

Title: Tongass Submerged Lands Reference Map Briefing Paper

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Issue: Proposed Tongass National Forest (submerged lands) federal subsistence locations listed in the [proposed rule](#) are approximate. Resource Advisory Council (RAC) members and other stakeholders are unable to locate the proposed subsistence locations.

Background:

The proposed rule, published in the Federal Register on May 12th, 2022, lists 162 proposed subsistence locations. The proposed rule location list includes site name, U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Chart Number or meridian name, area description, and approximate latitude and longitude coordinates.

Many area descriptions include a legal description of lands reserved by the federal government (typically intended for aids to navigation). It is difficult for a layperson to translate a legal description into a discrete map location. The latitude and longitude coordinates provided in the proposed rule are approximate and rounded to the nearest half minute. These locations frequently plot a mile or more from the intended location. For these reasons, RAC members and other stakeholders have difficulty understanding the actual proposed locations.

Recommendation:

In August of 2022 Greg Risdahl, Alaska Region Subsistence Program Leader, requested reference maps that provide the actual proposed subsistence locations. Alaska Region Information Management used the following methodology to develop a series of 162 reference maps:

- Modified approximate coordinate locations to match listed legal descriptions
- Depicted legal description survey on map (sourced from BLM)
- Used aids to navigation listed on pre-statehood U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Chart aids to navigation to refine locations

Because the map maker used some interpretation and assumption when improving the location accuracy, the maps list the locations as “approximate”. Additionally, because these maps are unofficial and not part of the proposed or final rule, each map features the following OGC reviewed map disclaimer:

Map Disclaimer: This map was produced as helpful reference material to accompany a proposed rule and therefore are necessarily non-final and subject to change. This map is intended for informational purposes only and may not be used to determine title, ownership, legal boundaries, or legal jurisdiction. The USDA Forest Service makes no warranty, expressed, or implied regarding the data displayed on this map, and reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace information.

The final reference map PDF document is available in Box (internal only) here:

<https://usfs.box.com/s/zbtncslcg3bsmdnrwrigh7d6ij9hjkxt8>

Note that the 162+ page PDF document is 50MB in size and may take a few moments to open.