



November 2009 Project Update

The Ocean Boulevard Project was reverted back to a standard Service Contract. The implications are that the benefits of Stewardship Contracting will no longer apply - local preference contracting, community collaboration, long-term contracts, planning for multiple values and benefits, and larger scale planning. SCS and the Forest Service are continuing to work together to identify projects and build capacity for future stewardship contracting.

OCEAN BOULEVARD STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

SUMMARY

Recent developments in Forest Service contracting has created a unique and unprecedented opportunity for the Sitka Ranger District and the Sitka Conservation Society to embark on a Community Collaborative Stewardship Project in the Sitka Community Use Area. As the Tongass National Forest transitions from a focus on old growth logging to a focus on restoration and young growth management, this project represents an opportunity to help define how future forest management in Southeast Alaska can be responsive to community priorities, and ensures the ecological and social resiliency of our communities and environment.

Ocean Boulevard Stewardship Project

This component of the False Island IRMP applies federal stimulus funds to conduct thinning operations in up to 506 acres of timber stands logged between 1967 and 1976. Restoration of wildlife habitat is the primary objective. Removal and utilization of the byproducts of thinning is a secondary objective. The goal is to start work in Summer 2010.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Over the past 1.5 years, the Sitka Conservation Society (SCS) and the Sitka Ranger District have successfully collaborated on the False Island Integrated Resource Management Project (IRMP). This collaboration has included joint participation in field surveys, reporting, GIS analysis, sharing of knowledge and resources, community outreach and public education, and providing a link with contracting specialists from other regions.

THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS - WHAT'S HAPPENED TO DATE

2008: SCS and the Sitka Ranger District conduct field site visits.

February 2009: SCS convenes a Stewardship Meeting with representatives from diverse community interests and community forestry experts from the other regions. Participants outline their values of and benefits derived from the Tongass National Forest. This is the first step in the development of a Collaborative Stewardship Group.

March 2009: SCS and the Sitka Ranger District conduct a 2-day site visit with community stakeholders of a portion of the IRMP project area. We discuss potential restoration needs, techniques, and uses of restoration by-products.

Collaborative group during a site visit in March 2009



Summer 2009: Additional site visits.

September 2009: SCS and the Sitka Ranger District meet with a stewardship contracting and community forestry expert to discuss the opportunities and challenges of stewardship contracting. We agree to engage in a collaborative stewardship process for the Ocean Boulevard Project. Now the work really begins!

THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS - KEY NEXT STEPS AND STEWARDSHIP MEETINGS

October 2009: SCS will convene a meeting of community stakeholders to discuss project development and identify key concerns and hopes for the project. Findings from this meeting will inform NEPA scoping. We will also identify a core Collaborative Stewardship Group

that will be involved through project completion.

November 2009 through March 2010:

- Development of stand treatment prescriptions. This process includes gaining insights from other agencies, researchers, and contractors.
- Development of criteria for “best-value” stewardship contracting. “Best-value” criteria can include standards for restoration work and ensuring local benefits of the project, such as jobs and byproduct utilization.
- Training to familiarize potential contractors with USFS Stewardship Contracts.
- Development of an implementation and effectiveness monitoring program. This component includes identifying partner agencies and organizations to conduct long-term monitoring and educational outreach.

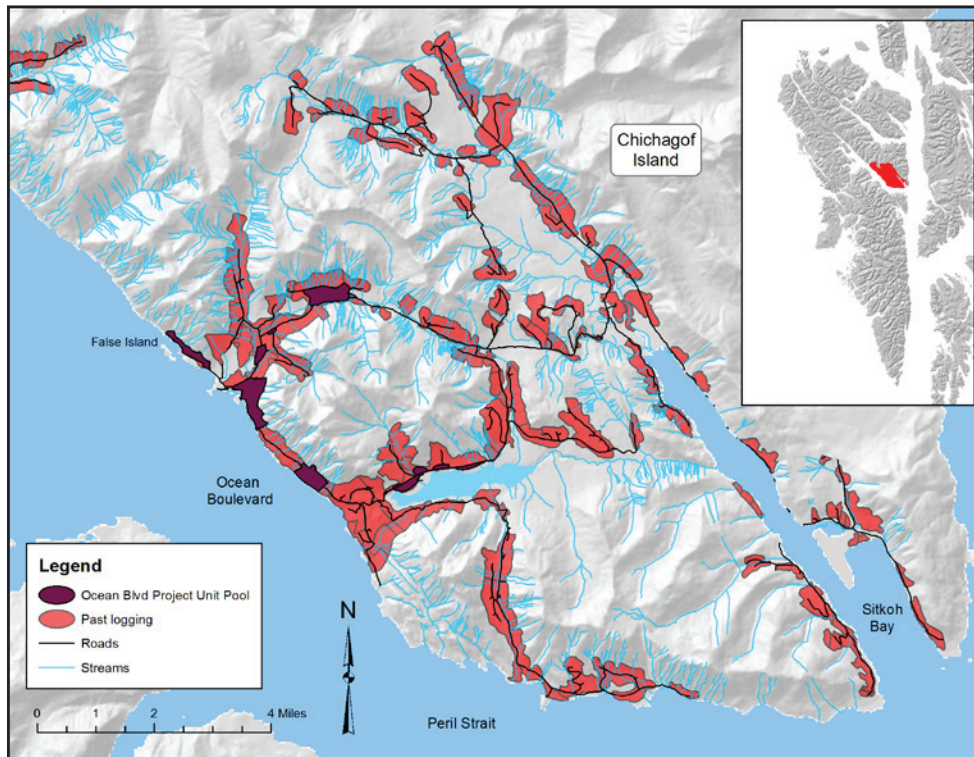


Young growth forest in the Ocean Boulevard unit pool

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT, CAPACITY BUILDING, AND EDUCATION

The development of a robust program to monitor and analyze the effectiveness of restoration treatments, contracting, operations, and wood utilization is a critical component to this project. The Tongass is just beginning to embark on mechanized thinning, restoration in older young growth stands, and the utilization of young growth forest products. Each project has the opportunity to build upon lessons learned to increase cost efficiency and improve our ability to restore wildlife habitat.

The False Island Project Area and Ocean Boulevard Unit Pool



The Collaborative Stewardship process will increase both community and agency capacity to collectively engage in these management activities.

Stewardship is an ethic that embodies the cooperative planning and management of our natural resources to ensure long-term sustainability. Education, outreach, and a commitment to learning through adaptive management will ensure that future forest management on the Tongass will help build vibrant communities and a healthy environment.

CONTACT

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