

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AREA

The Harris River is located on Prince of Wales Island in the Alexander Archipelago of Southeast Alaska (Map 1). The Harris River flows southeast to Harris River Bay near the town of Hollis. The 19,009 acre drainage basin was shaped primarily by glacial carving and resulted in two smaller sub-basins flowing to a main valley. The Harris River has been divided into three sub-basins: Upper Harris River; Fubar Creek; and Lower Harris River. State land occupies 1,974 acres of the lower channel and estuary. Encumbered land totals 3,172 acres in the Upper Harris River and Fubar Creek sub-basin. This land has been selected by the State of Alaska and native corporations for conveyance of ownership. (Map 2).

High precipitation is a driving natural process in Southeast Alaska. The sea level Hollis rain gage collects on average 105 inches of precipitation per year. The steep valley slopes with moderate to shallow soils over bedrock make for rapid and efficient transport of water to streams. Heavy vegetation and undergrowth in natural conditions protect soil resources from erosion processes.

Resource impacts from past management activities and intense natural processes were the primary reason for developing a Watershed Restoration Plan (WRP) in 2006. The WRP assessed the existing condition of the watershed and analyzed the impact of human induced stressors, such as timber harvest and road construction in ecologically sensitive areas, to then identify and prioritize rehabilitation projects.

No near future timber management activities are currently planned. Commercial thinning opportunities may become viable in a 5-20 year timeframe. Commercial harvest of mature second growth conifers in the basin may become viable in a 40-60 year timeframe.

Multiple discrete access points to the mainstem channel and Upper Harris basin provide opportunity for a variety of recreation and subsistence use. The Harris River Campground and Day Use Area located on paved highway is situated 10 miles from the Hollis Ferry Terminal and 20 miles from the Craig/ Klawock area. Restrooms, potable water, garbage service and campground host are available. The campground was newly constructed in 1998 to accessibility standards.

The Maybeso Experimental Forest borders the Harris River Watershed to the North. The Karta Wilderness Area borders the headwaters of the Upper Harris River. Projects proposed in this EA are limited to the Harris River Watershed and will not influence or affect any resources in the Maybeso River basin.

Map 1: Prince of Wales Island, Harris River Watershed General Location Map

