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**Subject:** Background of the current heli-ski map

Hello Mayor Hill and members of the Working Group,

As Mayor Hill mentioned at our first meeting, one of the principles of "Interest-Based Negotiations" is that information sharing is critical for effective solutions. In that spirit, I would like to share some information about the public process that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) used in 2001-2002 to work with all stakeholders in the Haines community to develop a management plan for commercial heli-skiing in the borough. (see an excerpt below from Appendix K of the Haines State Forest Management Plan, Background, for more information about the history of local concerns about helicopter supported tours in the borough and the process DNR used in developing the Commercial Helicopter SUD) The resulting SUD and map were later used by the borough as the jumping-off point for managing commercial heli-ski tours in the Haines Borough.

Development of the state's Special Use Designation (SUD) involved several trips to Haines by DNR officials and staff to meet with Haines elected officials as well as various stakeholder groups. DNR sought input from land managers and biologists at DNR, ADF&G, and BLM. It also involved many, many public meetings by the former city and borough of Haines to arrive at recommendations that were then forwarded to DNR for their consideration while they developed the Special Use Designation. After DNR issued the SUD, there was an additional opportunity for the public to request DNR to reconsider parts of the SUD. After the reconsideration period, some changes were made and the final SUD was signed on November 15, 2002, by the Director of the Division of Mining, Land, and Water (Robert Loeffler) and the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources (Pat Pourchot).

As you know, this was a lengthy, through, and I'm sure expensive process for DNR to undertake. Although the SUD was never 'brought to life' by putting it into state regulations, the process involved a lot of input from the various stakeholders on the management of commercial heli-skiing in the Haines Borough.

It is for these reasons that I feel it would be a waste of time and resources for the borough to completely start over with another approach to the heli-ski map as Scott Sundberg has suggested. The scoping and internal process DNR used to develop the SUD resulted in a map that indicated areas where commercial heli-skiing is allowed along with flight corridors to get to the heli-ski areas. Scott Sundberg has suggested a map that indicates areas where commercial heli-skiing isn't allowed, a completely different approach than the public process Haines was a part of in 2001-2002. I believe discussions about changes to the borough's current heli-ski map would be a much more efficient use of the time and energy of the Working Group and the Borough Assembly.

Thank you for considering my thoughts and the following excerpts from the Haines State Forest Management Plan, 2002.

Carolyn Weishahn, Working Group member

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The entire Haines State Forest Management Plan is online at:

<http://forestry.alaska.gov/pdfs/haines/hsfpfinal.pdf>

# HAINES STATE FOREST

## MANAGEMENT PLAN

August 2002

[excerpt from Chapter 4, page 2].....

### **SPECIAL USE DESIGNATIONS**

Special Use Designations (SUD) establish specific requirements for uses of state lands that would otherwise be permitted under 11 AAC 96.20. Those uses of state land that require and do not require a permit or other form of authorization are specified in 11 AAC 96. It also provides, under 11 AAC 96.014, that DNR may, through the use of a Special Use Designation, establish special permit requirements and requirements for receipt of authorization. Special Use Designations are confined to specific geographic areas, and specify conditions or standards that must be satisfied by the affected use(s). Uses not typically requiring a permit are identified in 11 AAC 96.020.

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[excerpt from Appendix A, page 10, Glossary].....

**Special Use Designation:** A document prepared by the Department of Natural Resources that specifies uses of state land that are excluded as a Generally Allowed Use or are limited in their operation to some degree. Derived from 11 AAC 96.010(a), special use designations typically affect a specific geographic and is effective for a period of five years.

***Haines State Forest Plan ----- A - 10 ----- August 2002***

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The entire Special Use Land Designation is online at:

<http://forestry.alaska.gov/pdfs/haines/hspfappenk.pdf>

*APPENDIX K*

**STATE OF ALASKA**

**DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

**DIVISION OF MINING, LAND, AND WATER**

**SPECIAL USE LAND DESIGNATION**

**For COMMERCIAL HELICOPTER OPERATIONS**

**Within the**

**HAINES STATE FOREST**

**And SURROUNDING GENERAL STATE LAND**

**And as further described in the**

**HAINES STATE FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**And NORTHERN SOUTHEAST AREA PLAN**

**ADL 106939**

*[Excerpt from K-4 and K-5] .....*

**4. BACKGROUND**

**Commercial Helicopter Operations in the Haines Area.** The issue of the management of commercial helicopter operations in the Haines Area came up as early as 1996, when there was an advisory vote on whether to authorize summer helicopter tours. The local community voted to not allow such activity. Since then, a heli-skiing operation, based in Haines, has operated for the last several years, primarily out of an area at mile 33 of the Haines Highway.

The issue of commercial helicopter operations emerged fairly late in the planning process for the Haines State Forest Plan (Forest Plan) and was not included in that process/plan. The Forest Plan recognizes the need to develop a mechanism to manage such operations as a specific recommendation in Chapter 4, Implementation.

Since the fall of 2001, there have been extensive local efforts to develop recommendations that could be used by DNR in its creation of a Special Use Designation to manage commercial helicopter operations. The City of Haines used a local planning group (Tourism Planning Committee) to develop a series of recommendations, which were passed by the City Council (January, 2002) and forwarded to the Department. At about the same time, a Service Advisory Board was created in the Haines Borough to develop an approach to helicopter operation management for areas outside the City proper. This group recommended a series of suggestions to the Borough Assembly who, in turn, approved a list of recommendations that were then forwarded to DNR (August, 2002). The recommendations from each of these entities were considered in the preparation of this SUD.

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**Land Status.** There is a considerable amount of state land within the Haines State Forest and the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve, as well as general state land surrounding the State Forest in the northwest and southwest. In addition, extensive areas of federal land have been selected by the state but not yet conveyed. These lands comprise most of the federal lands within the Haines Borough. They are located in mountainous areas to the north of the State Forest and in portions of the Tsirku River drainage in the mountainous area to the south and abutting the Glacier Bay National Park.

**Helicopter Operations in the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve.** In a separate action (August, 2002) an amendment was made to the Public Review Draft of the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve Plan that prohibited commercial helicopter landings within the Preserve and established a minimum flight altitude of 1,500 feet from ground surface.

***August 2002 ----- K-5 ----- Haines State Forest Plan***