

Attendees: Michael Kampnich (The Nature Conservancy - TNC), Keith Rush (TNC), Jim Beard, Paula Peterson (Organized Village of Kasaan - OVK), Frederick O. Olsen Jr. (OVK), Bob Claus (Southeast Alaska Conservation Council), Tana Coppin (OVK), Stormy Hamar (Kasaan Resident), Marla Dillman (USFS), AnneMarie White (USFS), Richard Trojan (Local Business Owner), Jan Storbakken (Trojan and Sons), Tim Lindseth (Conerstone Excavation), Angela Coleman (USFS), Carolyn Thomason (Wood Cuts), Bill Thomason (Wood Cuts), Brandy Prefontaine (Prince of Wales Resident), Clarence Clark (State of Alaska, Division of Forestry); Don Nickerson (Klawock Cooperative Association)

By phone: Austin Williams (The Wilderness Society)

Attendees reviewed workshop agenda, agreements and purposes and re-visited the Desired Outcomes below;

Desired Outcome of Workshops:

1. Prioritize the List of Existing project / opportunities in the project area,
2. Identify missed opportunities and projects the FS should work on next
3. Define the projects (or types of projects) that should be integrated at implementation for better economic and ecological benefit

Jay – I'm going to start with a summary of what we're working on here. Specifically the definition, purpose and need for the Big Thorne Stewardship Area.

Keith – The biggest advantage I have heard that comes from stewardship contracts in Best Value Contracting (BVC) and its positive influence on the local workforce and therefore economy.

Jay then gave us a definition of BVC and the theory behind it and informed us that this style contracting is ONLY available under stewardship contracts. Stewardship contracts (SC) can be flown as a timber sale contract or a service contract or some combination of both, Big Thorne will likely be a mix of the two.

- Next meeting will hopefully be a wrap-up and include a discussion with a Contracting Officer (CO) about acceptable BVC criteria.

A few Questions for local citizens and business owners:

- What services would you like to see become a part of the Big Thorne SC?
- What services are local business owners looking to provide?
- What services are economically viable for local businesses to provide?

Richard Trojan – Insurance and Bonds are a key issue for local companies. What level of bonding is available for local businesses?

Jay then asked for comments/concerns in regards to the purpose statement that was drawn up for this collaboration committee, none were given. He then went over the Collaboration Roles and Workshop Agreements that help these meetings run smoothly and productively.

Jay – Using the collaborative effort for the Stoney Community Forestry effort, to start the exploration of logical working areas, we found five important areas:

1. Recreation
2. Aquatic Habitat
3. Upland Habitat and Wildlife
4. Access
5. Subsistence

Jay then went on to review what had been determined as direction points for the first four areas of service.

Jay – Tonight we are here to discuss Subsistence, with some timber discussion thrown in at the end for good measure.

Discussion of Subsistence Management Opportunities: Items listed in Bold are criteria suggested by the working group

Jay – Subsistence Management is basically a balance between access and resources, specifically competition, abundance, and distribution (access).

- What do you (local citizens) want to see us do with subsistence management?

Jim K. – Road closures are having a negative impact on community subsistence. Is there a possibility of reversing any of these closures if a specific resource is not being affected?

Jay – Given budget projections, a target of 30% of the open roads were targeted to be closed due to high maintenance costs. Despite 4 years of public involvement, public comments were very limited at the final stages of the process, especially in regards to subsistence. We realize that is due to secrecy surrounding favorite hunting/fishing spots...but the results are the same, if the comments/concerns don't come in then we can't address them.

Richard – Which roads are OHV accessible? Can all closed roads be made OHV accessible? If not can these roads be made more walking friendly?

Jay – Road closure features (waterbars and excavated culverts) for foot traffic are dug to a ratio of 2:1 and OHV is 3:1 - these slope requirements are now built into all contracts. Making all closed roads OHV accessible is simply not economical.

Ensure that the contracted road storage work facilitates the type of access intended (so that motorized trails can be operated by OHV's and that stored roads can still be walked)

Jim K. – Can some old closed roads be fixed to meet the new criteria?

Jay – The current plan is simply to leave those roads as is for economic reasons – re-opening closed roads without a project that carries that cost, is not in the budget.

- What is the value placed on road access by the communities?
- Where will the money come from to maintain the roads you want to remain open?

Jim K. – The Thorne Bay city council is working on addressing these road concerns now, especially those popular hunting roads close to the community.

Consider fixing the accessibility (walking conditions) of previous storage actions

Jay then went on to explain the TRUCS analysis and its theory of choosing to leave roads open for hunting based on accessibility to alpine, muskeg, and <10 year-old clearcuts.

- Is there an interest in refining the criteria for the ATM specific to the Big Thorne Project Area?

Jim K. – Is there a way to give special consideration to roads within 15 miles of each community? Yes, the number 15 is arbitrary and could be changed to fit the size of the community and the quality of hunting grounds in the area.

Richard – Would it be possible to keep all roads open with X miles of each community? Maybe a percentage of these roads would be more acceptable? Can we use road maintenance costs as a criterion for specific roads?

Consider a radius of X miles around a given community in which to maintain roads important to subsistence;

Which roads and what criteria are to be considered? Is the ATM criteria sufficient?

Consider some kind of resource criteria and proximity to town

Jim B. – It all boils down to the older the road, the more maintenance it requires, and therefore the more costly it is to keep open.

Jay – Not all roads are valuable. Do we want to expand the criteria for roads to keep open in order to narrow the field?

Keith – We may want to look at desirable criteria rather than simply X miles due to the lack of FS land available around west-side communities (Craig, Klawock, etc).

Frederick – Who are we keeping these roads open for? Locals? Out-of-Staters? Do the communities want to limit access to Outsiders?

Jay – Living inside a National Forest takes away the ability to restrict access to one group vs. another – it's an all or none approach.

Jim K. – Families (Thorne Bay especially) DEPEND on subsistence to feed themselves, and as such want to keep these roads open.

The City of Thorne Bay endorses keeping open routes that have been traditionally used for subsistence

Frederick – Competition is a big issue here why make it easier for the competition by making more road access available?

Richard – Using clearcuts <10 years-old should maybe have stricter criteria because they are constantly aging and so are only useful for a short amount of time.

The age of a clear-cut may not be the best criteria since it is a moving target

Brandy – Different roads have different uses/pressures at different times of the year and different stages of the hunting season. The state can change the seasons and restrictions to limit outside competition but it requires a HUGE time commitment.

Consider the season of use in the criteria to maintain a road in an open status

Jay – How do these facts factor into road closures? Gated closures? How can we better address the access issue within the limits of what is legal in the National Forest System?

Richard – Is there a percentage of what level of closure a road gets?

Jay – We are currently operating under a target of roughly 1200 miles maintained for high-clearance vehicles, 200 additional miles for OHV only use, and roughly 400 miles are going into storage (no motorized use).

Richard – Will walking-only accessible roads be emergency vehicle accessible?

Jay – No, walking accessible means ONLY walking accessible – physical conditions would not likely support any kind of motorized access.

Jay – After the current road storage contracts are complete, there will be roughly 300 miles of roads on POW to be stored, according to the Access and Travel Management Plan (ATM) in the next 3 years (approximate time frame). I would love to hear from workshop participants any recommendations on which miles (in the Big Thorne Area should get stored. We need to focus on the Big Thorne Project Area and any roads designated for storage, that may actually be important to subsistence. We are limited in what we can do, but it is a distinct possibility that some of these road designations can be changed if there is a site-specific reason to do so.

Don – Can we get data from individual communities and/or tribes and use this database in the determination of criteria? Also, is it possible to expand the hunting season (earlier) for retirees and those suffering from disabilities? Jay responded that this is most likely a **Board of Game Issue** and not a Forest Service subsistence management action.

Several suggestions followed that were most likely under the authority of the Board of Game and not the USFS

Michael – Is it possible to have seasonal road openings? Is it possible to get gated roads opened for the 2 weeks of subsistence-only hunting season?

Brandy – Is it possible to put a limit on the size of the deer taken for outsiders? Maybe a question of quality vs. quantity in reference to the number of deer tags distributed? Another **Board of Game Issue**

Jay – The ATM attempts to address the effect of concentrated access on the available resources. In reference to the island as a whole; the effect is small. However when looked at from the community level there is a big difference.

Many comments reflect an interest in managing access specifically for subsistence users, by either

Permitting Access on Stored (closed) Roads, or

Experimenting with Gated Closures

Frank and Angela – Washington and N. Idaho have “disability closures” in regards to hunting access that are implemented with the help of a partner organization.

Jay – How many gates do we want to see? I am personally not a fan of installing gates on National Forest and therefore public-owned land, especially because once installed it is extremely hard to make a satisfactory case for removing them. So essentially using gated road closures to mitigate competition comes with two distinct problems. (1) we all lose access for most of the year, and (2) because the road is gated we can call the road “closed”, however this means no maintenance for the road and can cause major problems in the future (because in order to keep seasonal access, the unmaintained road structures would have to stay in place).

Gated Closures present an opportunity to mitigate competition issues – Honker and Cutthroat Roads may be a place to experiment with seasonal openers on gated roads

Richard then spoke up as a fan of subsistence-only hunting roads, with access granted through permits.

Keith spoke up as a supporter for a longer season for retirees and folks with special needs as an alternative for gated road closures. Another **Board of Game Issue**

Jay – I acknowledge that subsistence, particularly hunting, is mostly a matter of competition and access, however, the FS cannot address anything to do with season length, tag limits, etc. Instead, the agency could permit specific users access to “stored” roads on a case-by-case basis. I will explore options in regards to special permits for subsistence and firewood access on stored roads, and my decision will be heavily influenced by the ATM as well as community input. My decision would also be heavily influenced by the cost to the agency of a permitting program.

Another possible solution is OHV-only access, rather than the usual high-clearance vehicle access. The Stewardship Contracts we have been discussing could possibly generate funds to store more roads as OHV accessible.

As for timber management in regards to subsistence, the intent is to use all available techniques to maximize yield (thinning, pruning, gaps, etc).

As for berry picking, the ATM does address this resource, but to a smaller degree than deer hunting.

Seasonal Closures were also suggested as a form of access / subsistence management

Richard – I can currently, as a contractor, get a permit to access a gated road to retrieve rock. Can I get a permit for berry picking?

Jay – I would need to be convinced that the closed road is NEEDED for retrieval of that specific resource. However, due to the time-consuming and problematic nature of determining “why here, why now, etc” there would likely be a limited amount of permits issued each year.

Brandy – Speaking for all island communities I would like to say that the overwhelming response to roads being gated and/or closed is going to be a resounding NO!

AnneMarie – Are gated closures a better idea than gated openers? Meaning close the gates only for the non-subsistence deer-hunting season?

More ideas for service projects:

- **N. Thorne Falls trail/recreation area – concerns that trail improvements here may result in over-use of a subsistence resource**
- **Access to water, meaning more boat launches, specifically Ratz Harbor is also important to subsistence users.**
- **More access to free-use; firewood, timber, rock, tree-bark, etc. is all relevant to subsistence management**

Stormy– Is it possible to alert bark gatherers about timber soon to be sold to reduce damage to future timber trees?

Clarence – Bark needs to be on the trees in order for the mill to sell them.

Preview of Big Thorne Timber Sale Alternative Maps: For the purpose of displaying the geographic relationship of units in the various alternatives, to generate potential input for logical future Stewardship Contract packages

- Proposed Actions will be out for public comment this fall.
- This collaboration group is getting a preview of the alternatives maps in order to determine how these alternatives will affect what we have been discussing. Most of the timber will be sold in a large contract, the remaining will be sold in small-sales. All sales will be considered for stewardship contracts.
- Alternatives:
 1. No Action (no map)
 2. Proposed Action
 3. In response to public comments that suggested there was not enough timber in the Proposed Action - includes changing Old Growth Reserve (OGR) boundaries in response to the reinstated Roadless Rule. This alternative also includes Commercial Thinning in Young Growth as a portion of the alternative. Commercial thinning will likely be completed near the end of the 10-year contract period.
 4. Wildlife Alternative to improve forage and change prescriptions, less road-building, and includes a lot of basal area partial harvest in old growth units. This alternative also includes the interagency OGR recommendations along with some changes to the OGR's.
 5. Watershed Alternative, contains the least amount of road-building and reduces the prescriptions for clear cutting to reduce watershed affects.
- The objective of a 10-year Timber Sale from this area, presently targets a Stewardship Contracting (SC) as a tool. The question is what services do we want to be a part of this SC? Potential bidders should be weighing in on what they are capable of and how much they are willing to pay for it.
- Richard – Is there an opportunity to do a pre-PreCommercial Thinning in order to get saleable poles out of the Precommercial Thinning (PCT)?
- Jay - PCT is only effective at a certain base age, before that it is ineffective. Clearcutting (CC) is not allowed until the stand reaches Culmination of Mean Annual Increment (CMAI), CT increases the time it takes to reach CMAI. It all boils down to the fact that PCT followed by CC at stand CMAI yields the highest fiber volume in the shortest amount of time. At this time the economics for Young-growth (YG) timber harvesting are not good, but we are constantly testing and experimenting with ways to improve them; and new markets, including overseas markets are emerging.

Questions for local businesses/ citizens:

- What scale of service contract would you be bidding on and what services would/could you provide?
- What size timber sale would you like and what services, if any, would/could you provide?

- What criteria would you like to implement for BVC?

Bill – How often is stumpage paid more than base rates?

Jay - Not often in more recent sales or at least not to a high percent over base rates

Frank – Specific to the condition of contemporary timber sales on the Tongass, the wood quality is marginal, access is a challenge, and the economy is such that a potential SC will likely be of low value.

Jay – This is why priority is so important; money is short meaning we need to determine what services are most valuable to the citizens of this island.

Bill – Is the Stewardship Contract process even worth our time and effort if the money will very likely not even be there?

Jay – Yes, because the decisions reached through this collaboration are a good tool, and any money at all raised through the Stewardship Contract will come back to the island, and any money for the island is good money. Also, there is considerable pressure from internal sources to use this tool.

Bill – Can the Timber Sale Contract provisions for the 10-year sale require the purchaser to use BVC to do the work they would normally hire out?

Jay – This is where the collaboration and the BVC, both available under the Stewardship Contract, will benefit the local economy. To answer your question, Bill, this depends on the ability of big contractors to play ball, and they haven't so far. If they refuse to bid on the sale then we must go back to the drawing board and start over.

Clarence – Small sales make more money, comparatively, than big sales, however the capacity is much smaller as well.

Jay – In addition to the Unit Pool, the bidder will also be bidding on a subset of service work they will have to complete as part of their contract. We need to determine BVC criteria to put before the CO for consideration.

Richard – Will bidders come for a Stewardship Contract that includes BVC qualifiers?

Jay - Won't know till we try

Jay – Small Sales are more generally suited to the local milling industry, and although they carry their own unique challenges - I am still convinced that they are a good option for stewardship contracting.

John Inman and Sherman Mayle are the current CO's for Stewardships Contract. We will be trying to meet with them in August to attempt to nail down some reasonable criteria for BVCs.

Bill – Where does the authority lie to accept/disregard the BVC criteria? What is the chain-of-command regarding this process?

Jay – As far as I know the authority lies with the CO exclusively. However, there are of course superiors to the CO who may likely have a say.

Richard – Is there a possibility of trading logs for service work, in which case I can then sell these logs to a local mill owner for my paycheck.

Jay – Yes, as part of a stewardship contract, this is possible.

Frank – The priorities determined through this collaboration are useful to us as an agency regardless of whether this stewardship contract is successful or not. These priorities can better help us make decisions that affect the local businesses, communities, and individuals who reside on this island.

- ❖ Next Meeting - TENTATIVE -August 18th at 5:30pm with invites to John Inman and Sherman Mayle, USFS CO's
 - Discussion of Best Value Criteria and stewardship project packaging