Soil and Water

Goals: Maintain soil productivity and minimize soil erosion from land-disturbing activities. Minimize sediment transported to streams from land-disturbing activities. Maintain and restore the biological, physical, and chemical integrity of Tongass National Forest waters.

Objectives: Attain Alaska Region (R-10) Soil Quality Standards. Attain State of Alaska Water Quality Standards.

Background: Implementation of Soil and Water standards and guidelines is necessary to maintain soil productivity and water quality. The Soil and Water standards and guidelines are implemented as Best Management Practices (BMPs) described in FSH 2509.22. Region 10 Soil Quality standards are documented in FSM 2554. Methods for effectiveness monitoring of Soil Quality standards are also referenced in FSM 2554. Soil conservation practices are practices used to ensure that ground-disturbing activities will meet the R-10 Soil Quality standards. Typical soil conservation practices include log suspension requirements in timber harvest units and the use of full-bench and end-haul road construction techniques on landslide-prone terrain. Implementation monitoring evaluates whether or not soil conservation practices were required and implemented. Effectiveness monitoring determines whether or not the soil conservation practice used kept the ground-disturbing activity within the R-10 Soil Quality standard.

The State of Alaska Water Quality Standards set standards for chemical, physical, and biologic parameters of waters on National Forest System Lands. The Forest Service in Region 10 uses Best Management Practices and site-specific prescriptions to meet State of Alaska Water Quality Standards when implementing ground-disturbing activities on National Forest System lands.

Soil and Water Question 1: Are the standards and guidelines for Soil Disturbance being implemented?

The Best Management Practices (BMPs), described in the Soil and Water Conservation Handbook (Forest Service Handbook 2509.22, October 1996), define practices that protect soil and water resources. The Soil and Water standards and guidelines define site-specific measures to protect the resources. These standards and guidelines were monitored following a methodology described in the Tongass Monitoring Strategy. The strategy was developed to provide direction for Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) implementation monitoring.

The FY 2006 BMP Monitoring Report provides details on how the monitoring was conducted. Interdisciplinary Team Review trip reports detail individual reviews. These reports are included in the appendix. Additional information on the implementation monitoring is described in Soil and Water Question 3. A summary of the findings for the soil resources relative to disturbance is given below.

BMPs Applicable to Soil Disturbance

BMP 12.17 Revegetation of Disturbed Areas
BMP 13.5 Identification & Avoidance of Unstable Areas
BMP 13.9 Yarding Systems to Protect Soil/Water Resources
BMP 13.10 Landing Location & Design
BMP 14.7/ 14.12 Measures to Minimize Mass Failures/Control of Excavation & Sidecast
BMP 14.18 Control Rock Pit Sediment

Monitoring Context

Planning for some of the roads and units was completed before the Soil and Water Conservation Handbook was revised in October 1996 and new Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines were approved in May 1997. Both documents included many improvements for protecting soil and water resources. Several important changes in the 1996 Soil and Water Conservation Handbook included improving wetlands management direction, considering stream buffer windthrow, and generally making Forest Service BMPs consistent with State Forest Practices Regulations. A number of the units monitored were planned, laid out, and harvested under pre-1997 Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines. The concepts of the Forest Plan standards and guidelines were incorporated into most of these timber sales. Implementation of the Forest Plan standards and guidelines occurred in most of the units.

Monitoring Overview

Reviewing the timber sales and respective environmental documents associated with the monitoring this Fiscal Year, most of the units were harvested under contracts that were included in environmental documents that were signed before the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. The units and roads in the FY 2006 monitoring pool are listed below with their respective environmental impact statement (EIS) and environmental assessment (EA) or contracts. The small sales and public works contracts were all implemented under the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines.

Soil and Water 1. Units Monitored in FY 2006 through BMP Implementation Monitoring Process

Units	**Timber Sale; EIS/ EA (decision year)**
679-433, 679-409, 679-414	Fusion TS; (Dumpy) Polk EIS (1995)
594-412, 594-420	Kogish Shinaku; Control Lake EIS (1998)
581-417, 581-423, 581-448, 581-449, 581-452	Luck Lac TS; Luck Lake EIS (2000)
8*, 10*, 19, 29, 34, 51, 67	Licking Creek; Licking Creek EIS (2003)
551-001	Thorne Island TS; Lab bay EIS (1996)
60A & B	South Lindenberg TS; South Lindenberg EIS (1996)
Red Carpet unit	Red Carpet Small Sale; Roadside EA (2003)
118,122, 67*,145*, 147, 128, 127, 125, 108, 64, 124	Finger Point TS; South Lindenberg EIS (1996)

*Monitored by IDT and 100% monitoring groups

Soil and Water 2. Roads Constructed/ Reconstructed and Monitored in FY 2006 through BMP Implementation Monitoring Process

Roads	Road Contract/ Timber Sale
6350	South Lindenberg TS; South Lindenberg EIS (1996)
6590, 6260, 6296, 6270, 6267, 6585, 6265	Zarembo Reconstruction
43500-1	Lindenberg TS Public Works
6594*, 52033*, 520331, 520332, 5203321, 520333, 520334, 520335, 520336	Skipping Cow TS Roads Contract, Skipping Cow EIS (2000)
8446150*, 8446140*, 8400470	Licking Creek Reconstruction

*Monitored by IDT and 100% monitoring groups

Soil and Water 3. Roads with Culverts replaced for Fish Passage Improvement and Monitored in FY 2006 through BMP Implementation Monitoring Process

Roads	Road Contract/ Timber Sale
6256 MP 2.801, 3.144, 3.242*, 3.443*, 3.543*, 4.091, 4.496*, 5.524	Thomas Bay Fish Passage Structures
2160000 MP 7.715, 4.975	Polk Fish Passage Improvements

*Monitored by IDT and 100% monitoring groups

Quality Control IDT Monitoring

The IDT monitoring was completed on a stratified random sample made up of more than 10 percent of units and roads monitored during the 100 percent monitoring effort. This IDT monitoring was conducted as a quality control effort on the 100 percent monitoring as well as an effort to conduct interdisciplinary review of the implementation of the standards and guidelines. Further details on the IDT monitoring can be found in the BMP Monitoring Report and individual trip reports in the appendix.

During the IDT review, a number of units and roads were visited in Fiscal Year 2006 as noted by district below:

Petersburg Ranger District: August 28- 30, 2006; Finger Point Timber Sale; units 67, 145 and the associated temporary road.

Petersburg Ranger District: September 6- 7 2006; Thomas Bay Fish Pass Improvement Culvert Replacement Project; Road 6256.

Ketchikan Ranger District: September 12- 13, 2006; Revillagio Island; Licking Creek Timber Sale; units 8 & 10, Roads 8446140, 8446150, 8400470; and Shoal Cove LTF.

Wrangell Ranger District: September 30, 2006; Zarembo Island; Roads 52033, 6594

Monitoring Results

Evaluation of the BMP monitoring for fiscal year 2006 shows that 31 units were in the unit pool, 25 roads/ road segments, including 8 fish passage culvert replacement sites. The IDT monitored 4 units, 6 road construction segments including 4 fish passage improvement culvert replacements (located on 1 road) and 2 log transfer facilities. The 10% quality control threshold was exceeded through the IDT monitoring in 2006. Of the 957.39 acres of harvested units monitored through the 100% process; 133.91 acres were monitored by the IDT during the review. Details of the Best Management Practices monitoring reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Teams are included in the IDT trip reports that are included in the appendix.

The monitoring showed that the Tongass National Forest is implementing the Standards and Guidelines for protection of Soil and Water Resources. There were two departures and eight corrective actions reported as implemented relative to soil disturbance. The table below illustrates the BMP implementation ratings relative to soil disturbance.

Soil and Water 4. BMPs Implemented: Recorded on Unit and Road Forms

BMPs Applied	Number of Times the BMP was Appropriate for Use	Number of Times Corrective Action Implemented	Number of Departures from Full BMP Implementation
12.17 Revegetation of Disturbed Areas	9	0	0
13.5 Identification & Avoidance of Unstable Areas	20	0	0
13.9 Yarding Systems to Protect Soil/ Water Resources	31	0	0
13.10 Landing Location & Design	31	0	0
14.7/ 14.12 Measures to Minimize Mass Failures/ Control of Excavation & Sidecast	13	1	1
14.18 Control Rock Pit Sediment	11	0	1
Totals	**115**	**1**	**2**

Summary details on the departures by BMP are listed in the BMP Summary Report included in the appendix. In order to comply with the standards and guidelines, corrective actions were taken during timber sale administration although most were not significant enough to be noted on the forms. These corrective actions are also described in the individual BMP trip reports.

Review of the departures noted relative to soil disturbance shows that departure from full BMP implementation was noted in two situations. Departure was noted from BMP 14.7/ 14.12 on the Licking Creek Timber Sale. On Road 8400470, there was over blasting of rock from the rock cut of the road during construction. The road construction contract did not include the end haul described in the road cards. The blasted rock covered an area of roughly 200 feet x 75 feet of the down slope unit adjacent to the road and may limit re-vegetation. Departure was also noted from BMP 14.18 on the Skipping Cow Timber Sale Road Construction relative to Controlling Rock Pit sediment. During development of a rock pit for road material associated with Road 6594, rock was over blasted and fly rock covered two streams. One intermittent stream was flowing through the rock material; however, the other intermittent channel was covered with rock. The covered channel was excavated in the blasted rock and a culvert installed to provide cross drainage.

Evaluation of Results

Generally 10 percent quality control monitoring completed by the IDT showed agreement with the monitoring completed by the sale administrators and engineering representatives. Monitoring showed that Best Management Practices (BMPs) were implemented. The numerical rating system that summarizes BMP use, number of departures, and corrective actions worked sufficiently. This numerical rating served to clarify the split between the ratings and help the group rate the BMP implementation more consistently. The numerical rating system facilitated reflecting on the significance of the departure and the impact on the soil, water, and timber resources.

During the IDT monitoring, the group identified strengths associated with BMP implementation and a few BMPs that need continued emphasis.

Identified strengths of BMP implementation relative to soil disturbance included:

BMP 13.5 Identification and Avoidance of Unstable Areas
BMP 13.9 Yarding Systems to Protect Soil/Water Resources
BMP 13.10 Landing Location and Design

Identified emphasis items relative to soil disturbance included:

BMP 14.7/ 14.12 Measures to Minimize Mass Failures/ Control of Excavation & Sidecast
BMP 14.18 Control Rock Pit Sediment

During the IDT review, there was discussion of the impact of over blasting rock from rock pits and fly rock from excavated road cuts in rock. Also discussed was the significance of incorporating the prescription for end haul from the road cards into the road construction contract.

The sale administrators and layout crews work to limit blind leads and harvest on unstable slopes. Particularly, they worked to limit soil disturbance and achieve the prescribed suspension. The sale administrators deleted over steep areas in the units to limit potential landslide issues particularly in areas where the operator could not achieve the prescribed suspension. In most cases, the over steep areas and areas that show unstable soils were identified prior to the environmental assessment and a soils prescription for the areas was developed. If these units were evaluated today under the 1997 standards and guidelines, many of the unstable areas and over steep slopes would have been deleted. The sale administrators requested review by the soil scientists of the steep areas (>72% slope gradient) that showed instability. The sale administrators worked with the Timber Management Assistant to implement deferral of the steep portions of the units for helicopter harvest.

Action Plan

Examining trends in the BMP implementation, less emphasis items and discussion topics related to soil disturbance were noted this year. This can be attributed to the specific harvest of units monitored and the fact that many of the units that have excessively steep slopes are helicopter logged. New emphasis has been placed in recent years on deleting areas of potential instability from the units and helicopter yarding the steep areas.

General recommendations on the BMP monitoring process include moving toward a smaller sample set for monitoring. The selection should be based upon random selection and monitoring conducted by an IDT. The district soil scientists need to continue to be involved with the prescription of suspension and harvest limitations in the units relative to defining unstable slopes and concerns related to constructing road on steep slopes. The district specialists should continue to work with the layout and sale administrators on implementation of the Best Management Practices on a routine basis.

Emphasis needs to be placed on removing over steep sections and areas that indicate unstable soils from the units during initial planning, and layout phases. Emphasis on training people as to the BMPs and the actual reference for the BMPs and form guidelines is necessary. The importance of a strong understating of the BMPs and the mechanism for tracking implementation is necessary to continue integrity in the monitoring program as well as for implementation of the Standards and Guidelines that protect soil and water resources.

Soil and Water Question 2: Are the standards and guidelines effective in meeting Alaska Regional Soil Quality Standards?

Soil and water effectiveness monitoring is completed through monitoring the soil quality standards as described in Forest Service Manual 2554, and is addressed in two parts: 1) Soil Disturbance, and 2) Landslide frequency. Limited soil quality monitoring was done in 2006 but no report has been completed.

Soil and Water Question 3: Are Best Management Practices being implemented?

The Best Management Practices (BMPs) were monitored on the Tongass National Forest, using guidelines described in the Tongass Monitoring Strategy. The strategy was developed to provide direction for Forest Plan implementation monitoring. An interagency team of representatives from the Forest Service and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation selected specific BMPs to be monitored, based upon potential risk factors to soil and water resources. Members of the Monitoring and Evaluation Group (IMEG) then reviewed their selection. The BMPs evaluated are included in the Soil and Water Conservation Handbook (Forest Service Handbook 2509.22, October 1996). Soil and water effectiveness monitoring is completed through monitoring the soil quality standards as described in Forest Service Manual 2554, and is summarized in this report.

The BMP implementation monitoring included two distinct efforts: (1) 100 percent monitoring of the units closed out and roads completed, and (2) interdisciplinary team (IDT) monitoring. These monitoring efforts are briefly described in Soil and Water Question 1 and described in more detail in the Tongass Best Management Monitoring Report in the appendix.

BMPs Monitored and Reported

BMP 12.5 Wetlands Protection Measures
BMP 12.6/ 12.6a Riparian Area Designation & Protection/Buffer Zone Design and Layout
BMP 12.7/ 14.5/14.8 Measures to Minimize Surface Erosion
BMP 12.8/ 12.9 Oil Pollution Control Measures
BMP 12.17 Revegetation of Disturbed Areas
BMP 13.5 Identification and Avoidance of Unstable Areas

BMP 13.9 Yarding Systems to Protect Soil/ Water Resources
BMP 13.10 Landing Location and Design
BMP 13.11/ 13.14/ 14.5 Erosion Control Measures for Units & Temporary Roads
BMP 13.16 Stream Channel Protection
BMP 14.6 Timing Restrictions for Construction Activities/ Fisheries Prescription
BMP 14.7/14.12 Measures to Minimize Mass Failures/ Control of Excavation & Sidecast
BMP 14.9 Drainage Control Structures to Minimize Erosion & Sedimentation
BMP 14.14/ 14.17 Design & Installation of Bridges and Culverts
BMP 14.15 Diversion of Flows Around Construction Sites
BMP 14.18 Control Rock Pit Sediment
BMP 14.20/ 14.22 Road Maintenance Access Management
BMP 14.26/ 14.27 LTF Surface Erosion Control Plan, Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan

Monitoring Overview

The monitoring overview section for Soil & Water Question 1 should be referenced for a description of the units and roads monitored. This overview also provides details on the units and roads monitored during the quality control IDT process. Additional information describing the IDT monitoring is included in the appendix in the individual BMP trip reports.

Monitoring Results

Evaluation of the BMP monitoring for fiscal year 2006 shows that 31 units, 25 roads/ road segments, including 8 fish passage culvert replacement sites were in the monitoring pool. The IDT monitored 4 units, 6 road construction segments including 4 fish passage improvement culvert replacements (located on 1 roads) and 2 log transfer facilities. The 10% quality control threshold was exceeded through the IDT monitoring in 2006. Of the 957.39 acres of harvested units monitored through the 100% process; 133.91 acres were monitored by the IDT during the review. Details of the Best Management Practices monitoring reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Teams are included in the IDT trip reports that are included in the appendix.

The monitoring showed that the Tongass National Forest is implementing the Standards and Guidelines for protection of Soil and Water Resources in most cases. There were only a few departures from full implementation that were noted involving minor fuel spills, seeding of road corridors and road cuts adjacent to units, rock over blasting at one rock pit, and along one road segment, and the lack of end haul prescribed for a steep section of road that was not implemented.

In the cases involving unit layout, corrective actions to modify the unit configuration were implemented during unit layout and sale administration. In a number of the situations involving sites where seeding was not completed during the seeding window, direction to comply with the seeding were conveyed. Action plans were developed to fully implement the BMPs, although seeding and at some of these sites had not been completed.

The number of times corrective actions were implemented is summarized in the table below as well as departures from full BMP implementation. Corrective actions are actions completed to mitigate situations that occur during implementation. In some cases, corrective action was taken so that the BMP was fully implemented before the unit or road was approved by either

the sale administrator or contracting officers representative. In a few cases, the monitoring resulted in action plans being drawn up to complete additional work so the BMPs would be fully implemented.

Soil and Water 5. Summary of BMP Implementation Monitoring for Harvest Units, Roads Constructed/ Reconstructed, Road Segments with Culverts Reconstructed for Fish Passage Improvement

BMPs Applied	Number of Times BMP was Appropriate for Use	Number of Times Corrective Action Noted & Implementation Initiated	Number of Times Departure from full BMP Implementation Noted
12.5 Wetlands Protection Measures	26	0	0
12.6/ 12.6a Riparian Area Designation & Protection/ Buffer Zone Design and Layout	15	1	0
12.8/ 12.9 Oil Pollution Control Measures	56	4	2
12.17 Revegetation of Disturbed Areas	9	0	2
13.5 Identification and Avoidance of Unstable Areas	20	0	0
13.9 Yarding Systems to Protect Soil/ Water Resources	31	0	0
13.10 Landing Location and Design	31	0	0
13.11/ 13.14/ 14.5 Erosion Control Measures for Units & Temporary Roads	23	0	0
13.16 Stream Channel Protection	27	0	0
12.7/ 14.5/ 14.8 Measures to Minimize Surface Erosion	25	1	2
14.6 Timing Restrictions for Construction Activities/ Fisheries Prescription	6	0	0
14.7/ 14.12 Measures to Minimize Mass Failures/ Control of Excavation & Sidecast	13	1	1
14.9 Drainage Control Structures to Minimize Erosion & Sedimentation	21	0	0
14.14/ 14.17 Design & Installation of Bridges and Culverts	25	0	0
14.18 Control Rock Pit Sediment	11	0	1
14.20/ 14.22 Road Maintenance Access Management	23	0	1
14.26/ 14.27 LTF Surface Erosion Control Plan, Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan	33	0	0
	395	**7**	**9**

Corrective Action Summary

Comparison of the data that is summarized in the previous table and the narratives describing the monitoring shows that corrective actions during unit and road planning, design, layout, harvest and construction were implemented in efforts to fully implement the Best Management Practices. Details outlining some of the corrective actions are summarized in below as well as in detailed trip reports.

The corrective actions included;

- modifying the unit configuration and boundaries to minimize construction on wetlands and steep slopes,
- identification and prescription of protection measures on streams during unit harvest,
- clean up of a minor equipment leaks and oil spills,
- correction of SPCC Plans,
- construction of a rock buttress to stabilize a cut bank along a road,
- seeding prescribed and action directed prior to the end of the seeding window, and
- grading of log transfer facilities (LTF) surfaces and maintenance of settling ponds to minimize sediment transport.

Departure from Full BMP Implementation Summary

In FY 2006, the corrective actions contributed to the BMP implementation in most cases so there were very few departures from full implementation noted. Departures from full BMP implementation occurred on 9 events on 4 roads, 2 harvest units that are associated with two timber sales. The best management practices that showed the departures follow;

BMP 12.8/ 12.9 Oil Pollution Control Measures

BMP 12.17 Revegetation of Disturbed Areas

BMP 12.7/ 14.5/ 14.8 Measures to Minimize Surface Erosion

BMP 14.7/ 14.12 Measures to Minimize Mass Failures/ Control of Excavation & Sidecast

BMP 14.18 Control Rock Pit Sediment

BMP 14.20/ 14.22 Road Maintenance Access Management

The departures on BMP 12.8/ 12.9 were noted relative to a discrepancy between the tank size on a SPCC plan and the tank on the Licking Creek Timber Sale. The departures noted relative to BMP 12.17 on the Licking Creek Timber sale relative to the lack of seeding during the operating season of bared soil exposed in the road cuts. The Sale Administrator had directed the operator to take action to correct the SPCC Plan and complete the seeding. The departures of BMP 12.7/ 14.5/ 14.8/ 14.22 on Licking Creek Timber Sale Roads 8400470, 8446150, 8446140 were noted. Seeding of bared soil was not completed during the operating season and there was no erosion control plan that described the seeding and erosion prevention practices. The departures noted on BMP 14.18 as well as BMP 14.20/ 14.22 were summarized in Soil and Water Question 1.

Corrective actions mitigated the incidents in some of the situations that were designated as departures, so in some cases the overall outcome contributed to no net loss of implementation of the Standards and Guidelines.

Evaluation of Results

Generally, 10 percent quality control monitoring completed by the IDT was in agreement with the monitoring completed by the sale administrator and engineering representative, and showed that the BMPs were being implemented. The variation occurred in differences of degree of BMP implementation. Evaluation of these ratings shows the sale administrators and contracting officer's representatives were more stringent in their ratings than the IDT and more precise in measuring stream lengths/buffers. There were few inconsistencies in interpretation of how to apply the guidelines and the specific BMPs that the forms were referencing.

During IDT monitoring, the group identified strengths associated with BMP implementation and a few BMPs that need continued emphasis. Identified strengths of BMP implementation included: riparian area designation and implementation of buffers, stream channel protection, identification and avoidance of unstable areas, yarding systems to protect soil and water resources, landing locations and design, and timing restrictions for construction activities/fisheries prescription.

In the harvest units, continued emphasis is focused on consistent identification of streams and prescription/implementation of protective measures (buffers) as well as avoidance of unstable areas and associated mitigation covering bared soil with vegetative debris and seeding. Emphasis is also being placed on BMPs specific to seeding of roads, and cross drain function. Focus need to be on developing erosion control measures and plans and ensuring the operators plan of operations includes these measures. Oil pollution control measures, and LTF surface erosion control/storm water pollution prevention continues to be practices that require continual effort to implement. Additional details on the emphasis items that contributed to departures can be found in the appendix in the BMP report.

During completion of the roads, continued emphasis is being placed on rock pit sediment control and development, seeding soil exposed in road cuts, providing upstream habitat evaluations at fish passage at culvert sites, and development of the settlement ponds and ditches to minimize transport of sediment at LTF structures.

Focus on the design of the culverts/bridges specific to the site will be emphasized on sites where structures are being replaced or removed. At these sites, detailed survey and investigation should focus on maintaining the original stream course as well as providing fish passage. The structures and sites should be surveyed after construction completion and the initial high flows to ensure fish passage is provided. Particular focus should be placed on minimizing stream turbidity for compliance with State Water Quality Regulations. At the culvert replacement sites, inspection notes, monitoring, and implemented mitigation measures ensure water quality and response to equipment failures when necessary. Inspection of equipment prior to work daily for equipment leaks and maintenance needs is suggested.

Overall, the sale administrators and engineering representatives demonstrated diligence in implementing appropriate protection of the stream courses, as well as prescribed suspension, effective culvert/water bar installation, and limiting sediment transport. The terrain in some of these units was excessively steep, requiring extensive efforts on the part of the sale administrators to implement the BMPs. The sale administrators worked carefully to identify streams missed during the environmental assessments and during layout, and implemented the appropriate stream protection measures.

There were numerous cases where the IDT identified strengths and a few cases of concerns. Brief overview of the situations that related to departures from full BMP implementation is included in the BMP report in the appendix.

The IDT identified strengths associated with the following BMPS:

BMP 12.5 Wetlands Protection Measures

BMP 12.6/ 12.6a Riparian Area Designation & Protection/ Buffer Zone Design and Layout

BMP 12.7/ 14.5/14.8 Measures to Minimize Surface Erosion

BMP 12.8/ 12.9 Oil Pollution Control Measures

BMP 13.5 Identification and Avoidance of Unstable Areas

BMP 13.9 Yarding Systems to Protect Soil/ Water Resources

BMP 13.10 Landing Location and Design

BMP 13.16 Stream Channel Protection

BMP 14.6 Timing Restrictions for Construction Activities/ Fisheries Prescription

BMP 14.14/ 14.17 Design & Installation of Bridges and Culverts

Emphasis items were associated with the following BMPs:

BMP 12.6/ 12.6a Riparian Area Designation & Protection/ Buffer Zone Design and Layout

BMP 12.7/ 14.5/14.8 Measures to Minimize Surface Erosion

BMP 12.17 Revegetation of Disturbed Areas

BMP 13.11/ 13.14/ 14.5 Erosion Control Measures for Units & Temporary Roads

BMP 13.16 Stream Channel Protection

BMP 14.14/ 14.17 Design & Installation of Bridges and Culverts

BMP 14.26/ 14.27 LTF Surface Erosion Control Plan, Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan

Summary

The results show that the Tongass has successfully implemented the Best Management Practices and is continuing to improve on implementing the BMPs as well as documenting the BMP monitoring. Specific details on the situations that were associated with the departures as well as corrective actions taken in response to efforts to implement the BMPs are detailed in the BMP Summary Report included in the appendix.

Overall, the monitoring showed that the Tongass National Forest is implementing the Best Management Practices successfully. There was general agreement between the 100 percent monitoring effort and the IDT monitoring effort. There were eight departures from full BMP implementation noted. These departures involved some instances of site specific related

problems although there were repeated difficulties in implementing erosion control measures in a timely manner on the Ketchikan Ranger District. The operator harvesting the timber and constructing road in the two projects monitored is not completing seeding during the seeding windows and this problem has been relayed by the sale administer to the contracting officer.

Generally, the sale administrators and engineering representatives have a strong understanding of the Best Management Practices (BMPs) and work to implement these BMPs on the ground. The sale administrators, engineering representatives, and contracting officer's representatives have responsibilities for implementation of many of the BMPs through the contract administration. Through the hard work and diligent efforts of the sale administrators, engineering representatives and contracting officer's representatives, the BMPs are implemented on the ground.

Action Plans

The IDT monitoring of the Tongass this year shows that the sale administrators, engineering representatives, and contracting officer's representatives are consistently implementing these BMPs fully and monitoring the same criteria as the IDT. This is a trend that has continued to generally improve over the past five years. The departures noted last year identify some focal points for Fiscal Year 2006 and there was improvement shown in filling out the forms more consistently. Examining the IDT review relative to the departures and emphasis items, evaluation of the data shows that review of a subset of the data could be used to identify if BMP implementation was occurring.

Particular action plans have been developed to improve consistency of stream identification and prescription relative to riparian streams as well as water quality streams. A lecture and field training program were conducted across the Tongass to promote consistency in stream classification. Continual emphasis on review of any questionable stream prescriptions and locations should be a focal point of the layout crews.

Field participation by the district soil scientists, hydrologists, and fish biologists throughout the environmental assessment and layout is necessary. Emphasis on detailed field review of contract developed environmental assessment as well as layout is necessary. Numerous of the discrepancies between the environmental documents, layout and timber that could be harvested with maintaining BMP implementation was related to errors or oversights in the contract work.

The IDT recommends focusing on emphasis items rather than the specific rating for the BMP. Follow through on a feedback system has been initiated to get information from monitoring back to the planning, design, layout, and contract preparation groups.

Specific action is recommended to develop specific monitoring forms for the culvert installation sites and the road decommissioning. A pilot form for road decommissioning/closure has been tried out this year. Further review of this form and development to cover road obliteration and trench roads is underway. The road decommissioning/closures have not been routinely monitored for BMP implementation. Inclusion of road closure sites on the IDT monitoring is recommended.

Turbidity Compliance Monitoring

Background

The Clean Water Act establishes regulatory authority for water quality within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). ADEC has established numeric criteria for water quality as Water Quality Standards (ADEC, 1999). The Forest Service must apply Best Management Practices that are consistent with the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Regulations to achieve Alaska Water Quality Standards. The site-specific application of BMPs, with a monitoring and feedback mechanism, is the approved strategy for controlling nonpoint source pollution as defined by Alaska's Nonpoint Source Pollution Strategy (ADEC, 2000).

Monitoring Context

Stream turbidity monitoring during road construction activity is a simple, low-cost observation of a water quality standard that responds to routine BMP implementation monitoring outlined in the USDA Forest Service Memorandum of Agreement with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (1992). Turbidity is specifically referenced as an erosion control measure in BMP 14.5 Road and Trail Erosion Control Plan which was developed as an administrative and preventative practice. The objective of turbidity sampling is to determine if the erosion control measures are achieving State water quality criteria for turbidity. If turbidity exceeds water quality criteria, corrective action(s) are taken. If turbidity continues to exceed water quality criteria despite corrective actions, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation is consulted.

The waters within the Tongass National Forest are classified for multiple beneficial uses (water supply, water recreation, and growth and propagation of fish, shellfish, and other aquatic life and wildlife (Alaska Water Quality Standards 18 AAC 70.020,1999 as amended, 2002). If water bodies are protected for more than one use class, the most stringent water quality criteria for all included use classes apply. The most stringent criteria for turbidity is that samples,

> *"…may not exceed 5 NTU (nephelometric turbidity units[1]) above natural conditions when the background turbidity is 50 NTU or less, and may not have more than 10% increase in turbidity when the natural turbidity is more than 50 NTU, not to exceed a maximum increase of 25 NTU." (AK Water Quality Standards (WQS) Tables, 2006)*

Actual uses for these affected waterways are related to the growth and propagation of fisheries (Alaska Water Quality Standards 18 AAC 70.020(c), Table A, as amended, 2002), therefore a second criteria for turbidity important to the forest management is that samples,

> *"…may not exceed 25 NTU above natural conditions. For all lake waters, may not exceed 5 NTU above natural conditions."*

[1] A property of the particles — that they will scatter a light beam focused on them — is considered a meaningful measure of turbidity in water. Turbidity measured this way uses an instrument called a nephelometer with the detector setup to the side of the light beam. More light reaches the detector if there are lots of small particles scattering the source beam than if there are few. The units of turbidity from a calibrated nephelometer are called Nephelometric Turbidity Units (**NTU**).

Monitoring Methods

Turbidity protocols require sampling before construction, within 48 hours of the beginning of construction, and subsequent sampling as necessary. Grab samples and a portable turbidity meter were used in all cases. Some sites received pre-sampling background data gathering and some received post-impact sampling for several days after construction was completed.

Turbidity measured upstream of the drainage structure site was assumed to reflect natural or background conditions for evaluating the achievement of water quality criteria downstream of the drainage structure where construction has occurred. The difference in the paired upstream and downstream data is evaluated against the State water quality criteria standard that compares the disturbed site data against the natural conditions. By collecting both upstream and downstream data in the same period, natural variations in the turbidity due to precipitation, stream flow and upstream events are accounted.

Site conditions play a substantial role in determining the nature of the turbidity readings. Stream discharge varies depending upon the bed load deposits, channel shape, stream size, and drainage area. The turbidity measured in the grab samples varies with the amount of fines in the channel and the flow.

Turbidity is measured in nephelometric turbidity units (NTUs). Turbidity increases occur in response to natural channel processes as well as forest management activities. Spikes in turbidity levels may be due in part to increased precipitation, level of flow, changes in watershed conditions or construction/ timber harvest. Measuring changes in turbidity with grab samples only reflects the conditions of the stream at the time the sample was collected.

Monitoring Results

Four new or replaced drainage structures were monitored in FY 2006 per criteria for turbidity monitoring protocol (*Tongass National Forest Turbidity Monitoring Protocols, as revised, 2004*). These structures were identified in the road condition survey process and prioritized for replacement. The construction and replacement of culverts to improve fish passage frequently involves multiple phase construction of structures designed to provide fish passage. Diversion of water flow or “dewatering” from the immediate zone of construction, through cofferdams and diversion pipes is typically required. The stream gradients are then constructed specifically to provide fish passage. The stream banks are reconstructed to near their original contours.

Consultations with ADEC occurred at each site where turbidity levels were elevated and no violations of the State Water Quality standards were issued. One of the four sites may have exceeded the water criteria for short periods of time after the water started to flow through the culvert following contstruction completion but the turbidity cleared 6 hours later. The data shows that the water quality returned to less than 5 NTUs in most cases shortly after construction completion.

In 2006, turbidity grab samples were only collected on one construction project; Thomas Bay fish Passage improvement project. In the vicinity of Thomas Bay on Petersburg Ranger District 4 sites were monitored. The sites were located on Road 6256 at KM station: 7.240, 5.544, 5.063, and 4.511. One site showed incidental periods where the 5 NTU criteria was exceeded. All 4 all sites met the 5 NTU criteria within 48 hours.

Evaluation of Results

Turbidity data reported in FY 2006 demonstrates compliance with State water quality criteria. Compliance was achieved in a period less than 48 hours after construction was initiated to a short period following construction completion. The increased turbidity appears to be an incidental occurrence in response to in stream activity and the turbidity dissipated following the in stream work. The four sites met the State Water Quality Standards following the end of construction once the fines generated during in stream work were dissipated.

Conclusion:

- There were no violations of state water quality standards for turbidity issued by the State. The Forest responded to temporary exceedances with corrective actions and consultation with ADEC according to our MOA.
- The Forest will continue dialogue with ADEC and EPA on the application of numeric turbidity criteria and appropriate corrective actions and monitoring protocols.
- The grab sample turbidity monitoring is serving as a useful monitoring tool to indicate to the contracting officer's administrators when corrective action to reduce turbidity is necessary during construction of complex fish passage structures.

Action Plans

Continued turbidity monitoring for compliance with the BMP 14.5 requiring erosion Plans for construction activities is recommended. We intend to use the grab sample turbidity monitoring to indicate compliance with the State Water Quality Standards. Continued emphasis is necessary to follow the protocol in collecting up stream and down stream samples is necessary. Focus on collecting samples that show recovery of the site following construction end is imperative. Additional training and focus on inspection and monitoring of the fish passage improvement sites is recommended.

The elevated turbidity levels documented at numerous sites typically recovered to background levels within 48 hours. At the sites where this did not occur, additional mitigation was applied to decrease the turbidity levels. Recommendations follow to tighten the contract provisions for the specification of backfill and application of mitigation measures in response to the compliance turbidity monitoring made in 2004 were developed in 2005. As mentioned above, dialogue with ADEC and EPA on the application of numeric turbidity criteria and appropriate corrective actions and monitoring protocols will continue.

Soil and Water Question 4: Are Best Management Practices effective in meeting water quality standards?

Goal: Maintain and restore the biological, physical, and chemical integrity of Tongass National Forest waters.

Objective: Attain State of Alaska water quality standards forest-wide.

Background: The Clean Water Act establishes regulatory authority for water quality within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). ADEC has established numeric criteria for water quality as Water Quality Standards (ADEC 2003). The Forest Service must apply Best Management Practices

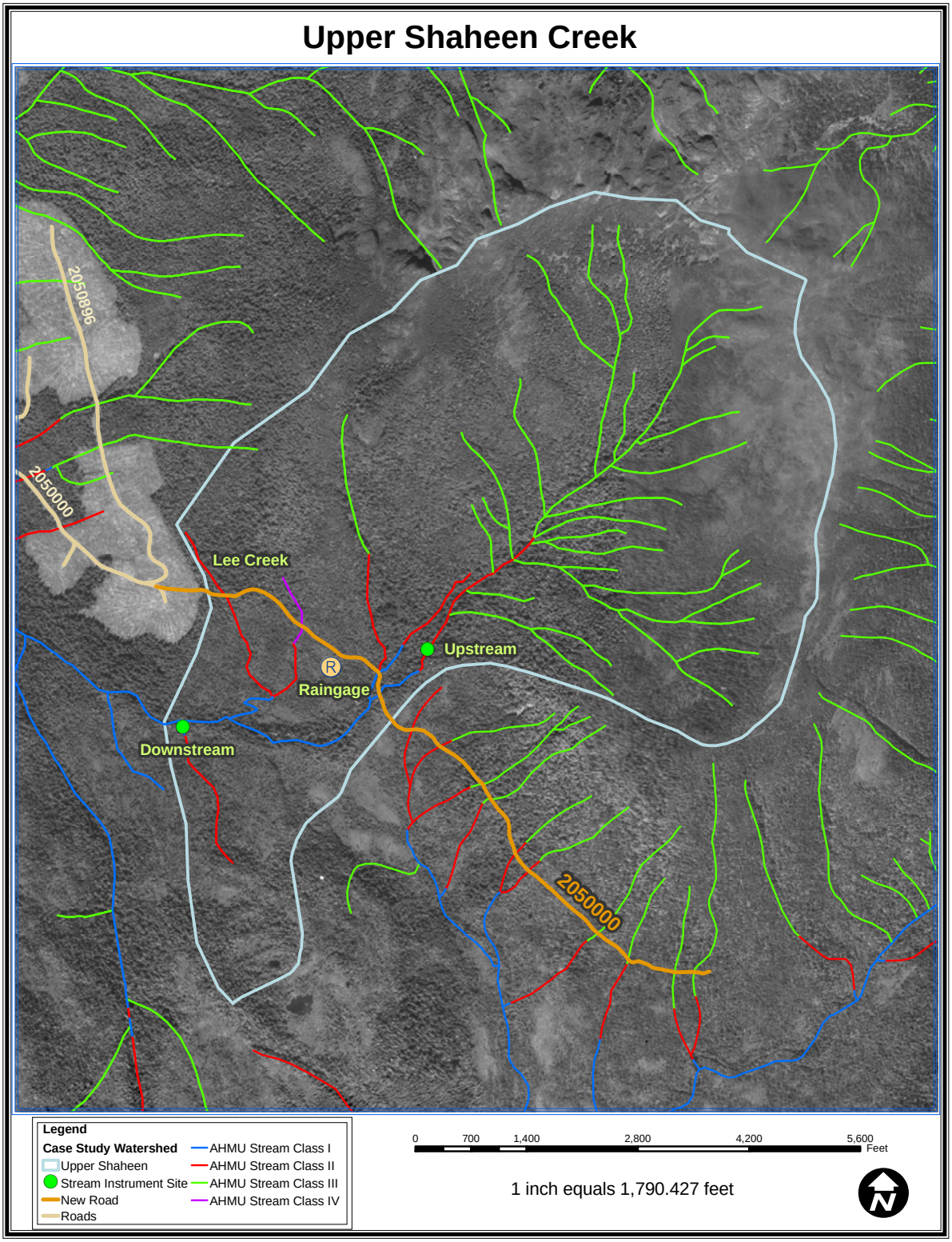
that are consistent with the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Regulations to achieve Alaska Water Quality Standards. The site-specific application of BMPs, *with a monitoring and feedback mechanism*, is the approved strategy for controlling nonpoint source pollution as defined by Alaska's Nonpoint Source Pollution Strategy (ADEC 2000).

Attainment of state water quality standards is a specific Forest Plan objective driving the Aquatic Synthesis. Continuous water quality and stream stage (water depth) instruments have been installed in a set of three case study watersheds (Thompson 2006) to monitor stream turbidity and temperature as Forest Plan implementation proceeds.

Monitoring Results and Evaluation

As part of the Forest Plan aquatic monitoring synthesis, long term monitoring has been underway in three case study watersheds on Prince of Wales Island since 2004 (Figure Soil and Water 1). A goal of the Aquatic Synthesis is to evaluate watershed-scale influences on water quality, including the effectiveness of Best Management Practices at attaining water quality standards (Thompson 2004). Stream water quality sensors (temperature and turbidity) were installed in each watershed. Data analysis is in progress. Preliminary results were reported in the 2004 Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report.

Soil and Water 1. Prince of Wales Island, Upper Shaheen Creek



Turbidity

Continuous stream turbidity monitoring is underway downstream of a road constructed in on of the case study watersheds. The monitoring objectives were to compare turbidity up and downstream of the road and to evaluate the attainment of Alaska Water Quality Standards for turbidity at the watershed scale. Provisional results of the 2004 data—construction phase--have been reported (Thompson and Tucker 2005). This road experienced truck traffic from a timber sale in an adjacent watershed during 2005. Analysis of 2005 and 2006 data is in progress. Data collection and analysis will continue through road storage activities.

We also tested the use of in-stream turbidity sensors to monitor turbidity continuously before, during, and after culvert installation for fish passage on the Thomas Bay road system on the Petersburg Ranger District in 2006. Low water levels and biological fouling prevented any reliable conclusions. These problems were very specific to the slough-like streams at these sites and have not been encountered in the case study watersheds. The sensors are available for monitoring at other sites if funding is secured.

Actions Recommended for 2007

We recommend no corrective actions to Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for attaining State of Alaska water quality standards in the Tongass National Forest at this time. It is reasonable to continue focusing on BMP implementation and effectiveness monitoring, including the feedback mechanism, to meet the USFS responsibilities outlined in the 1992 Memorandum of Agreement between ADEC and the USFS, Alaska Region.

The following specific actions are recommended for 2007:

1. Engineering personnel will continue grab sample compliance monitoring as described in *Turbidity Protocols and Sampling Procedures* (Seitz Warmuth 2003). We will continue dialogue with ADEC and EPA on the appropriate application and reporting of numeric turbidity criteria in this context.

2. Hydrology personnel will continue collection and analysis of continuous turbidity and stream temperature data in case study watersheds as described in the *Aquatic Monitoring Synthesis Study Plan* (Thompson 2004).

3. Hydrology personnel will request funding for continuous turbidity monitoring during culvert installation at up to three sites in 2007.

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