



# Southeast Alaska Conservation Council

2207 Jordan Ave  
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[www.seacc.org](http://www.seacc.org)

**January 3, 2023**

Thorne Bay Ranger District  
P.O. Box 19001  
1312 Federal Way  
Thorne Bay, AK, 99919-001

*Submitted electronically via portal:*  
<https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=50337>

## **Re. Prince of Wales Landscape Level Assessment Out-Year Plan, Fall 2022**

Mr. Milton,

Based in Juneau, Alaska (Tlingit/ Áak'w Kwáan lands), Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC) is a regional grassroots organization with over 7,000 supporters. For over 50 years, SEACC has been bringing together diverse Alaskans from our region's communities to protect the natural resources of Southeast Alaska, ensure sound stewardship of the lands of the region, and protect subsistence resources and traditional ways of life side-by-side with fishing, tourism and recreation.

On December 15th, SEACC attended the POW LLA Out-Year Planning session for Fall 2022. We were particularly interested in learning how the District met goals related to the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy (SASS), which prioritized recreation and restoration projects for the Tongass.

In terms of restoration projects, SEACC heard that rising costs associated with inflation rates impacted the ability of the district to purchase goods to replace or repair any of the "red pipes" that block fish passage in key areas. Given the almost 450 red pipes needing replacement, identified by POW staff during several Out-Year planning presentations, it is disappointing that no progress was made in 2022. We were happy to see the progress on restoration within the Shaheen Creek watershed, however. SEACC staff have been in that area recently and plan to visit again.

Another disappointing revelation was that some of the major recreation projects scheduled for 2022 were not accomplished, apparently mostly due to various hiring issues. Both of the two existing water routes on POW are virtually impassable due to log jams, missing portages, overgrown routes and poor signage, and have been in this state for a number of years; this is well-documented and has been reported by numerous outfitter-guides and visitors. At least one of those routes was supposed to have been repaired during 2022 (Sarkar Lake Canoe Route) but has not been logged out or brushed and apparently isn't prioritized by the District, despite high use documentation, location on the road system, and testimonials by area outfitter-guides as to the importance of the area and its appeal to visitors. While we understand that post-Covid challenges are still impacting operations, SEACC is frustrated by the Prince of Wales Island district's continuing struggle to maintain existing recreation sites, repair and replace broken or unreadable signs, and accomplish other basic seasonal field work.



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Invasive plant populations were addressed during the meeting. There are potential plans to use herbicides, including glyphosate, to control larger populations. Concern was expressed by a long-time POW resident who pointed out public outcry regarding herbicide use in the past. There were formerly plans by the Department of Transportation to spray herbicides on roadside property. A group of POW citizens fought the application of roadside herbicides; many were concerned about subsistence deer hunting and the chemicals that deer would potentially be ingesting. The District Ranger stated that these herbicides were approved by the FDA for these uses, and that sometimes other methods fail to control invasive populations. SEACC would like to be kept informed on this management topic.

SEACC would like to meet face-to-face with district or regional staff to discuss ways the POW district can meet SASS expectations and community needs in 2023. We hope to schedule a meeting soon after the holiday break.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Forest Service's work plan for Prince of Wales Island for 2023.

Respectfully,  
Maranda Hamme

Tongass Forest Program Manager

Katie Rooks, M.Sc.

Environmental Policy Analyst