104	1,536			6		
Mud Bay ^{4/}	3104	1,536			6		
	3105	1,144			5		
Total ^{5/}		13,847	577	311	59	75	16

WAA = Wildlife Analysis Area: A division of land used by ADF&G for wildlife analysis.

1/ Total documented deer harvest by community for those WAAs that include road systems.

2/ Total documented harvest by WAA and community divided by total harvest within the project area by community.

3/ The Corner Bay road system also extends into WAA 3308.

4/ The Mud Bay road system extends into two WAAs, as shown.

5/ Total documented harvest within WAAs that include road systems divided by total project area harvest.

Source: ADF&G, various years

Environmental Effects – Direct and Indirect Effects

ANILCA Section 810 stipulates that when an action taken by a Federal agency may affect public lands, the agency with primary jurisdiction should evaluate the effects of the action on subsistence uses and needs. Three factors related to subsistence uses are specifically identified by ANILCA: 1) resource distribution and abundance, 2) access to resources, and 3) competition for the use of resources. The following sections address each of these factors in turn.

Resource Distribution and Abundance

The following sections discuss the potential effects of the alternatives to the following subsistence resources: salmon and other finfish, terrestrial mammals, marine mammals, marine invertebrates, and vegetation.

Designated OHV Use Areas

All action alternatives include three designated OHV use areas (Table 13) that would be open and available to OHV use. The “North Beach” use area on Shelikof Bay is approximately 9 acres in size and provides access along the beach between high tide and the vegetated beach fringe. “Bear View” is approximately 5 acres in size located adjacent to the False Island administrative site and forest Road 7540FI. This area is comprised of sand intermixed with beach grasses. The Harbor Mountain site is the largest at 136 acres and occupies mostly alpine habitat. Off-road use of this site occurs only when adequate snow cover is present to prevent soil damage. Sitka black-tailed deer have moved to lower elevation sites by the time enough snow has accumulated to allow use of the Harbor Mountain site by OHV’s. Because of their past use, location near roads, lack of fish or wildlife habitat, or seasonal use, OHV use of these three sites will have little affect on the distribution and abundance of subsistence resources.

Salmon and Other Finfish

The two main road-related issues affecting fish habitat within the project area are road/stream crossings and roads within RMAs. Providing for fish passage at road crossings of streams is critical for fish movement and water quality. Improperly located or installed culverts, culverts that fail, or crossings that are not functional can restrict fish movement and decrease water quality through the input of sediment into stream systems (see the Fisheries Resource Report for further discussion). Negative effects to fish habitat affect fish populations, which in turn have the potential to affect subsistence fishing. The No Action Alternative would not improve fish habitat in the project area. It would not improve fish passage or reduce the miles of road within RMAs. Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would have positive impacts on fish habitat in the project area, both in terms of road/stream crossings and roads located within RMAs. Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would result in the removal or repair of twice as many road-stream crossings without fish passage as the No Action Alternative, and would remove or repair more miles of existing road within RMAs. These improvements would likely have positive effects on fish populations and could result in a small, but positive effect to subsistence fishing compared to the No Action Alternative (see the Fisheries Resource Report).

Road repair activities related to decommissioning under the Proposed Action and Alternative 4 and structure removal under Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 may result in localized inputs of sediment and disturbance to the riverbed within the immediate area of the repair. This may cause minimal damage to small areas of fish habitat. In addition, this activity could result in the temporary displacement of individual fish at the site of repair. These effects, which are expected to be temporary and of short duration, would be mitigated by following Forest Best Management Practices (BMPs) during road repair activities (see the Fisheries Resource Report). They are not expected to affect subsistence fishing.

Terrestrial Mammals

There is generally a low risk of adverse impacts to terrestrial animals and their habitats under all four alternatives at the species level, and no risk at the landscape level (see also the

Biological Evaluation in the Planning Record). Important species include Sitka black-tailed deer, brown bear, and mountain goat. There would be no change to current conditions under the No Action Alternative. Impacts under the Proposed Action are expected to be low because any vegetation removal would be limited to existing roadbeds and the areas immediately adjacent to these roads. High-value bedding, foraging, and winter use habitats would not be significantly affected by disturbance associated with road maintenance activities (e.g., storage or decommissioning roads), or indirectly by activity along roads (see the MIS Resource Report in the Planning Record). Impacts under Alternative 3 would be similar to those under the Proposed Action for deer, and mountain goat, but slightly greater for brown bears due to the higher level of OHV access. Alternative 4, with the least amount of open roads of all alternatives, would be the least impactful to terrestrial mammals. Therefore, none of the alternatives are expected to affect the distribution or abundance of subsistence species for hunting.

Marine Mammals and Marine Invertebrates

None of the alternatives is expected to result in direct or indirect effects to either the habitat or populations of any marine mammal (the threatened or endangered species present on the Sitka Ranger District) or marine invertebrate species (see the Biological Evaluation in the Planning Record).

Vegetation (Edible Plants)

The risk of adverse impacts to vegetation is expected to be low under all four alternatives. Closing roads to passenger vehicles, as proposed under Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would likely increase protection of plant resources by reducing the introduction of non-native plants along roadbeds. The seeds of non-native plants are dispersed by vehicular traffic. Mitigation measures would limit the introduction of non-native species during project work (see Chapter 2 of the 2006 EA).

Access to Resources

Data on documented deer harvest by transportation type for Game Management Unit (GMU) 4 from 1996-2003 indicate that hunters accessing the area by boat and airplane accounted for approximately 81 percent of deer harvested in the project area. Hunters using highway vehicles and OHVs as their primary means of access accounted for 13 percent and 3 percent of deer harvested, respectively on the entire GMU 4 (ADF&G 1996-2003).

Additionally, a survey was completed as part of this ATM analysis to assess which roads were being used by OHVs prior to 1980. Apart from a few exceptions, the mainline roads that were identified during this survey are currently open for OHV use or will be open pending repair or replacement of bridges and/or acceptable stream crossings in all alternatives. The following roads would not be open to OHVs: in Alternative #4, Saint Johns mainline Roads 7584 and 75842 would be closed, and the Kizuchia Road 7582 would be open only from the LTF to the private property boundary approximately 2 miles from the LTF. On the Katlian road system, in all alternatives, all roads other than 7579 and 75797 would be closed. Because use of highway vehicles and OHVs for subsistence hunting is limited, and because many roads historically used by subsistence hunters will remain open (or be open after repairs/concurrence on crossings), a reduction in highway vehicles and OHV access would not affect the large majority of subsistence hunters.

Under the No Action Alternative, approximately 164 miles of road are open to high-clearance and passenger vehicles. The project area is currently managed as open to OHV use unless designated otherwise (USDA Forest Service 1997a,b). However, state laws prohibit the crossing of streams where there are inadequate crossing structures. Under this alternative, inadequate stream crossings would continue to limit OHV access to approximately 185 of the existing 372 miles of road. Under all alternatives, it will be the responsibility of the motor vehicle user to obtain a copy of the MVUM to know where they can drive or ride. A Law Enforcement Officer and Forest Protection Officers will monitor areas and roads closed to motorized vehicles with the assistance of Forest Service Officers in all alternatives.

Under the Proposed Action, approximately 119 miles of road would be open to high-clearance and passenger vehicles. Approximately 193 miles of roads would be open to OHV use, approximately 97 miles would be closed until repairs can be made to roads, and approximately 90 miles would be closed (including unauthorized roads added to the road system as stored roads). In the short term, the Proposed Action would limit OHV access to approximately half the mileage that is technically designated as open. However, many of the roads that would be either temporarily or permanently closed under this alternative, while currently designated as open, lacks legally passable stream crossings and/or rights-of-way. Under this alternative, approximately 97 miles of roads that currently lack stream crossings would be open after consultation with the State of Alaska, and repairs are made if needed. This would result in an increase in OHV access compared to the No Action Alternative, in the long term.

Under Alternative 3, approximately 115 miles of road would be open to high-clearance and passenger vehicles. Approximately 193 miles of roads would remain open to OHV use, approximately 180 miles would be closed until repairs can be made to roads, and approximately 8 miles would be closed pending legal access agreements. Alternative 3 would provide the same open mileage as the Proposed Action in the short term, but it would also provide the opportunity for approximately 180 miles of roads to be opened to OHV use after repairs are made and legal access is acquired, rather than approximately 97 under the Proposed Action. In addition, approximately 22 miles of road that would be converted to OHV trails under the Proposed Action would remain roads under Alternative 3, and approximately 16 miles of road that would be decommissioned under the Proposed Action would remain in service under Alternative 3. Thus, Alternative 3 would not restrict motorized access for subsistence in the long term.

Alternative 4 provides the least amount of open road or trail mileage of any alternative in both the short and long term. Under Alternative 4, approximately 66 miles of road would be open to high-clearance and passenger vehicles. Approximately 105 miles of roads would remain open to OHV use and approximately 60 miles would be closed until consultation with the State of Alaska occurs, and repairs are made if needed. Additionally, approximately 43 miles of road would be converted to OHV trails, the most of any of alternative. Approximately 5 miles of road would be decommissioned under Alternative 4. Because all of the main OHV access routes for the most popular road systems such as Kruzof Island, False Island and Corner Bay remain accessible under Alternative 4 the ability of most people to access subsistence resources will not be significantly restricted.

The miles of road suitable for passenger cars would remain essentially unchanged under both the Proposed Action and Alternative 3. There would be a net reduction in roads open to high-clearance vehicles of approximately 46 miles and 49 miles under the Proposed Action and Alternative 3, respectively. Under Alternative 4, the net reduction in roads open to high-clearance vehicles is approximately 62 miles. More than half of this reduction would be associated with the Mud Bay road system on Kruzof Island (WAA 3104). This area accounted for 6 percent of total documented deer harvest for Sitka residents between 1995 and 2003; however, most of the hunters using WAA 3104 do not access the area using high-clearance vehicles due to the difficulty of transporting large vehicles by boat. A current closure order limits use of this road system to 1,000 pounds. While these roads would no longer be open to high-clearance vehicles, they would remain open to OHV use.

Approximately 16 miles of road would be decommissioned under the Proposed Action (see Table 14). Decommissioned roads would be closed to all forms of motorized access, including OHV use. Many of the decommissioned roads are small segments of road, or individual roads in large systems. In these cases, the action would not result in a significant effect to subsistence access. One entire road system, Fish Bay, would be decommissioned. These roads are located in an Old-Growth Habitat LUD, and all have marked vegetative encroachment. This road system includes several log stringer bridges and culverts in poor condition. The Fish Bay road system is located in the Upper Baranof Island analysis area within WAA 3314, which accounted for 5 percent of total documented deer harvest for Sitka residents between 1995 and 2003 (Table 17). The shoreline area of Fish Bay is a popular hunting area accessed primarily by boat. Most of the deer harvest occurs along the beach. It is unknown how much of the harvest in WAA 3314 was taken by hunters accessing the road system with OHVs. Decommissioned road miles in Alternative 4 total 4.7. Refer to Appendix B for a detailed list of changes in maintenance levels and of roads proposed for decommissioning or conversion to trails.

Approximately 4 miles of the Katlian road system in the Lower Baranof Island analysis area would be decommissioned under the Proposed Action. These roads have become extremely overgrown and the former roadways were indistinguishable. It is unlikely that these roads, in their present condition, provide any substantial motorized access for subsistence activities. The Katlian road system is located within WAA 3002, which accounted for 12 percent of deer harvest by Sitka residents from 1995 through 2003, but this WAA also includes the city of Sitka and a number of other access roads. The Camp Coogan road system was recently decommissioned. These areas would continue to be available to non-motorized hunters.

Closure of the roads on Fish Bay and Katlian might lead to the displacement of a limited number of motorized hunters and gatherers, who would likely begin to rely on resources accessible through other nearby systems. Overall, this number would be minimal and would not be expected to result in measurable depletion of resources in other sites across the Ranger District, or in increased competition for the users of other nearby localities.

No roads would be decommissioned under the No Action Alternative or Alternative 3.

Designated OHV Use Areas

All Action Alternatives include designated OHV use areas (Table 13) that would be open and available to OHV use. Use of these areas will not affect access to resources.

Competitive Effects

Increased access to an area can result in an increase in competition for resources. This is a particular concern if there is an increase in non-rural resident hunting. No new roads or trails would be constructed under any of the alternatives. Therefore, there would be no new opportunities for access by residents of Juneau, Ketchikan, or other visitors from outside the area, and no direct effects to subsistence use or resources.

Implementation of any project alternative is not anticipated to cause disproportionate adverse human health or environmental effects to minority or low-income populations. Legal access related to stream crossings (by OHVs) to subsistence resources will slightly increase for the long term in Alternative 3 compared to the No Action Alternative and with the slight increase in motorized access, effects are expected be the same to all populations. The Proposed Action and Alternative 4 would result in fewer road miles accessible to OHVs in comparison to the No Action Alternative. However, implementation of either the Proposed Action or Alternative 4 is not anticipated to cause disproportionate adverse human health or environmental effects to minority or low-income populations.

Designated OHV Use Areas

All Action Alternatives include designated OHV use areas (Table 13) that would be open and available to OHV use. Use of these areas will not induce competition for resources or cause disproportionate adverse human health or environmental effects to minority or low-income populations.

Non-Significant Issues

Roads in Old-Growth Habitat Land Use Designations (LUDs)

Affected Environment

Existing conditions related to old-growth have not changed between now and when the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA was released. Therefore, the affected environment information has not been repeated here. The reader is referred to the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA (USDA Forest Service 2006) for roads in old-growth information on existing condition.

Environmental Effects – Direct and Indirect Effects

There would be no change in road maintenance levels or OHV access within Old-Growth Habitat LUDs under the No Action Alternative. However, implementing the Travel Management Rule under Alternative 1 would cause all roads and areas to be closed to OHVs. The Proposed Action and Alternatives 3 and 4 would decrease highway vehicle access in the Old-Growth Habitat LUD from 7.7 miles under Alternative 1 to 2.1, 1.6 and 1.0 miles, respectively (Table 18). Road miles available for OHV access substantially decrease under the Proposed Action and Alternative 4. OHV access under Alternative 3 would be reduced in the short term; however, nearly all roads would be open after repairs are completed to stream crossing structures and right-of-way agreements are concluded. Alternative 4 would allow for almost 12 miles of access within Old-Growth LUDs once road repairs and stream crossings are repaired. Just over 15 miles of road would be closed to OHV access within Old-

Growth LUDs. Consequently, the integrity of the Old-Growth Habitat LUD in the project area, and associated wildlife species, would receive the most protection under Alternative 4.

Under the Proposed Action and Alternative 4 there would generally be lower risk of adverse impacts to Management Indicator Species ([MIS] i.e., for individual animals) and no risk at the landscape level (i.e., for populations of MIS). There would generally be a low to moderate risk under the No Action Alternative and Alternative 3, due to the greater OHV access compared to the Proposed Action and Alternative 4. Under all action alternatives, vegetation removal would be limited to existing road and trail beds and areas immediately adjacent to them. Mitigation measures required by the Standards and Guidelines in the Forest Plan are expected to protect high-value nesting, foraging, and winter use habitats from disturbance associated with road maintenance activities (e.g., storage or decommissioning roads), or indirectly by activity along roads.

Designated OHV Use Areas

All Action Alternatives include designated OHV use areas (Table 13) that would be open and available to OHV use. None of these areas occur within Old Growth Land Use Designations.

Table 18. Maintenance Level and OHV Use Designation in the Old-Growth LUD

Maintenance Level	Miles of Road			
	No Action	Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
1 (Stored)	16.7	3.4	22.8	22
2 (High clearance) ^{1/}	7.7	2.1	1.6	1
Decommissioned	0.0	9.0	0.0	1.5
Converted to trail	0.0	9.9	0.0	0
OHV Access	No Action	Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Open	24.4	4.6 ^{2/}	4.6 ^{2/}	1
Closed pending repairs	0	10.0	19.7	10.6
Closed	0	9.8	0.1	15.3

1/ High-clearance vehicles are vehicles with ground clearance greater than 5 inches.

Numbers are based on GIS analysis and may not be exact.

2/ Portions of open OML-2 and OML-3 roads providing access to adjacent developmental LUDs, such as Road 7500.

Water Quality

Affected Environment

Existing conditions related to water quality have not changed between now and when the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA was released. Therefore, the affected environment information has not been repeated here. The reader is referred to the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA (USDA Forest Service 2006) for water quality information on existing condition.

Environmental Effects – Direct and Indirect Effects

The replacement of log stringer bridges with sturdier structures, such as metal bridges, as well as the maintenance of drainage structures and repair of road surface, are issues identified in recent road analyses that would affect water quality. Putting roads into storage or decommissioning roads to focus repair and maintenance efforts on those roads that are

essential to the road network should generally improve water quality by reducing ongoing sources of sediment input and potential for slope or road bed failure from inadequately maintained or constructed roads.

The Clean Water Act (Sections 208 and 319) recognized the need for control strategies for nonpoint source pollution. Soil and water conservation practices (BMPs) were recognized as the primary control mechanisms for nonpoint source pollution on National Forest System lands. Following BMPs while doing road activities will allow us to improve from the current condition, and comply with Alaska Water Quality Standards as directed by the Clean Water Act.

All action alternatives would increase the miles of road in storage or decommissioned status over the current system. The No Action Alternative has 208 miles of road in storage. Implementing the Travel Management Rule under Alternative 1 would cause all roads to be closed to OHVs. The Proposed Action would decommission 16.4 miles of road and have 222 miles of road in storage. Alternative 3 would not decommission any roads, but would have 276 miles of road in storage. Alternative 4 would store 266 miles of road and decommission 4.7 miles. The Proposed Action would close approximately 90 miles of road to OHV use and another 102 miles of road would be closed to OHV use until stream crossings can be repaired. Alternative 3 would close approximately 8 miles of road to OHV use and another 185 miles of roads would be closed to OHV use until stream crossings can be repaired. Alternative 4 limits OHV use the most of all alternatives. Approximately 216 miles would be closed with another 60 miles closed to OHV use until stream crossing can be repaired. In total, all the action alternatives would reduce the amount of roads and trails that currently are at risk for harming water quality.

Road Miles on Wetlands

Under the No Action Alternative, no changes to roads on wetlands would occur. Although implementing the Travel Management Rule under Alternative 1 would cause all roads to be closed to OHVs. Under the Proposed Action and Alternative 3, changes to the road network on wetlands would decrease the miles of road available for passenger vehicles in these areas and in the Proposed Action there would be a decrease in the miles available for OHVs, potentially improving water quality in wetland areas by reducing sediment delivery to the adjacent wetland. Under the Proposed Action, approximately 4.3 miles of roads crossing wetlands would be decommissioned and about 41 miles would be placed in storage. Under Alternative 3, no roads would be decommissioned but approximately 57 miles would be placed in storage in the short-term. In Alternative 4, approximately 63 miles of roads in wetlands would be placed in storage, and 2 miles would be decommissioned.

Riparian Areas and Streams

Roads in riparian areas and road/stream crossings are discussed under the Fisheries section of this chapter.

Karst

There are no significant changes to road management with respect to roads on karst under any of the alternatives. Therefore, there are no significant differences among their direct or indirect effects to water quality related to karst. Roads will continue to have the same impacts on karst in all alternatives. Refer to the Soils and Geology Resources Report for a discussion of karst.

Designated OHV Use Areas

All Action Alternatives include designated OHV use areas (Table 13) that would be open and available to OHV use. None of these areas occur on or within riparian areas, wetlands or karst. All areas are located away from streams and will not result in the addition of sediment.

Fisheries*Affected Environment*

Existing conditions related to fisheries have not changed between now and when the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA was released. Therefore, the affected environment information has not been repeated here. The reader is referred to the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA (USDA Forest Service 2006) for fisheries information on existing condition.

Environmental Effects – Direct and Indirect Effects

Providing for fish passage at road crossings of streams is critical for fish movement and water quality. Improperly located or installed culverts, culverts that fail, or crossings that are not functional can restrict fish movement and decrease water quality through the input of sediment into stream systems. Culverts can block fish migration due to vertical barriers, debris blockages, and excessive water velocities (USDA Forest Service 2002b). Currently, there are 133 road crossings of streams that were identified as not having adequate fish passage for either adult or juvenile salmonids, or both. These ratings were established through road condition surveys (RCSs) and documented in road analyses that have been conducted in the project area.

Under the No Action Alternative, no additional culverts would be removed as part of this project (although 33 culverts are scheduled to be removed as part of ongoing maintenance). Existing fish passage blockages would continue to affect at least one life stage of MIS fish and other salmonids.

The Proposed Action and Alternatives 3 and 4 would remove or repair 40, 39 and 69 crossings, respectively, that lack adequate fish passage. All action alternatives would improve fish passage within the project area compared to the No Action Alternative. In addition, the Action Alternatives could remove or repair up to 888, 781 and 1,211 stream crossings to reduce the risk of sediment entering the water at these points. Action Alternatives would reduce the risk of sediment entering streams compared to the No Action Alternative and will minimize the effect of roads on floodplain function by reducing the amount of sediment and restoring natural flow paths.

Roads in Riparian Management Areas (RMAs)

Changes in the condition and use of roads within the RMAs are another measure of potential direct and indirect effects to MIS fish and fish habitat associated with the action alternatives. No roads would be decommissioned, placed in storage, or converted to OHV trails as part of the No Action Alternative. Roads in RMAs that impact MIS fish and fish habitat would continue to do so.

Under the Proposed Action, approximately 3.5 miles of road would be decommissioned; approximately 2.7 miles of this is in a Class I stream buffer and approximately 0.7 is within a Class II stream buffer (see Tables 19 and 20). Decommissioning these roads would result in improvements to fish habitat because, over time, these roads would revegetate, and would no

longer be a potential source of sediment that could end up in streams. Roads that are decommissioned would be closed to OHV use. Approximately 7.6 miles of road in RMAs would be converted to trails. These roads would be closed to passenger and high-clearance vehicles, as would roads placed in storage. Under the Proposed Action, an additional 17.4 miles of road in RMAs would be closed to OHV use compared to the No Action Alternative with 39 miles closed to OHV use in Alternative 4.

Table 19. Roads in RMAs by Maintenance Levels and OHV Use (miles)

Maintenance Level	Alternative 1	Alternative 2^{1/}	Alternative 3^{1/}	Alternative 4
Storage (OML-1)	45.4	43.8	54.9	62.9
High-clearance vehicle (OML-2)	18.7	12.6	12.6	12.6
Passenger car, rough surface (OML-3)	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5
Passenger car, smooth surface (OML-4)	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6
Decommissioning	0	3.5	0	0.7
Convert to OHV trail	0	7.6	0	8.0
OHV Use^{2/}				
Open	71.3	31.7	31.7	20.0
Closed	2.1	19.6	3.1	41.5
Closed for repair	0	24.3	40.8	14.1

1/ Under the Proposed Action and Alternative 3, approximately 2 miles of unauthorized road in RMAs would be added to the system.

2/ Includes existing OHV trails.

Numbers are based on GIS analysis and may not be exact. Numbers may not match other exactly due to rounding.

Table 20. Roads within Class I, II, and III RMAs by Maintenance Levels

Maintenance Level	Alternative 1	Alternative 2 ^{1/}	Alternative 3 ^{1/}	Alternative 4
Class I Streams				
Storage (OML-1)	28.1	26.7	34.9	51.6
High-clearance vehicle (OML-2)	10.3	6.3	6.3	9.7
Passenger car, rough surface (OML-3)	4.0	4.0	4.0	0
Passenger car, smooth surface (OML-4)	0.1	1.3	0.1	0.22
Decommission	0	2.7	0	0.4
Class II Streams				
Storage (OML-1)	10.6	10.7	12.3	8.9
High-clearance vehicle (OML-2)	5.6	4.4	4.3	2.2
Passenger car, rough surface (OML-3)	2.4	2.4	2.4	0
Passenger car, smooth surface (OML-4)	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.01
Decommission	0	0.7	0	0.1
Class III Streams				
Storage (OML-1)	6.7	6.5	7.8	2.4
High-clearance vehicle (OML-2)	2.8	1.9	1.9	0.5
Passenger car, rough surface (OML-3)	1.1	1.1	1.1	0.1
Passenger car, smooth surface (OML-4)	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Decommission	0	0.1	0	0.1

1/ Under the Proposed Action and Alternative 3, approximately 2 miles of unauthorized road in RMAs would be added to the system.

Numbers are based on GIS analysis and may not be exact. Numbers may not match other tables due to rounding.

Another 24.3 miles of road in RMAs would be repaired before being re-opened for OHV use. The road surface would remain as a potential source of sediment to clog stream gravel. Culvert repair on these roads would likely have increased risk of sedimentation in the short term, but long-term stabilization of crossings would improve fish habitat. However, there would be a continued risk of sediment delivery to streams because the road surface would continue to be disturbed by OHV use. Use of any stream fords along these trails may also introduce sediment into aquatic habitat.

Under Alternative 3, approximately 9.4 miles of additional road in RMAs would be placed in storage, compared to the No Action Alternative. Approximately 6.8 of these miles are in Class I stream buffers, approximately 1.7 are within Class II stream buffers, and approximately 1.1 miles are within Class III stream buffers (see Tables 19 and 20). No roads would be decommissioned under Alternative 3; therefore, no long-term sources of sediment would be removed. Approximately 40.8 miles of road within RMAs would be repaired before being re-opened for OHV use, while an additional 1.0 mile would be closed to OHVs compared to the No Action Alternative. Miles of RMA road open to OHV use under Alternative 4 total 20 miles, with 8 miles of road converted to OHV trail; in Alternative 4, approximately 41.5 miles of road in RMA are closed and 14.1 miles of road in RMA are closed until repairs to stream crossings are made. As with the Proposed Action, road culvert

repair prior to OHV use would likely have increased risk of sedimentation in the short term, but long-term stabilization would improve fish habitat. However, continued use by OHVs on these roads would increase the risk of sediment delivery to streams because the road surface would continue to be disturbed by vehicles. Use of any stream fords along these trails may also introduce sediment into aquatic habitat.

Both the Proposed Action and Alternatives 3 and 4 would have beneficial effects for fish habitat and MIS fish species compared to the No Action Alternative because more road segments within the RMAs would be decommissioned, placed in storage, or repaired. The Proposed Action would have the greatest benefit for water quality, fish habitat, and MIS fish in terms of potential to reduce sediment sources over the long term, because it would decommission roads and would close more roads to OHV use than the No Action Alternative or Alternative 3.

Essential Fish Habitat

The effects of Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 related to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) have not changed between now and when the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA was released. Therefore, the effects of those alternatives have not been repeated here; see the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA (USDA Forest Service 2006). Only the effect of Alternative 4 on Essential Fish Habitat has been included here.

Alternative 4 would not cause detectable effects (positive or negative) on the managed fish species because Forest Plan direction and applicable BMPs would be applied during implementation of road closure, decommissioning, and maintenance activities, and the scale of the project area is small compared to EFH as a whole. Forest Plan direction and BMPs were developed through interagency negotiation and provide state-of-the-art protection of fish habitat.

Occasionally, Forest Plan direction and BMPs are not fully implemented or are not fully effective. Thus, there is always some risk to EFH when management actions are taken. The risk of this project is minimal. Stream crossing structures would be removed on closed or decommissioned roads, which would reduce their potential for failure during storms. This action would also remove structures that interfere with natural fish movement patterns. On the open roads, efforts to restore fish passage through improperly installed stream culverts would continue. Thus, all the action alternatives would benefit salmon streams by closing roads and removing stream crossing structures. Approximately 2, 20, 3, or 42 miles of road in RMA are permanently closed in Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively (Table 19). These restoration actions would reduce the current risk and negative effects of roads on EFH in the project area.

Public Safety

The Ranger District's Road Condition Survey (RCS) data and road analyses document more than 154 cases where log stringer bridges are deteriorating and in some instances have failed, particularly on road systems located on Baranof Island and Southeast Chichagof Island. Landslides and slumps occur periodically on or near roads in the project area, often following storm events. Landslides can block a road or a portion of the road can move downhill.

Use of these roads and failing bridges by motorized vehicles poses a hazard to public safety. People using the road may not be aware that a recent landslide has blocked the road or that part of the roadbed has moved downhill. The speed at which motor vehicles travel makes occupants of these vehicles much more likely to be injured by crashing into logs, earth and rocks deposited on a road by a landslide or driving off the roadbed that has been lost by a slump or washout than non-motorized users. In addition, motorized vehicles add substantial weight on the road surface compared to non-motorized users.

Safety standards are set by Forest Service policy. Because of our policies and procedures regarding public safety, we must protect public safety; therefore we cannot allow the public to use identified unsafe roads and bridges. Consequently, the action alternatives call for some roads posing threats to public safety to be closed to motorized use, some roads to be repaired and converted to trails, and some to be decommissioned. Unsafe bridges would be replaced and roads re-opened as funds become available as part of ongoing road maintenance or trail maintenance under all alternatives. Under the Proposed Action and Alternative 3, approximately 44 and 48 miles of roads would no longer be open for passenger and high-clearance vehicle use, respectively, and 163 miles of potential OHV trail would be closed (until trails were cleared/crossings could be fixed or concurrence on stream crossings reached), reducing the risk of injury. Under Alternative 4, about 98 miles of roads would no longer be open for passenger and high-clearance vehicle use and 251 miles of potential OHV trail would be closed until crossings could be fixed or concurrence on stream crossings reached.

Road Maintenance Costs

Forest roads in Southeast Alaska are some of the most expensive to build in the nation. The isolated nature of the roads and the large amounts of rainfall in the region are two of the main reasons for these high costs. Rock is required for road stabilization and surfacing and often requires blasting. Other factors include the higher costs of shipping and labor, numerous drainage structures, and logistics. Road construction costs can range from \$120,000 to \$300,000 per mile for forest roads and \$60,000 to \$120,000 per mile for temporary roads (USDA Forest Service 2002a, 2004a, 2004b, 2005c).

Road maintenance funding is decided through the annual appropriations process in Congress. Based on the current funding formulas for the Tongass, each maintenance level is assigned a different funding level. Currently the Tongass does not receive funds for the maintenance of closed roads (OML-1 roads) (USDA Forest Service 2005d). However, closed/OML-1 roads still require periodic maintenance and have annual maintenance costs associated generally with maintaining or fixing drainage structures or stream crossings

A discrepancy was discovered between current estimates of road maintenance costs and the road maintenance cost estimates found in the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA (USDA Forest Service 2006). The 2006 EA estimated that, under Alternative 1, the existing roads would cost about \$980,000 per year for maintenance (Table 10, 2006 EA). The current estimate for road maintenance costs under Alternative 1 is about \$219,000 per year (Table 21).

The difference in the estimates is based on both a change in calculation methods and incorrect numbers used in the 2006 estimate. Road maintenance activities, such as brushing,

grading, culvert maintenance, occur on a scheduled rotation. The current estimate reflects a new standard of an 8-year rotation for Level 2 & 3 roads, instead of the old standard of a 3-year rotation.

The 2006 EA estimate also appears to include some portion of the increasing deferred maintenance backlog. Estimated deferred maintenance presented in the 2006 EA, in Table 11, totaled approximately 4.5 million dollars. The current estimate for deferred maintenance dollars is substantially higher.

As stated in the 2006 EA, funding levels have historically fallen short of funding needs. Keeping roads open and maintained adequately is expensive. The road maintenance cost estimates in Table 21 provide a relative way to consider the costs of each alternative.

Direct and Indirect Effects

Table 21. Road and Trail Maintenance Costs

	Alternative 1, No Action	Alternative 2, Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Miles of Level 2, 3, 4 Road to Maintain	163.7	118.7	115.3	66.0
Cost of Road Maintenance per year^{1/}	\$219,000	\$187,000	\$192,000	\$106,000
Miles of Motorized Trail to Maintain	50	77 to 179 ^{2/}	50-128 ^{2/}	93-152 ^{2/}
Cost of Trail Maintenance^{3/}	\$36,250	\$55,825- \$129,775	\$36,250- \$205,900	\$67,425- \$110,200

1/ Estimated using OML-1=\$169/mi/yr, OML-2=\$806/mi/yr, OML-3=\$1,138/mi/yr, OML-4=\$2,051/mi/yr, pers. com. V. Hazel
2/ includes yellow roads that are potential trails
3/ Estimated using \$725/mile/year, generic formula is OML-2 cost per mile multiplied by 0.9 \ \$806 x 0.9 = \$725/mile/year, pers. com. E. Ouder Kirk

There would be no changes in road maintenance costs under the No Action Alternative. Maintenance that has not been performed due to inadequate funding would continue to be deferred for a future period. Under the Proposed Action, approximately 44 miles of road that is currently open would be closed to passenger and high-clearance vehicles. Approximately 16 miles of these 44 miles would be decommissioned, 22 miles would be converted to trails, and the remainder would be stored (Table 21). Under Alternative 3, no roads would be decommissioned or converted to trails, but approximately 48 miles would be stored and closed to passenger and high-clearance vehicles. Under Alternative 4, approximately 98 miles of road that is currently open would be closed to passenger and high-clearance vehicles. Approximately 5 of these miles would be decommissioned, 43 miles would be converted to trails, and the remainder would be stored. Alternative 4 followed by the Proposed Action would result in the greatest road maintenance budget savings (see Table 21). Alternative 4 results in the most savings in road maintenance dollars because roads in storage, while still requiring some maintenance, are cheaper to maintain than OML-2, 3, or 4 roads and some roads are decommissioned. Alternative 3 would result in somewhat less

savings than Alternative 2 because all roads would be stored and would require some maintenance, while roads decommissioned under Alternative 2 would not require any maintenance. All of the action alternatives would result in road maintenance savings over the No Action Alternative.

Road maintenance savings would also accrue on roads converted to trails or stored, though the trail maintenance budget would need to increase to cover the new trail costs (Table 21). Trail maintenance costs are not substantially lower than road maintenance costs because similar equipment is used to brush trails, perform culvert maintenance and grading. The Proposed Action would increase trail mileage in the short-term from approximately 50 to roughly 77 miles and to 179 miles in the long-term. Alternative 3 would maintain the trail mileage at 50 in the short-term and increase it to 284 miles in the long-term. Alternative 4 would increase the trail mileage to 93 miles in the short term and to 152 miles in the long-term. In the long-term, Alternative 4 has the lowest road maintenance and trail maintenance cost of the action alternatives. The no action alternative would maintain the current trail maintenance costs, but would also maintain the highest road maintenance costs.

Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Road Corridors

The Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan (SATP), proposed in 2004, included transportation and utility corridors designed to better link the communities of the Sitka Ranger District to the continental highway system. Individual scoping participants believed that certain roads proposed to be stored or decommissioned should remain open to preserve the potential corridors outlined in the SATP. Representatives of the State of Alaska Department of Transportation also requested that the Forest Service maintain and protect the roads aligning with these routes. Proposed actions within road corridor options described in the SATP (Road to Rodman, Road to Baranof Hot Springs, etc.) will be delayed. No roads in proposed corridors would be decommissioned in Alternatives 1, 3 or 4. In Alternative 2, roads in proposed corridors would be decommissioned. However, in all alternatives portions of the following roads would be retained indefinitely in case they are needed for future road corridor development:

- Road 7500: Hoonah-Tenakee Inlet Road Corridor
- Road 7540: Kadashan Road Corridor
- Roads 7580 and 75802: Rodman Bay Road Corridor
- Roads 7583 and 75832: Rodman Bay Road Corridor
- Road 7579: Rodman Bay Road.
- Roads 7586 and 7587: Rodman Bay Road Corridor

Heritage Resources

There is a determination of no historic properties affected for the proposed project because Alternative 4 reduces current levels of access and no ground disturbance is planned outside the current road prism or previously disturbed areas. Heritage resource surveys of various intensities have been conducted in the analysis area in accordance with the Regional Inventory Strategy. By following the provisions of the Programmatic Agreement signed July

29, 2002 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.

Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive (TES) Plants, Rare Plants, and Invasive Plant Species

The existing conditions related to TES and invasive plants have remained the same between now and when the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management EA was released. Therefore, only additions related to rare plants and the effects of new proposed actions have been included here. The reader is referred to the Sitka Access and Travel Management EA (USDA Forest Service 2006) for TES and invasive plant information.

North Beach on Kruzof Island is the only area associated with the Access Travel Management proposals with known rare plant concerns. One rare plant species, an aster called dune tansy, or *Tanacetum bipennatum* ssp. *Huronense*, is known from North Beach. Six rare plant species are known from other beaches on Kruzof Island with similar habitat. Three of the rare plants known from Kruzof Island are being considered for sensitive species designation for the Alaska region. Habitat for three current sensitive species occurs on North Beach. The North Beach population of dune tansy is the only known population of this species on the Tongass National Forest. Other populations are known from the Anchorage area and the Queen Charlotte Islands of British Columbia.

Large sandy beaches (at least ½ mile in length) exposed to the open ocean with associated upper beach meadows are a relatively rare habitat on the Sitka Ranger District. Most of these beaches occur on Kruzof Island. North Beach accounts for about 12 percent of this type of habitat on Kruzof Island and approximately 5 or more percent of this type of habitat on the Sitka Ranger District. The rare plant's habitat occurs on the upper beach above the mean high tide line and into the upper beach meadows. Typically this rare plant's habitat is a corridor less than 50 yards wide that ends abruptly at the forest edge. This type of habitat is known to support 10 or more rare and sensitive plant species in southeastern Alaska.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be a high risk that long term, unregulated use of this beach/beach meadow habitat by OHV vehicles would eliminate the population of dune tansy and other potential rare plant populations that may occur on North Beach. Degradation of this habitat may change the erosion patterns on this beach, leading to a destabilization and loss of some of the vegetated terraces and banks at the back of the beach. This could result in a loss of rare plant habitat and make it difficult for plants to re-colonize this beach. Frequent disturbance by OHV's would probably reduce the species diversity, leaving only the more disturbance tolerant deep-rooted plants, such as dunegrass, *Elymus mollis*. Widespread disturbance of the beach meadow habitat increases the chances of introducing invasive species to this natural habitat. This risk is high because many introduced species exist at Mud Bay and along the Forest Road system to North Beach. OHV traffic between these areas is likely to spread weed seeds into the beach habitat. Invasive species are another threat to rare plant populations. However, implementing the Travel Management Rule under Alternative 1 would cause all areas to be closed to OHVs.

Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would limit OHV disturbance to the unvegetated portion of North Beach, which will help protect the population of dune tansy and the upper beach meadow

habitat. Under the action alternatives, the vegetated upper beach and beach meadow would be closed to OHV use except for accessing campsites. Posted signs would make these areas off limit to OHV use and educate the public about the value of this habitat. Monitoring would determine if resource damage is occurring in these areas; if a degradation of plants or beach grass habitat were to occur, this area would be closed to OHV use.

Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would result in activities on existing roads. Road management activities under all alternatives have the potential of negatively impacting sensitive species directly if these species occurred on the roadbed. However, use of this habitat by sensitive species is very unlikely, and consequently direct effects are not anticipated. Indirect effects would include modifications of habitat due to changes in vegetation canopy, hydrology, and introduction of noxious weeds and other non-native plant species. Under all the action alternatives, indirect effects of road maintenance including stabilized vegetation and additional road closures would likely be beneficial over time. To a small extent these beneficial effects would be offset by the increased likelihood of noxious weeds associated with ground disturbance during road maintenance and road use along other roads. However, Alternative 4 and the Proposed Action substantially reduce the total amount of road open to OHV access, which would impart greater beneficial indirect impacts to sensitive plant species than the other alternatives. None of the alternatives is likely to add to cumulative effects on threatened, endangered, or sensitive plants because existing roads are unlikely to support threatened, endangered, or sensitive plants.

Coastal Zone Management Act and Alaska Coastal Zone Management (ACMP)

Under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972, as amended, USDA Forest Service activities and development projects that affect the coastal zone must be consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP).

The USDA Forest Service has determined that the Sitka Access and Travel Management project has only limited or indirect impacts on the coastal zone, and that Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines and mitigation measures applicable to the Sitka Access and Travel Management project meet or exceed the requirements of the State of Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act.

Direct impacts to the coastal zone are expected to be minimal: no new roads would be constructed under any of the alternatives, all proposed activities are to occur within the existing road footprint, and road maintenance activities follow the stipulations of the Act. The majority of the planned closures are outside of the coastal zone and do not block access to the coastal zone; thus most closures would have no direct impact on the coastal zone or on recreational access to the coastal zone. Closing roads and removing culverts and bridges on proposed roads will reduce motorized recreational opportunities for some users. The current road systems provides access to a low number of users due to the distance from communities and remoteness; while some motorized recreational users will be impacted by road management changes in Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, the impacts are expected to be minimal. Additionally, all roads will remain open to foot traffic (including decommissioned roads), and a decision to close a road or put it into storage does not preclude a later decision to open a road.

The proposed actions are expected to provide some indirect long-term improvement to the coastal zone through the reduction of sediment in streams. In the short-term, replacement or removal of culverts and bridges on roads may temporarily increase turbidity in the affected stream but applicable Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines and mitigation measures would be applied and sediment would settle before reaching the coastal zone. This project is categorized as FAA (1) – the Forest Service will provide the State with either a consistency determination or a negative determination. The project is considered to be consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the Alaska Coastal Management Program. Copies of the consistency determination and supporting information were provided to the State of Alaska, Department of Program Management and Permitting, for review as required by the CZMA. Concurrence on the consistency determination for Alternatives 2 and 3 was received from the State (March 6, 2006). The findings and determination for Alternative 4 would remain the same as Alternatives 2 and 3. A copy of this EA will be sent to the State of Alaska, Department of Program Management and Permitting.

Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects include the combination of past, present, and foreseeable management actions in the project area. The current condition of the planning area is the result of past actions and natural processes. These are summarized in the Affected Environment sections of this EA and, in more detail, in the resource reports and the Forest Plan. The environmental effects of the action alternatives are described in the Environmental Effects sections for each issue, and in the resource reports. Past timber harvest and associated road building have resulted in expanded motorized access for OHV users and other recreational users. The results of past recreation management include the development of cabins, campgrounds, hiking trails, and other recreation facilities that are available within the project area. However, roads constructed for timber harvest have also resulted in additional sediment reaching streams that, in some cases, has degraded fish habitat.

Cumulative impacts of this project include changes in the overall level of road maintenance in the project area and the accessibility of the project area for public use and resource management. Of the 50 miles of trails that are currently managed for recreation only 3.6 miles are managed for motorized use. Adding 43.3 miles of additional motorized trails to the district trail system will increase overall maintenance costs and requirements in an already limited trail budget. Most of these trails will require at least in the short term, limited maintenance. All of these trails have been used by OHV enthusiasts for many years when they were considered roads. The action alternatives list from 60 to 184 miles of roads for conversion to trails once stream crossings are concurred by Alaska Department of Fish and Game either by building crossing structures or allowing designated crossing areas for OHVs. This addition would further increase trail maintenance needs.

Designated open areas are difficult to contain. Where ever areas are not topographically or vegetatively contained there is potential for effects beyond the area. There is potential for additional vegetative damage to North Beach if riders continue to access the vegetated portion of the area. But because the three areas designated in all action alternatives are hardened by rock, sand, or snow there are no cumulative effects anticipated. Monitoring would determine if OHV riders are staying within the confines of the hardened surfaces.

In the next few years the Tongass National Forest will be completing a Trails Facility Master Planning process. This process will rate all trails based on current condition, deferred maintenance needs, and estimated use, and will determine how many miles of trail can be maintained to standard with projected maintenance funds. This process along with public interest will help guide which and how many yellow roads will be converted to trails. Roads would be evaluated using criteria such as, miles of surface available to ride on that system, maintenance costs required to maintain to standard, and access to other recreation facilities or opportunities before being converted to a trail. The outcome and cumulative effect of this planning process is unknown at this time.

Disturbance related to this project is not expected to contribute substantially to cumulative effects in the project area because all activities associated with action alternatives would be temporary and localized, and would occur periodically as time and funding allow.

Under the No Action Alternative, 33 of the 133 road/stream crossings of streams identified as not having adequate fish passage are on roads designated for storage as part of ongoing road maintenance activities. Culverts on roads placed in storage are removed or bypassed as part of ongoing maintenance. Blockages on the remaining 100 crossings would remain under the No Action Alternative, 60 under the Proposed Action (Alternative 2), 61 under Alternative 3, and 31 under Alternative 4. These blockages would continue to affect at least one life stage of salmonids until repaired. In early 2005 the Sitka Ranger District met with the State of Alaska’s Department of Natural Resource’s Office of Habitat Management and Permitting (OHMP) and discussed a process to address the identified inadequate stream crossings. These identified crossings will be field verified to determine the severity and what method would provide acceptable passage and the costs associated with that remedy. Concurrence from OHMP on the method of repair would be obtained before the identified stream crossing could be fixed. This process is currently in progress.

Road/stream crossings that currently provide fish passage would remain. While these crossings do not currently impede fish passage, there is a risk that storm damage to these culverts/crossings could create blockages in the future. All action alternatives would result in fewer road/stream crossings that do provide fish passage remaining on roads open to highway and high-clearance vehicle traffic. A total of up to 888, 781 and 1,211 crossings could be removed or repaired in Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, respectively. Table 22 displays cumulative effects measures of alternatives for MIS fish species and fish habitat. Alternative 4 followed by the Proposed Action would have the greatest benefit for water quality, fish habitat and MIS fish in terms of potential to reduce sediment sources and removal of culverts that impeded fish passage, because they would decommission roads and would close more roads to OHV use than the No Action Alternative and Alternative 3.

Table 22. Cumulative Effects for MIS Fish Species

Alternative	Fish Passage Blockages Removed	Miles of Road Decommissioned in RMAs^{1/}	Miles of Open Road in RMAs^{1/}
No Action	33	0	27.6
Alternative 2	73	3.5	20.7
Alternative 3	72	0	20.7
Alternative 4	102	0.7	12.7

^{1/} Includes roads open to passenger and high clearance vehicles
 Numbers represent Class I, II and III RMAs. Numbers are based on GIS and may not be exact.

In general, any increase in road miles carries an increased risk for fish habitat from surface erosion of roads and cutbanks, increases in the frequency of landslides by destabilizing soils, changes in hydrology, increases in soil compaction, and increases in sediment. The actual impacts of present and foreseeable projects would depend on the level of planning to locate the roads and construct them in a way that creates a minimal impact to water quality and hydrology. Additionally, the impacts to hydrology and water quality are dependent on the level of maintenance and use given to roads.

Reconstruction of Road 7576, the Harbor Mountain Road (4.7 miles), is a foreseeable action in the future, but there are no road miles within RMAs and no road crossings in those sections of road. The project also includes the construction of new recreation facilities, including two ski trails and new viewing areas. Potential cumulative effects could include temporary disruptions to recreation activities on the Ranger District due to noise and temporary access limitations, from projects such as the Harbor Mountain Project improvements, the Finger Mountain Timber Sales, and small timber sales. This would also be the case if the proposed reconstruction of the Lake Eva Trail and/or extension of the Sitka Cross Trail were to take place at the same time as the Sitka Travel and Access Management project. These cumulative impacts would, however, be expected to be of short duration.

Between 2005 and 2007, the Duffield Peninsula Fish Habitat and Passage Improvement project removed more than 40 culverts and bridges affecting or had the potential to affect fish habitat. This will lead to an overall improvement in habitat access for MIS fish and other fish species.

An EIS has been completed for the Finger Mountain project; however, no sales have been prepared or sold. Effects on fish would primarily be due to the construction of 9.8 miles of new roads, 10.9 miles of temporary roads, and the reconstruction of 13.8 miles of existing roads. This project also includes an opportunity to improve culverts and drainage on 13.8 miles of existing roads that would be reconstructed. The EIS also includes a Forest Plan Amendment expanding Old Growth Reserves in the project area by several hundred acres.

The 2004 Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan identifies a number of road corridors within the project area where improvements may take place in the future, including the Hoonah-Tenakee Inlet Road Corridor (Road 7500), the Kadashan Road Corridor (Road 7540), and the Rodman Bay Road Corridor (Roads 7580, 7583, 75832, 7579, 7586, and 7587), but no firm plans have been identified to date. No firm, foreseeable actions have been identified, just the opportunity that roads may be extended to link road systems in the future.

CHAPTER 4 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

The Forest Service consulted the following federal, state, and local agencies; and tribes during the development of this EA:

Federal, State, and Local Agencies

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Alaska Department of Transportation

Alaska Department of Natural Resources

City and Borough of Sitka, Office of Government Relations

Tribes and Native Corporations

Sitka Tribe of Alaska

Shee Atika Incorporated

Sealaska Corporation

Angoon Community Association

Kootznoowoo Incorporated

CHAPTER 5 LITERATURE CITED

Readers are referred to the 2006 Sitka Access and Travel Management Environmental Assessment for the list of literature cited in the Revised EA. Additional citations used in the Revised EA are listed below.

USDA Forest Service. 2006. Sitka Access and Travel Management Environmental Assessment. Sitka Ranger District, Tongass National Forest. R10-MB-554.

USDA Forest Service. 2003. Tongass National Forest Forest-Level Roads Analysis. Tongass National Forest.

Appendix B

Detailed Project Priorities for Passenger Vehicle and Off-Highway Vehicle Access

Table B-1 lists the objective maintenance level for roads that are affected by Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 for each analysis area. Table B-2 describes OHV access and the priority list for the evaluation and resolution of fish stream road crossings on existing district roads for each analysis area, which is relevant to OHV access under the alternatives. Unauthorized roads converted to forest roads is the same as the Proposed Action shown in the 2006 EA Table A-3; the reader is referred to the 2006 EA for that information.

Road miles on the following tables are derived from the INFRA database and are rounded. Road miles may vary slightly from the road miles in other tables in the EA that are based on GIS analysis.

Priorities for Road Storage Activities

Several factors were used to develop a priority work list to convert roads that are currently available for passenger vehicle access into roads that would be stored, decommissioned, or designated as OHV trails. These factors are described in the 2006 EA (refer to Appendix A in the 2006 EA).

Table B-2 displays Alternative 3 priorities, with Number 1 being the highest priority to open to OHV use. This same priority order would be used in Alternatives 2 and 4 where roads are to be opened after repair. Clearance work done by resource specialists and with the State of Alaska to allow OHV use on some roads “closed pending repairs” between the 2006 EA and this Revised EA shows that the Forest Service is working toward opening the highest priority roads (as well as other roads where resource specialists were available to do clearance work).

Table B-1a. Objective Maintenance Level by Alternative—Indian River

Road Number	Total Road Mileage	Affected Segment Mileage	Alternative 1 – No Action	Alternative 2 – Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Indian River						
7500 (MP 11.9 to 14.0)	14.0	2.1	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
75001	0.7	0.7	Stored	Decommissioned	Stored	Stored
75002	0.2	0.2	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
7501	0.6	0.6	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored

Table B-1b. Objective Maintenance Level by Alternative —Southeast Chichagof Island

Road Number	Total Road Mileage	Affected Segment Mileage	Alternative 1 – No Action	Alternative 2 – Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
False Island						
7544 (MP 4.9 to 8.2)	8.2	3.3	Stored	OHV Trail	Stored	OHV Trail
7545	2.5	2.5	Stored	Decommissioned	Stored	Decommissioned
Inbetween						
7561	0.4	0.4	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
75619	0.1	0.1	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
7568	2.7	2.7	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
75682	0.4	0.4	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
75683	0.3	0.3	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored

Table B-1c. Objective Maintenance Level by Alternative —Baranof Island

Road Number	Total Road Mileage	Affected Segment Mileage	Alternative 1 – No Action	Alternative 2 – Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Hanus Bay						
7720 (MP 1.3 to 3.1)	3.1	1.8	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
Appleton Cove						
7722E(MP 0 to 0.9)	5.4	0.9	Stored	High Clearance	Stored	OHV trail
7722E (MP 0.9 to 3.4)	5.4	2.5	Stored	High Clearance	Stored	Stored
7722E (MP 3.4 to 5.7)	5.4	1.9	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
7723	1.3	0.4	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	OHV trail
7723	1.3	0.9	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
7729	1.9	1.9	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
St. John the Baptist						
7583 (MP 0 to 1.6)	6.8	1.6	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
7583 MP 1.6 to 6.0	6.8	4.5	Stored	OHV Trail	Stored	Stored
75832	1.7	1.7	High Clearance	OHV Trail	Stored	Stored
7584 (MP 0 to 3.1)	3.9	3.1	High Clearance	OHV Trail	Stored	Stored
7584 (MP 3.2 to 3.9)	3.9	0.7	Stored	Decommissioned	Stored	Stored
75842	0.8	0.8	High Clearance	OHV Trail	Stored	Stored
Kizhuchia						
7582	5.6	5.6	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
75821 (MP 1.48 to 1.53)	1.5	.05	Stored	Decommissioned	Stored	Stored
Fish Bay						
7580	3.7	3.7	Stored	Decommissioned	Stored	Stored
75801	1.2	1.2	Stored	Decommissioned	Stored	Stored
75802	0.9	0.9	Stored	Decommissioned	Stored	Stored
75803	1.0	1.0	Stored	Decommissioned	Stored	Stored
Katlian						
7579	1.8	0.5	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	OHV trail
7579	1.8	1.3	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
75790	1.2	1.2	Stored	OHV Trail	Stored	Stored
75791 (MP 1.7 to MP 4.9)	4.9	3.2	Stored	Decommissioned	Stored	Stored
75792	1.7	1.7	Stored	Decommissioned	Stored	Stored
75797	7.2	2.1	Stored	Decommissioned	Stored	OHV trail
MP 0 to MP 2.1						
75797	7.2	0.6	Stored	OHV trail	Stored	OHV trail
MP 2.1 to MP 2.7						
75797	7.2	4.5	Stored	OHV Trail	Stored	Stored
MP 2.7 to MP 7.2						
Sitka Town						
75111	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Passenger Car	Passenger Car	Passenger Car
75131	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Passenger Car	Passenger Car	Passenger Car
75132	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Passenger Car	Passenger Car	Passenger Car
7515	0.1	0.1	Unauthorized	Passenger Car	Passenger Car	Passenger Car
7517	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Passenger Car	Passenger Car	Passenger Car
7569	0.3	0.3	Passenger Car	Passenger Car	Passenger Car	High Clearance
7577	2.2	2.2	Passenger Car	Passenger Car	Passenger Car	High Clearance
Sitka: Starrigavan						
75811	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Passenger Car	Passenger Car	Passenger Car
75812	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Passenger Car	Passenger Car	Passenger Car
Sitka: Trailer Court						

Road Number	Total Road Mileage	Affected Segment Mileage	Alternative 1 – No Action	Alternative 2 – Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
75981	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Passenger Car	Passenger Car	Passenger Car
Nakwasina	4.5	4.5	Unauthorized	OHV Trail	Unauthorized	Unauthorized

Table B-1d. Objective Maintenance Level by Alternative—Kruzof Island

Road Number	Total Road Mileage	Affected Segment Mileage	Alternative 1 – No Action	Alternative 2 – Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Mud Bay						
7590 (MP 5.3 to 8.9)	8.9	3.6	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
759001	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
759002Q	0.2	0.2	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
759003Q	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
75901	1.0	1.0	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
759021Q	0.3	0.3	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
759022	0.2	0.2	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
759031	0.4	0.4	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
75904	1.1	1.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
75905	0.1	0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
75906	0.1	0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
7591	8.2	8.2	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
75911	1.4	1.4	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
75912	1.4	1.4	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
759121Q	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
759122	0.5	0.5	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
75913	2.2	2.2	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
759141Q	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
75915	0.6	0.6	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
75916	0.5	0.5	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
7592	3.5	3.5	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
759201Q	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
759202Q	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
759203	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
759221Q	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
759222Q	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
75923	0.8	0.8	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
759231Q	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
759601	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
75961 (MP .5 to 1.1)	1.1	0.6	Stored	Decommissioned	Stored	Stored
Eagle Creek						
7595	8.3	8.3	High Clearance	Stored	Stored	Stored
759501Q	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored
759511	<0.1	<0.1	Unauthorized	Stored	Stored	Stored

Table B-2a. OHV Access by Alternative—Indian River

Road Number	Total Road Mileage	Affected Segment Mileage	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2 Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 3 Priority
Indian River							
7500 (MP 11.9 to 14.5)	14.5	2.1	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	40
75001	0.6	0.6	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Decommissioned	46
75004	0.6	0.6	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	47
75005	0.4	0.4	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	41
75006	0.3	0.3	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	42
7501	0.6	0.6	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	43
75011	0.3	0.3	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	44
75012	0.3	0.3	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	45

Table B-2b. OHV Access by Alternative—Southeast Chichagof Island

Road Number	Total Road Mileage	Affected Segment Mileage	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2 Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 3 Priority
False Island							
75401	2.8	2.8	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	28
7544 (MP 3.8 to 8.2)	8.2	4.4	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Open	1
75441 (MP 0 to MP 0.8)	1.3	0.8	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Open	2
75441 (MP 0.8 to MP 1.3)	1.3	0.5	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	2
75443	3.0	3.0	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	66
754431	0.5	0.5	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	67
7545	2.5	2.5	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Decommissioned	71
75461	0.6	0.6	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	NA
7547	2.9	1.3	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	70
7552	8.5	8.5	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	68
75522	0.3	0.3	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	69
7553 (MP 0 to 0.1)	4.8	0.1	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Open	12
7553 (MP 0.1 to MP 4.8)	4.8	4.7	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	12
75531	2.6	2.6	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	13
755311	0.7	0.7	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	17
755312	0.6	0.6	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	18
75532	0.4	0.4	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	14
75533	1.6	1.6	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	15
75534	0.2	0.2	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	16
Corner Bay							
75409 (MP 0.1 to 0.9)	0.9	0.8	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Open	75
7541 MP 0 to MP 0.8	1.9	0.8	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Open	76
7541 (MP 0.8 to MP 1.0)	1.9	0.2	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Open	
7541 (MP 1.0 to 1.9)	1.9	0.9	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	76
75410	1.5	1.5	Open	Closed	Closed Pending	Closed	77

Table B-2b. OHV Access by Alternative—Southeast Chichagof Island

Road Number	Total Road Mileage	Affected Segment Mileage	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2 Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 3 Priority
7543 (MP 1.5 to 1.7)	1.7	0.2	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	72
7559	1.1	1.1	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	73
75591	0.4	0.4	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	74
7621 (MP 1.1 to 1.6)	1.6	0.5	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	78
7623	0.6	0.6	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	79
7624 (MP 0.7 to 2.6)	2.6	1.9	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	80
76241	0.6	0.6	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	81
Inbetween							
7561	0.4	0.4	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	82
75619	0.1	0.1	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	84
7568	2.7	2.7	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	83
75682	0.4	0.4	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	85
75683	0.3	0.3	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	86
Crab Bay							
7560E	2.1	2.1	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	48
7560W	4.6	4.6	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	49
75601	0.7	0.7	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	50
75602	0.3	0.3	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	51
75603	0.4	0.4	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	52
75604	0.2	0.2	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	53
75605	0.4	0.4	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	54
7565	2.5	2.5	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	55
75651	0.9	0.9	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	56
75652	0.3	0.3	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	57
75653	0.1	0.1	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	58
7566	0.6	0.6	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	59
Oly Creek							

Table B-2b. OHV Access by Alternative—Southeast Chichagof Island

Road Number	Total Road Mileage	Affected Segment Mileage	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2 Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 3 Priority
7554	3.0	3.0	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	93
7593	1.5	1.5	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	94

Table B-2c. OHV Access by Alternative—Baranof Island

Road Number	Total Road Mileage	Affected Segment Mileage	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2 Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 3 Priority
Hanus Bay							
7532 (MP 1.1 to 2.9)	2.9	1.8	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	39
7533 (MP 1.2 to 2.1)	2.1	0.9	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	37
75331	0.7	0.7	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	38
7701 (MP 1.3 to 2.0)	2.0	0.7	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	36
7730	1.9	1.9	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	35
Appleton Cove							
7722E (MP 3.4 to 5.4)	5.4	2.3	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	62
7588 (MP 0 to MP 2.4)	3.9	2.4	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	19
7588 (MP 2.4 to 3.9)	3.9	1.5	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	19
75881	0.4	0.4	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	60
75882	1.2	1.2	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	61
75883	0.3	0.3	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	63
Saook							
7539	1.9	1.9	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	64
St. John the Baptist							
7583	6.8	6.8	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	6
75831	1.3	1.3	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	8
75832	1.7	1.7	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	9
7584	3.9	3.9	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	7
75842	0.8	0.8	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	11
7585	1.9	1.9	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	10
Rodman Bay							
7586	10.0	10.0	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	91
7587	9.1	9.1	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	92

Road Number	Total Road Mileage	Affected Segment Mileage	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2 Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 3 Priority
Fish Bay							
7580	3.7	3.7	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	87
75801	1.2	1.2	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	88
75802	0.9	0.9	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	89
75803	1.0	1.0	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	90
Kizhuchia							
7582 (MP 0.0 to 1.9)	5.6	1.9	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs/ROW	Closed Pending Repairs/ROW	Open	29
7582 (MP 2.5 to 6.2)	5.6	3.7	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs/ROW	Closed Pending Repairs/ROW	Closed	29
75821	1.5	1.5	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs/ROW	Closed Pending Repairs/ROW	Closed	30
75822	0.6	0.6	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs/ROW	Closed Pending Repairs/ROW	Closed	31
Noxon							
7574	3.2	3.2	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	33
Nakwasina							
	4.5	4.5	Unauthorized	Closed Pending Repairs	Unauthorized	Closed Pending Repairs	34
Lisa Creek							
7558	2.6	2.6	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	65
Camp Coogan (Decommissioned in 2005)							
7594	2.1	2.1	Closed	Closed	Closed	Decommissioned	NA
Katlian							
7579 (MP 0.0 to 0.5)	1.9	0.5	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Open	4
7579 (MP 0.5 to 1.8)	1.9	1.4	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	NA
75790	1.2	1.2	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	32
75791	3.2	3.2	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	NA
75792	1.7	1.7	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	NA
75797 (MP 0 to MP 2.1)	7.2	2.1	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Open	5
75797 (MP 2.1 to MP 2.7)	7.2	0.6	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Open	5
75797 (MP 2.7 to MP 7.2)	7.2	4.5	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	5
Sitka: Starrigavan							

Road Number	Total Road Mileage	Affected Segment Mileage	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2 Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 3 Priority
Trail			Open	Open	Open	Open	NA
Sitka: Harbor Mountain							
7576	5.6	5.6	Open Seasonally	Open Seasonally	Open Seasonally	Open Seasonally	
Kelp Bay							
7535	4.3	4.3	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	96

Table B-2d. OHV Access by Alternative—Kruzof Island

Road Number	Total Road Mileage	Affected Segment Mileage	Alternative 1 – No Action	Alternative 2 – Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 3 Priority
Mud Bay							
75903	1.6	1.6	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Open	24
75911 (MP 0 to MP 0.7)	1.4	0.7	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Open	2
75911 (MP 0.7 to MP 1.4)	1.4	0.7	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	2
75912	1.4	1.4	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	3
75913	2.2	2.2	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	20
7596 (MP 0.4 to 1.0)	1.0	0.6	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	21
75961 (MP 0 to MP 0.5)	1.1	0.5	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	22
75961 (MP 0.5 to 1.1)	1.1	0.6	Open	Closed	Closed Pending Repairs	Decommissioned	23
Eagle Creek							
7595	8.3	8.3	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	25
75951	1.3	1.3	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	26
75952	0.8	0.8	Open	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed Pending Repairs	Closed	27

Appendix C

Harbor Mountain Snow Conditions

Above the highest gate, two factors are used to determine when to open the top to off-road motorized use (OHV and snowmobile).

- 1) A frozen base of snow/ice more than 12 inches in depth covers frozen ground on all Off-Road Areas including the areas of concern, such as the Picnic Shelter, Snowman, and other exposed areas.
- 2) The boulders at the base of the bowl are covered by one foot of snow.

Map Section

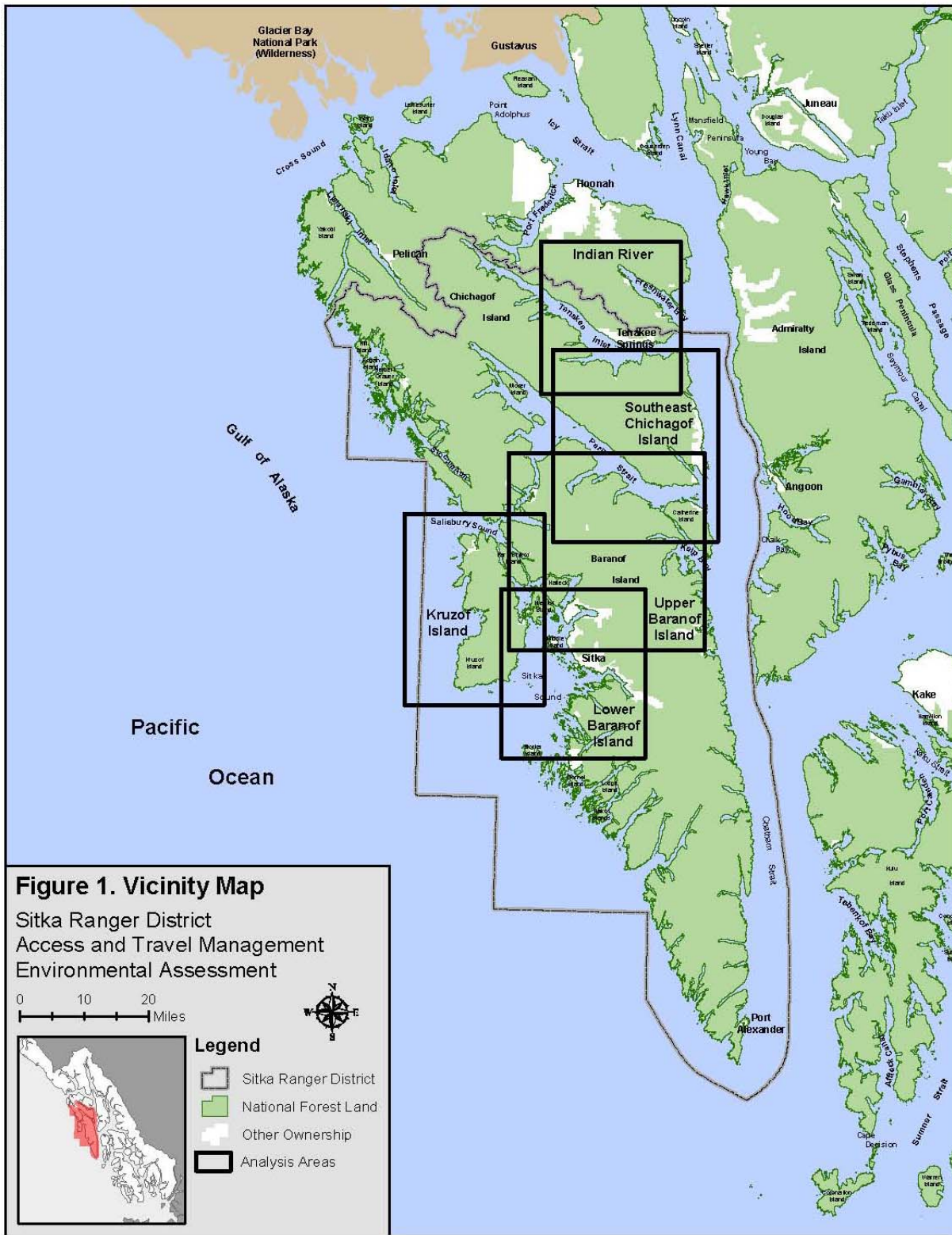


Figure 1. Vicinity Map is repeated here to provide context for the alternative maps

**DECISION NOTICE
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**USDA FOREST SERVICE
TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST
SITKA RANGER DISTRICT**

ACCESS AND TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

This Decision Notice contains a brief summary of the environmental analyses completed for this project as well as my decision regarding which alternative to implement and the rationale for my decision. It also contains Findings required by various laws, and information concerning the right to Administrative Review of this decision. The Environmental Assessment (EA) and Revised EA completed for this project are incorporated by reference in this decision document.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to provide sustainable, efficient, and safe access to forest resources and recreational opportunities on the Ranger District. The need for this project is to reduce the number of unmaintained or inadequately maintained roads to better match the level of funding available for road maintenance and to eliminate or reduce risks of adverse environmental impacts, threats to public safety, and complies with the 2005 Travel Management Rule.

This Decision Notice documents my decision concerning how the road systems on the Sitka Ranger District will be managed. The road systems provide access for recreation, subsistence, and commodity uses. There are approximately 372 miles of authorized road on the District (including roads that cross private land where the government holds an easement). Cars, trucks, off-highway vehicles (OHVs) such as motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians use many of these roads. Many roads on the District are isolated and are only accessible by boat or float plane. Transportation on remote roads is generally limited to bicycles, motorcycles, and OHVs due to the expense of transporting larger vehicles. The majority of the roads on the District were built to provide access for timber management. This road network created new and improved access to the District for recreational and subsistence users. In recent years, budgets have been insufficient for the Sitka Ranger District to perform adequate maintenance on all of our roads.

DECISION

Based on the EA and Revised EA completed for this project, as well as taking into consideration comments received during the 30-day public review of the documents, it is my decision to select Alternative 4 for implementation, with modifications. Passenger vehicle access for the Selected Alternative will remain as described in the Revised EA Alternative 4 (refer to Figures 1 through 6 at the end of this Decision Notice). For OHV access the Selected Alternative will implement Alternative 4 with the following modifications (see Figures 7 through 14 at the end of this Decision Notice):

Changes for OHV Access:

Lower Baranof Island

Katlian: National Forest System (NFS) Road #7579 – change approximately 0.5 miles to OML 1 (storage) – part of the easement has become Coxe Creek, cutting off legal public access; the Sitka Ranger District intends to address Coxe Creek within the easement working with Shee Atika, Inc., the land owner.

NFS Road #75797 – this road is OML 1 (in storage) and is changed to yellow-potential OHV trail; public access needs to be re-established before this trail can be open to OHVs.

Kizhuchia: NFS Road #7582 – change portion of road adjacent to private land (appx. 1/2 mile) to closed (storage). If public access through private property is granted from the landowner, the closed portion of the road will be opened.

Upper Baranof

Appleton Cove: NFS Road #7722 W - the last 1.94 miles of this road will be put into storage as per the decision in the 1992 Alaska Pulp Corporation Long-Term Timber Sale Contract Kelp Bay EIS due to wildlife concerns.

St. John the Baptist: NFS Road #7584 - change the first 3.06 miles of this road from NFS Road #7585 to the lake from OML 1 (storage) to potential OHV trail (yellow).

As described in the EA and Revised EA, OHV use is limited to a 50-inch wheelbase or less on the Starrigavan trail system and on Ocean Boulevard (Road 7544). On the remaining OHV designated trails, OHV use is limited to a 60-inch wheelbase or less.

Designated OHV Use Areas

Three designated OHV use areas will be open and available to OHV use. The North Beach Designated OHV Use Area would remain as described in the Revised EA (see Figure 12). The Harbor Mountain Designated OHV Use Area has been expanded to include additional acres for riding (see Figure 13). Use by OHVs will continue to be seasonal; it will only be open in the winter with snow condition requirements described in the Revised EA. The Bear View Designated OHV Use Area, as shown in the Revised EA, will be referred to as the False Island Designated OHV Use Area on this and future maps (see Figure 14).

Dispersed Camping

Motor vehicle use off the center line of designated routes up to 100 feet is allowed for the purpose of dispersed camping as long as the vehicle remains on a hardened surface. Dispersed camping at North Beach would be allowed as described under Designated OHV Use Areas.

As described in the EA and Revised EA, roads placed in storage will have most drainage structures removed and additional water bars installed. A few roads (4.7 miles) not needed for long-term management will be decommissioned. Decommissioned roads will have their drainage structures removed and road surfaces may be scarified and revegetated unless they are already naturally revegetated.

Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM)

Based on this decision, as well as any future road management decisions, a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) will be produced annually that will identify what roads, trails, and areas are open to motorized use. The MVUM will be revised annually to display changing conditions of roads. As yellow roads (potential OHV trails) are repaired or concurrence is received from the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, these roads will be added to the MVUM and shown as open to motorized use. Likewise, some roads and trails may not be shown as open on the annual MVUM

if conditions change on the roads causing safety hazards (such as landslides or bridge failures) or if a major construction project would block the road.

The Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan

The Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan (SATP), as proposed in 2004, includes transportation and utility corridors designed to better link communities within the Sitka Ranger District to the continental highway system. Representatives of the State of Alaska Department of Transportation requested that the Forest Service retain the roads aligning with these routes. Our decision will not preclude future road development within the SATP identified corridors. Portions of the following road corridors would be retained indefinitely in the event they are needed for future road corridor development:

Road #7500: Hoonah-Tenakee Inlet Road Corridor

Road #7540: Kadashan Road Corridor

Roads #7580 and #7582: Rodman Bay Road Corridor

Roads #7583 and #75832: Rodman Bay Road Corridor

Road #75790: Rodman Bay Road.

Roads #7586 and #7587: Rodman Bay Road Corridor

The Forest Service signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State of Alaska in 2006 to provide rights-of-way for the road corridors covered by Public Law 109-59. This agreement identifies right-of-ways the State needs for their transportation and utility corridors. The corridors are displayed on Map 92337 (part of the MOU). The corridor between Tenakee and Hoonah, Sitka to Rodman Bay, and Sitka Baranof (across Baranof Island) are included in this MOU. The MOU also identifies marine access points the Forest Service needs for activities on National Forest Land and public access. Marine access points included in the MOU: Mud Bay, Sitkoh Bay, Eagle River, Kidney Cove, Mid Arm Kelp Bay, Nakwasina, Nakwasina NE, Finger Creek, Silver Bay, Indian River, Hanus Bay, Lisa Creek, St. John the Baptist Bay, Rodman Bay, Appleton Cove, Saook Bay, Todd, False Island, Corner Bay, Crab Bay, and Inbetween.

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

I have selected Alternative 4 with the modifications identified above as the Selected Alternative because I believe that it best meets the Purpose and Need as described in the EA and Revised EA. The Selected Alternative balances resource protection, public safety, and public access needs. The predicted funding will not suffice to meet Forest Service standards for keeping roads and trails open under the Selected Alternative. The Sitka Ranger District will be embracing partnerships to assist with keeping roads and trails open to meet motorized needs for the public. This alternative is based on four roads analyses completed for the District. These roads analyses were completed using the roads analysis process outlined in FS-643 and included public meetings to gather public input. The roads analysis process was used to identify the road systems that best meets current and anticipated land management and public access needs within expected budgets. This decision generally implements the findings of the roads analysis and supports the three landscape assessments in the project area.

I recognize that the Selected Alternative has a high impact on road access via motorized vehicles, and thus a high impact on recreation and subsistence by those using motorized equipment to access areas and resources. The Sitka Ranger District currently has approximately 372 miles of authorized road. Prior to this decision, 251 miles of this 372 miles, were used by OHVs. However, due to State of Alaska law related to the crossing of anadromous streams, lack of public access (across private land), and previous EIS decisions that closed roads, only 108 miles of these roads currently had legal access. With implementation of this decision, over 100 miles of the road systems would remain open for motorized access under the Selected Alternative and approximately 63 additional miles of road will be opened when legal stream crossings can be provided and/or roads are repaired or right-of-way acquired.

Although roads will be closed in the Selected Alternative, no recreation areas will be closed or access denied; all roads will remain open to non-motorized (foot traffic) access at all times and alternative forms of access, including float plane, boat, bicycle, helicopter (outside of wilderness), and walking, will continue to be allowed.

Comments from the public during scoping and in response to the EA and Revised EA indicated that many local residents favor leaving all, or nearly all, roads open. Many public comments noted the importance of the roads for recreation and subsistence. A few comments favored closing roads to protect water quality, fish habitat, and the old-growth reserves. In considering these competing goals, I considered what was achievable within the available road maintenance budget. Road maintenance budgets for the past several years have not been sufficient to maintain the District road systems. Because this situation is expected to continue, hard choices must be made. Many roads have old log stringer bridges that are deteriorating or have already collapsed. Other roads lack legal access, either because they cross private land where no easement exists providing for public access, or because they cross fish streams without approved crossings. The selected alternative allocates the available funds to the highest priority roads, as identified in the roads analyses. Appendix A of the EA lists the priority for repairing roads that must be closed to OHV use until safety issues are dealt with and/or legal access can be provided. I plan to work with local groups and communities to explore ways to provide additional access for recreation and subsistence. We will actively pursue partnerships to facilitate improved access, including adopt-a-road agreements to maintain roads.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

We initiated access and travel management planning in 1999 and began conducting roads analyses, using the roads analysis process (RAP) outlined in FS-643. Analyses were completed for roads in the Indian River area, Southeast Chichagof Island, Baranof Island, and Kruzof Island. This process provided an assessment of the extent and condition of the existing roads. We held public meetings to invite public comment and identify preliminary issues. Recommendations documented in the roads analyses, supplemented by the input from public comment, led to the Proposed Action addressed in the Access and Travel Management EA and Revised EA.

The project has been listed on the Tongass National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions available on the Forest Service web site. The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping (March 14, 2005 to April 14, 2005). A scoping brochure describing the Proposed Action and soliciting public comment was mailed to 471 individuals,

organizations, institutions, and industry representatives that had previously shown interest in Forest Service projects on the Sitka Ranger District. Interested parties included federal and state agencies, Alaska Native groups, municipal offices, businesses, interest groups, and individuals. A total of 125 responses were received based on scoping regarding the project and our Proposed Action, including 71 from members of the Sitka Recreational Riders, Inc. The majority of respondents (111) were from Sitka. Seven were from Tenakee Springs, six were from other cities in Alaska, and one was from Utah. Some individuals also included additional comments with their submissions. In addition, an announcement about the project and public meetings was published in the *Juneau Empire* on March 14 and 15, 2005 and the *Daily Sitka Sentinel* from March 14 through 18, 2005. Public service announcements were also made on Sitka's Raven Radio (KCAW) prior to public meetings.

Public meetings were held in Tenakee Springs and Sitka on March 22 and 24, 2005, respectively. A meeting was also held in the community of Angoon on May 18, 2005. There were 16 attendees at the Tenakee Springs meeting, 62 at the Sitka meeting, and approximately 12 at the Angoon meeting. Prior to the meetings, scoping brochures were sent to the local community centers in Sitka, Tenakee Springs, and Angoon. During the public meetings, scoping brochures were distributed to the participants and maps illustrating the Proposed Action were available for public review. Following the presentation, the public was prompted to ask questions and was encouraged to provide written comments to the Forest Service.

A Web site (<http://www.SitkaATM-EA.com>) was created for users on both high-speed and dial-up Internet connections to access the scoping brochure and download it if needed. Sixteen of the responses were received through the Web site.

Forest Service staff met with representatives of the Angoon Community Association on May 18, 2005, Shee Atika Incorporated on June 15, 2005, and Sealaska Corporation on June 24, 2005. Forest Service staff also met with representatives of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska for an informational Access and Travel Management meeting on May 31, 2005 from 7 to 9 p.m.

The following government agencies were contacted: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Alaska Department of Transportation, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

The 2006 EA was mailed to 167 individuals, organizations, institutions, industry representatives, federal and state agencies, Alaska Native groups, municipal offices, and businesses. A total of 44 responses were received regarding the EA during or after the 30-day comment period on the EA. The Legal Notice for the 30-day comment period on the EA was published in the *Daily Sitka Sentinel* on January 3, 2006. The Forest Service's response to comments on the 2006 EA are located in the Access and Travel Management project record. The comments were also used to make corrections and additions to the Revised EA.

Based on a projected reduction in the road maintenance budget, a new alternative (Alternative 4) was created. An announcement about the project and public meetings was published in the *Daily Sitka Sentinel* on March 28 and March 30, 2007. Public service announcements were also made on Sitka's Raven Radio (KCAW) prior to public meetings. Alternative 4 was described and discussed at a public meeting in Sitka on April 5, 2007 and in Tenakee Springs on March 14, 2007. There were about 20 attendees at the Tenakee Springs meeting and about 40 at the Sitka meeting. During the public meetings, maps illustrating Alternative 4 were available for public review. Following the presentation, the public was provided the opportunity to ask questions. A

representative of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources was present at the Sitka meeting to answer questions about State law and fish stream crossings.

The Revised EA was sent to 46 individuals, organizations, institutions, industry representatives, federal and state agencies, Alaska Native groups, municipal offices, and businesses who commented on the original EA or requested the Revised EA. Additionally 132 announcements of the availability and internet location of the Revised EA were sent to those people who had provided scoping comments or shown interest in the project. The Legal Notice for the 30-day comment period on the Revised EA was published in the *Daily Sitka Sentinel* on August 23, 2007. A total of 28 responses were received regarding the Revised EA during or after the 30-day comment period on the Revised EA. Subsistence hearings were held in Tenakee Springs, Angoon, and Sitka on September 5 and 6, 2007, after publication and dissemination of the Revised EA. No one attended the Angoon hearing. A total of 29 people attended subsistence hearings in Sitka and Tenakee Springs, with 6 people providing testimony; transcripts of the subsistence hearings are located in the Project record. A summary of the comments received on the Revised EA and the Forest Service's response to those comments has been included with this Decision Notice and is attached to this document as Appendix A.

Based on comments, I am providing the following clarification as to why the Hanus Bay roads will remain closed. All the Hanus Bay (Catherine Island) roads will remain closed to manage for subsistence resources per the Alaska Pulp Corporation Long-Term Timber Sale Contract Kelp Bay EIS decision. The Record of Decision states: General public all terrain vehicle (ATV) use will be prohibited on all roads in the Catherine Island and Portage Arm area. This decision takes that previous decision into account and confirms that decision.

Issues

Two issues were identified and used to develop alternatives for the project: motorized access for recreation and motorized access for subsistence. Other issues include roads in old-growth reserves, fisheries, water quality, public safety, road maintenance costs, the Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan road corridors, unauthorized access onto private lands, funding for proposals, and enforcement of closures.

Motorized Access for Recreation

Many residents of remote communities such as Sitka and Tenakee Springs rely heavily on National Forest System roads to access recreational opportunities and to enjoy outdoor activities. Roads provide access to cabins; beaches; camping, fishing, and hunting sites; and trails, and create opportunities for viewing wildlife and appreciating the scenery of the Forest. These experiences represent an important part of the region's lifestyle, and also support the local economy, including more than 70 outfitter/guide services that provide opportunities for tourists and residents. Recreational riding was ranked as the highest use by OHV riders who use District roads for recreational riding, camping, hunting, and fishing.

Motorized Access for Subsistence

Many scoping comments were made about the loss of motorized access for subsistence. Roads have been used to reach sites for hunting, fishing, and gathering. All alternatives provide for non-motorized subsistence access. All alternatives, including the No Action Alternative,

preclude motorized access for subsistence where there are inadequate crossings on anadromous fish streams (Alaska State statute, AS 41.14.870).

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

I considered four alternatives, including the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1), current management plans would continue to guide management of the roads on the Sitka Ranger District. All system roads would be managed as designated by the Forest Plan, existing road management objectives, and previous National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decisions (1992, 1994, 1996, 1999, and 2003). No changes to passenger vehicle access or OHV access would be made on Forest roads. However, the No Action Alternative would not comply with the travel management regulations promulgated in November 2005 (known as the OHV rule). Under previous regulations, all classified roads were open to OHVs, except where designated closed. Under current regulations, all roads are closed to OHVs unless designated open.

Ongoing road maintenance and reconditioning would continue, to some degree, in all alternatives no matter which alternative is chosen.

The Proposed Action (Alternative 2) would reduce the amount of road open to highway vehicles by approximately 45 miles. These roads would be placed in storage, decommissioned, or converted to trails. Approximately 14.5 miles of unauthorized roads would be added to the Ranger District road systems (they would become forest roads) and another 4.5 miles of unauthorized road would be converted to OHV trails. Under the Proposed Action, six road systems would remain open for OHV use (with certain exceptions within each system).

Alternative 3 was developed in response to public concerns about diminished opportunities for OHV access for recreation. Under Alternative 3, no roads would be decommissioned or converted to OHV trails; roads no longer needed would be stored. Under Alternative 3, we would actively work toward making all classified roads on the District open to OHV use.

Alternative 4 places more roads into storage and reduces more road maintenance levels than Alternative 2 and 3. Alternative 4 was developed in response to anticipated budget reductions in engineering.

Biological Evaluations were completed for sensitive plants and animals. No sensitive wildlife or fish species will experience impacts that would cause or contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. While the likelihood of effects to sensitive plants is extremely low (due to a lack of habitat in the road systems), the alternatives “may impact individuals but not likely cause a trend to federal listing or loss of viability” for those plant species known or suspected to occur in the project area.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan)

This decision is consistent with the Forest Plan. The selected alternative fully complies with the Tongass Forest Plan. This project incorporates all applicable Forest Plan forest-wide Standards and Guidelines and management area prescriptions as they apply to the project area, and complies with Forest Plan goals and objectives. The Forest Plan identifies 13 Land Use

Designations (LUDs) in the project area. Management direction for each LUD is summarized in Chapter 1 of the EA. All required interagency review and coordination has been accomplished.

The Forest Plan complies with all resource integration and management requirements of 36 CFR 219 (219.14 through 219.27). Application of Forest Plan direction for the Sitka Access and Travel Management Plan ensures compliance at the project level.

ANILCA Section 810, Subsistence Evaluation and Finding

The effects of this project have been evaluated to determine potential effects on subsistence opportunities and resources. The selected alternative provides unrestricted non-motorized access to the entire District. No documented or reported subsistence use would be restricted as a result of this decision. As for motorized access, some areas will be restricted that were previously open. However, the Sitka Ranger District has made a concerted effort to keep as many roads and trails open for motorized access where laws and standards can be met. For this reason, none of the alternatives would result in a significant possibility of a significant restriction of subsistence use of wildlife, fish, or other foods.

Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as Amended

Under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), Federal agency activities within the coastal zone must be consistent with the Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP). This is a federal agency activity as defined in 15 CFR 930.51(a). The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Forest Service and State of Alaska lists activities normally requiring a consistency determination (Section 202.B.1.). This project is included on that list and a consistency determination has been provided to the State. I have determined that this activity is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the ACMP.

Endangered Species Act of 1973

A Biological Evaluation has been completed for this action that indicates that no federally listed threatened or endangered species will be affected by this activity. The Biological Evaluation has been included in the planning record.

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

I have determined that there will be no effects on historic properties listed in, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places. Heritage resource surveys of various intensities have been conducted in the analysis area in accordance with the Regional Inventory Strategy. By following the provisions of the Programmatic Agreement signed July 29, 2002 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. The Heritage Resource Report is included in the planning record.

Floodplain Management (EO 11988), Protection of Wetlands (EO 11990)

This activity will not impact the functional value of any floodplain as defined by Executive Order 11988 and will not have negative impacts on wetlands as defined by Executive Order 11990. Restoring natural drainage patterns and decommissioning roads are expected to improve wetland function.

Recreational Fisheries (EO 12962)

This activity is consistent with Executive Order 12962. Decommissioning roads and restoring natural drainage patterns is expected to improve the quantity, function, sustainable productivity,

and distribution of United States aquatic resources for increased recreational fishing opportunities.

Environmental Justice (EO 12898)

I have determined that in accordance with Executive Order 12898 this project does not have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1996 (the Act) defines Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) as “those waters and substrates necessary for fish spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity.” For EFH, “fish” refers to federally managed fish or shellfish species and their prey. Marine EFH in Alaska includes estuarine and marine areas from tidally submerged habitat to the 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Freshwater EFH includes streams, rivers, lakes, ponds, wetlands and other bodies of water currently and historically accessible to salmon. EFH for Pacific salmon recognizes six critical life history stages: (1) spawning and incubation of eggs, (2) juvenile rearing, (3) winter and summer rearing during freshwater residency, (4) juvenile migration between freshwater and estuarine rearing habitats, (5) marine residency of immature and maturing adults, and (6) adult spawning migration. Habitat requirements within these periods can differ significantly and any modification of the habitat within these periods can adversely affect EFH.

EFH Assessment

The Selected Alternative will have “no adverse affect” on EFH because Forest Plan direction and applicable BMPs would be applied during implementation of road closure, decommissioning, and maintenance activities. Forest Plan direction and BMPs were developed through interagency negotiation and provide state-of-the-art protection of fish habitat. Stream crossing structures would be removed on closed or decommissioned roads, reducing their potential for failure during storms. This action would also remove structures that interfere with natural fish movement patterns. On the open roads, efforts to restore fish passage through improperly installed stream culverts would continue. Thus, the Selected Alternative would benefit salmon streams by closing roads and removing stream crossing structures. Approximately 42 miles of road in RMA are permanently closed in the chosen alternative. These restoration actions would reduce the current risk and negative effects of roads on EFH in the project area.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have reviewed the EA for this project using criteria identified in implementing regulations for NEPA (40 CFR 1508.27). Based on the EA and the findings displayed above, I have determined that this is not a major action that will have a significant effect on the human environment and therefore does not require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Implementation of decisions made by the District Ranger, which are subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR part 215, may occur on, but not before, five business days from the close of the appeal filing period. The appeal filing period closes 45 days after publication of legal notice of this decision in the *Daily Sitka Sentinel* newspaper, published in Sitka, Alaska.

RIGHT TO APPEAL OR ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215. Individuals or non-federal organizations who submit written comments or otherwise express interest in this particular action during the comment period specified at 215.6 have standing to appeal this decision. The notice of appeal must be in writing, meet the appeal content requirements at 215.14 and be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer:

Forrest Cole, Appeal Deciding Officer
Tongass National Forest Supervisor
Federal Building
Ketchikan, AK 99901-6591
(Street Address: 648 Mission Street)
Fax: (907) 228-6292
appeals-alaska-tongass@fs.fed.us

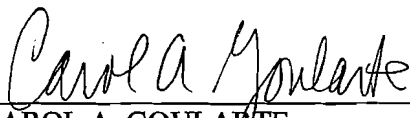
The Notice of Appeal, including attachments, must be filed (regular mail, fax, e-mail, express delivery or messenger service) with the Appeal Deciding Officer at the correct location within 45 calendar days of publication of notice of this decision in the *Daily Sitka Sentinel*, the newspaper of record for the Sitka District. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Appeals submitted electronically, including attachments, must be in an electronic format compatible with Microsoft Word.

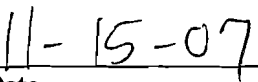
Hand delivered appeals will be accepted at the Supervisor's Office in Ketchikan during normal business hours (8:00 a.m. through 4:30 p.m.) Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

CONTACT PERSON

Carol Goularte
Sitka District Ranger, Tongass National Forest
204 Siginaka Way
Sitka, Alaska 99835
Telephone (907) 747-6671



CAROL A. GOULARTE
Sitka District Ranger

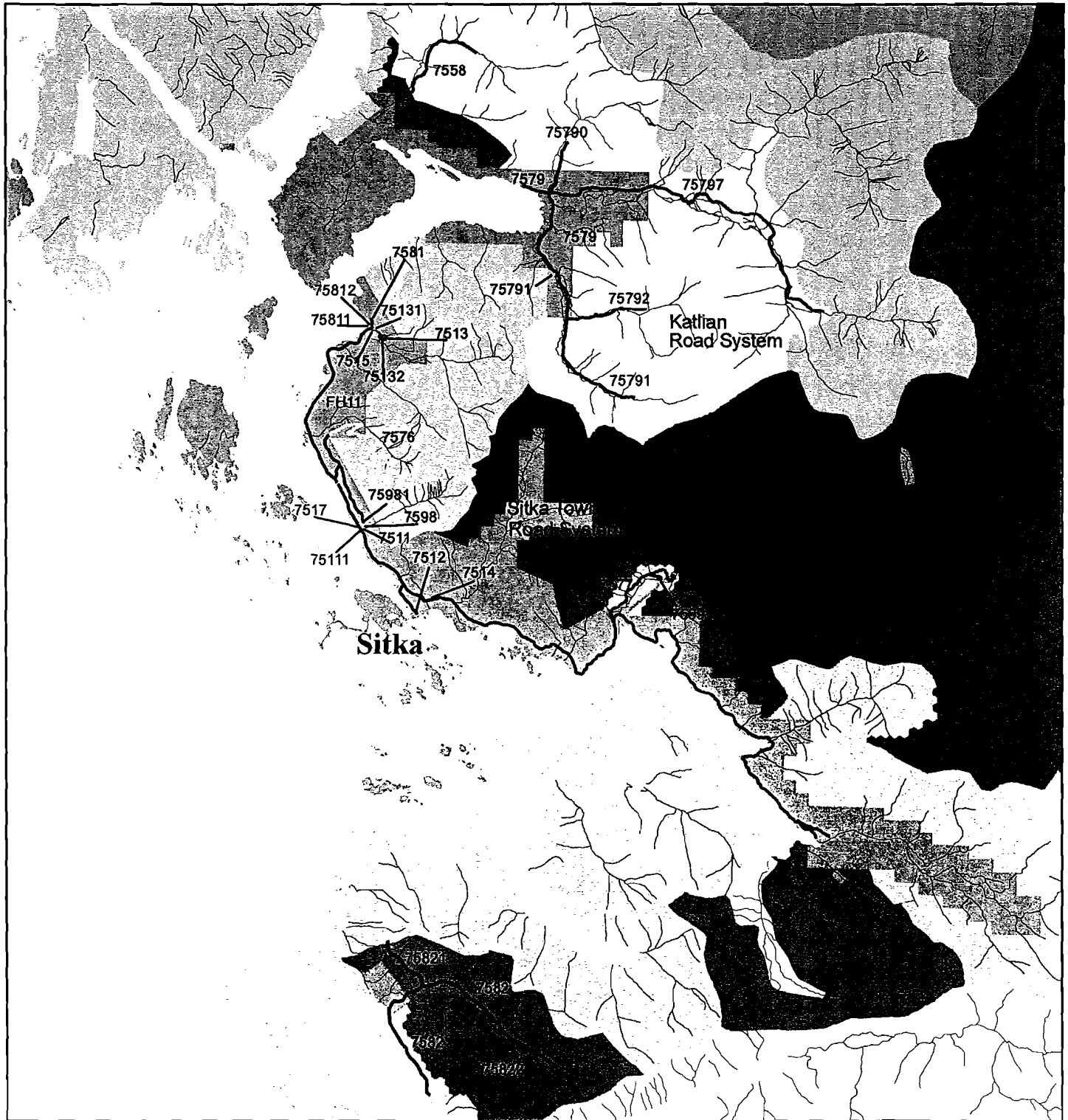


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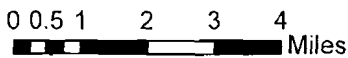
Distribution

Legal Notice, *Daily Sitka Sentinel*
Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Lawrence Widmark

Shee Atika, Incorporated, Coyne VanderJack



**Lower Baranof Island
 Analysis Area
 Sitka Ranger District**



**Selected Alternative
 Passenger and High Clearance Vehicles**

- Closed (Storage)
- High Clearance Vehicles
- Passenger Vehicle, rough surface
- Passenger Vehicle, smooth surface
- Non-Forest Service Road
- Class I, II and III Streams

Land Use Designations

- Enacted Municipal Watershed
- Modified Landscape
- Non-National Forest
- Old Growth Habitat
- Remote Recreation
- Semi-Remote Recreation
- Special Interest Area
- Timber Production
- Wild River