

**From:** [Cynthia Jones CJ](#)  
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**Subject:** Haines State Forest office  
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Hi all,

I have spoken with some of you, but haven't reached you all. Most of you know about the Forestry office slated to close on July 1 and I believe Bill Thomas is lobbying to keep it open. I was in Juneau last week and also lobbied.

I am very concerned about the situation because it not only leaves the Baby Brown timber sale without proper supervision, but also because of the potential Public Safety impacts from the proposed wild fire protection changes. The delayed response time to wildfires due to these actions have a huge negative potential for the Haines Borough. I have written letters to legislators (copy attached) and am contacting local residents to lobby for the office and wildfire suppression management to be kept here.

I applaud the Haines Borough for recognizing the need for the Haines State Forestry office. The office and wild fire management are not necessarily the same issue. Even if the office is kept open, DNR is in the process of turning wild fire management to the Tongass National Forest. This means no more local wild land firefighting crew which means delayed response times to local wild fires. You all know what an extra 2-4 hours will mean with dry conditions and high winds. We need to lobby to stop this transfer to the Tongass and keep wildfire suppression out of our local office.

I am asking that the Haines Borough send letters to legislators, DNR, the Governor and Lt. Governor and have Bill Thomas also lobby for retaining wild fire suppression locally. It could mean homes saved.

I think my letter explains this better. If you have any questions, please give me a call. 766-2018.

Thank you. CJ

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Name  
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February 9, 2017

Dear Name,

Last week I met or spoke with Representative Sam Kito, Senator Dennis Egan, Representative Justin Parrish, DNR Commissioner Andy Mack, and Deputy Commissioner Ed Fogels, to discuss not only the threatened closure of the Haines State Forestry Office, but the Public Safety issue arising because of the transfer of area wildland firefighting from said office to the Tongass National Forest.

The Haines State Forestry Office, slated to close on July 1, 2017, must remain open for several reasons. The 2 most pressing issues are the recent timber sale and wildland firefighting.

1. The recent Baby Brown timber sale is the largest sale in the state and the largest in over 40 years. When logging begins, the only effective oversight is from the Haines Office. The managing forester must be close by with the ability to be onsite whenever there is a question, an issue, or simply for inspection to ensure that logging is done properly. A Tok, Delta or even Juneau forester cannot do a proper job. In the Medical world, we call this abandonment- taking on a patient then turning them over to lesser or untrained person. In this case, maybe not less trained, but certainly less capable due to distance.
2. Closing the Haines State Forestry Office and transferring wildfire suppression to the Tongass National Forest (The process started on Jan. 1, 2017, and needs to be stopped.), is a huge **PUBLIC SAFETY issue** for the residents of the Haines Borough, and potentially more costly for the State of Alaska.

This area's traditional response format is the MOST EFFECTIVE AND CHEAPEST form of firefighting available to the State. A pool of trained, red-carded Emergency Firefighters (EFF's) who live in Haines is available to muster at a moment's notice when there is a fire. We are not waiting for a fire to happen while on the State payroll. Many of us are part of the Haines Volunteer Fire Department and carry radios, so call out is fast. We muster when needed; we get to the fire quickly; and we put the fire out. Due to our quick response time, very rarely does a fire get big enough where outside crews are needed. If the Tongass National Forest takes over wild fire duties, response time (from Juneau) increases to a minimum of 3-5 hours—if planes can fly. Everyone knows how fast a fire can grow and spread in that amount of time on a hot windy day. We also have a mutual aid agreement with the Haines and Klehini Valley Volunteer Fire Departments for use of space, equipment, and trucks with engineers. The HVFD members also help get us 'out the door' quickly to a fire by helping to gather equipment, etc. The Haines State Forestry office provides initial and refresher fire training to the EFF's, and wild/urban interface fire training to the EFF's and Fire Departments. With this proposed change, the State will lose a lot of free 'stand by' time (crew and trucks) and fast response to fires. With a dramatically longer response time, fires

will become larger, and more expensive to fight. They will also pose a far greater threat to homes and buildings.

Fire incurred expenses by the Tongass National Forest will all be billed to the State. The Tongass cannot keep the local crew as they cannot administer the pack test (part of the annual certification) to non Forest Service employees. They could station a first response crew and vehicle in Haines during extreme fire season (think travel, hotel, per diem, and nothing to do until a fire happens) or provide response from Juneau (think much larger fires; more calls for outside crews; longer suppression time; *a greater threat to homes AND will be far more expensive per fire*. Local fire department response will also be more problematic, because, even if there is a mutual aid agreement, the VFD's cannot respond further than 300' from the road w/o the wild land fire crew oversight.

A few years ago we had a fire near the end of the Chilkat Peninsula in Chilkat State Park. The day was extremely dry conditions and strong winds from the south. The fire had the potential to burn the entire Chilkat Peninsula; burn many homes; and run as far as Haines. *Only* a timely response by the *on-site* wildland firefighting crew prevented this. We were on-scene well within an hour (probably closer to ½ hr.) of the call out. Greg had immediately put Temsco helicopters in Skagway on standby. Within minutes of arrival, we had our hoses and they their buckets of water on the blaze. The fire was quickly contained. Haines itself has been threatened with large fires in the past.

**Bottom line:** Without the Haines State Forestry Office:

(1) The Baby Brown timber sale cannot be efficiently managed.

(2) Fast wild fire response is over. Wild fires will be larger, more dangerous, far greater threat to homes and town, **and** vastly more expensive to control.

**Please fund the Haines State Forest office.**

Thank you for being thoughtful, being responsible, and considering the safety of fellow Alaskans.

Cynthia Jones (CJ)

907-766-2018 you are welcome to call and talk.

Cc: Representatives Sam Kito, Justin Parrish, David Guttenberg, Jonathan Kress-Tomkins, Louise Stutes, Dan Ortiz;

Senators Dennis Egan, Bert Stedman, Gary Stevens;

DNR Commissioner Andy Mack; DNR Deputy Commissioner Ed Fogels; DNR Director Chris Maisch;

Haines Mayor Jan Hill; Haines Borough Manager Brad Ryan; Haines Lobbyist Bill Thomas; Borough Assembly members

Haines Volunteer Fire Department Chief Brian Clay; and Haines State Forester Greg Palmieri