

"... Community participation will legitimize the work of ecological restoration and bring to the table numerous resources, such as: local knowledge, workforce capacity (contractor and volunteer), funding support, and place-based roots that can lend a project long-term stability..." **TWS / SEAWEAD**

(Christensen) 2012, Forest Restoration in the Tongasss

Watershed Restoration Priorities A Strategic Plan for the Sitka Community Use Area

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to maximize the potential of watershed restoration efforts to meet community and ecological priorities in the Sitka Community Use Area. It serves as a resource to guide the efforts of the multiple management agencies, organizations, and individuals that are collaborating on the restoration of forest and aquatic habitats. Specifically, it will help identify individual communitysupported project areas that are potential candidates for funding opportunities.

Strategic Planning for watershed restoration is not new in Southeast Alaska. Prior efforts have primarily focused on assessing the ecological needs for restoration, while integrating social priorities has been a challenge. This Plan augments and builds on those efforts by integrating the ecological assessments with a simple tool for measuring local social priorities - a survey. The result is a priority list of watersheds

specific for the Sitka Community Use Area (the SCUA).

This Plan differs from past efforts in that it elevates the importance of community input in the prioritization process. At the planning table, we do a good job of involving stakeholders and decision-makers - people whose jobs are to be at the table. But we can do a better job involving the general pubic.

There are significant benefits to integrating social and ecological priorities, and investing restoration dollars where these priorities overlap. When people are involved Choosing Priority Watersheds



the sweet spot invest time and money here



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in the selection process, they feel more ownership in the outcomes of a project, are more likely to support projects, and feel more engaged in resource stewardship. Additionally, funders will be more likely to support projects that demonstrate strong community support.

Engaging the community at all levels of resource stewardship - planning, implementation, monitoring, and learning - can have huge benefits for project success. Projects can be proposed that meet community priorities. The public will have a greater understanding of, and increased support for projects. Additional resources can be utilized such as funding, local and traditional knowledge, and volunteers to ensure project success.

Priorities Map

This map shows the watershed restoration priorities, in the Sitka Community Use Area, that were first identified by ecological criteria and then prioritized through a community survey. For the 132 respondents that selected priorities (multiple selections allowed), the shading shows the number of responses for each location. Survey participants were asked which of 18 places should, "be a focus for forest and/or stream restoration". This map also shows the locations that survey respondents wrote in as "other locations" (Kizuchia Creek, Camp Coogan, Starrigavan -Granite Creek - Indian River, and Catherine Island)

The top six priorities were:

- Katlian River
- Nakwasina River
- Iris Meadows Shelikof
- Fish Bay
- Nakwasina Passage and Sound

Methods

This Plan prioritized watersheds using both ecological and social criteria. The schematic on the next page shows how watersheds were chosen and prioritized.

There are approximately 93 watershed planning areas in the SCUA. This includes both public and private land. A "watershed planning area" can include more than one watershed. For this report, we will use the these two terms interchangeably.

The next step was to narrow down the selection of watersheds that had restoration needs. To do this, we integrated the significant body of work that has



Schematic showing how watersheds were chosen and prioritized.

taken place to assess ecological restoration priorities. We integrated information from three sources: the US Forest Service Watershed Condition Framework (WCF), the Audubon / Nature Conservancy Conservation Assessment, and the ecological component of The Wilderness Society (TWS) / SEAWEAD Assessment.

The reason for integrating multiple assessments is that each was designed to satisfy different goals, used different criteria, and were assessed at different spatial scales. Integrating all three maximizes their strengths and provides a thorough assessment of ecological needs. Each has inherent strengths and limitations including:

- The Watershed Condition Framework (WCF) was designed to assess watersheds across the entire National Forest system. Therefore, some factors are not locally relevant, such as wildfire and rangeland vegetation. Also, the WCF weighs aquatic habitat more than upland forest habitats.
- The **Conservation Assessment** was primarily designed to identify opportunities to conserve pristine watersheds.
- The recently completed TWS/SEAWEAD Assessment combines both ecological and social criteria. It is a flexible assessment system that was designed to incorporate new knowledge (such as the community survey) and be used as a tool to inform collaborative decision-making and increase the level of community engagement.

We integrated these three assessments by including the watersheds that each assessment identified as having restoration needs. The table in the Appendix compares the three assessments. Differences in spatial scales (e.g. the WCF usually had higher resolution) and



The Sitkoh River Restoration Project was completed in the Summer of 2012. This project is an excellent example of how community priorities can drive the development of restoration partnerships that make things happen. After being identified as a community priority in 2009, the Sitka Conservation Society and Trout Unlimited then secured \$145,000 additional funds from the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund and others to add to the project.

nomenclature (e.g. names that would confuse the general public) were adjusted based on local knowledge. From this filter we ended up with 18 watersheds to include in the survey.

The survey went through multiple revisions based on input from 2 pilot studies and review by 11 individuals. Input from members of the Sitka Collaborative Stewardship Group, staff from Sustainable Northwest, the Tongass National Forest, and others were used in developing the survey. The final survey is included in the appendix to this report.

We solicited responses by publishing an insert in the Friday edition of the Daily Sitka Sentinel. Estimated readership is 2000. We collected responses in October and November 2012. Respondents had the options to submit survey responses online through *Survey Monkey*, return surveys to boxes at local coffee shops or the office of Sitka Conservation Society, or mail them (respondents supplied the stamp). We received a total of 226 surveys.

Because the Sitka Conservation Society (SCS) is engaged in watershed restoration advocacy, we strove to minimize influencing the survey towards specific areas or attitudes. We also wanted to understand the attitudes and priorities for Sitka, not just our membership. These were the primary reasons for using the local newspaper as our vehicle for soliciting responses, as opposed to face-to-face solicitations. Over two-thirds of the survey respondents were not SCS members.

Survey Results

The map on page 2 shows the watershed priorities identified by the survey results. The three highest priorities were Katlian River (72% of respondents selected Katlian), Nakwasina River (54%) and Iris Meadows - Shelikof (52%).

The table on this page is another way of presenting the data. One-hundred thirty two, or 59%, of survey respondents selected watersheds or places they felt should be a focus for restoration. An additional 71 respondents did not select specific places.

In the survey design, we intentionally chose to not provide detailed information, describe restoration

Watershed or "place"	% of respondents that selected			
Katlian River	72%			
Nakwasina River	54%			
Iris Meadows - Shelikof	52%			
Fish Bay	42%			
Nakwasina Passage	41%			
Nakwasina Sound	41%			
Appleton Cove	37%			
Rodman Bay	37%			
False Island - Todd	35%			
Sitkoh Bay	33%			
Sitkoh Lake and Creek	31%			
Krestof Sound	28%			
Ushk Bay	27%			
Eagle River	24%			
Kelp Bay - Portage Arm	23%			
Fick Cove	17%			
Gilmer Bay	17%			
Duffield Peninsula	15%			
Starrigavan and Granite Creeks and Indian River	6%			
Kizuchia Creek, Catherine Island,	2% or less for			
Camp Coogan Bay	each			

Of the 132 respondents that selected priority places, this table shows the percentage of those respondents that selected each place

needs, or even provide a map for each place. We wanted respondents to select places based solely on their personal experiences, knowledge, and values.

Attitudes towards restoration

In addition to prioritizing places, we also wanted to understand people's general attitudes toward and support for restoration work. The vast majority of respondents felt that restoring forests and streams was important work.

Responses are shown in the charts on the following page. Responses were on a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Two-hundred twenty three people responded to these questions.



I have a good understanding of forest and stream restoration. Rating average = 2.17



Restoration activities can provide economic benefits to our community. Rating average = 1.65



Restoring streams and fish habitat is important. Rating average = 1.47



Restoring forests and wildlife habitat is important. Rating average = 1.52



Proportion of survey participants that selected each use or value they place on the Sitka Community Use Area. n = 220

Landscape Values

We also wanted to learn how people value the landscape. This information is invaluable to resource managers and agencies because it identifies the activities and values that are the most meaningful to local residents. When planning projects or long-term priorities, resource managers can make better-informed decisions about how to balance the potentially competing interests of recreation, subsistence, resource extraction, ecosystem services, and others.

From a provided list, survey participants indicated the ways (multiple responses allowed) they "use, depend upon, or value the Sitka Community Use Area". Recreational, subsistence, and quality of life values were the most popular responses, as shown in the figure on the previous page.

Conclusion

By integrating prior assessments with a local survey, this Plan provides a powerful tool to inform collaborative decision-making about where to invest the next restoration dollar in the Sitka Community Use Area. We hope this effort will be replicated in other communities as well. Dependent upon local circumstances and objectives, we estimate replicating this Plan in other communities would have a total cost of \$5000 at the most, and potentially much less.

However, this Plan is certainly not the final word. It should be refined and improved as more information becomes available. Restoration priorities should also be ground-truthed to verify our knowledge of specific places. And the public should be provided ample opportunities to stay engaged in all stages of the process.

For More Information

- US Forest Service Watershed Condition
 Framework can be accessed at <u>http://www.fs.fed.us/publications/watershed/</u>, including an interactive map and technical guide
- Audubon / The Nature Conservancy Conservation Assessment can be accessed at <u>http://home.gci.</u> <u>net/~tnc/</u>
- The Wilderness Society / SEAWEAD Assessment can be accessed at <u>http://www. sustainablesoutheast.net/documents/Tongassforest-restoration-low-rez.pdf</u>



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Appendix: Table comparing ecological assessment priorities

This table compares how the three ecological assessment score or prioritize watersheds. For all watersheds within the SCUA, this table includes those that meet at least one of the following criteria:

- identified by the US Forest Service Watershed Condition Framework as "priority"
- identifed by the TWS/SEAWEAD Assessment with "cumulative restoration need" scores of 2 or higher

 identified by the Audubon/ TNC Assessment as "high values and restoration opportunities"
 This table also shows the challenge with integrating different systems for delineating watershed boundaries.

From this list, the only watersheds NOT included in the survey were (with justifications):

- Deadman Reach (not a priority for 2 assessments)
- Kizuchia Creek (not a WCF priority and lower TWS score)
- Starrigavan Valley (limited future restoration opportunities)

	watersheds delineated by HUC-12 system		watersheds delineated by VCU system			
local name	USFS WCF Assessment			TWS	Audubon	
	HUC12 Name	Priority Score		VCU Name	Score	Opportunity
Appleton Cove	Appleton Cove	No	1.5	Appleton Cove	3	Yes
Deadman Reach	Deadman Reach-Frontal Peril Strait	No	1.3	Deadman Reach	2	No
Duffield Peninsula	190102030904-Duffield Peninsula	Yes	1.5	Peschani Point	3	Yes
Eagle River	Sukoi Inlet-Frontal Krestof Sound	Yes	1.3	Sukoi Inlet / N. Krestof S	0	No
	Peril Strait-Frontal Chatham Strait	Yes	1.5	False Island	3	Yes
False Island - Todd				Cozian Reef	2	No
				Catherine Island	0	Yes
Fick Cove	South Arm Hoonah Sound- Frontal Hoonah Sound	No	1.5	Fick Cove	3	No
	Fish Bay Creek	Yes	1.5			
Fish Bay	190102030604	No	1.2	Fish Bay	2	No
- Tish Buy	Fish Bay-Frontal Peril Strait	No	1.1	n Sh Buy		
Gilmer Bay	Gilmer Bay-Frontal Pacific Ocean	No	1.3	Gilmer Bay	3	No
Iris Meadows -	Iris Meadows	Yes	1.5			No
Shelikof	Shelikof Bay-Frontal Pacific Ocean	No	1.3	Shelikof Bay	2	
	Katlian River	Yes	1.7	Katlian Bay - North	2	Yes
Katlian River	Katlian Bay-Frontal Sitka Sound	No	1.5	Katlian Bay - South	2	No
Kelp Bay - Portage	Hanus Bay-Frontal Peril Strait	No	1.3	Kelp Bay - Portage	3	Yes
Arm	Portage Arm-Frontal Kelp Bay	No	1.5	Arm	,	103
Krestof Sound	Krestof Sound-Frontal Sitka Sound	Yes	1.5	Krestof Sound	0	No
Nakwasina Passage	Mount Rosenberg-Frontal Nakwasina Passage	No	1.4	Nakwasina Passage	3	No
Nakwasina River	190102032301- Annahootz Mountain	Yes	1.5	Nakwasina River	3	Yes
Nakwasina Sound	Nakwasina Sound-Frontal Olga Strait	No	1.4	Nakwasina Sound	4	Yes
	Rodman Creek	Yes	1.6		3	Yes
Rodman Bay	Rodman Bay-Frontal Peril Strait	No	1.5	Rodman Bay		
Kizuchia Creek	Redoubt Bay-Frontal Sitka Sound	No	1.4	Redoubt Bay	1	Yes
	190102030801	Yes	1.5			
Sitkoh Bay	Sitkoh Bay-Frontal Peril Strait	No	1.2	Sitkoh Bay	3	Yes
Sitkoh Lake and Creek	Sitkoh Creek	Yes	1.3	Sitkoh Lake	3	Yes
Starrigavan Valley	Sitka Sound-Frontal Pacific Ocean	Yes	1.3	Sitka / Indian River	0	Yes
Ushk Bay	Ushk Bay-Frontal Peril Strait	Yes	1.2	Ushk Bay 0		No

 Ecological assessments have identified the following areas in the Sitka Community Use Area as having restoration needs. Place a check next to any of the places below that you feel need to be a focus for forest and/or stream restoration. 					
Appleton Cove Kelp Bay - Portage Duffield Peninsula Krestof Sound Eagle River Nakwasina False Island - Todd Passage Fick Cove Nakwasina River Fish Bay Nakwasina Sound Gilmer Bay Sitkoh Bay					
Shelikof Katlian River Other area					
Other area I don't know or don't have specific priorities					
7. How did you learn about this survey?8. Any comments?					

Place stamp here

Sitka Conservation Society

Sitka, AK 99835

Box 6533

:

Sitka Conservation Society Box 6533 Sitka, AK 99835 SURVEY

Attitudes and Priorities for Forest and Stream Restoration

IN THE

SITKA COMMUNITY USE AREA





Protecting the natural environment of the Tongass while supporting the development of sustainable communities in Southeast Alaska

PURPOSE:

The Sitka Conservation Society (SCS) wants to know your priorities and attitudes for restoring forests and streams in Southeast Alaska.

Your responses will help SCS prioritize locations for restoration activities, and guide our efforts in working with the US Forest Service and other organizations in seeking funding for restoration, and ensuring restoration activities address community priorities and interests.

RESTORATION IS:

Examples of restoration include:

- removing or replacing culverts that block fish passage
- placing logs in streams to improve fish habitat
- thinning forests to improve habitat for deer and other wildlife
- fixing road/stream problems

HOW TO COMPLETE:

Choose one of these options:

 Return this survey to a drop-box at one of the following locations: SCS office (above Old Harbor Books) Highliner Coffee

4 J's Coffee

- Kruz-off Espresso
- 2. Put a stamp on it and mail it.
- 3. Complete the survey online at: <u>https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/</u> restoration-sitka

All respondents will remain anonymous To see survey results, follow <u>www.sitkawild.org</u> Please complete the survey ONLY ONCE! THANK YOU! 1. Do you live in Sitka (or surrounding community/location) for at least 3 months each year?



3. In what ways do you use, depend upon, or value the Sitka Community Use Area shown on the front page? Check all that apply.

subsistence hunting, fishing, collecting

- hiking, camping, visiting cabins
- tourism (non-hunting, non-fishing)

charter fishing







sport or recreational fishing

- wood products personal use, work, firewood
- cultural, aesthetic, and/or spiritual
- environmental quality such as clean air and water

other - please list:

 Please rank each statement on a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) or NA (no opinion/don't know).

Circle your answer

	strongly agree	agree	neu	ıtral	c ag	lis- gree	stron disag	igly ree do	no opinion/ on't know
	1	2		3		4	5		NA
	I have a g understar forest and restoratio	ood nding of d stream on		1	2	3	4	5	NA
	Restoring and fish h importan	streams abitat is t	5	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	Restoring wildlife ha importan	forests abitat is t	and	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	Restoratio can provi benefits t communi	on activi de econo to our ty	ties omic	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	Restoration can provision and socia our comm	on activi de cultu l benefit nunity	ties ral s to	1	2	3	4	5	NA
	In areas v managem such as lo importan the needs and fores	vith past nent hist ogging, it t to asse s for stre t restora	ory is ss am tion	1	2	3	4	5	NA
E Are you a member of the Sitka Concernation							ation		

5. Are you a member of the Sitka Conservation Society?

Used for statistical purposes only



NO