



Southeast Alaska Conservation Council

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June 13, 2023

Craig Ranger District
504 9th St.

Craig, Alaska 99921-9998

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

Mark Pentecost, District Ranger

Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC) thanks the Forest Service for the opportunity to comment on the 2023 summer program of project work planned for the Prince of Wales Island Ranger District in Southeast Alaska. Members of SEACC attended a May 8th workshop online meeting about planned work. SEACC submits the following comments.

The use of herbicides, particularly herbicides which contain glyphosate or other proven cancer-causing chemicals, is an issue that many Prince of Wales Island (POW) residents have expressed concern about, particularly in areas popular for subsistence and cultural activities. One concern for subsistence users is that deer and other animals may ingest these chemicals and then that humans will ingest the animal and the chemical. Subsistence users gathering berries or other edible plants could come in direct contact with herbicides. Other concerns generally have to do with the chemical leaching into watersheds and contaminating soil, water, and harming biological resources.

Regarding the recreation program, SEACC members heard positive things about what is to come in terms of new facilities and improvements at the El Capitan site and Sarkar Lake Canoe Route. However, SEACC is disappointed that there is still a look of neglect and dilapidation to most signs and many of the recreation grounds and facilities. We hope that the new Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy (SASS)-focused funding will help resolve this ongoing situation during 2023 and improve the look and feel of recreation facilities on POW. SEACC also sees contract opportunities for accomplishing field work in recreation.

Regarding restoration and resilience, SEACC members heard that during 2022, no culvert or fish passage restoration work was accomplished. The reason cited was that inflation caused construction materials costs to rise above viable thresholds. Apparently, there were some road contracts that did get awarded last year; during the May meeting, we heard mention of a Ketchikan-based contract outfit. If work is necessary on POW that cannot be accomplished by any contract outfit on the island, this is certainly understandable. What SEACC would like to understand is where the opportunities are for local contractor use and expansion within Forest Service project work. If there are tasks here that no local contractor is poised to accomplish, this is where SASS-funded workforce development support is important. If Tribal crews or any POW crew can learn from more skilled contractors that have already been working in restoration, then some workforce opportunities exist here which can be tapped for future restoration work on POW. If these opportunities are already working, SEACC would love the opportunity to support these projects and provide some positive press showcasing these efforts on POW.

SEACC requested specifics about engineering contracts from the POW district today, June 13th, and a staff member called and was about to send some information on past contracts. However, that staff member called back to let us know that a higher-level Forest Service



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employee had instructed them not to send that information. We would like to meet with the POW District Ranger and discuss opportunities for positive public relations that may result from a greater degree of transparency, particularly regarding economic investments that the Forest Service has made here on POW.

Maranda Hamme, SEACC Forest Program Manager

Katie Rooks, SEACC Environmental Policy Analyst