

**UNIT 4****WESTERN  
ICY BAY****Background**

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This unit at Icy Bay on the eastern end of the Yakataga forelands is isolated from other state uplands by the Mental Health Trust lands.

**Physical features**

This unit has forested lowlands from Claybluff Point for several miles north along Icy Bay. The northern two-thirds of the unit has glacially-scoured bedrock hills with alders and alpine vegetation at lower elevations.

Shoreline erosion at the mouth of Icy Bay is extreme. The maximum erosion rate is 37 meters per year at Point Riou. Sediment transported westward by coastal currents infills the Claybluff shoreline, posing maintenance problems at the log transfer facility (LTF).

**Access**

The LTF at Claybluff Point is the only developed tidewater transfer facility serving the Yakataga forelands. Repeated dredging is necessary to allow deep-draft ships to approach the LTF because there is a high rate of siltation. In recent years, timber operators have floated logs from the Claybluff LTF across Icy Bay for loading at the Moraine Bay LTF. Compared to other parts of Icy Bay, the western shoreline is exposed to high wave energy and south/southeasterly winds from the dominant storm track.

The main haul road extends 36 miles west from the LTF across Mental Health Trust Land to approximately six miles west of White River. The main haul road is 16-foot-wide and built with three feet of fill. It requires regular maintenance because of the region's high rainfall, numerous small creeks, and wetlands. A road spur, passable by all-terrain vehicles, heads north from the LTF to Independence Creek.

The nearest airstrip is approximately four miles away at the logging camp on Mental Health Trust lands near Priest River.

There is an anchorage at Kichyatt Point.

**Land status**

There is a 40-acre Native allotment at Kichyatt Point. All other lands in the unit are state owned. However, the boundary of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve encompasses the northern half of this unit, including most of Independence Creek. State lands within that boundary constitute an inholding in the national park.

**Adjoining lands**

Unit 4 is bounded to the north by Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. This part of the park is designated wilderness. Icy Bay lies to the east and south. The Mental Health Trust owns 45,312 acres to the west.



*Log transfer facility near Icy Cape*

### **Resources and uses**

The LTF has operated for over 20 years. Prior to timber transfer, the site was used as the beach-head for oil and gas exploration in the Yakataga area. In addition to log loading, the site has been used to unload machinery for minerals exploration near Cape Yakataga.

Small-scale mineral exploration has been a permitted activity at Independence and Jetty creeks. Currently, there are no valid mining claims.

Several anadromous creeks fish support guided and unguided sport fishing. The relatively easy access has also fostered goat viewing, and guided and sport hunting for goat and bear.

### **Management considerations**

Rapid siltation at the log transfer site and the shifting of Jetty Creek brought a halt to direct loading of barges from shore. Dredge and fill operations from 1978 to approximately 1988 could not keep pace with siltation from creeks and ocean currents. Despite these challenges, this site offers perhaps the best loading conditions along the forelands: somewhat protected waters relatively free from ice, level up-land acreage for storage and support operations, and a road connection to the Yakataga forelands.

DNR will not make state timber available for sale or harvest within this management unit until at least December 2014.<sup>1</sup> Prior to future state timber offerings, DNR must revise the Yakataga Area Plan, including re-examination of land classifications and land use designations. The annual allowable cut for state land must also be recalculated after the revised plan.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C for the history and terms of the December 1994 timber settlement.

## Unit 4 - Western Icy Bay resource allocation summary

### Forestry

The plan designates all the commercial forest lands in Unit 4 for forestry to capitalize on timber values and the existing roads and LTF. The uplands at the log transfer facility will be reserved in state ownership to serve multiple resource transfer needs.

Under the settlement agreement regarding the university timber litigation, there will be no state timber sales or harvests until at least December 2014.

### Fish and wildlife harvest

**Availability.** One non-forested subunit is designated for fish and wildlife harvest to recognize existing hunting use.

**Access.** Fishing and hunting access will be relatively easy via the logging road system. Harvest pressure may increase after the road connects to Cape Yakataga and the airstrip.

### Fish and wildlife habitat

The plan has guidelines for mountain goat habitat to offset the effects of timber harvest and increased hunting access. DNR may apply further habitat guideline through the FLUPs. The plan designates non-forested areas for habitat.

### Minerals development

All lands will be open to mineral entry.

### Recreation and tourism

The plan does not recommend commercial recreation leasing under the .073 process because the potential appears low relative to other areas. Other types of commercial recreation leasing are allowed provided it does not interfere with forestry operations. No lands in Unit 4B were designated for recreation because there is scant current use for recreation and tourism; and the impacts from development are likely to divert future visitors to the roadless, undeveloped areas of Icy Bay.

### Settlement

The state will retain these lands to include them in the timber base. The plan does not recommend settlement at Icy Cape: the log camp and Cape Yakataga already require essential services and are more efficient locations for settlement.

### Transportation

The plan supports state retention of the log transfer facility to ensure on-going opportunities for multiple resource transfer.

### Waterfront development

The tidelands at the log transfer facility are designated waterfront development. This will give DNR latitude to ensure that a landing site remains viable as nearshore conditions change.

### Other resources

The plan advises DNR to ask the National Park Service to exclude state land in Unit 4a-3 from Wrangell-St. Elias National Park by moving the park boundary.

## **Subunit 4a-1 - Icy Bay log transfer facility vicinity**

### ■ Designation

Forestry (F1)

### ■ Management Intent

Promote forest management for sustained yield of timber. All activities will, to the extent feasible and prudent, avoid significant adverse impacts to timber resources and production. This subunit should be managed to ensure access by a variety of users in order to promote multiple use development of lands

in the Yakataga area. This site will be reserved in state ownership for resource transfer for multiple users and uses.

DNR will reserve a public right-of-way across this unit to the log transfer facility. DNR Division of Land will apply for a public right-of-way across adjoining lands between Icy Bay and White River.

■ **Guidelines:** None. There are no guidelines specific to this subunit.

### ■ General Information

The upland facilities include an eight-acre sort yard on the east side of Carson Creek and 20 acres on the west side of Carson Creek.

In 1989, Jetty Creek shifted course and began discharging in front of this facility. Log transfer reverted to the sack-raft float-off system to reduce conflicts with salmon returning to Jetty Creek, to eliminate constant dredging and filling of wetlands, and to avoid a major rerouting of Jetty Creek. Presently log storage is not permitted on the west side of Carson Creek.

## **Subunit 4a-2 - upper Carson Creek**

### ■ Designation

Habitat and Harvest (H1, HV1)

### ■ Management Intent

Protect or enhance fish and wildlife habitat and harvest, particularly for mountain goats and bears. All activities will, to the extent feasible and prudent, avoid significant adverse impacts to the habitat resources and harvest activities listed above.

DNR will ask the National Park Service to exclude the Independence Creek drainage from Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve because Independence Creek may have mineral values.

■ **Guidelines:** None. There are no guidelines specific to this subunit.

### ■ General Information

Unit 4a-2 lies within the boundary of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

Guided goat and bear hunting are facilitated by the relatively easy access. This subunit has moderate terrain, road access to an airstrip, an anchorage, and ice-free areas for float plane landing.

### **Subunit 4a-3 - Kichyatt Point**

#### ■ Designation

Habitat (H2)

#### ■ Management intent

Maintain fish and wildlife habitat. All activities will minimize significant adverse impacts to habitat resources, particularly for mountain goats.

■ **Guidelines:** None. There are no guidelines specific to this subunit.

#### ■ General Information

This subunit lies mostly within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. Drifting icebergs sometimes bring seals into the nearshore waters during pupping season. There is good access for goat viewing.

### **Subunit 4b - tidelands and submerged lands at log transfer facility**

#### ■ Designation

Waterfront development (WD)

#### ■ Management intent

Promote use of tidelands, submerged lands, and shorelands for water-dependent or water-related facilities for industrial or commercial purposes, particularly for resource transfer. All activities will, to the extent feasible and prudent, avoid significant adverse impacts to opportunities to develop these facilities. This subunit should also be managed to ensure access by a variety of users in order to promote multiple use development of lands in the Yakataga area.

■ **Guidelines:** None. There are no guidelines specific to this subunit.

#### ■ General information

Two methods have been used to load log barges. In the early years, logs were placed on the beach in sack rafts that floated with the tide. These rafts were then towed to Moraine Bay on the east side of Icy Bay for storage and loading to barges or ships. In 1978 a barge was sunk on state tidelands to act as a platform to facilitate direct loading of barges. This transfer method was abandoned in 1989 because Jetty Creek shifted course and began discharging in front of this facility. Constant dredging and filling and the prospect of rerouting Jetty Creek caused a return to the sack raft loading system.

Marine log transport operations from Icy Bay are currently limited to the summer months because of the unavailability of marine insurance in other seasons.

Icebergs occasionally drift into the area from Icy Bay. Seals rely on floating ice for pupping and molting and are easily disturbed during these periods. See explanation in Unit 5 background.

## Unit 4 - western Icy Bay

| Area # & name   | Designation | Resource or Use<br>(See resource reports and maps for more complete information)  | Background   |
|---|-------------|---|--|
| <b>4a-1</b><br>Icy Bay log transfer facility vicinity             | F1          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Existing log storage area &amp; transfer site. Used for offloading heavy machinery for mining and other development.</li> <li>■ young spruce and hemlock</li> <li>■ anadromous streams</li> <li>■ bear spring feeding areas near coast</li> <li>■ mountain goat winter areas on south &amp; east slopes</li> <li>■ past mineral exploration</li> <li>■ trapping</li> <li>■ sport fishing, guided and unguided</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Although tidal deposition has reduced the nearshore water depths, this site is the only practical transfer site for access to the entire Yakataga uplands.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>4a-2</b><br>Upper Carson Creek                                 | H1<br>HV1   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ mountain goat winter habitat on south slopes</li> <li>■ bear spring feeding area</li> <li>■ guided goat and bear hunting</li> <li>■ camping</li> <li>■ wildlife viewing</li> <li>■ young spruce in 5 percent of unit</li> <li>■ cottonwood stands at mouth of Independence Creek</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ State owned but lies within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.</li> <li>■ Formerly a guided goat hunting area. Goat hunting prohibited in early 1990s because of an 80 percent decline in goat populations from Icy Cape to White River</li> <li>■ Previous mineral exploration along tidelands.</li> </ul> |
| <b>4a-3</b><br>Kichyatt Point                                     | H2          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ alpine area with alder slopes in eastern half of unit</li> <li>■ no commercial forest</li> <li>■ mountain goat winter habitat</li> <li>■ bear habitat (concentration areas unknown)</li> <li>■ camping</li> <li>■ wildlife viewing</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ State owned but lies within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. There is a Native allotment at Kichyatt Point.</li> <li>■ Seal pupping near shore on drifting ice.</li> <li>■ Previous mineral exploration at Independence Creek and tidelands (small-scale placer).</li> </ul>                              |
| <b>4b</b><br>tidelands & submerged lands at log transfer facility | WD          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ only developed marine access for timber transfer from Yakataga forelands</li> <li>■ occasional seal pupping and molting area if ice floes are carried into this area</li> <li>■ sea otter established population (in outer bay)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sedimentation has reduced the water depth nearshore, despite dredging.</li> <li>■ In recent years, logs have been loaded from floating rafts which are assembled on tidelands and then towed to awaiting barges in deeper waters.</li> </ul>  |