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Comments:

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 10

1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 155

Seattle, WA 98101-3140

June 18, 2018

Delilah Brigham

Thorne Bay Ranger Districts

Tongass National Forest

1312 Federal Way

Thorne Bay, Alaska 99919

Dear Ms. Brigham:

OFFICE OF

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

AND ASSESSMENT

The EPA has reviewed the U.S. Forest Service's draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Prince of Wales Landscape Level Analysis Project (EPA Region 10 Project Number 16-0066-AFS/CEQ Number 20180079) pursuant to Section 309 of the Clean Air Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

The DEIS analyzes various projects at the landscape level within the Thorne Bay and Craig Ranger Districts for the benefit of multiple resources. The purposes of the analysis are to improve forest ecosystem health, support community resiliency and provide economic development. Possible projects may include, but are not limited to, timber stand improvement activities and timber harvests; transportation management activities; instream

restoration work and riparian thinning; improvement of fish passage and water quality; improvement of fish and wildlife habitat; and development and improvement of recreation infrastructure.

We understand these projects will be implemented over a 15-year timeframe and support the proposed landscape-level approach. We agree with the Forest Service's goal to work with the local forest collaborative team and ensure that a wide-range of stakeholders and user groups are involved in providing input to project specific activities. Overall, we find the DEIS to be a comprehensive document and appreciate the inclusion of the Activity Cards (Appendix A) and Implementation Plan (Appendix B). This level of detail provides an understanding of the breadth of activities to promote ecosystem health and the associated applicable guidelines (e.g., riparian thinning and buffer widths). In addition, the implementation process described clearly links the EIS to project specific work. We also commend the Forest Service for engaging youth and soliciting input regarding the aspects of the Tongass National Forest that they find important.

Based on our review, we are rating the DEIS as Lack of Objections (LO). An explanation of the EPA rating system is enclosed. Thank you for this opportunity to comment. If you have any questions, please contact Lynne Hood of my staff at 208-378-5757 or by email at hood.lynn@epa.gov, or you may contact me at 206-553-1841 or nogi.jill@epa.gov.

Enclosure:

Sincerely,

Jill A. Nogi, Manager

Environmental Review and Sediment Management Unit

1. US Environmental Protection Agency Rating System for Draft Environmental Impact Statements

LO-Lack of Objections

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Rating System for

Draft Environmental Impact Statements

Definitions and Follow-Up Action*

Environmental Impact of the Action

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application

of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

EC - Environmental Concerns

EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce these impacts. [middot]

EO-Environmental Objections

EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the [middot]environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred

alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no-action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. [middot]

EU - Environmentally Unsatisfactory

EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potential unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS

stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

Adequacy of the Impact Statement

Category 1 - Adequate

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis of data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

Category 2 - Insufficient Information

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available

alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses or discussion should be

included in the final EIS.

Category 3 - Inadequate

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the

action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of

alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of

such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the [draft EIS is

adequate for the purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act and or Section 309 review, and thus should be

formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the

potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

[bull] From EPA Manual I 640 Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment.

February, 1987.