



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Alaska Region
Tongass National Forest
Sitka Ranger District

204 Siginaka Way
Sitka, AK 99835
Phone: (907) 747-6671
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File Code: 2320-1

Date: January 8, 2009

mailing list
123 any street
Sitka, AK 99835

Dear (see mailing list):

The Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, Sitka Ranger District, is currently conducting an analysis for removal of two decommissioned cabins in the South Baranof Wilderness. The purpose of this letter is to inform you about the project and to request your comments on the proposed removal as part of the scoping phase of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation process.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to remove these deteriorated structures from the wilderness. These structures were formerly managed by the Forest Service as public recreation cabins. Both are in a state of advanced disrepair and collapse. Both cabins consist of wooden components as well as non-biodegradable materials such as corrugated metal roofing. Both structures present significant health and safety hazards to visitors. Removal of the deteriorated structures will improve the undeveloped quality of wilderness character by returning the land back to a natural state.

Options for maintaining cabins at these two locations have been addressed. The Tongass National Forest strategy is to maintain cabins in locations of high interest and with a predicted average use. All cabins are under the recreation fee program and dollars collected from cabin fees are used to maintain cabins. These two locations are not in high demand areas; therefore, replacing these cabins is not being considered.

Location

One cabin is located on the southeastern end of Rezanof Lake, near the lake outlet. The other is located on the north shore of Maksoutof Lake (referred to on some USGS topographic maps as 'Lonieof Lake') below a stream inlet from a small unnamed lake. Both sites are identified as "Ruins" on USGS topographic maps.

Proposed Removal Method

Teams of two-three people on each site would camp and remove the structures over the course of three-four days at each location.



Camps would adhere to minimum-impact guidelines, consisting of two-person tents, plastic tarps for a separate covered cooking area and portable camp stoves for food preparation. Sanitation would adhere to standard Leave No Trace guidelines. Structure dismantling would be conducted with non-motorized equipment including sledge hammers, pry bars, crosscut saws and other hand tools. Burnable materials would be burnt in on-site fire pits. Non-burnable materials would be flown by floatplane. Both sites would be naturalized as part of a final cleanup prior to departure.

Timeframes for removal of these structures would be during the summer when the lakes are thawed and float-plane access is possible. This action is proposed to take place in the summer of 2009 or 2010.

We encourage you to comment on this request and identify issues which may be of concern to you. Please try to be specific when identifying a concern. Comments are welcome at any time; however, to be most useful, comments should be received by March 8, 2009. Please send comments to Mary Emerick, Wilderness Manager, Sitka Ranger District, Tongass National Forest, 204 Siginaka Way, Sitka, AK. 99835. Also, we welcome your phone calls. The number is 747-4219. Oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official's office during normal business hours via telephone or in person, or at an official agency function (i.e. public meeting) that is designed to elicit public comments. Those wishing to provide oral comments should contact the Responsible Official or their representative to schedule their presentation.

Hand delivered written comments will be accepted at the Sitka Ranger District Office during normal business hours Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Electronic submittals will be accepted. Electronic comments shall be in a format that is compatible with the current version of MS Word. The address is comments-alaska-tongass-sitka@fs.fed.us. The subject heading of electronic messages should contain the title of this environmental analysis (Removal of Decommissioned Cabins in the South Baranof Wilderness).

Sincerely,

/s/ Carol A. Goularte
CAROL A. GOULARTE
District Ranger