

File Code: 2320, 1010

Date: July 22, 2025

Route To: File

Subject: Forest Order – Cube Cove Blasting - Admiralty Island National Monument, Alaska

From: Monique Nelson – Forest Supervisor

I have decided to issue an order imposing a closure of an area within the vicinity of Cube Cove and Ward creek on Admiralty Island National Monument, Tongass National Forest in order to protect public health and safety.

This order closes all public use on National Forest System Road #SHA0273 and areas within 0.5 mile of this corridor starting at milepost 0.0 (former site of the Cube Cove Log Transfer Facility) to Ward Creek. It also closes all public use on roads and areas within 0.5 miles of any road in the entire Ward Creek drainage. This Order shall be in effect from July 22, 2025, through September 2nd, 2025, unless rescinded sooner. This is the period when the blasting operations are anticipated to occur.

The legacy road system within the Cube Cove Restoration Project area has not been open to motorized use since the US Forest Service purchased the parcels (22,890 acres between 2016 and 2020), but recent road clearing has made it accessible. The Cube Cove mainline road (SHA0273) extends from the LTF to the Ward Creek bridge, but an extensive road system remains throughout five drainages. USFS public use cabins on Lake Kathleen and Lake Florence are primarily reached by floatplane.

The order is necessary to ensure public health and safety. As part of an aquatic restoration project, explosive material will be transported and staged along the mainline road before being deployed at multiple sites throughout the Ward Creek drainage. The closure is intended to prevent access by and disturbance to the public on and around the mainline road and the entire Ward Creek drainage. The activities may incur falling trees, airborne debris, landslides, and sudden loud noise which could compromise safety.

This decision reflects the documentation in the Cube Cove Restoration Environmental Assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Moreover, I have also concluded that this action also fits within a categorical exclusion to NEPA. It falls within the category identified in 7 CFR 1b.4(c)(19) – prohibitions to provide short-term resource protection or to protect public health and safety – and does not require documentation in a decision memo, decision notice, or record of decision. There are no extraordinary circumstances associated with this forest order. Implementation of the decision may begin immediately.

Scoping was completed during the NEPA process in the spring of 2021, 2022, and summer of 2022.

This Order includes an exemption for persons with a permit from the Forest Service specifically authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission. All requests for a permit authorized by this exemption must be submitted to the Monument Ranger at 8510 Mendenhall Loop Rd, Juneau, AK 99801. The criteria for granting written authorization from the use restrictions will be as follows:

1. The applicant must provide a reasonable explanation for the need for an exemption from the use restrictions.
2. I or my delegate must determine that the risk to public health and safety is reasonable considering the circumstances of the request.
3. Whether the exemption will benefit the Forest Service or the public in general.

The written authorization may only exempt the applicant from certain use restrictions or from a circumscribed portion of the use restriction area. If I am unavailable at the time a request is received, I hereby grant the Deputy Forest Supervisor, Admiralty Island Monument Ranger, and the Juneau District Ranger, the authority to sign any written authorizations exempting persons from these use restrictions. Examples of permissible exemptions may include a tribe that requests exemption to allow its members to practice or participate in traditional activities such as collecting native foods or medicine, provided that these activities take place when blasting is not ongoing or there are other measures in place that make the exemption permissible (i.e., spatial separation from any blasting operations).

Monique Nelson
Forest Supervisor
Tongass National Forest

Enclosure- Forest Order No. **10-05-34-25-11**