

The Kake Community Forest Project

Collaborative Land Stewardship for a
Healthy Community

A report by the
Southeast Alaska Conservation Council

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This is a summary document. For the full report go to www.seacc.org or www.seawead.org

SUMMARY

The Kake Community Forest Project seeks to create sustainable forest management in the Kake area through community-based, collaborative land management planning.

This report focuses on the linkages between local economics, community empowerment, respect for cultural heritage, and ecological health. It includes discussion of the necessary ingredients for a healthy community and a healthy landscape, a social assessment and landscape assessment of the Kake area, and recommendations for how to enhance both social and ecological resilience through collaborative land stewardship.



Sunset on Keku Islands outside of Kake

This document is intended as a tool for those invested in the community of Kake and its surrounding lands, but also for anyone interested in collaborative land stewardship. The appendices included in this document provide additional resources for this purpose.

The Kake Community Forest Project is a continuing effort. Your comments and suggestions on the ideas presented here are very welcome. It is only through broad participation that we learn how to improve our social and environmental well-being. Author contact information is available at the end of this report.

For this project SEACC partnered with naturalist Bob Christensen from Southeast Alaska Wilderness Exploration, Analysis and Discovery (SEAWEAD) to conduct field surveys, gather reference material and provide tools for the collaborative stewardship of National Forest and Native Corporation lands immediately ac-

cessible to the community of Kake, Alaska hereinafter referred to as *The Kake Community Forest* (KCF).

Our task:

- Learn about Kake, what forest-related projects residents would like, the kinds of forest related jobs they would like, the community's current capacity for conducting forest work, and their vision for long-term management of their community forest;
- Assess the condition of the lands within the Kake Community Forest.
- Identify areas in which wildlife habitat restoration and enhancement activities could be efficiently blended with opportunities for customary and traditional uses, sustainable logging, recreation development and the cultivation and harvest of non-timber forest products.
- Describe tools for community-based collaborative stewardship including: stewardship contracts and agreements, Memorandums of Understanding, and place-based legislation.
- Utilize these tools to foster future stewardship activities in the Kake Community Forest which are thoroughly community-based and collaborative, are suited to the community's capacity for doing the work, increase capacity where desired and reflect the long-term vision the residents have for their Community Forest.



Fireweed and young growth on Kupreanof Island

KEY FINDINGS

- A clear message from tribal members that conservation and resource use are inseparable in their culture's customary and traditional stewardship.
 - The ecological health of the KCF was significantly reduced during the 40 year timber boom. Likewise, the health of Kake's economy suffered greatly when both the large-scale logging and fishing industries collapsed 15 years ago. Neither the ecological nor economic systems have yet recovered.
 - Kake residents are highly aware of these impacts. There is a great deal of concern about the price the timber era tolled on the health of local forests and streams, but even more so there is a special sensitivity to the impact the collapse of industry had on the people of Kake. Loss of jobs, then loss of population are pointed to, but often this process was also spoken of as an impact to the spirit of the people.
 - Meeting the ecological and social needs in Kake will require cooperation between community members, land owners, City and Tribal government, and the variety of agencies and organizations connected to Kake.
 - Community-based, collaborative land management is a very useful tool to meet many of these needs.
- There exists some capacity in Kake to do forest stewardship work- tree thinning, road work, culvert repair and harvest of non-timber forest products.
 - Non-timber forest products are a particularly promising sector for community development opportunities. Many Kake residents are skilled at harvesting berries, plants, roots, animal pelts, etc. because these activities are important components of Kake's traditional and current-day culture. Business development in this sector would be environmentally sustainable and require relatively little infrastructure.
 - The recently released USFS Transition Framework provides momentum to jump-start collaborative land management planning for the KCF.
 - The USFS Central Kupreanof Project is scheduled to provide the first stewardship contracts on the Tongass for summer 2011. This is an ideal opportunity for building collaborative stewardship in the KCF.
 - Both the land and people of Kake are well poised for restoration and healing. Of all the communities we have worked in, Kake is one of the most ready to help blaze the trail of rural Southeast Alaskan sustainability.

Foggy day in Kake

