

Wrangell Economic Cluster Initiative Plan

February 2012

The City & Borough of Wrangell is looking forward to establishing a strong partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service to collaboratively advance economic development opportunities identified as part of the Cluster Working Group Initiative and the Tongass Transition Plan. This document is to provide collaborating agencies with an information bridge between innovative local projects and programs and state and federal opportunities to leverage resources. Below are key Wrangell economic development projects consistent with the strategic initiatives identified through the cluster group process. It is our intention to work with the USDA and other federal and state agencies and organizations to focus limited resources to advance projects consistent with the Transition Planning process that will strengthen the economy of the City & Borough of Wrangell and Southeast Alaska.

Ocean Products

Maritime Industry Technology & Workforce Development

(Ocean Products Cluster Initiative 2)

The City & Borough of Wrangell, EDA, and State of Alaska have invested in the Marine Service Center Facility located in downtown Wrangell. The long-term success of this facility hinges on Wrangell maintaining and attracting skilled workers and successful businesses in order to provide excellent service. If customers are satisfied with the level of work completed on their vessels, they will continue to return to use this facility and spread the word to others.

With this goal in mind, the City & Borough of Wrangell would like to pursue funding to determine the following:

1. levels of satisfaction among users of the facility in the past 2 years
2. gaps in service
3. needs of current businesses operating in Wrangell
4. existing marine training opportunities in the region
5. plan to fill identified gaps and needs

Upon completion of this project, the City & Borough of Wrangell will be empowered to pursue appropriate workforce development opportunities, prioritize infrastructure projects, and recruit businesses to the community, in turn strengthening the marine service industry in Wrangell and southeast Alaska.

Collaborative Partners

- USDA Rural Development
- University of Alaska

- State of Alaska Workforce Development
- Southeast Conference
- Ketchikan Ship and Dry Dock

Increase Wild Salmon Production Through Habitat Restoration

(Ocean Products Cluster Initiative 4)

Restoration activities can improve wild salmon production. Increased salmon production results in increased opportunity for commercial, sport, and subsistence harvest. Increasing the economic output of wild salmon harvests for all sectors of the fishing industry will increase the number of jobs directly and indirectly stemming from wild salmon production for all sectors of the salmon industry in SE Alaska.

From a community economic development point of view, identified restoration projects can also provide a “mitigation bank” opportunity for future public and private development projects, assuring that project mitigation requirements are focused on an identified need, rather than random conservation efforts.

The City & Borough of Wrangell supports engaging with the Forest Service in a collaborative process to 1) identify damaged watersheds and other restoration areas (such as Pat’s Creek drainage, Bradfield River, and areas close to town threatened by development) and 2) develop stewardship contracts that are compatible with the local capacity and use local “Best Practices” criteria.

Collaborative Partners:

- United States Forest Service
- Southeast Alaska Conservation Council
- State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources
- State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Office

Visitor Industry Initiatives

Premier ATV Trail System

(Visitor Products Cluster initiatives 1 & 2)

The City & Borough of Wrangell would like to develop and market a premier ATV trail system on the Wrangell Ranger District using in-service Forest Service roads and a limited number of closed, or identified for closure, Forest Service roads. This initiative would involved identifying and conventionally naming ATV trails (roads), performing a limited amount of maintenance on some of the road systems, installation of strategically located picnic areas, developing marketing tools (such as

maps, brochures, website), and marketing the system to areas where recreational ATV is highly popular. Recreational ATV use in the Lower-48 is a growing industry. ATV users who live in areas with limited access to public land, such as in Texas, travel to states where ATV trails are available, such as Colorado. Combining the growing demand for ATV recreation areas with the scenic opportunities in Southeast Alaska could prove to be a significant driver for the visitor industry in the Wrangell area.

Collaborative Partners:

- United States Forest Service
- Southeast Alaska Conservation Council
- Stikine Sportsman Association
- Wrangell Chamber of Commerce
- Wrangell Convention and Visitor Bureau

Enhance & Expand Existing Trail Systems

(Visitor Products Cluster Initiative 1)

The City & Borough of Wrangell would like to work with SEATrails and other agencies and organizations to fully develop and market an integrated trail system in Southeast Alaska. In addition, we would like the trail system on the Wrangell Ranger District to become the premier ADA accessible recreation area on the Tongass both for local and regional residents, but also for disabled travelers and returning US Military Veterans.

Collaborative Partners:

- United States Forest Service
- Southeast Alaska Conservation Council
- SEATrails
- State of Alaska Division of Natural Resources
- Wrangell Convention and Visitor Bureau

Forest Products Initiatives

Small Mill and Value-Added Timber Products Plan

(Forest Products Cluster Initiatives 4, 5, & 9)

The City & Borough of Wrangell would like to work with USDA and the Forest Service to implement a plan to support and enhancing existing and new small mills and value-added timber product businesses. The Borough is developing a plan that identifies six specific objectives:

1. Establish long term timber supply plan for small mills and value-added manufacturing
2. Develop infrastructure to maximize value-added local wood manufacturing
3. Create and market the Tongass wood brand

4. Support “Buy Local” campaign for wood products
5. Recruit timber product manufacturers
6. Enhance workforce development and opportunities for youth skills development

Collaborative Partners:

- United States Forest Service
- Wrangell Chamber of Commerce
- State of Alaska Division of Forestry
- Southeast Alaska Conservation Council
- Southeast Conference

Renewable Energy

BioBrick Manufacturing Facility Demonstration Project

(Energy Cluster Initiative 6, Forest Products Initiative 6)

Wrangell faces two growing challenges that are quickly converging to create an opportunity that could benefit the community: rising electrical loads for residential and commercial heating and growing costs for municipal waste management. The City & Borough of Wrangell would like to partner with the USDA and other agencies and organizations to develop a demonstration project to manufacture “BioBricks” from small mill waste and municipal solid waste. The “BioBrick” can be burned in wood stoves, which are currently common to many households in Southeast Alaska, and in automated commercial boilers. The City & Borough can realize cost savings by diverting solid waste that would otherwise be shipped south to a landfill, and reducing heating costs by installing commercial “BioBrick” boilers in large public and potentially private buildings that currently heat with fuel oil.

Collaborative Partners:

- United States Forest Service
- University of Alaska
- Southeast Alaska Power Agency
- Alaska Energy Authority
- Southeast Conference
- Southeast Regional Solid Waste Authority
- Southeast Alaska Conservation Council
- Wrangell Cooperative Association