

Figure 1. Overview of the proposed 10-year timber sale on University of Alaska Land Trust parcels in the Haines area.

Background

In late 2017 the University of Alaska Land Trust Office announced a proposed timber sale on 13,000 acres in the Haines area, all timber to be cut and exported over a 10-year time period. These 13,000 acres include most, but not all of UA’s land in the area, and nearly 2000 of these acres are within the Alaska Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve. The announcement met with significant criticism from the local community, resulting in letters of concern from the Haines Borough Assembly, the Alaska Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve Advisory Committee, the Upper Lynn Canal Fish and Game Advisory Committee, and local conservation groups. UA Lands Office staff have come to Haines to meet with community members on a handful of occasions. By their own admission, they do not know what is on the ground, where their lands are located, or any details at all of a potential timber sale plan. They have indicated that they will be doing survey and timber inventory work in the summer of 2019.

On February 4 2018, UA Land Management staff came to the Takshanuk Watershed Council (TWC) offices in Haines and met with Derek Poinsette of TWC, Shannon Donahue of the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC), and Jessica Plachta of Lynn Canal Conservation (LCC). The discussion centered on concepts for generating revenue with UA’s land holdings in the Haines area, while also maintaining nearly all of the conservation, recreational, subsistence, and commercial values that these lands support--values that are cherished by local residents.

Possible alternatives to a large-scale clear-cut and export sale include:

- 1 Sustainable forestry. Identify lands that are suited to timber harvest and develop a management plan for supplying local and small-scale export markets with timber. Ideally, this would be a coordinated effort between UA, the Haines State Forest, the Mental Health Trust, private landowners, the local timber industry, and tribal and borough governments.
- 2 Conservation easements. Lands that contain high-value fish and wildlife habitat can generate revenue by being placed into conservation easements and the land title held by UA, or the parcels can be sold to a land trust. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of acres of University land that qualify as important habitat, and these lands often do not contain marketable timber. Where there is marketable timber, a conservation easement can be written so as to also allow some level of harvest on that parcel.
- 3 Carbon markets. There are numerous opportunities for generating revenue by selling the stored carbon contained and supported by University land holdings. And like conservation easements, some of these programs allow for limited timber harvest and other development activities. Preliminary estimates indicate that millions of dollars could potentially be generated by the initial sale of carbon on UA’s 13,000 acres, followed by 100 to 300 thousand dollars in annual carbon growth earnings.
- 4 Recreation and commercial tourism. There are a number of parcels of UA land that already support significant recreational activity, and the Chilkat River supports a thriving commercial tourism industry. Revenue could be generated by the long-term leasing of recreational cabin lots, or land and facilities for commercial tourism activities.
- 5 Land sales.

It is likely that large-scale timber harvest will have an overall negative impact on many other values that are important to the people of the Chilkat Valley. Fish and wildlife habitat, hunting, fishing, trapping, subsistence, recreation, and commercial tourism all stand to lose from road building and clear cutting, especially on the roadless west side of the Valley. It is hoped that with a combination of the above strategies, the University will be able to generate revenue comparable to, or perhaps even greater than, a 10-year timber sale, and this income can be maintained over a much longer period of time. And just like a timber sale, these activities will create and support Chilkat Valley jobs, jobs within the UA Land Management office, and contribute to the economy as a whole, while at the same time not doing harm to other parts of the local economy, especially tourism (the #1 money-maker in Haines) and fisheries (#2).

UA Lands Office staff have subsequently indicated that they are researching some of these proposed alternatives (carbon credits, in particular), and that they welcome continued input and involvement from local community groups.

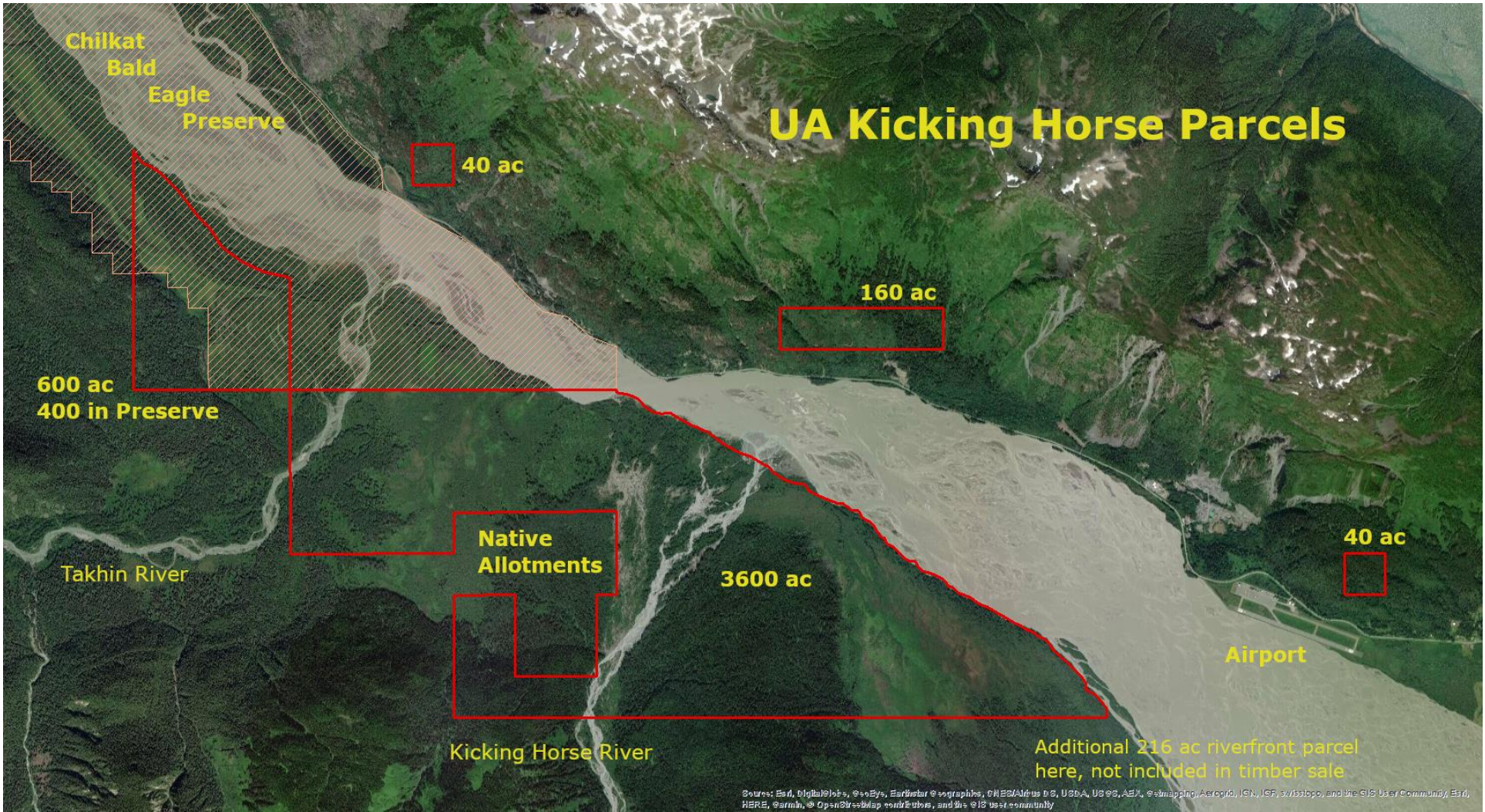


Figure 2. UA lands located on the Takhin and Kicking Horse alluvial plains.

The Kicking Horse Parcels are of primary conservation concern. These lands are located near the mouth of the Chilkat River across from the Haines airport.

- The two largest parcels are located within a much larger area that has been excluded from the available timber base by the Haines State Forest (HSF) Management Plan. (See Figure 10, page 5: HSF Timber Inventory South) All HSF lands south of the southern border of the Bald Eagle Preserve (shown above) are expressly set aside from commercial logging for the preservation of wildlife habitat.
- There are six major anadromous waterways within or adjacent to these parcels—Norman Creek, Gillam Creek, Takhin River, Kicking Horse River, South Kicking Horse River, an unnamed AWC (Anadromous Waters Catalog) stream, and the Chilkat River. These waters are critically important habitat for all five species of Pacific salmon, Dolly Varden char, cutthroat trout, steelhead trout, and eulachon, among other less-charismatic species.
- There is relatively little spruce forest on this parcel. It is mostly wetland and cottonwood bottomland, which is very productive wildlife habitat—for moose, bears, otter, beaver, and many other animals.
- This is perhaps the most popular moose hunting area in the entire valley (despite that hunting is not allowed on UA land) and it contains a number of permanent cabins, tree stands, and hunting camps--all built and occupied illegally. This is also a very popular area for trapping and ski touring in the winter.
- Adjacent landowners are the Alaska Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve (Alaska State Parks), the Haines State Forest (Division of Forestry), and a handful of Native allotments.

Acreages estimated from satellite imagery:

Total:	4400
In Preserve:	400
Old growth spruce-hemlock:	300
Mixed cottonwood-spruce:	700
Cottonwood riparian:	400
Wetlands (riverine, lacustrine, palustrine):	2800
Potentially inoperable/poor quality timber:	200

Access to these parcels would be provided by the construction of a network of forestry roads up and down the roadless west side of the Chilkat Valley. A bridge across the Tsirku River near the outlet of Chilkat Lake would be constructed to link these new roads with the existing system (see Figure 3 below). Chilkat Lake is Southeast Alaska’s number one producer of sockeye salmon. The proposed bridge would span the migration path of these salmon. Opposition to the construction of a bridge at this location has been expressed by residents of Klukwan, landowners at Chilkat Lake, and by numerous other community groups and individuals.

This bridge would provide industrial access to the last large stand of old-growth spruce forest in the Chilkat Valley--an area between the lake and the river called the Chilkat Ridge. The Haines State Forest has long proposed two timber sales in this area but these have never generated any interest. Presumably, after a bridge is constructed, road building and timber cutting would work its way south down the west side of the Valley and terminate with the logging of the UA parcels at the Kicking Horse. All HSF lands south of that point are off-limits to commercial logging per the 2002 HSF Management Plan.

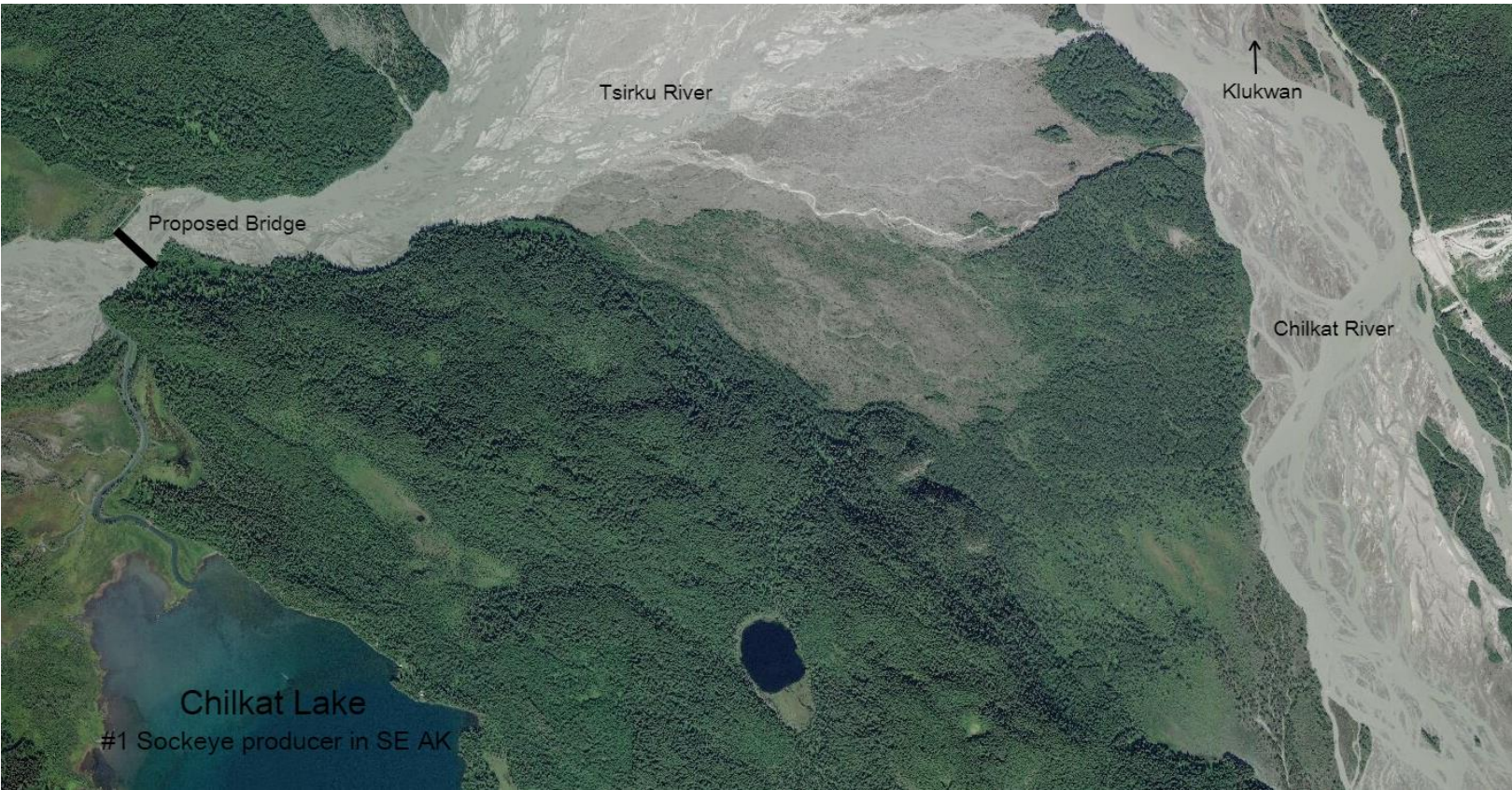


Figure 3. Proposed bridge over the Tsirku River that would provide industrial access to the roadless west side of the Chilkat River Valley.

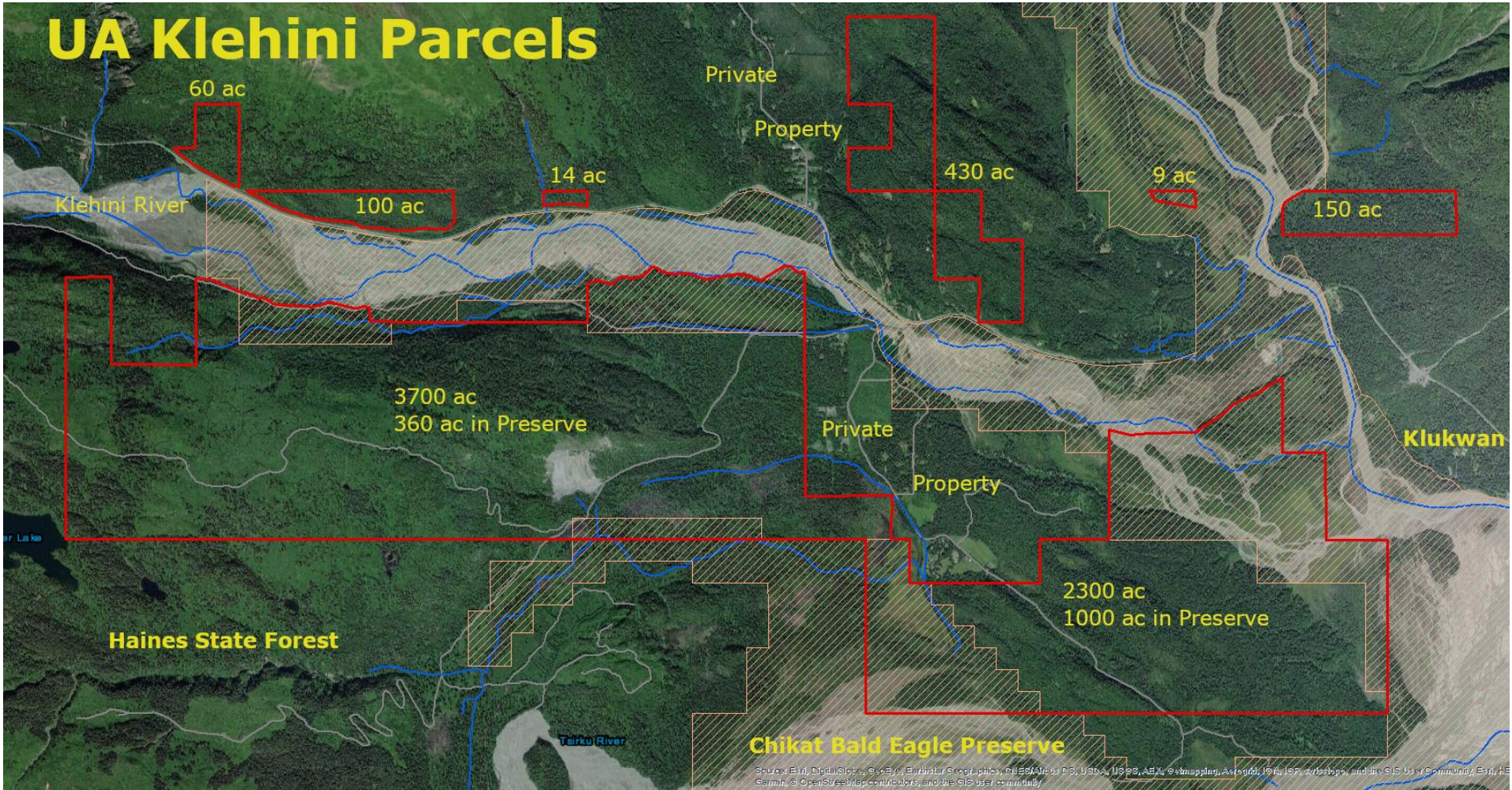


Figure 4. UA lands in the lower Klehini River valley, just upstream from Klukwan. Blue lines are anadromous waters. Grey lines are primary forest roads.

The Klehini Parcels consist almost entirely of second growth forests of various ages. These lands are located directly across the river from Klukwan and surround a significant portion of the total amount of private land in the Upper Valley.

Acreages estimated from satellite imagery:

Total:	6700
In Preserve:	1360
Old-growth spruce-hemlock:	400
Mature 2 nd -growth:	1100
Immature 2 nd -growth:	3830
Wetlands (riverine, lacustrine, palustrine):	1370

Appropriate management activities on the Klehini parcels and surrounding HSF lands might include:

- Conservation of wetlands and other aquatic resource values via easements or other means
- Second-growth stand management
- Small-scale local-buyer timber sales
- Sustainable forestry demonstration projects
- Recreational development—trails and cabins (see HSF Management Plan, and the Haines Borough Comprehensive Plan)

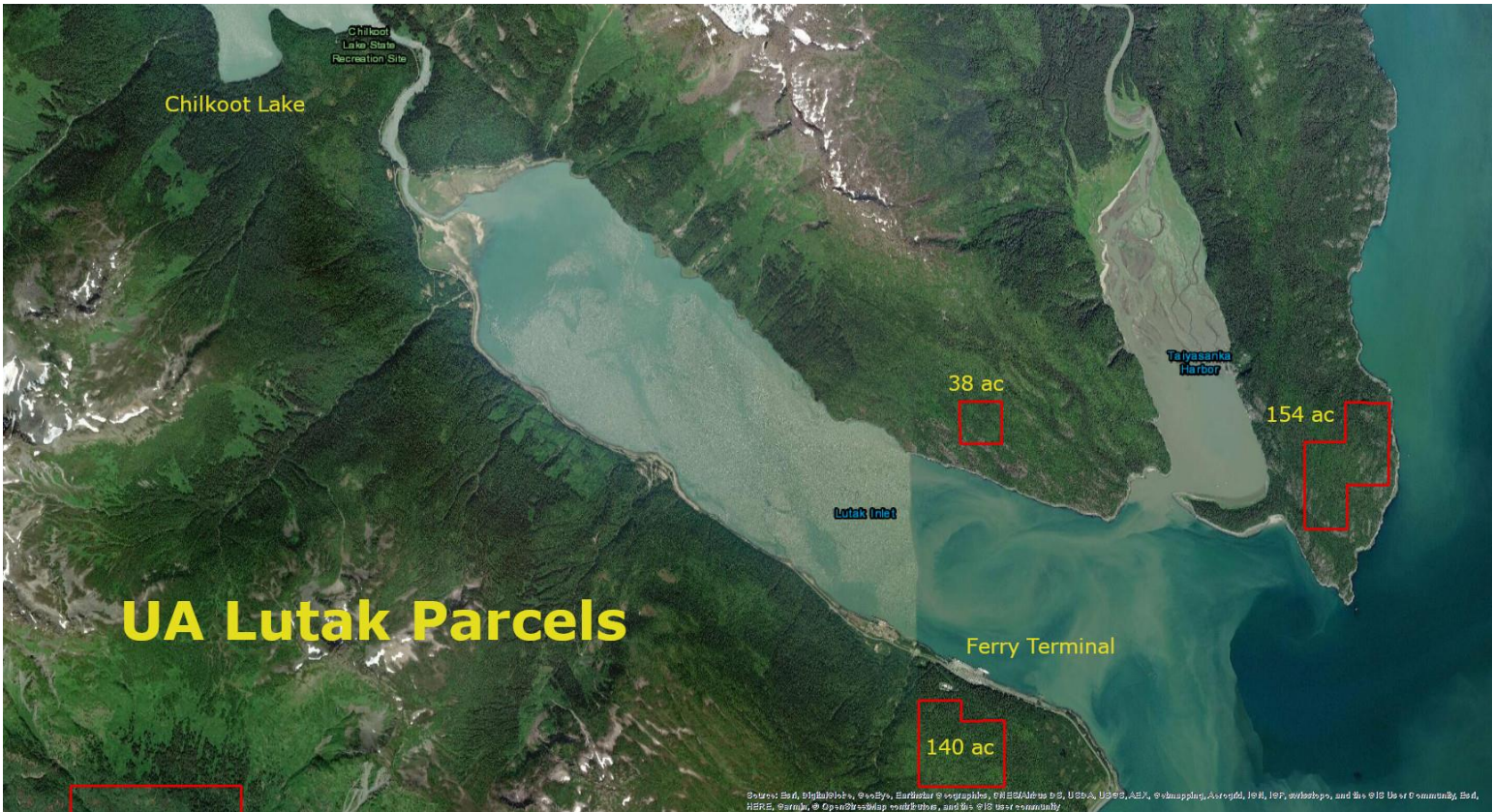


Figure 5. On the north side of Lutak Inlet are two parcels, totaling roughly 200 acres, of difficult-to-access timber of low market value. The parcels are surrounded by State lands.

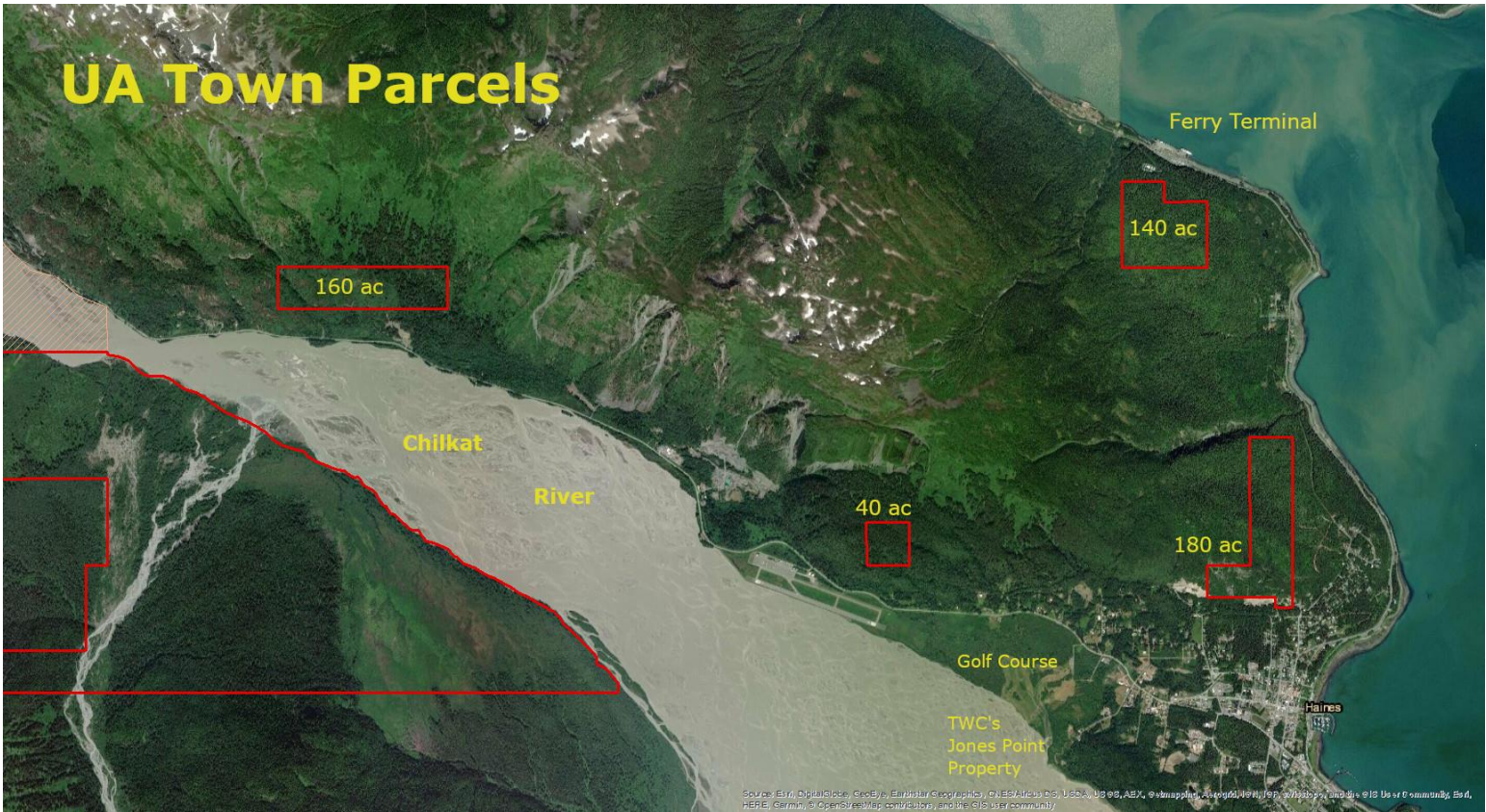


Figure 6. Near the Haines town site are three parcels, totaling 360 acres, of mostly mature spruce-hemlock forest of unknown market quality. The parcels abut both private and State lands.

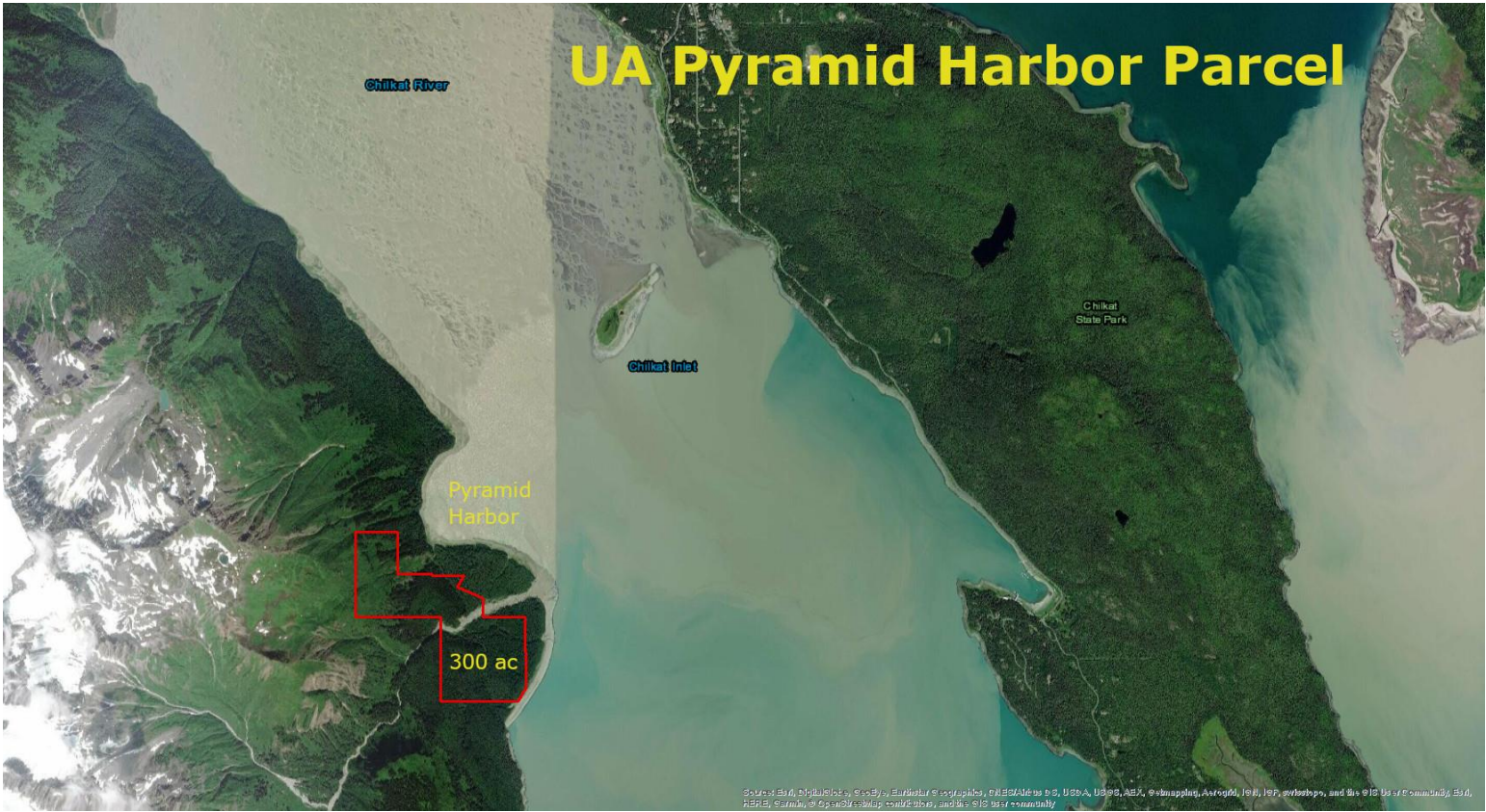


Figure 7. At the mouth of the Chilkat River is a 300-acre parcel containing less than 200 acres of mature spruce forest of unknown market quality. Private land abuts the property on the north and east margins. State land surrounds the rest.

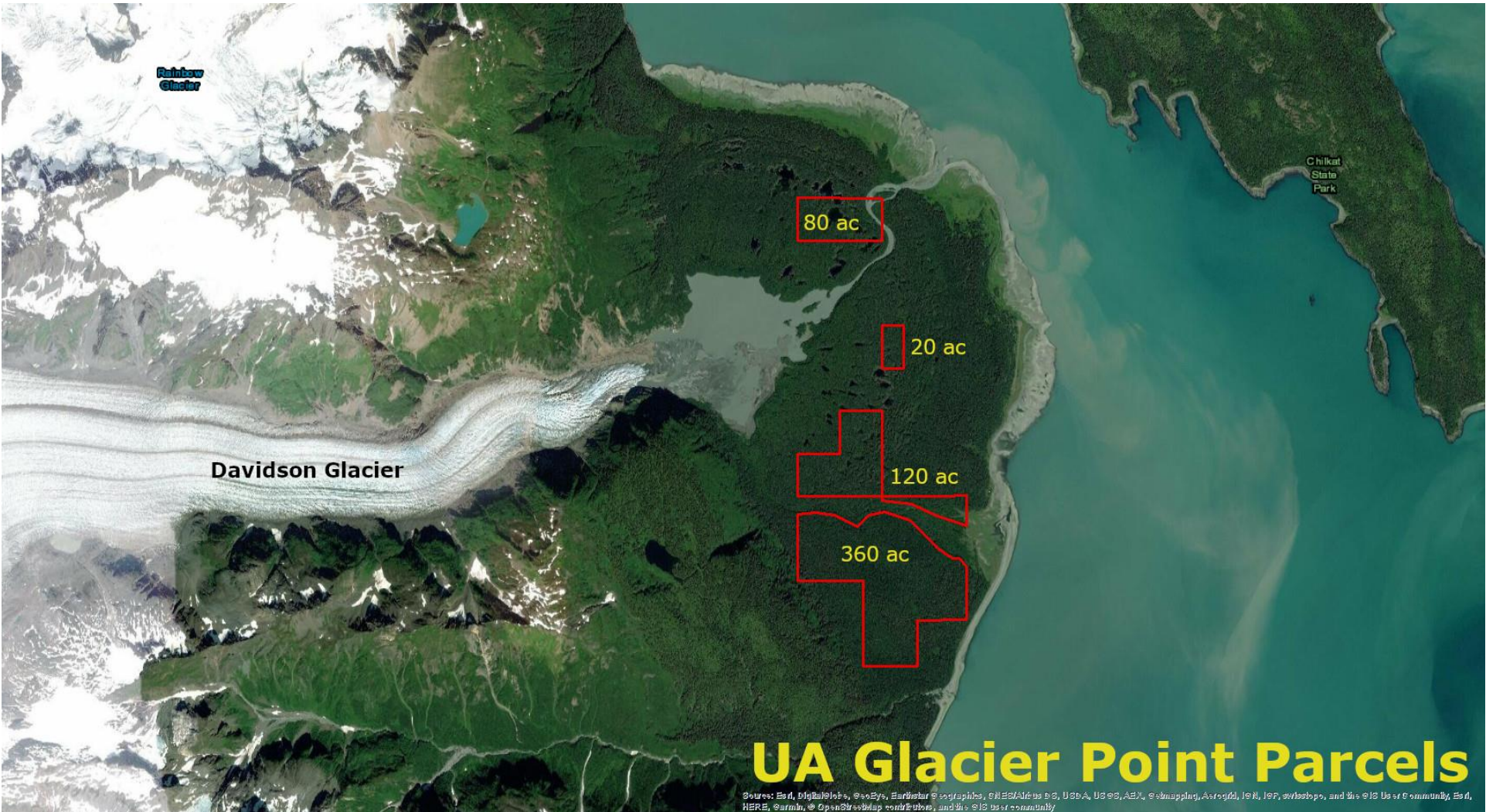
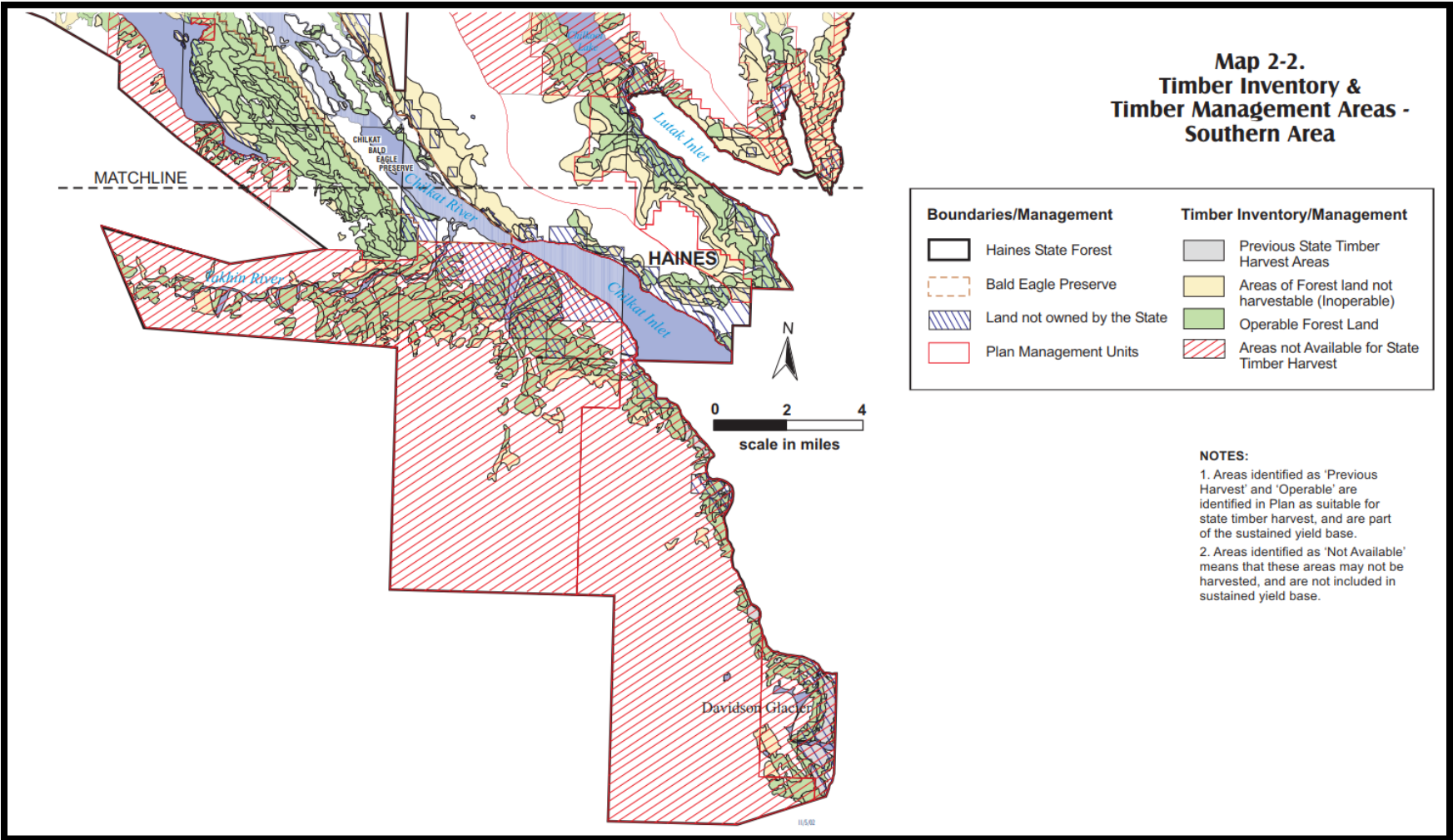
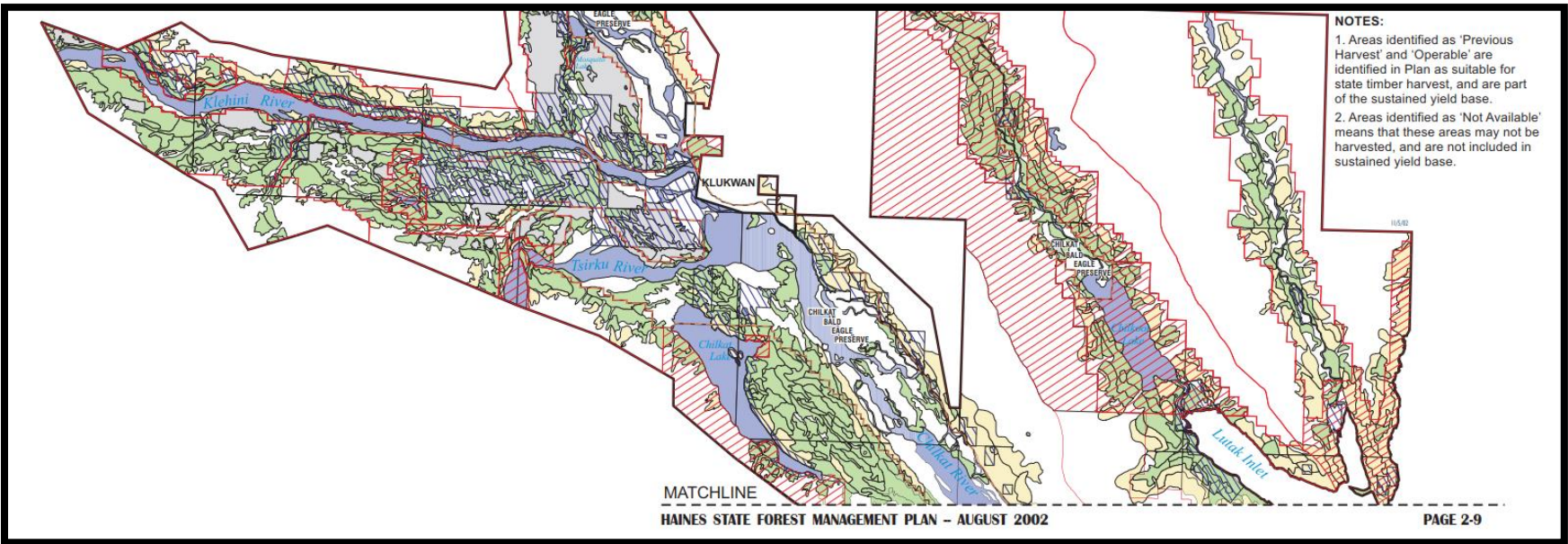


Figure 8. On Glacier Point are five parcels totaling roughly 570 acres containing mature spruce forest of unknown market quality. The parcels are surrounded by private land. Glacier Point is the site of significant commercial tourism activities as well as a number of private homesteads. The glacial lake and outlet stream support anadromous coho salmon and Dolly Varden char.



Figures 9 and 10. From the 2002 Haines State Forest Management Plan.