

Operating Plan/Statement of Work

I. Project Description:

Alaska Geographic and the Chugach School District will work in close collaboration with the US Forest Service and other land managers in Prince William Sound to remediate the impacts of recreation and commercial use in order to restore native habitats along coastal uplands, in ANCSA 14(h)(1) sensitive cultural sites, and within designated recreation sites in specific areas of Western Prince William Sound.

The Chugach National Forest has identified priority areas of Prince William Sound in need of restoration work and clean-up of recreational impacts. Project locations and areas were identified by the Forest Service and partners based on known existing impacts in need of remediation, as well as being better suited to volunteer crews traveling by kayak than boat-based Forest Service crews. The projects will be completed by 2 crews of 12-15 high school students and trip leaders traveling by sea kayak and wilderness camping for approximately 10 days each, with water taxi support for drop off and pick up from Whittier at the start and end of the trip. Collected debris and trash will be stashed in areas reachable by boat and removed by USFS vessels. Youth volunteers will be recruited from all Prince William Sound communities, Anchorage, and the Kenai Peninsula.

PROJECT NEEDS AND LOCATIONS:

Lighthouse Point to Eshamy Bay

This area sees regular recreation and sport and commercial fishing. USFS has documented abandoned fishing gear, litter, unauthorized structures, invasive species, and impacts to soils and vegetation.

The area includes State lands, several 14(h)(1) heritage sites managed by Chugach Alaska Corporation, and Exxon Valdez Oil Spill acquired lands.

Work priorities will be informed by Forest Service specialists in conjunction with other land managers. Duties will include coastal uplands garbage removal, restoration, and monitoring/removal of invasive species. The work will improve heritage values, water quality, recreation opportunities, wilderness character, and wildlife habitat.

Culross Passage to Blackstone Bay

Culross Passage sees some of the heaviest recreational boating traffic in Prince William Sound, with many visitors stopping ashore for dog walks, bathroom breaks, or sightseeing. It is also popular among bear hunters, fishers, campers, and kayakers. It is an area of persistent resource damage, including garbage, unauthorized structures, improperly disposed human waste, improper food storage, and damage to vegetation and soils.

Blackstone Bay is among the most popular areas in western Prince William Sound for independent and commercial kayak camping. Other uses include recreational boating, fishing, jet-ski tours, tour boat visits, and bear hunting. Trash, damaged soils and vegetation, improperly disposed human waste, and associated litter are common resource concerns.

These volunteer youth crews will visit the area in 2023 to perform coastal uplands clean-up and restoration and maintenance of hardened campsites, trails, and other amenities in the area. Clean-up will include improperly disposed human waste and associated trash, which are

common in this area, often in or close to streams. The work will improve public health and safety, water quality, recreation experience and economy, and wilderness character in the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area.

II. The Forest Service Shall:

- Provide agency staff to work collaboratively with AK Geographic on the overall planning, coordination, and implementation of the PWS Youth Stewardship
- Provide expertise for program development, content, and review.
- Inform Alaska Geographic staff and trip leaders in a timely manner with the details and necessary logistics of performing the specific work projects.
- Provide Alaska Geographic staff, trip leaders, and youth participants with guidance and skills training necessary to complete projects.
- Work with Alaska Geographic staff early in the year to schedule project timing in a way that accounts for tides and other environmental conditions and for availability of necessary Forest Service support staff.
- To a degree that is practical and desired by the partner, provide AK Geographic youth participants with education on Prince William Sound, Chugach National Forest, career opportunities, and other topics.

III. The Cooperator Shall:

- Recruitment of diverse youth from local communities for participation in the youth stewardship projects.
- Provide supervision, support, and training of the youth crew for the duration of the project
- Plan for and arrange all logistics associated with the successful completion of the project by the youth crew.
- Be responsible for the health, safety, and well-being of youth participants during program execution ensuring they have appropriate field gear to stay comfortable and safe while in the out of doors. This includes overseeing risk management for the program.
- Track measurable accomplishments of this project, including:
 - Locations and descriptions of site impacts and stewardship actions completed
 - Number of volunteers, including communities represented, volunteer hours, and demographics
 - Measurable impacts to youth volunteers which may include changes in awareness, understanding and interest in public lands, recreation, and natural and cultural resources stewardship

IV. Goals & Objectives:

Through teams of trained local youth volunteers, remediate resource impacts caused by recreation and other human use; naturalizing and protecting sites; and removing trash in priority sites of Prince William Sound identified by the USFS in conjunction with other land managers in the area.

VI. Tasks and Timeline:

The tasks and general timeline for this project are as follows:

- Fall 2022 – Planning for summer 2023 PWS Youth Stewardship Crew. Determine trip dates.
- Winter 2022/2023 – Recruitment of youth participants
- March 2023 – Final logistics confirmed
- Summer 2023 – PWS Youth Stewardship work

VII. Long Term Benefits:

In addition to accomplishing measurable improvements in cultural, natural, and recreation resources associated with managing for ecosystem health, this project also addresses high priorities identified by Forest Service leadership on the Chugach—maintaining the Wilderness Character of the Chugach through collaboration with partners and citizen stewards. As Forest Service funding for the maintenance of recreation facilities and stewardship of wilderness character in the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area has decreased, partnership opportunities like this help to address these stewardship needs.

An additional benefit to the National Forest is the success that programs like this has had in inspiring stewards in younger generations—both rural and urban in the Chugach region. National trends raise concerns that diverse younger generations are increasingly disconnected from nature and public lands—this program is proving successful in raising awareness and participation of diverse local youth in public lands stewardship and recreation.