

Addendum
Interagency Biologist Review of the Old-Growth Reserves
in the
Wrangell Island Timber Sale Project Area
December 2013

This addendum supplements the August 24, 2011 “Interagency Biologist Review of the Old-Growth Reserves in the Wrangell Island Timber Sale Project Area” (USFS 2011). At the request of the timber sale interdisciplinary team leader and the Wrangell District Ranger, biologists from the Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reviewed project area Old Growth Reserves (OGRs) to specifically look for opportunities to increase timber availability by adjusting OGRs in ways that would not weaken their conservation value, or compromise achievement of Old Growth Habitat Land Use Designation (LUD) goals and objectives. We identified two such opportunities, and make one other recommendation that we believe would improve Forest Plan compliance and eliminate ambiguity associated with the Thoms and Fools Medium Old Growth Reserves, with no net effect on the timber base. These opportunities are described below.

VCU 4760 Small OGR

The OGRs in VCUs 4760 and 4770 have been combined for computational purposes because productive old growth (POG) stands elsewhere in either VCU are small and fragmented, and the current location optimizes incorporation of OGR criteria.

Previous interagency biologists’ teams (in 2007 and 2011) avoided incorporation of an obvious stand of productive old growth (POG) at the northeast end of the reserve, even though it contained a known goshawk nest, because there were timber sale units from the Doughnut Timber Sale shown on maps of the area. We have since learned that these units were never harvested, and have been dropped because of the goshawk buffer required under the Forest Plan.

We recommend that all acres from this OGR currently mapped in VCU 4750 be moved to VCU 4760 to incorporate the goshawk nest buffer, as shown in Figure 1-1, below. This will result in an OGR for VCUs 4760 and 4770 that meets all Forest Plan acreage criteria, and better meets the non-acreage design criteria of the Forest Plan EIS, Appendix D, while removing OGR designation from nearly 500 acres (including 85 acres of productive old growth) outside Inventoried Roadless Areas in VCU 4750 (Table 1). This modification should be displayed as part of the “biologically preferred option” in the Wrangell Island Timber Sale EIS. We continue to recommend against the “Roadless” alternatives for the reasons given in the 2011 IOGR Report.

The Wrangell Island Timber Sale ID Team may find timber harvest opportunities in the area removed from the OGR, particularly for alternatives that emphasize timber production.

Figure 1-1. Recommended modification of small OGR in VCUs 4760 and 4760. Modification would incorporate known goshawk nest and existing nest buffer in 4760, and remove lands outside Inventoried Roadless Areas in VCU 4750 from the OGR.

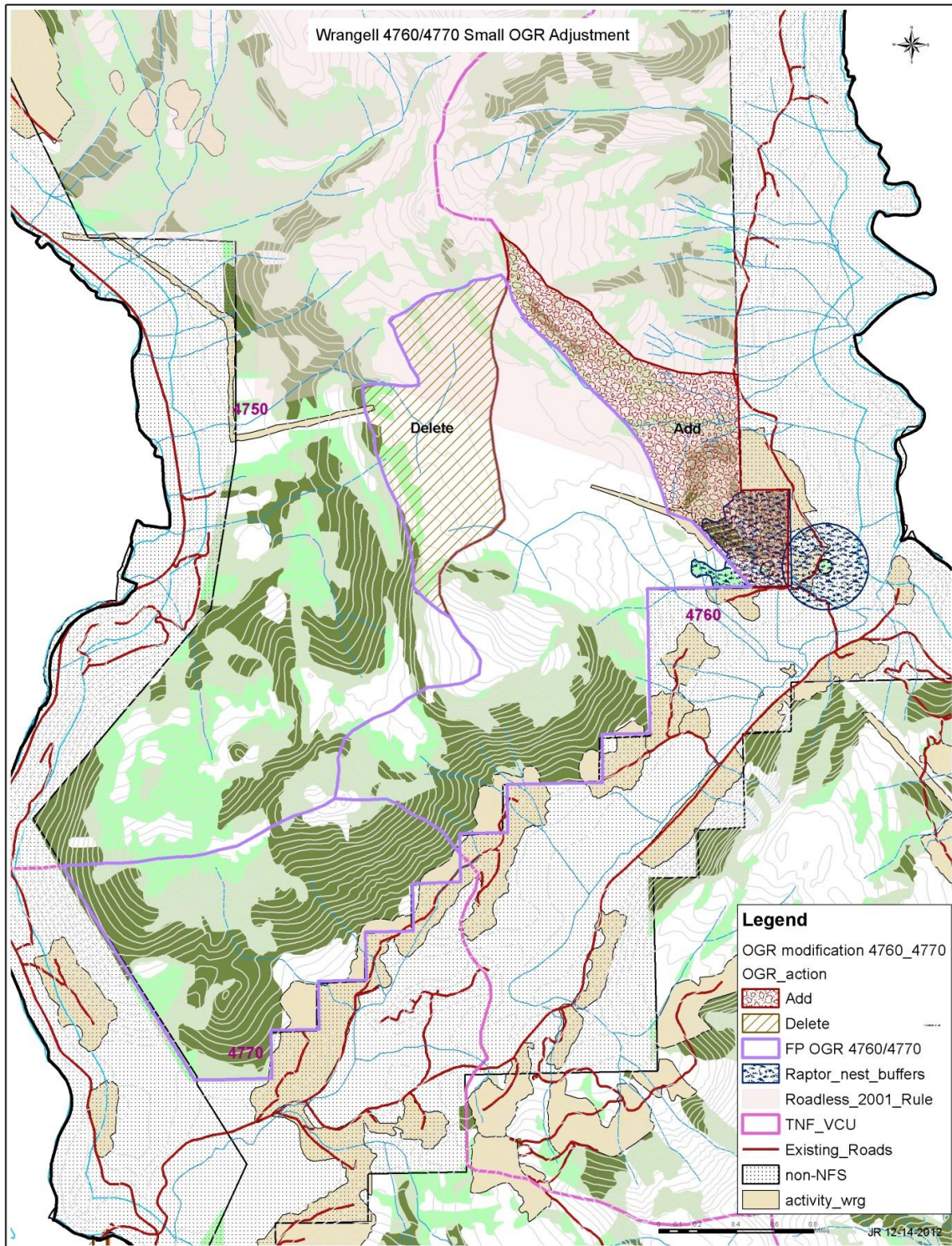


Table 1. VCU 4760/4770 IOGRs Proposed Modification

Acres/Miles	Required by FP	Existing 4760/4770 IOGR	Deleted from Existing 4760/4770 IOGR	Added to Existing 4760/4770 IOGR	Modified* 4760/4770 IOGR	% Change
Total Acres	3,093	3,098	494	486	3,090	<1%
Total POG Acres	1,547	1,646	85	278	1,866	+13%
High-POG Acres	--	902	11	105	996	+10%
Medium POG Acres		471	8	95	558	+18%
Low POG Acres	--	274	66	78	286	+4%
Acres in Roadless			186	419		

*includes 100 acre POG goshawk nest buffer with majority of addition in 2001 Roadless.

VCU 4800 Fool's Medium OGR

The Fools Medium OGR was established by the 1997 Forest Plan. It just meets minimum Forest Plan acreage criteria for productive old growth (5,027 acres currently vs. 5,000 required), but **fails to meet the minimum criteria** for high-volume productive old growth (2,082 acres currently vs. 2,500 acres required). Medium reserves are required to be “approximately 10,000 acres” total size. The existing reserve is 9,246 acres (Table 2).

The 2011 Interagency OGR team (IOGR) identified a corridor of high-volume productive old growth along Fools Creek, linking the medium reserve to the Earl West small OGR to the north, to bring the reserve up to minimum Forest Plan acreage standards (USFS 2011). We continue to support this addition as presented in 2011 (labeled “Added IOGR Size” in Figure 2).

The 2012 interagency biologists’ team identified one opportunity to modify the Fools Medium reserve in a manner that would help protect remaining connectivity between the Fools and Thoms Medium OGRs, while providing an opportunity for additional timber harvest. This modification would delete a large stand of productive old growth along the western flank of Fools Inlet from the OGR (labeled “Delete for Corridor” in Figure 2). The proposed addition (labeled “Add Corridor” in Figure 2) addresses a shortcoming of the existing Medium reserves, by linking the Fools and Thoms Medium OGRs with a protected corridor.

The proposed corridor would connect to the proposed “Thoms IOGR Addition” (Figure 2). This addition was recommended by the 2011 interagency team (USFS 2011). We continue to recommend this addition. If the addition is not approved, we recommend that the corridor proposed here be extended into VCU 4790, to provide a protected corridor the existing Thoms Medium OGR, as illustrated in Figure 2. We continue to recommend against both the “Roadless” and the “Hybrid” alternatives, for the reasons given in the 2011 IOGR Report.

Figure 2. Proposed modification of the Fools Medium OGR. This option would protect a corridor between the Fools and the Inventoried Roadless area adjacent to the Thoms Medium OGRs while allowing additional timber harvest along an existing road west of Fools Inlet.

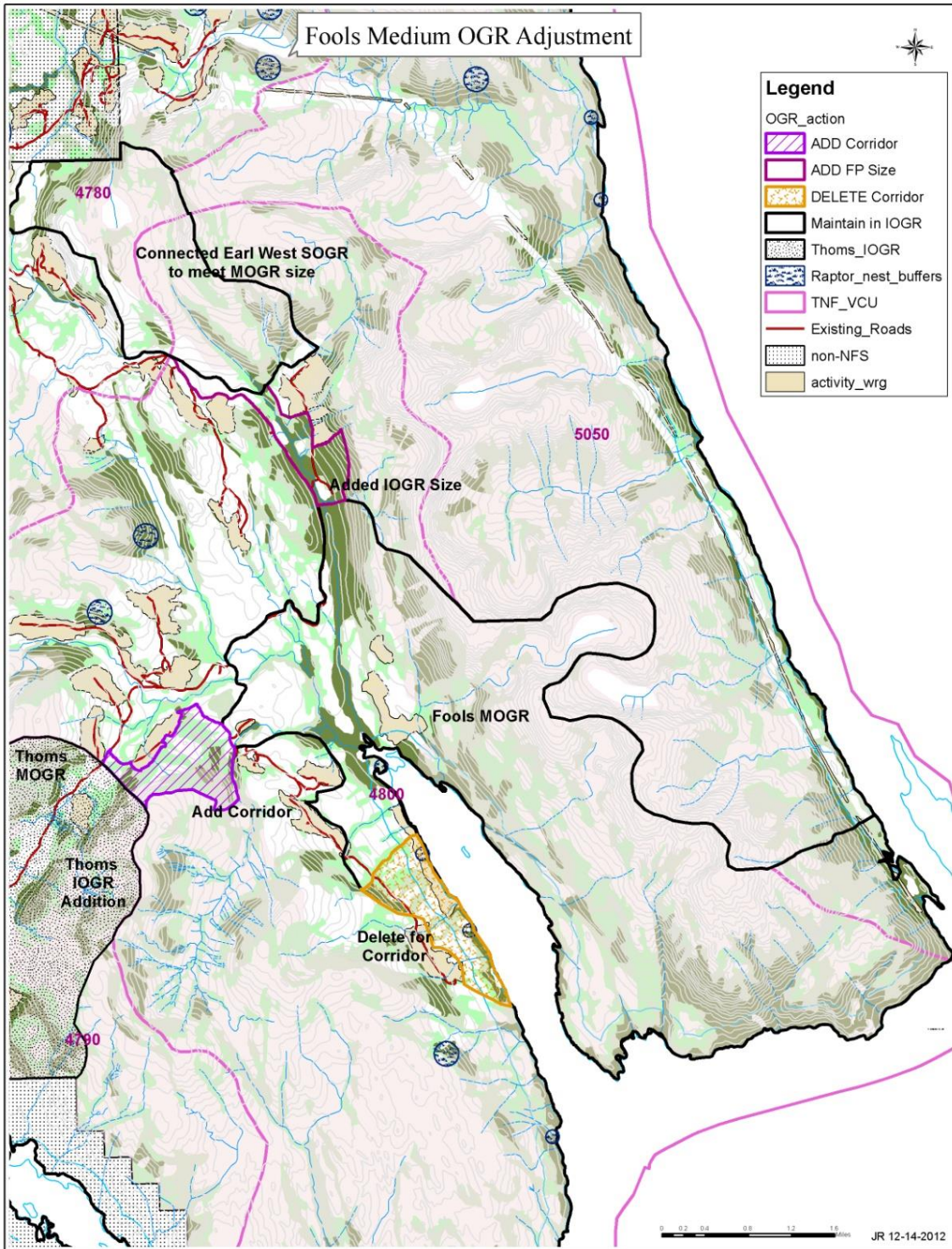


Table 2. FOOLS MEDIUM OGR Modification

Acres/Miles	Fools FP OGR	Fools IOGR*	“Functional” Fools + Earl West IOGR**	Fools + Earl West/ corridor	Deleted for corridor	Added in corridor
Total Acres	9246	9556	11426	11383	428	386
Total POG Acres	5027	5251	6024	6099	205	280
High-POG Acres	2082	2257	2516	2528	51	62
Medium POG Acres	1636	1669	1912	1880	102	70
Low POG Acres	1309	1325	1596	1692	52	148

*2009 clearcut (2012 activity layer update) removed from IOGR addition so numbers different from 2011 OGR report.

**Includes the proposed 2011 addition and Earl West small OGR to bring it up to specified FP size.

Thoms Medium/Salamander Small OGR

The 2011 interagency team found the Thoms Medium OGR in VCUs 4780 and 4790 to be short 650 acres of the required 2,500 acres of high-volume productive old growth. When combined with the adjacent Salamander Small OGR in VCU 4780, the reserve was still 180 acres short of high-volume old growth. They recommended adding acres south and east of road 6299 (Thoms Creek Road) (2011 IOGR Report, Figure 2). We continue to support this recommendation.

Even with this addition, old growth acreage in the Salamander Small OGR is required for this reserve to meet minimum Forest Plan acreage standards. Table 3, below, gives acreage for the reserve alternatives considered, with and without the contributions of the Salamander Small OGR. The location and configuration of this “combination” reserve is critical to retention of a cross-island corridor believed to be important to dispersal of many species through the central portion of the Alexander Archipelago (MacDonald and Cook, 2007).

Table 3. Acreage for the Thoms Medium OGR Alternatives, with and without contributions from the contiguous Salamander Small OGR. Inclusion of the Small OGR acres is necessary to meet Forest Plan requirements for high-volume productive old growth (POG).

Acres/Miles of Habitat	Required by FP	2008 FP Thoms OGR	Thoms 2011 IOGR	2011 Hybrid Thoms OGR
Total Acres	10,000	12,738	13,964	17,167
POG Acres	5,000	6,312	6,861	7,625
High-POG Acres	2,500	1,850	2,067	2,168
SD67 large tree		199	199	288
Total Acres w/ Salamander Small OGR		15,886	17,112	20,315
POG Acres w/ Salamander Small OGR		7,707	8,256	9,020
High-Vol POG with Salamander Small OGR		2,321	2,536	2,637
<i>Achieves OG goals & objectives</i>		N	Y	N

We continue to recommend against the “Hybrid” Thoms OGR, which incorporated various Roadless and non-Roadless blocks to achieve numerical acreage standards, as shown in Table 3. Primary shortcomings include loss of the Skip Creek corridor and reduction of west-facing, low-elevation forest habitat, deer and marten winter habitat, goshawk nesting habitat, anadromous fish habitat and riparian bear and otter habitat.

Because inclusion of the Salamander Small OGR is critical to meeting acreage requirements and functional performance of this Medium OGR under any of the alternatives considered, we recommend that the “Small” designation of the Old Growth LUD in VCU 4780 be modified to “Medium” as part of the Wrangell Timber Sale decision. Such adjustments, to bring reserves up to minimum criteria, are required by the Forest Plan and do not require a significant plan amendment (TLMP 2008, p. 3-62, Mgmt. Prescriptions WILD1, B.1. and B.3). We continue to recommend against both the “Roadless” and the “Hybrid” alternatives, for the reasons given in the 2011 IOGR Report.

Fools Medium/Earl West Small OGR

A similar situation exists with the Fools Medium OGR (VCU 4800) and the adjacent Earl West Small OGR (VCUs 4800 and 4780); specifically, the combined acreage of both reserves is necessary to meet Forest Plan minimum criteria for the Medium reserve. The 2011 IOGR team identified an area along Fools Creek that links the Medium and Small OGRs, and provides high-volume old growth to meet minimum Forest Plan standards. Without inclusion of the Earl West Small OGR, though, the reserve fails to meet the 10,000 acre total size and 2,500 acre high-volume old growth requirements. Acreage is shown in Table 4. We continue to recommend against both the “Roadless” and the “Hybrid” alternatives, for the reasons given in the 2011 IOGR Report.


Because incorporation of the Earl West Small OGR is critical to attainment of both size and functional requirements of the Fools Medium OGR, we recommend that the “Small” designation for Earl West Small OGR be formally modified, to reflect a single Medium reserve as part of the Wrangell Island Timber Sale decision.

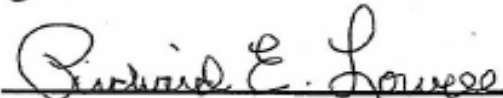
Table 4. Acreage for the Fools Medium OGR Alternatives, with and without contributions from the contiguous Earl West Small OGR. Inclusion of the Small OGR is necessary to meet Forest Plan requirements for high-volume (POG), total acres, and various design considerations (see 2011 IOGR report).

Acres/Miles	Required by FP	2008 FP Fools OGR	Fools IOGR*	Fools IOGR with Earl West Small FP OGR	Fools IOGR with Earl West Small IOGR
Total Acres	10,000	9,244	9,509	11,180	11,426
POG Acres	5,000	5,027	5,306	5,945	6,024
High-POG Acres	2,500	2,082	2,361	2,569	2,516
<i>Achieves OG goals & objectives</i>		N	N	Y	Y

This addendum reflects the recommendations of an interagency biologists' team, as the best professional judgment of the undersigned biologists.

12/17/2013
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Date

12/16/2013
U.S. Forest Service Date

12/16/2013
Alaska Department of Fish and Game Date