

**Threats to Private Forests Workshop Draft Agenda  
Interior Alaska  
April 7-8, 2009**

**BLM/GSA Building  
6881 Abbott Loop Road, Anchorage, AK 99507**

**Objectives:**

- Engage and empower stakeholders throughout the west to raise visibility on threats to western private forests
- Develop a detailed outline of the threats in Interior Alaska
- Review major past efforts to describe threats
- Articulate potential solutions to the threats to be passed on to final report drafting committee

**Tuesday, April 7**

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**11:00 a.m.                    Opening comments**

**11:10 a.m.                    Agenda review**

**11:20 a.m.                    Introductions**

**11:35 a.m.                    The Western Threats Assessment Process**

A brief explanation of the context for the workshop, how the workshops are organized and the expected final outcome. Review of threats that describe the challenges for Interior Alaska.

Description of the process and how we arrived at the themes to be discussed for the day. There is also the potential adding of other threats to the list.

**12:00 p.m.                    Briefings on Threats**

Workshop organizers will brief each of the four threats/issues identified as challenges for Interior Alaska by reviewing studies to understand the impacts of the threats on forests in Interior Alaska. These threats are:

- Climate change and invasive species
- Insects & disease
- Continuing sale of in-holdings

Question and answer will be included as part of the briefing.

**12:50 p.m.                    Break**

**1:00 p.m.                    Discussion**

The group will be asked to discuss the threats and to work to discuss the underlying causes and impacts of the threats to private forestry. How are these threats changing the economic and social parameters of private forestry? Some potential questions include:

- Is the threat a symptom of a larger threat or a cause of other symptoms or both?
- What is the nature of the threat? What is the definition?
- Is it different in different locations?
- How is this impacting private forests?

**3:15 p.m.                    Break**

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- 3:30 p.m.**                    **Discussion**  
How are the threats related to each other?  
What are additional threats and how are they related to the discussion?
- 5:00 p.m.**                    **Review of outline** of threats and discussion of how they should be bound together/ organized.
- 5:30 p.m.**                    **Adjourn, Day 1**
- 7:00 p.m.*                    *Dinner out?*

**Wednesday, April 8**

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- 8:00 a.m.**                    **Discussion of Day 1**  
Any additions or changes from the previous day.
- 8:30 a.m.**                    **Review of outline:** Is this the way it should look? What changes are necessary?
- 9:15 a.m.**                    **Solutions: Given the outline of threats, how can solutions be applied?** Solutions that were mentioned during discussion will be reviewed and new ideas will be invited.
- How can we overcome barriers to achieving productive private forests in Interior Alaska?
- 11:30 a.m**                    **Next steps, comments on workshop**
- Noon**                            **Adjourn**

Threats to Western Private Forests

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\*Attended first day only.

**Western Forestry Leadership Coalition  
Threats to Western Private Forests  
Anchorage Alaska Workshop Summary**  
Anchorage April 7-8, 2009

**In Attendance:**

Carol Lewis	Jeff Graham√	John Yarie√
Marty Freeman	Matt Anderson√	Mike Fastabend
Mitch Michaud	Roger Burnside√	Steve Patterson√
Gary Lee√	Sue Rodman	Valerie Connor√
Will Putman√	Dana Coelho√	Jamie Barbour√
Will Singleton√ - <i>Facilitator</i>		√ = <i>Attended both days</i>

**Workshop Objectives:**

- Develop a detailed outline of the barriers to forestry on Alaska's private lands
- Articulate potential solutions to the threats to be barriers on to the drafting committee
- Provide guidance to the drafting committee for the Alaska section of the report

**Action Items / Next Steps:**

- WFLC will post the finalized summary on a private website for participants' reference
- Flip chart photos will also be posted on the Web
- Once the summary is finalized, invitees who did not attend will be asked to add their perspectives that will be an appendix to the summary

**Process Summary:**

The Western Forestry Leadership Coalition is conducting five workshops throughout the western United States to identify threats to maintaining private forests as working lands. This workshop was the third of the five. Its focus was on the Alaska, specifically, Regions II & III – the areas that do not include the moist coastal forests of SE Alaska. SE Alaska will be included in the Pacific NW Workshop on April 29-30. The workshop was organized to ask participants to delve into the issues in depth. The results of the workshop are going to be incorporated into a report to be approved and published by the WFLC board. The major steps of this process are:

- Workshops held in five regions throughout the West
- A drafting group is assembled to draft a report
  - The report will summarize the results of the workshops but will also synthesize the themes of the workshops to produce a unified report that reflects the entire region
- The draft report will be reviewed by the WFLC board, changes may be suggested/requested
- A finalized report will be produced by the drafting committee
- WFLC expects to print a final report by the early fall of 2009
- Workshop participants will be asked to review the report and ensure factual accuracy as well as determine their willingness to have their names associated with the report as "Workshop Participants"
- Drafting committee members will be asked if they want to sign on to the report
- The report will be published by WFLC, printed, posted on the Web and distributed to key policy makers

The report will be used to inform policy makers at the local, state and federal levels about the challenges that private forests face in the West, to establish a policy context for approaches to address the challenges, and to make appropriate recommendations to address the barriers to maintaining private working forests in the western states.

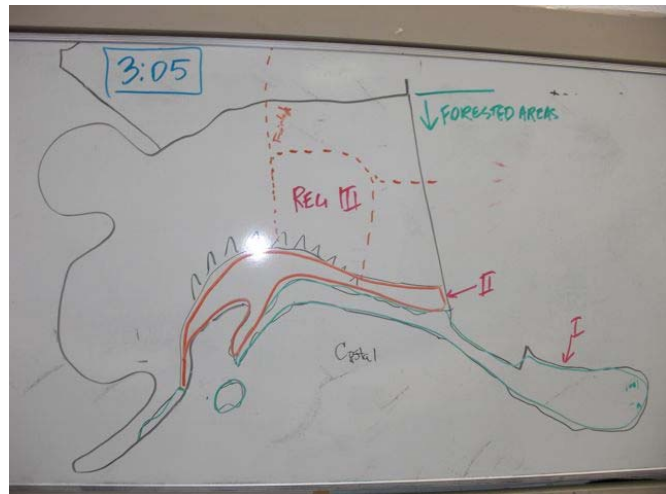
A general **timeline** follows (Note: dates are approximate):

April	Regional Workshops are conducted
May	WFLC forms a drafting committee
June – Aug	Drafting committee develops its report
Aug 15	Draft shared with workshop participants – comments are solicited
Sept.	Drafting committee sends its report to the WFLC Board
Sept. 15	Drafting committee considers comments and finalizes reports Workshop participants are asked to sign on to report

## **Workshop Results:**

### **A. Summary of Actions**

Workshop participants engaged in a day and a half of discussions centering on conditions in Regions II & III of Alaska. After an initial review of themes that were developed through interviews with WFLC members, the participants discussed the unique aspects of conditions in Alaska and determined that it was crucial to draw distinctions between Regions II and III. A rough map was drawn to distinguish the two areas. In the photo below, Region II is delineated with an orange outline (and includes the Kenai Peninsula) and Region III is north of Region II with Fairbanks at its center. The participants started with a description of the special conditions that exist in each region. Region III is typified with some of the issues related to remote native villages. Region II is experiencing some of the issues related to multiple use and development. Both regions are being impacted by climate change.



### Issues specific to Region III

- The region of the state most susceptible to fire
- Limited access except through rivers, a few roads and rail. New roads open up new opportunities
- Lack basic data/information/mapping on landscape level conditions. This makes projections difficult. It is hard to assess risks and to know what forestry practices are renewable/sustainable. This means that there is little understanding of what is sustainable.
- This lack of understanding means that the natural systems are poorly understood – little ability to understand climate impacts.
- The simplicity (relatively few species of trees) makes it vulnerable to disease and climate change.
- Insufficient regeneration after fires
- Limited access to markets
- Little milling infrastructure
- Local use of timber and forest products only
- Small communities with limited cash economies
- Underdevelopment of many areas
- There is a housing shortage but local lumber is not used because there is no grading standard in Alaska. Federal funds requires the use of graded lumber [Will Putnam writes: “It

*turns out that the largest mill in Fairbanks, although still a modest sized operation (~3MMBF/year), does grade their output product.”]*

- Subsistence use of forest resources
- Desire for development opportunities means that decisions can be opportunity driven

### Issues specific to Region II

- Tax structure for the 1% of land occupied by individual landowners. There is often a borough tax on working lands
- The forestry resource is less valuable / acre
- Greater urban interface bringing conflict over forest management as well as some issues associated with forest conversion
- Increased land costs has meant competition for forestry from other uses (subdivision, recreation, tourism)
- Tourism has changed the social license for forestry. Wildlife and views have become more important. This has also changed because of the increase in small landowners and their values that also include fire danger and tree survival.
- More ANCSA lands being sold off for conversion
- Conflict over land use – recreation
- Timber comes from clearing – not sustained forestry practices. There is s an exploitive perspective that comes from ready access to what seems like an endless resource
- Small/little milling infrastructure
- Everything harvested after 1997 was exempted from reforestation practices
- Beetle in N. Kenai
- Grass precludes regeneration. After forest clearing grass invades and prevents new trees from regenerating. It can be 40 years before seedlings “retop”
- Fire regime in transition. The grass is more prevalent because the natural fire regime has changed. When fuel is removed, grass becomes more dominant. Climate has also had an impact on the fire regime. People are also changing the fire regime with their increased forest conversion

The discussion was framed around three central organizing categories: **Ecological, Economic, and Social**. This framework was used to organize participant described threats and solutions to private forests in the Alaska. It was repeatedly raised that Alaska has a different set of conditions as opposed to the rest of the country related to the state’s enormous scale, the ownership of private lands (99% owned by native corporations) and the economic conditions in interior Alaska. The summary below reflects the aspects of these special conditions. Importantly, some of the barriers to utilizing private forests were deemed to be immutable. Others can be addressed through policy change.

The participants were asked to draw a Venn diagram reflecting the threats in the geographic area in which they work (i.e. Kenai Peninsula, or Alaska). They were asked to draw the diagram to reflect which of the three groupings were the most important (Ecological, Economic, or Social) and they were asked to identify their three priority threats. The **Venn diagrams** showed that policy/economics is that largest overall concern. Barriers that were identified repeatedly are signified with a 4. These diagrams were scanned and are going to be used to inform the drafting committee on the variability in the region.

**Recommendations** were discussed on day two and are attached at the end of this summary. They focused on the three major actionable barriers identified by the group: addressing energy needs of native villages, data, and climate change.

Finally, as a result of the discussions, an **outline** was suggested that might be a format for the Alaska “chapter” of the eventual region-wide report. Participants stressed the importance of establishing the right context: that Alaska would not fit easily into a report that describes conditions in the western lower 48 states.

A description of threats, solutions and a proposed outline follow. The last item is a list of reports, examples and initiatives that can be used to inform the writing of the report.

## **B. Discussion of Threats/Barriers:**

### **Social:**

- Lack of entrepreneurial mindset
- Clash of traditional mindset with economic values
- Lack of forestry ethic in Alaska, not “growers”
- Individual vs. common/joint ownership
- People want access to timber lands without permits & fees
- People in AK (and the US as a whole) have a “preservation voyeurism” they want to know that unspoiled wilderness is there – even if they don’t live near it or use it
- Societal values means that moose and fish are more important than trees. Society wants to maintain a “pristine” landscape. Trees can tend to be a backdrop – an undervalued asset
- On the Kenai – there is little history of managing forests for multiple generations – trees are a backdrop
- On native corporation lands, there is a lack of consensus on how to manage parcels
- There is a generational disconnect that pulls young talented people away from traditional villages. There is a rural flight to the cities but also a culture of preservation for villages that are no longer economically sustainable. The villages are still “home” for people who have lived in the cities

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### **Policy/Economic:**

- Access
- High cost of replanting is uneconomic, even with cost sharing
- Costs of forest management are economically prohibitive
- A lack of markets for timber is compounded by high costs of operations (remote, slow regeneration rate) – this leads to limited opportunities for any forest products 4
- Land abutting public land is taking on additional economic value because people want the solitude, wildlife and just want to have a piece of unspoiled nature
- Land disposals are based on highest monetary value. Other important assets of the land are not included in the calculation
- Lack of processing infrastructure. There is not enough milling capacity to meet the demand of the normal lumber markets in the state. 44
- Lack of transportation options for timber 4
- AK produced lumber does not have grading standards [*This bullet is disputed by another workshop participant*]; therefore it is unusable in some/many construction projects. It is actually cheaper to import lumber from Oregon
- There is less funding available for rural land owners to utilize their lands because of a decline in cost-share funds
- For native corporation lands, revenue sharing drives incentives down

- On allotted native lands, parcels in Region III are scattered (2700) with each parcel potentially owned by a number of individuals making cohesive management as an economic enterprise difficult
- Because of huge distances and lack of funding, sufficient technical assistance by the state forestry office is not possible
- Lack of data- On the Kenai Peninsula (as with other parts of AK) there is no good GIS-based data that could be used to make decisions on what to plant and how to manage forests
- Lack of information about the basic characteristics of the land – Google Earth ends up being the information source 44
- Past policies and practices have bred vulnerabilities
- Native corporations and tribes have a development orientation. They are looking for the ways to bring basic development to their villages. This drives their actions and can sometimes seem like it is grabbing at all opportunities that come along
- State policy is driven by oil and gas to the detriment of other resources

### **Biophysical/Natural**

- Fragility of ecosystem to climate change
- Increase in fire risk with climate change
- There is a lack of scientific consensus on what constitutes good forest practices<sup>44</sup>
- Regeneration is very slow <sup>44</sup>
- Climate change will alter the forest environment and tree mortality
- Grass precludes regeneration. After forest clearing grass invades and prevents new trees from regenerating in some areas. It can be 40 years before seedlings “retop”.
- Fire regime in transition. The grass is more prevalent because the natural fire regime has changed. When fuel is removed, grass becomes more dominant. Climate has also had an impact on the fire regime. People are also changing the fire regime with their increased forest conversion.

**C. Discussion of Recommendations:** On day two, participants discussed potential solutions to the issues that are faced in Regions II and III. Participants discussed that some barriers are simply conditions that exist as opposed to barriers that can be addressed through policy change and human effort. As a result, the workshop participants focused on recommendations for three broad categories: promoting forests as an energy source; improving data and management; and understanding / adapting to climate change. The main points follow.

### **Promote Forests as a Sustainable, Renewable Energy Source**

- It is possible to go to space heating first and then transition to electrical production. Wood pellets can be cleaner than other thermal wood uses. EPA is developing air quality standards for pellet use
- There are hot/clean burning technologies that use water as a heat storage system
- Use stick fed system or chips
- Refine and augment stewardship plans to include energy. Determine what the nearby resources will support (how many tons of chips / year are needed and what are the costs to get them from specifically identified locations); this entails land use planning that will include transportation costs. Provide funding for transportation equipment.
- State and Federal Government should provide funding for stewardship plans to be done by the Alaska Division of Forestry which would include a forest inventory
  - The Division has already done 70 feasibility studies on wood fuel technologies

- Reorient oil subsidy to villages and refine the funding to promote more efficient energy/wood use
- Power cost equalization – Currently diesel is shipped in to run generators at a highly subsidized rate. With the potential phase out of the subsidy associated with investments in biofuels and biomass energy, sustainable use of forest resources can be integrated.
- Engage the Alaska Energy Authority to assist with engineering for the facility. The Authority has \$250 million for renewable energy. *[Will Putnum writes: My understanding is that the State legislature specified \$50 million/year for 5 years for the State's renewable energy fund in 2008. The FY2008 amount was bumped up to \$100 in a special session, and the FY2010 amount has been reduced to \$25 million during the 2009 Legislative session, so the actual amount to be appropriated over the 5 year period is a bit of a moving target.]*
- Address relationships with utilities

#### **Data Needs**

- Risk map – 2012
- Obtain higher resolution to attribution to assist in broader decision-making including for native corporations to do stewardship plans
- Forest Inventory Analysis funding could be focused on interior
- Process imagery into a system that makes sense across landscape. Landsat is not enough. The imagery needs regional updates
- Imagery should be broad scale across the entire interior and fine scale around native villages
- Parcel level land status GIS layer is needed across the state

#### **Climate Change**

- Orient programs towards early detection/rapid response. Early detection of pests and determine if and how something should be done
- Facilitated migration of trees to address mortality
- Better understand forest composition to identify threatened areas

#### **D. Proposed Outline**

Workshop participants agreed to a proposed outline for their section that would establish the context for the region, discuss barriers/threats/vulnerabilities, and ways to address underlying causes of problems. The discussed outline follows:

##### I. Introduction:

The introduction should give the reader a sense of the scale and differences of Alaska relative to the rest of the West. The context should be given to the reader. Some of the challenges presented in Alaska are immutable and cannot be changed or addressed by human actions or policies. These should not be the focus of the report. Instead, the report should focus on the barriers that can be overcome. Immutable challenges should be included as factors in describing the conditions of the landscape.

##### Context:

Land and land ownership: Scale is different in AK. The same words as applied to AK's landscape means very different things from their meaning in the lower 48. There are 129 M ac of boreal forests in Alaska. In holdings in these forests present regulatory challenges because of the patchwork nature in an undeveloped landscape. The slow regeneration speeds of AK's forests present challenges.

### Ownership:

ANCSA lands are the corporation lands defined and established by the settlement act of 1971, and exist as regional and village corporation holdings. Allotments are parcels of land, up to 160 acres, applied for and “owned” by individuals, managed as trust lands by the federal government, and authorized by congressional legislation in 1906. Trust lands account for 2 million acres; native allotments account for 99% of private lands and are held by Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act corporations. This is roughly 44 million acres. The other 1% is individual owners. These ANCSA lands tend to be scattered along rivers.

Forests play a unique role in community subsistence. The AK Native Claims Settlement Act and other legislation bring uncertainty of how statewide forests should be managed. It was oriented towards maintaining a traditional way of life. This complicates the investment environment. Traditional villages are often without basic services and opportunities – these are lesser-developed communities. Forests are used for subsistence and energy. The lack of development presents additional economic barriers to removing trees to create forest products. Additionally there are little commercial markets for wood products.

Natural conditions: Because the scale is so large, there is little understanding of the full landscape. It is too large to impact through human forestry practices. Slow tree growth means that forestry has been more oriented towards extraction rather than management.

## **II. Threats/Barriers/Opportunities**

(Draw from the points summarized in the Barriers section of this summary)

The increase of attention to more sophisticated electricity generation technologies through biomass could bring opportunities to sustainably use the forestry resource as well as meet some of the basic development needs of village communities.

Alaska’s forests are important and have many important uses, these include:

- Subsistence
- Wildlife habitat
- Some forests have high economic value, others have importance that is difficult to value economically
- Carbon sequestration
- Biomass energy
- Wilderness – areas that remain undisturbed by man
- Some 3 – 4 million acres could potentially be accessible for timber

Barriers: There are barriers from realizing some of the important opportunities that exist. As appropriate, the barriers should be taken from previous sections (Venn Diagram and Issues for Regions II and III). Specific to encouraging the use of forests for biomass:

- Biofuels and Biomass energy would require massive investment.

## **III. Recommendations/Solutions**

(Draw from the recommendations section of this summary)

Focus on the actions that are doable. Emphasize the development needs of native communities and how they might utilize their resource in a sustainable way.

## **E. Resources:**

Participants were asked to give examples of reports, studies and papers that could be used by the drafting committee in describing conditions and options for private forestry in Alaska.

- Alaska Spatial Analysis Project - <http://www.fs.fed.us/na/sap/products/ak.shtml>
- Alaska's Forests in the 21st Century - In 2006, the Alaska Division of Forestry published a booklet of 7 maps on contemporary statewide forestry topics - <http://forestry.alaska.gov/posters.htm>
- Annual Condition Report - This USFS report reviews our current knowledge of forest health in Alaska. Its purpose is to help resource professionals, land managers, and other decision makers identify and monitor existing and potential forest health risks and hazards. [http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/spf/fhp/condrpt07/for\\_h\\_conditions\\_2007\\_web.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/spf/fhp/condrpt07/for_h_conditions_2007_web.pdf)
- Berg, E.E. and R.S. Anderson. 2006. Fire history of white and Lutz spruce forests on the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska, over the last two millennia as determined from soil charcoal. *Forest Ecology and Management*. 227. 275-283.
- Flint, C.G. 2006. Community perspectives on spruce beetle impacts on the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska. *Forest Ecology and Management*. 227. 207-218.
- Ross, D.W., G.E. Determan, J.L. Boughton, and T.M. Quigley. 2001. Forest health restoration in south-central Alaska: A problem analysis. US Forest Service. General Technical Report PNW-GTR-523. <http://academic.evergreen.edu/curricular/envstu01/SEAlaska.pdf>
- Strategic Plan for Forest Health in Alaska (2008-2012) - [http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/spf/fhp/pubs/R10\\_FHP\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_v1.1.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/spf/fhp/pubs/R10_FHP_Strategic_Plan_v1.1.pdf)
- Werner, R.A., E.H. Holsten, S.M. Matsuoka, and R.E. Burnside. 2006. Spruce beetles and forest ecosystems in south-central Alaska: A review of 30 years of research. *Forest Ecology and Management*. 227. 195-206.

## **F. Workshop Debrief**

Good:

- Discussion was open to input from all participants

Issues to be changed:

- Logistics regarding the location
- Invitation was not clear on the focus of the workshop
- Threats/barriers definition needs to be clearer
- Need more representation from native groups