

# CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

## Meeting Agenda Sustainability Commission

**Officers:** Chair Aurora Taylor, Vice Chair Elizabeth Bagley, Secretary Erik de Jong

**Members:** Gerry Hope, Adam Vail

**Staff Liaison:** Bri Gabel, Sustainability Coordinator

**Assembly Liaison:** Tim Pike

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**Monday, May 4, 2026**

**6:00 p.m.**

**Harrigan Centennial Hall**

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**I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

**II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA**

**III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES**

Approve the April 6, 2026 minutes.

**IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD** (*not to exceed 3 minutes on topics off the agenda*)

**V. SPECIAL REPORTS**

Southeast Alaska Conservation Council

**VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

**A.** Approve the CBS comments on the Tongass Preliminary Draft Plan Content

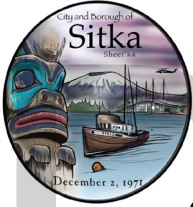
**B.** Appoint a Commissioner(s) to serve on the Sitka Community Renewable Energy Strategy (SCRES) Team

**VIII. PERSONS TO BE HEARD** (*not to exceed 3 minutes on topics on or off the agenda*)

**IX. REPORTS** (*Staff, Chair, Assembly, Commissioners*)

**X. SET NEXT MEETING DATE AND AGENDA**

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**



# CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

## Meeting Minutes Sustainability Commission

**Officers:** Chair Aurora Taylor, Vice Chair Elizabeth Bagley, Secretary Erik de Jong

**Members:** Gerry Hope, Adam Vail

**Staff Liaison:** Bri Gabel, Sustainability Coordinator

**Assembly Liaison:** Tim Pike

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Monday, April 6, 2026

6:00 p.m.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

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### I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

**Chair Taylor called the meeting to order at approximately 6:06 p.m.**

**Present:** Aurora Taylor (Chair), Elizabeth Bagley (left at 7:04 p.m.), Erik de Jong, Adam Vail, Tim Pike (Assembly Liaison)

**Absent:** Gerry Hope (Excused)

**Staff:** Bri Gabel (Sustainability Coordinator), Sara Peterson (Municipal Clerk), Holley Bayne (Deputy Municipal Clerk)

**Public:** None

### II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

No changes.

### III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

Approve the November 3, 2025 minutes.

**Bagley moved to approve the November 3, 2025 minutes.  
Motion PASSED 4-0 by voice vote.**

Approve the January 5, 2026 minutes.

**Bagley moved to approve the January 5, 2026 minutes.  
Motion PASSED 4-0 by voice vote.**

### IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(not to exceed 3 minutes on topics off the agenda)*

None.

### V. SPECIAL REPORTS

#### **Municipal Clerk's Office – Boards, Commissions, and Committees Training**

The Municipal Clerks provided training for Commissioners on the roles of the Commission as an advisory body, agenda preparation, meeting process, parliamentary procedure including Robert's Rules of Order, complying with Alaska Open Meetings Act, and provided additional resources. Commissioners thanked the Clerks for their support and appreciated the training.

## VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

### A. Amend The Sustainability Commission Bylaws

Taylor summarized the amendments to the bylaws that clarified the Commission's intent to alternate between regular meetings and work sessions at their regular meeting time.

**Bagley moved to amend the Sustainability Commission's Bylaws Article IV: Meetings by changing A: Regular Meetings to Normal Meeting Time, adding B: Regular Meetings, C: Work Sessions, E: Alaska Open Meetings Act Compliance and moving E: Special Meetings to D, B: Quorum to F and D: Informal Working Groups to G.**

**Motion PASSED 4-0 by voice vote.**

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

### B. Approve the Sustainability Commission 2026-2027 Work Plan Goals

Pike inquired how the discussion about human-bear conflicts with food waste and how that might align with Goal 3: Continue collaborating with city staff on strategic management of municipal solid waste. Taylor summarized the public discussion bear resistant containers hosted by Assembly Members Christianson and Saline in January which included the possibility of a pilot study of bear resistant containers funded by the Baranof Island Housing Authority and Fortress of the Bear, and expressed interest in supporting the Assembly in facilitating the conversation. de Jong also expressed interest but was concerned that it may distract from preparing for the solid waste contract expiration in 2032. Bagley clarified that as written, the goal was not specific to a certain solid waste issue and could encompass both. Commissioners concluded that the bear challenge, at its core, was a solid waste issue, and that with Goal 3 as written positioned the Commission given the direction to do so by the Assembly.

**Bagley moved to approve the 2026-2027 Work Plan goals as written below and next steps as published in the draft work plan document:**

- 1. Continue supporting sustainable municipal operations**
- 2. Continue exploring a regional approach to sustainability**
- 3. Continue collaborating with city staff on strategic management of municipal solid waste**
- 4. Continue finalizing the Sitka Community Renewable Energy Strategy (SCRES)**

**Motion PASSED 4-0 by voice vote.**

### C. Approve the Sustainability Commission 2025-2026 Work Plan Document

Gabel introduced the item and summarized changes made to the document as suggested in the March work session, primarily the inclusion of a page that outlined the Commission's intent to alternate between regular meetings and work sessions at its regular meeting time. She requested Commissioners help thoroughly proof the document before it was due for presentation to the Assembly.

**de Jong moved to approve the 2026-2027 Work Plan document as published in the packet.**

**Motion PASSED 3-0 by voice vote.**

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**VIII. PERSONS TO BE HEARD** *(not to exceed 3 minutes on topics on or off the agenda)*

None.

**IX. REPORTS** *(Staff, Chair, Assembly, Commissioners)*

**Staff:** Gabel announced that the City's new web platform was live and that all the SCRES modules were now available. She noted that she would update the pages with additional information as time allows in anticipation of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Work Session.

**Chair:** Taylor informed the Commission that she had been assessing grants available for marine debris disposal through the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for applicability to the municipality, though none had been good fits. She summarized her meeting with the Ocean Conservancy and noted the potential opportunity for a partnership with CBS to support marine debris backhauling to disposal facilities in Washington State.

**Assembly:** Pike thanked the Commission for their work and looked forward to hearing from the Sustainability Commission Chairs at the April 28<sup>th</sup> Assembly meeting.

**Commissioners:** None.

**X. SET NEXT MEETING DATE AND AGENDA**

The next meeting was scheduled for May 4, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in Harrigan Centennial Hall.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

**Chair Taylor moved to adjourn the meeting.**

**Seeing no objection, the meeting ADJOURNED at approximately 7:17 p.m.**

Minutes by Erik de Jong, Secretary

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## Sustainability Commission, cleaner marine fuel resolution

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**From** Aaron Brakel <aaron@seacc.org>  
**Date** Wed 4/29/2026 8:14 AM  
**To** Bri Gabel <bri.gabel@cityofsitka.org>  
**Cc** Holley Bayne <holley.bayne@cityofsitka.org>

 2 attachments (803 KB)

Letter from Craig Mayor supporting Resolution 26-07 Clean Marine Fuel in Cruise Ships.pdf; Resolution 26-07 Supporting the Use of Cleaner Marine Fuels for Cruise Ships in Alaska Waters.pdf;

Hi Bri,

Thanks for finding me yesterday at the SSP Spring Retreat. I would be happy to speak with the City of Sitka Sustainability Commission about the dirty fuel and exhaust scrubbers used by cruise ships in Alaska. This is an issue that directly affects the City of Sitka and the health of all Borough waters including Sitka Sound and Chatham Strait. There are two bills currently in the legislature dealing with this issue. Rep. Sara Hannan's [HB 366](#) requiring cruise ships to stop using heavy fuel oil was heard last week in House Transportation with testimony by Ketchikan Indian Community CEO Emily Edenshaw, Linda Behnken from the Alaska Longline Fishermans Association, and Alaska-raised aquatic ecotoxicologist Dr. Morgan Powers. That hearing can be viewed [here](#) on Gavel Alaska.

I've attached the City of Craig's April 16, 2026 resolution supporting the use of cleaner fuel on cruise ships as well as a My Fellow Alaskans letter from Craig Mayor Kasey Smith urging "decision-makers at all levels -and in all coastal communities - to support and implement the measures outlined in this resolution." Mayor Smith gave me his permission to share this letter in reaching out to other Alaska municipalities.

It's great to finally see movement on this longstanding issue. The cruise ship companies use cleaner fuel where required, including Glacier Bay, all of U.S. waters of Puget Sound and the Straits of Juan de Fuca, and within 24 miles of the California coastline. Use of cleaner distillate marine gas oil is a regular business practice for the cruise lines where required or where they decide it is in their interest. That could easily be here. A 2025 economic analysis of cruise ship activity in Alaska waters found that the cost difference for burning cleaner distillate marine gas oil amounts to \$3.50 per passenger per day - a small cost to avoid dirty heavy fuel oil that requires exhaust scrubbers and pollutes our waters.

SEACC is working hard to inform and educate the public and to build the Alaska consensus to end the use of heavy fuel oil and exhaust scrubbers here. A resolution from the City of Sitka calling for cleaner fuel to be required would be a substantial piece in that consensus and show important support both to legislators and to other Alaska communities. I hope the Sustainability Commission will take this issue up and forward it to the Assembly with a recommendation that Sitka add its voice to the call for a healthier relationship with the industry and for better stewardship of our shared waters.

Best regards,

Aaron

--

Aaron Brakel, Clean Water Campaigner

907.321.4393

he/him

My regular schedule is Tuesday through Friday.

### **Southeast Alaska Conservation Council**

2207 Jordan Ave, Juneau, Alaska 99801

We acknowledge the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people who have been stewards of the forests and waters of this land since time immemorial and continue to do so today, and on whose land we each do our work and live our lives.

Find SEACC on [\*\*Facebook\*\*](#) and [\*\*Instagram\*\*](#). **Become a member today!**



# CALL FOR CLEANER FUEL

DITCHING DIRTY FUEL A SOLUTION TO SCRUBBER POLLUTION IN ALASKA

## CLEAR BENEFITS OF CLEANER FUEL USE IN ALASKA WATERS

Alaska is known for its pristine waters, beautiful to behold and home to prized fish, majestic whales, playful marine mammals and so much more. These waters have long provided for harvesters of seafood and coastal plant life and today enable industries like fishing, mariculture, tourism and recreation. Harvesters, commercial fishermen, tourism operators and all who live, visit and recreate in the region rely on these waters being clean. The bad news is heavy fuel oil burned in Alaska waters creates pollution that puts it all at risk. The good news is we can protect it all by using of cleaner fuel.

## THE DIRT ON DIRTY FUEL

### WHAT IS HEAVY FUEL OIL?

Heavy Fuel Oil is a dirty, tarry, viscous leftover product of refining that has long been disposed of in ship fuel. It's used because it's cheap and benefits corporate bottom lines; it's not needed for the safe operation of ships — they're equipped to burn cleaner fuel and already do in some circumstances. Heavy Fuel Oil is high in sulfur and can only be used with an exhaust gas scrubber to comply with international sulfur limits.



### A WHOLE LOT OF PROBLEMS AND SULFUR IS JUST ONE

Even with the use of scrubbers, ships burning HFOs release considerably more particulate matter, nitrous oxides, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and black carbon into the air compared with cleaner fuels. Black carbon is one of the primary drivers of Arctic warming and increases 81% when using HFO with scrubbers.



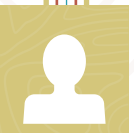
### IT'S A WASH: (SLIGHTLY) CLEANER AIR AT THE EXPENSE OF CLEAN WATER

HFO vessels using scrubbers discharge wastewater that contains heavy metals, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, nitrites and nitrates, sulfates, and particulate matter pollutants.



### A FOOD CHAIN REACTION

Water pollution discharges from scrubber systems can persist within the marine environment for decades. Scrubber wastewater, even at extremely low concentrations, has been shown to disrupt biological processes and threaten the health and wellbeing of Alaska's marine ecosystem, on which Alaskans rely for food, cultural, and economic security.



### WHAT ABOUT YOU, A HUMAN?

Alaskans are exposed through activities in our nearshore waters and consumption of seafood in which HFO generated pollutants bioaccumulate. Exposure to air pollutants like black carbon is linked to a number of serious health risks including cancer.



### SPILL RISK

Large cruise ships carry millions of gallons of HFO through our waters each year. When spilled, HFO's density allows it to sink and resurface, prolonging environmental impacts and making it much more expensive and difficult to clean.



## THE WORKAROUND FOR BURNING DIRTY FUEL

Exhaust gas scrubbers allow ships to keep burning cheaper, high-sulfur, heavy fuel oil instead of cleaner burning distillate fuel. To satisfy international sulfur limits they 'scrub' the exhaust, but those pollutants have to go somewhere.

### WHAT GOES IN MUST COME OUT

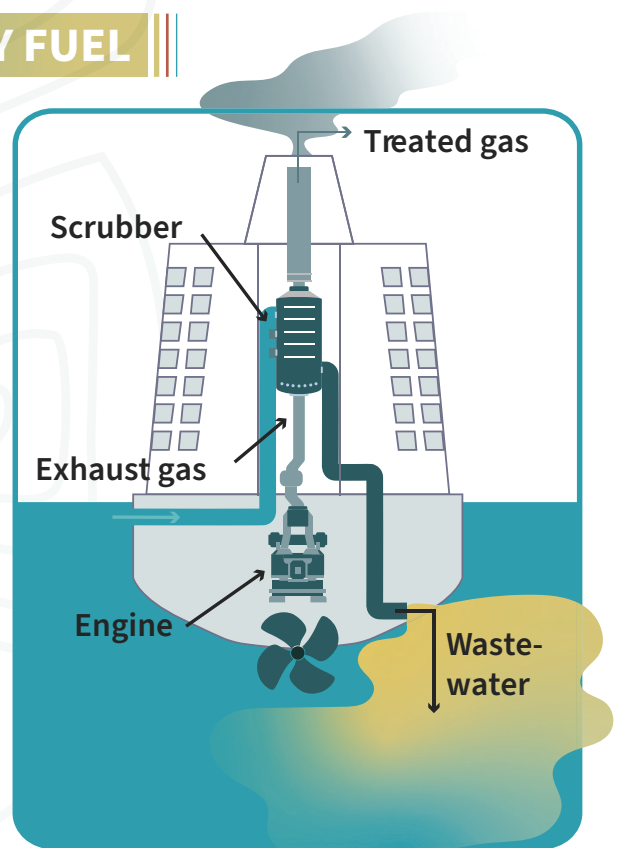
Most scrubbers are open-loop and spray large volumes of clean seawater through the highly acidic exhaust to 'wash' the sulfur out, discharging polluted water.

### ONE SHIP DISCHARGES MILLIONS OF GALLONS DAILY

Open loop scrubbers continuously discharge this polluted wastewater into the sea at estimated volumes ranging from 6.3 to 8.7 million gallons per day — for a medium sized ship.

### A TROUBLESOME TREND

Scrubbers have been installed on almost all large cruise ships that visit Alaska, allowing them to burn heavy fuel oil.



*Produced by Clean Arctic Alliance | Design by Margherita Gagliardi  
Altered with permission*

## HEAR FROM HARVESTERS



## POLLUTION SOLUTION

### SO SIMPLE BUT NOT SO EASY

There's a simple solution — ships can burn cleaner fuel to cut both air and water pollution — but this solution is not likely to be employed voluntarily because cleaner fuel comes with higher costs. It is possible, though — Alaska's smaller cruise ships burn cleaner distillate fuel.

### A CALL FOR CLEANER FUEL

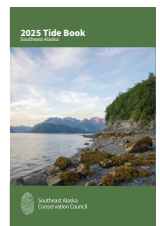
Alaska can and should join the roughly 50 countries, regions and ports that have taken action to end this pollution. What that action looks like in Alaska is a requirement for cleaner fuel use in Alaska waters.

## THE BIG ASK

### A WAVE OF SUPPORT FOR CLEAN WATER

We're working toward a cleaner fuel solution to ensure clean water for Alaskans — sign our petition and sign up for email alerts to be notified of opportunities to take action.

*Hear the voices of real people who rely on Alaska's marine waters. More than a dozen harvesters shared their stories for SEACC's 2025 Tide Book.*



*We acknowledge the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian people who have been stewards of the forests and waters of this land since time immemorial and continue to do so today, and on whose land we each do our work and live our lives.*



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CONNECT



**CITY OF CRAIG  
RESOLUTION 26-07**

**A Resolution Supporting the Use of Cleaner Marine Fuels for Cruise ships in Alaska Waters.**

WHEREAS, the City of Craig community is committed to protecting the health, environment, and economic well-being of our community; and

WHEREAS, large ocean-going vessels operating in Alaska waters sometimes use heavy fuel oil, a residual fuel containing higher levels of contaminants than cleaner marine distillate fuels; and

WHEREAS, the use of heavy fuel oil with exhaust gas scrubbers can generate polluted wastewater, increase particulate and black carbon emissions, and pose risks to marine ecosystems and coastal communities; and

WHEREAS, heavy fuel oil spills are more persistent and difficult to clean up in cold northern waters, creating additional environmental risk; and

WHEREAS, cleaner marine distillate fuels are widely available and already used by many vessels operating in Alaska and other regions without disrupting shipping or cruise operations;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Craig calls upon the cruise industries to end the use of heavy fuel oil and exhaust scrubbers in Alaska waters and instead use cleaner marine distillate fuels; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that City of Craig calls on the State of Alaska to bring an end to the use of heavy fuel oil in Alaska waters and near Alaska's coastal areas by requiring the use of cleaner marine distillate fuel.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Craig affirms the importance of protecting our marine environment for present and future generations of our residents who rely on these waters for subsistence, sport and commercial needs.

APPROVED: April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

Kasey Smith  
Kasey Smith, Mayor



Rebecca Ververs  
Rebecca Ververs, City Clerk



4/17/2026

City of Craig  
PO BOX 725  
Craig, AK 99921

My Fellow Alaskans,

I am writing to express my strong support for City of Craig Resolution 26-07, passed by our council last night. This resolution calls for the use of cleaner marine fuels for cruise ships operating in Alaska waters.

It reflects a forward-thinking approach to safeguarding the health of our residents, the integrity of our marine ecosystems, and the long-term sustainability of our coastal economy. By advocating for the transition from heavy fuel oil to cleaner marine distillate fuels, the City of Craig is taking a stand against pollutants that threaten both environmental and human well-being. Heavy fuel oil, even with exhaust gas scrubbers, poses significant risks — from generating contaminated wastewater to increasing particulate and black carbon emissions. In Alaska's cold northern waters, spills are especially persistent and damaging, with long-lasting impacts on marine life, subsistence resources, and coastal livelihoods. Cleaner marine distillate fuels are proven, widely available, and compatible with existing shipping operations, making this transition both practical and necessary.

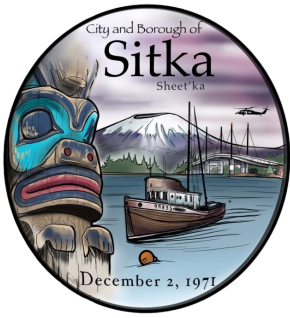
Resolution 26-07 is both an environmental imperative and an economic safeguard, ensuring Alaska's pristine waters remain a draw for fishing, subsistence and recreation for generations to come. By encouraging other communities to adopt similar measures, the City of Craig is helping build a united front to protect Alaska's waters and the people who depend on them. I urge decision-makers at all levels — and in all coastal communities — to support and implement the measures outlined in this resolution.

Thank you for your commitment to protecting Alaska's waters and the communities that rely on them.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kasey Smith".

Kasey Smith, Mayor  
City of Craig, Alaska



# CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Sustainability Commission Members

**From:** Bri Gabel, Sustainability Coordinator  
Amy Ainslie, Planning and Community Development Director

**Date:** May 1, 2026

**Subject:** **Approve the Draft CBS Comments on the Tongass Preliminary Draft Plan Content**

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### **Background**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service is currently updating the Tongass National Forest Plan and released the [Preliminary Draft Plan Content](#) on March 23, 2026, with public comment accepted through May 6, 2026.

The City and Borough of Sitka is a cooperating agency in the process, with the Planning and Community Development Director as the primary point of contact for the project.

### **Analysis**

The preliminary draft plan content informs the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process and content is the basis for the full plan. Because the final plan will impact land management, comments from CBS have been drafted and requested to be reviewed by the Sustainability Commission for additional input.

### **Recommendation**

Review and approve the draft CBS comments on the Tongass Preliminary Draft Plan Content.

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### **Possible Motion(s)**

I move to approve the draft CBS comments on the Tongass Preliminary Draft Plan Content as published in the packet.

I move to amend/add/subtract/replace \_\_\_\_\_ on page/line \_\_\_\_\_.

*(Staff will conduct vote to amend main motion)*



# CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

100 Lincoln Street | Sitka, Alaska 99835

www.cityofsitka.com

planning@cityofsitka.org

907-747-1814

May 3, 2026

**VIA EMAIL**

Land Management Plan Revision Team  
Attn: Monique Nelson, Forest Supervisor  
8510 Mendenhall Loop Rd.  
Juneau, AK 99801  
tongassplanrevision@usda.gov

Re: CBS Comment on Land Management Plan: Preliminary Draft Plan Content

Dear Land Management Plan Revision Team,

The City and Borough of Sitka (CBS), a cooperating agency for the Tongass National Forest Plan Revision, would like to extend our gratitude for this opportunity to provide comment on the Preliminary Draft Plan Content that was published by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on March 23, 2026. Before providing comments on specific plan areas, CBS would like to note several appreciable aspects of the Preliminary Draft Plan Content including prioritization of subsistence activities and resources; inclusion of local and tribal governments in management activities; integration of indigenous stewardship knowledge and principles; how Tongass infrastructure and resources are integral to Southeast Alaskans' ways-of-life; and how the Tongass National Forest Plan should be responsive Southeast Alaska's changing economic landscape particularly in regards to fisheries and tourism.

## Forestwide Preliminary Direction

- Infrastructure, Facilities and Access (IFA):
  - On page 41, it states, "...and the State of Alaska's Southeast Transportation Plan also guide management of the Tongass transportation system." CBS noted the lack of non-state or federal plans included in this section and would like to see community and tribal recreation plans, transportation plans, and/or comprehensive plans added as resources used to guide management of the Tongass transportation system.
  - FW-IFA-DC-09: Roads are the only named infrastructure in this section. As recognized later in the plan, Southeast Alaska is characterized by coastal, remote, and island areas/communities; other infrastructure such as moorings, water landings, and trails should be recognized and prioritized in terms providing access to the Tongass for management, subsistence, recreation, and more.
  - FW-IFA-G-01: Maintainability of transportation systems should be an explicit design goal. Given funding and personnel constraints as well as the extreme weathering conditions in Southeast Alaska, design for all

infrastructure in the Tongass should be optimized for longest-life with minimal maintenance demand.

- Lands and Land Uses (LAND)
  - On page 45, it's noted that *"The Forest Service special uses program (36 CFR 251 subpart B) authorizes the occupancy and use of National Forest System lands by individuals, organizations, companies, governmental entities, educational institutions, etc., for a wide variety of uses, such as roads, water systems, communication sites, and other private or commercial uses"* and also states in the paragraph above that *"Management direction regarding lands and land uses are set by law, regulation, and Forest Service policy, which supersedes the direction in this land management plan."* CBS can certainly understand why law and regulation would supersede land status and use as designated in this Plan, but is seeking clarification about why and which other unnamed and unspecified Forest Service policy would supersede the Tongass National Forest Plan in terms of determining management direction for lands and land uses on the Tongass. Perhaps this verbiage is an unintentional over-generalization, or perhaps more public education is needed about the purpose of a forest plan, but this section in particular is concerning without further elaboration.
  - Need to Change: The Need to Change in this section states, *"Incorporate direction for land exchanges, transfers, selections, leases, or other instruments that benefit local communities as well as nation forest management."* However, it's unclear what direction has been given, or how benefit to local communities would be determined; both should be explicit.
  - FW-LAND-DC-01: Only state and federal agencies and organizations are identified for coordination work; local and tribal governments should also be included where appropriate for overlapping jurisdictions and areas of interest.
  - FW-LAND-DC-05: Local governments should not be excluded from land management processes and access considerations.
  - FW-LAND-G-01: Local governments and communities should also be considered and coordinated with when undertaking land management activities.
  - FW-LAND-G-02: This goal feels like a low level of commitment on the part of the USFS; cooperating with does not necessarily connote coordination.
- Partnerships and Shared Stewardship (PTSP)
  - FW-PTSP-DC-01: Local and/or tribal comprehensive plans and/or economic development strategies should also be named as resources and opportunities for alignment. The region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a five-year plan and generalized for the region; local and tribal efforts are more community-specific and often for broader time horizons.
- Developed Recreation (DVREC)

- FW-DDVREC-DC-03: This desired condition states that “*Recreation cabins are located and constructed to be consistent with the recreation opportunity setting...*” however, there is no consideration for citing cabins in alignment with public need and demand. The “Description and Values” subsection for DVREC notes that some cabins are occupied over 75% of the time; there is valuable insight to be gained by evaluating the commonalities among cabins with high occupancy in terms of siting and prioritizing new cabins. As an example in Sitka, the Starrigavan Creek Cabin is the only USFS cabin accessible by road and has very high occupancy rates. The desired conditions for developed recreation should explicitly reflect how the public is already indicating its desired conditions for new cabins. Additionally, the Plan content recognizes that USFS cabins provide for public health and safety, serving as shelter in emergency situations – this being said, CBS has significant concerns about the statement in this desired condition that, “*Cabins with consistently low utilization are phased out...*” given the public safety aspect of USFS cabin utilization (which, also, may not be accurately reflected in USFS data regarding cabin utilization given that formal bookings/reservations may not be occurring for emergency use).
- Trails (TRL)
  - FW-TRL-DC-01: Access and connectivity for local residents should be named as part of this desired condition, not just for visitors.
  - FW-TRL-DC-01: Similar to our comment on FW-IFA-G-01, trails should also be designed to optimize for longest-life and minimal maintenance demand.

### Designated Areas

- Alaska Mental Health Trust Exchange Lands (DA-AMHT)
  - As noted in Table 16, there are three parcels in the Sitka Ranger District that were part of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Exchange Act. All three of these parcels are connected to Sitka’s state and municipal road system; they are not remote, nor distant/isolated from moderate-to-heavy community development and use.
  - DA-AMHT-DC-01: Given that some locations of DA-AMHT lands are within developed communities, limiting the use to retain undeveloped natural character with only some opportunity for sustainable recreation to be offered in these areas potentially chokes community and economic development, especially for much needed housing development consistent with the regional CEDS, particularly when DA-AMHT lands could provide means of access to non-USFS owned lands.

### Management Areas

While CBS understands the intent of “...*simplifying, clarifying, reorganizing, and reducing the number of management areas for concise, easy to follow direction*” as described in the Need to Change for Potential Management Area Preliminary Direction, the proposed Management Areas in this Preliminary Draft Plan Content are too

underdeveloped to replace the current Land Use Designation (LUD) system. Again, we do understand that the purpose of laying out these new Management Areas in the Preliminary Draft Plan Content was to outline big picture ideas and spark conversation, but functionally, when will these Management Areas be further defined and with substantive opportunity for public input? The next time the public will see more robust Management Area descriptions will likely be when the NEPA evaluation is open for the 90-day public comment period; at that point, it seems unlikely that major revision to the Management Areas would be practical/actionable. Unless the process and timeline is shifted significantly to accommodate meaningful review and comment opportunity by the public and other agencies, CBS does not support the replacement of the LUD system with the Management Area system. A few specific examples about the lack of specificity in new Management Areas:

- Community Use (MA-CMTY)
  - MA-CMTY-DC-01 & MA-CMTY-G-01: How will the USFS determine each community's "way of life", as well as our economic, social, and cultural needs and values? No plans, studies, or strategies are identified as resources for the USFS to use in such evaluation. Goal 01 in this section states that the Forest will "*coordinate with local and tribal governments on proposed management actions within this area*", but coordinate doesn't necessarily equate to collaboration or shared stewardship. The idea of community self-determination in land management is certainly one to strive for, but the lack of specificity and structure within this Management Area does not secure that outcome.
- High Commercial Recreation Use (MA-HCREC) & Low Commercial Recreation Use (MA-LCREC)
  - The Preliminary Draft Plan Content does not provide any definitions or distinctions for terms such as high versus low commercial recreation use, or large versus small commercial groups. These are critical distinctions to draw in order for the public, land management agencies, and the tourism industry to have clear and shared expectations about potential land use.
  - CBS has been working diligently over the last five years to engage the community on how to manage tourism and balance its benefits and impacts on our residents; without more specificity, CBS is extremely wary of having any High Commercial Recreation Use Management Areas within its borough boundaries.
  - It is also very unclear how the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum will be applied in High versus Low Commercial Recreation Use management areas. It is also unclear how designating areas as high versus low commercial uses will impact commercial allocations for recreation opportunities within these management areas. This uncertainty again indicates that the new Management Area structure is not yet ripe for use.
- Key Fisheries Watersheds (MA-FISH)
  - The "*Preliminary additional considerations*" note that "*Timber production is suitable on land within this management area...*". However, it also states that "*When there is conflict in use, aquatic ecosystem habitat protection is the priority*", but this seems to be at least somewhat at odds with the

declarative statement that timber production would be suitable on these lands. It begs the question whether there's meaningful protection or value in a management area for key fisheries watersheds that also has timber production as a declared, suitable use.

#### Potential Activity Specific Preliminary Direction

- Recreation and Tourism Management
  - “*Aging, outdated, unsustainable developed recreation sites, infrastructure, or cabins...*” could be interpreted to mean cabins that have lower booking rates, but are critical for emergency situations and shelter. The direction in this section should acknowledge this use, and make alternative provisions other than having them “*...removed or updated...*”.
- Subsistence Harvest Management
  - Simply “considering” effects to subsistence resources and uses by rural residents when designing management actions is insufficient; it should be prioritized.

#### Management Area Maps for Sitka Area

While CBS maintains that the new Management Area structure is not yet mature enough for use in this Plan revision and use of the current LUD system would be preferable, we still would like to provide the following comments on the Potential Management Area Maps for the Sitka Area.

- Without any definitions, distinctions, or guardrails for such land use, CBS objects to all High Commercial Recreation Use Management Area designations within our borough limits.
  - Of particular concern, CBS strongly objects to this designation being applied on Kruzof Island. Kruzof Island is a beloved recreation and subsistence area for Sitka residents. It is reasonably accessible by boat, and provides opportunities for low-user conflict recreation away from more crowded locations on the Sitka state and municipal road system during the visitor season.
- The Redoubt Lake area is not identified as a Key Fisheries Watershed despite the USFS's partnership with Sitka Tribe of Alaska for sockeye salmon management and previous acknowledgement that this area is one of the largest subsistence and commercial harvest areas in the region. However, it's possible that the Old Growth Management Area would, ironically, provide this area with more valuable protection than a Key Fisheries Watershed designation given that timber production is declared as suitable in the latter.

As a general note, the maps provided in this section were difficult to view and use. The resolution is too low to see detail within some areas, and the unfortunate choice to use several shades of grey renders it confusing to users. As such an important part of the plan, we would ask that the Management Area maps produced in future be clearer and more accessible. Making a GIS site available to the public with these maps could be a good potential solution.

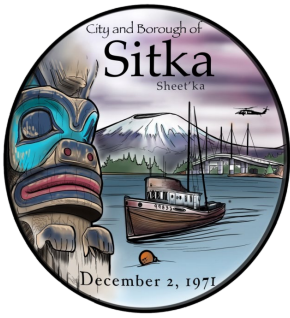
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CBS would like to recognize and applaud the considerable efforts of USFS staff to keep cooperating agencies like CBS informed, and for offering an in-person community engagement session here in Sitka on April 27<sup>th</sup>. The changes contemplated in this update to the Tongass National Forest Plan are significant; it is critical to continue offering as many opportunities for public involvement as possible, and to ensure that the scale of change contemplated is feasible within the timeframe for change. Again, we appreciate this opportunity to comment, and I am available for any follow-ups with USFS staff to share additional detail regarding our comments.

Sincerely,

Amy Ainslie  
Planning & Community Development Director  
City & Borough of Sitka


DRAFT



# CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Sustainability Commission Members  
**From:** Bri Gabel, Sustainability Coordinator   
**Date:** May 1, 2026  
**Subject:** **Appoint a Commission Member(s) to the Sitka Community Renewable Energy Strategy (SCRES) Team**

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### **Background**

The Sitka Community Renewable Energy Strategy is supported by technical assistance through U.S. Department of Energy's (DoE) Energy Technology Innovation Partnership Project (ETIPP) and the Sustainability Coordinator's time, which are collectively known as the technical team. Currently, three of the four components of the technical assistance are completed. For the fourth component, the technical team has determined the best path forward to finalize the strategy. **The scope of the ETIPP technical assistance included:**

- 1. A Community-wide Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Inventory** to act as an energy baseline to support strategic planning, electricity demand projections, goal setting, and progress tracking. **The final 2023 Sitka GHG Emissions Inventory was released in January 2026 and can be found at [cityofsitka.com/GHG](http://cityofsitka.com/GHG).**
- 2. Energy education modules** necessary for community members to effectively participate in energy planning and strategy development. **Currently, seven of the eight modules are available as webpages at [cityofsitka.com/energy-education](http://cityofsitka.com/energy-education),** (Module 8: Sitka's Energy Future, will be created after the SCRES is complete).
- 3. Community engagement** was also emphasized by the Commission and took many forms throughout the energy education module development but also through community workshops, which were held in 2025 to facilitate the creation of personalized visions and pathways to Sitka in 25 years. **Through this process, four guiding principles for Sitka's energy future emerged: affordability, reliability, self-sufficiency, and innovation.** The game and a detailed report of results from 12 workshops can be found online at [cityofsitka.com/energy-quest](http://cityofsitka.com/energy-quest).

**4. Recommended actions and policies to advance Sitka’s shared energy vision:** The final SCRES document will be a unique strategic plan that combines community and City actions that together will support an affordable, reliable, self-sufficient, and innovative energy future. The final strategic document is currently at a point where additional support is needed; see analysis section below.

Pacific Northwest National Lab engineers on the technical team have identified a plethora of potential recommendations throughout the project. However, additional input is needed to fully adapt these recommendations for a community like Sitka. As essentially a strategic plan specific to the electric department, additional involvement from the utility’s governing body (the Assembly) was requested to synthesize results from previous engagement efforts and refine recommendations before releasing a draft list for further review. To facilitate this, a process similar to the development of the CBS 2022-2027 Strategic Plan is being followed, which involved a core team of members.

**At the April 28<sup>th</sup> 2026 Assembly Meeting, Assembly Members Mosher, Christianson, and Carlson volunteered to serve as these core members.**

**Analysis**

To support the technical team and the Assembly Members above, the Sustainability Commission should follow the same process and appoint up to two Commissioners to act as core team members. It should be noted that full Sustainability Commission and Assembly involvement in the final strategy is intended to occur in the fall, along with additional opportunities for public involvement that are currently in development, like the upcoming [community energy planning workshop on May 11<sup>th</sup> from 5:00-7:00 p.m.](#) (flyer enclosed).

**For the SCRES project, team members are expected to:**

- Be involved on a more regular basis for the SCRES finalization process, with most of the work occurring over the next 3-4 months.
- Work with the Sustainability Coordinator and Electric Utility Director to align the technical team’s recommendations with the existing Comprehensive Plan and current CBS Strategic Plan.
- Facilitate final review for the Sustainability Commission, likely in the fall.
- Collaborate with the listed Assembly Members to bring the final strategy forward after Sustainability Commission recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Appoint up to two Commissioners to the Sitka Community Renewable Energy Strategy Team.



A City and Borough of Sitka Project  
**SITKA COMMUNITY  
RENEWABLE ENERGY  
STRATEGY**

# SCRES

Join the Sustainability Commission,  
energy engineers, and Spruce Root to

**HELP MAKE SITKA'S ENERGY FUTURE**

**AFFORDABLE**

**RELIABLE**

**SELF-SUFFICIENT**

**INNOVATIVE**

**COMMUNITY ENERGY PLANNING WORKSHOP**

**MAY 11<sup>TH</sup> 5:00-7:00 PM**

**HARRIGAN CENTENNIAL HALL**



[cityofsitka.com/SCRES](http://cityofsitka.com/SCRES)



**QUESTIONS?**

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