



Thorne Bay Basin Integrated Resource Management Project

Thorne Bay Ranger District to the Tongass Transition Collaborative

Project Leadership and Selected Interdisciplinary Team Staff

- Mark Pentecost, District Ranger
- Ken Ostrom, Deputy District Ranger
- Quentin Hall, Environmental Coordinator
- Molly Simonson, Planning Silviculturist
- Kevin Garter, Planning Forester
- Gregg Dunn, Wildlife Biologist
- Casey Lavoie, Transportation/Engineering
- Shona Donnelley, Heritage/Archaeology
- Hannah Harris, Fisheries Biologist
- Malcolm Cross, Hydrologist
- Jacquie Foss, Soils and Botany Coordinator
- Anna Harris, Geology
- Carol Jensen, Landscape Architect
- Joni Johnson, Climate Specialist
- Nick Reynolds, Forester
- Jean Daniels, Economics/Env. Justice
- Justin Donnelley, Recreation
- Rob Cross, Subsistence Coordinator
- Sally Burch, GIS Specialist
- Sandy Powers, Writer-Editor

...and more from across the District, Forest, and Region.

Project History and Background

- Project initiated in early 2022.
- Sought to address:
 - Wildlife habitat improvements.
 - Wildlife habitat connectivity.
- Grew to include:
 - Young-growth transition.
 - Fisheries and watershed restoration.
- Sought tribal consultation and opened for public comment (scoped) in September of 2022.
 - Broad project details.
 - Only 11 comments.

USDA Forest Service U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Tongass National Forest, Thorne Bay Ranger District | September 2022

Thorne Bay Basin Integrated Management Project

The Thorne Bay Ranger District is planning to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Thorne Bay Basin Integrated Management Project, which proposes to utilize sustainable vegetation management approaches over the course of 10 to 15 years to provide an annual average of 7-10 million board feet (MMBF) of suitable young-growth timber, reconstruct temporary roads, maintain National Forest System roads, and implement terrestrial and watershed restoration activities in the Thorne Bay basin, in a way which considers and supports a healthy resilient forest, economic benefits to local communities, fish and wildlife habitat, cultural and traditional uses, subsistence, and other authorized uses. Details of the proposed project are included in the map and text below.

PROJECT AREA

Thorne Bay is located on the eastern side of Prince of Wales Island, Alaska. The project area is about 91,173 acres of National Forest System land that includes two land use designations (Modified Landscape and Timber Production), and about 3,595 acres of land of other ownership (non-National Forest System land).

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT BACKGROUND

This project responds to direction in the 2016 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) specific to young-growth timber harvest. This direction is outlined in the Purpose and Need.

Some of the needed restoration activities have already been approved under the Prince of Wales Landscape Level Analysis Record of Decision. Other activities have not been approved and will be analyzed in this project. Already-approved restoration activities will be considered in the cumulative effects portion of this analysis.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED PURPOSE

The purpose of the Thorne Bay Basin Integrated Management Project is to implement the 2016 Forest Plan direction to progress toward the multiple-use goals, objectives, and desired future conditions as described in that plan, as well as USDA's Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy. Components of the July 15, 2021, strategy include ending large scale old-growth timber harvest on the Tongass National Forest and focusing resources to support forest restoration, recreation, climate resilience, and sustainable young-growth forest management. It is the purpose of this project to implement Forest Plan direction and work toward achieving its goals and objectives, including, but not limited to, the following:

Local and Regional Economies—Goals and Objectives (USDA Forest Service 2016a, p. 2-3)

Goal: Provide a diversity of opportunities for resource uses that contribute to the local and regional economies of Southeast Alaska.

Objective: Support a wide range of natural resource employment opportunities within Southeast Alaska's communities.

Thorne Bay Basin Integrated Management Project
Scoping Document - 1

Project History and Background

- Forest leadership voluntarily decided to rescope in September 2023.
 - Sought tribal consultation.
- Forest wanted additional public:
 - Comments on new project details.
 - Involvement in project development.
 - Input on Proposed Action.
- Rescoping resulted in 44 commentors.
 - Private.
 - NGO.
 - Government.

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Tongass National Forest, Thorne Bay Ranger District | September 2023

Thorne Bay Basin Integrated Resource Management Project

The Thorne Bay Ranger District is seeking comments on the proposed Thorne Bay Basin Integrated Resource Management Project (TBB IRMP). The Forest Service proposes to improve wildlife habitat, provide commercial young growth harvest opportunities, and implement riparian and road restoration activities in the project area over the next 15 years. The Proposed Action would support healthy resilient forests, bring economic benefits to local communities, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, and promote cultural, traditional and subsistence uses.

PROJECT AREA

Thorne Bay, Alaska, was originally established in 1960 as a floating logging camp and is now one of the larger communities on Prince of Wales Island (POW) with 470 full time residents as of 2021. The project area is located near Thorne Bay, on the eastern side of POW (Figures 1 and 2).

The project area was selected given its potential to meet multiple resource objectives. These objectives include opportunities to improve wildlife habitat, address aquatic resource concerns, provide commercial young growth products, and support employment opportunities for isolated rural communities. The project area includes about 26,371 acres of National Forest System (NFS) land within three land use designations (LUD), including Modified Landscape, Recreational River, and Timber Production, as well as about 3,604 acres of land under other ownership (non-NFS land).

PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

Need

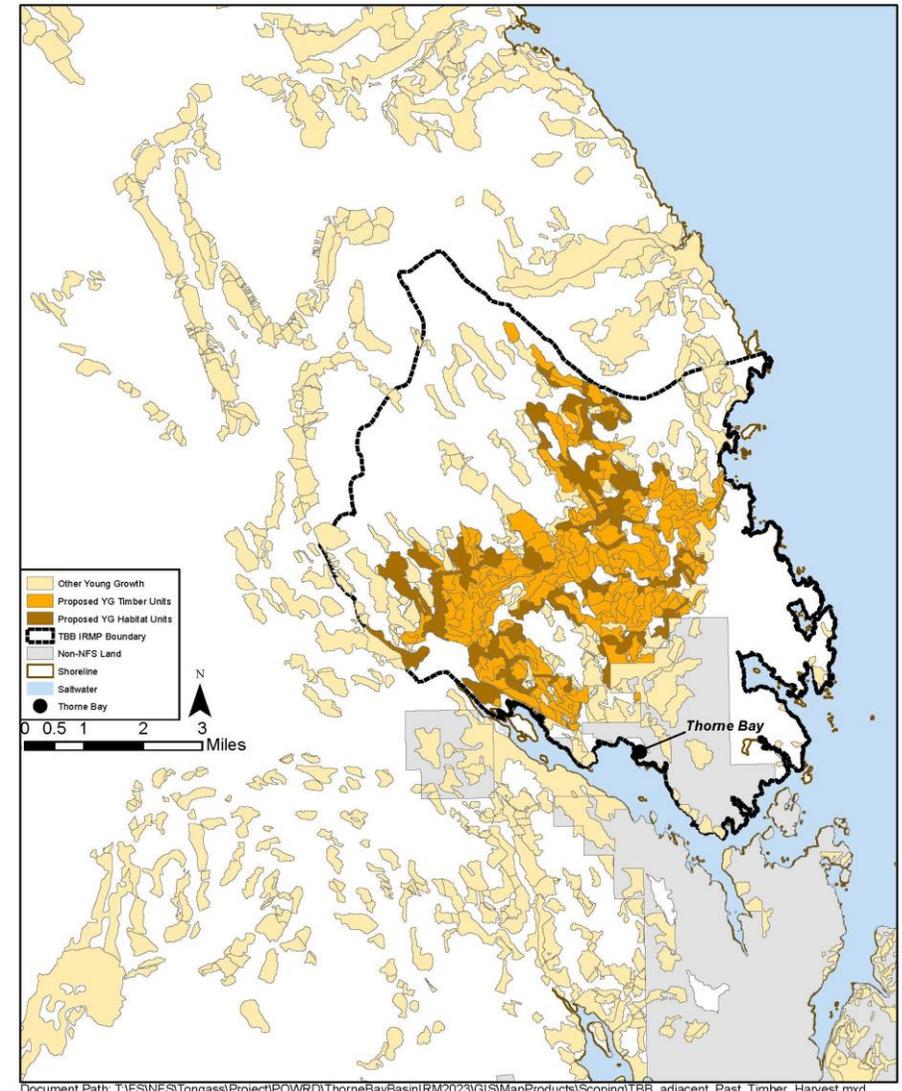
The project area is located in the Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area, which is designated as a disadvantaged community according to the [White House Council on Environmental Quality Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#). The area falls below the low-income threshold with residents burdened by high energy costs, lack of affordable housing, and legacy pollution. In the 2017-2021 period, 17.3 percent of individuals and 14.9 percent of families living in the Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area were living below the State of Alaska poverty benchmarks. Employment is primarily in health care and social assistance, small sawmills, government, commercial fishing, and tourism as guided sport fishing charter opportunities. Residents routinely engage in subsistence activities in this area, such as hunting, fishing and trapping. There are seven federally recognized Native Alaskan Tribes who share ancestral territory and sovereignty on Prince of Wales Island, and eight Alaska Native Claims and Settlement Act (ANCSEA) corporations who manage lands on behalf of their shareholders or are included in Government-to-Corporation consultation based on their relationship to the island's federally recognized tribes.

Both the OneUSDA Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy (SASS) and the public have challenged the Forest Service to identify short- and long-term opportunities for investments that reflect the diverse

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Rescoping Results

- Main rescoping comment topics:
 - Increase/maintain emphasis on wildlife and other restoration.
 - Decrease timber harvest volumes.
 - Increase timber harvest volumes.
- Emphasized the need for alternatives to the Proposed Action.
 - This is where we are now.



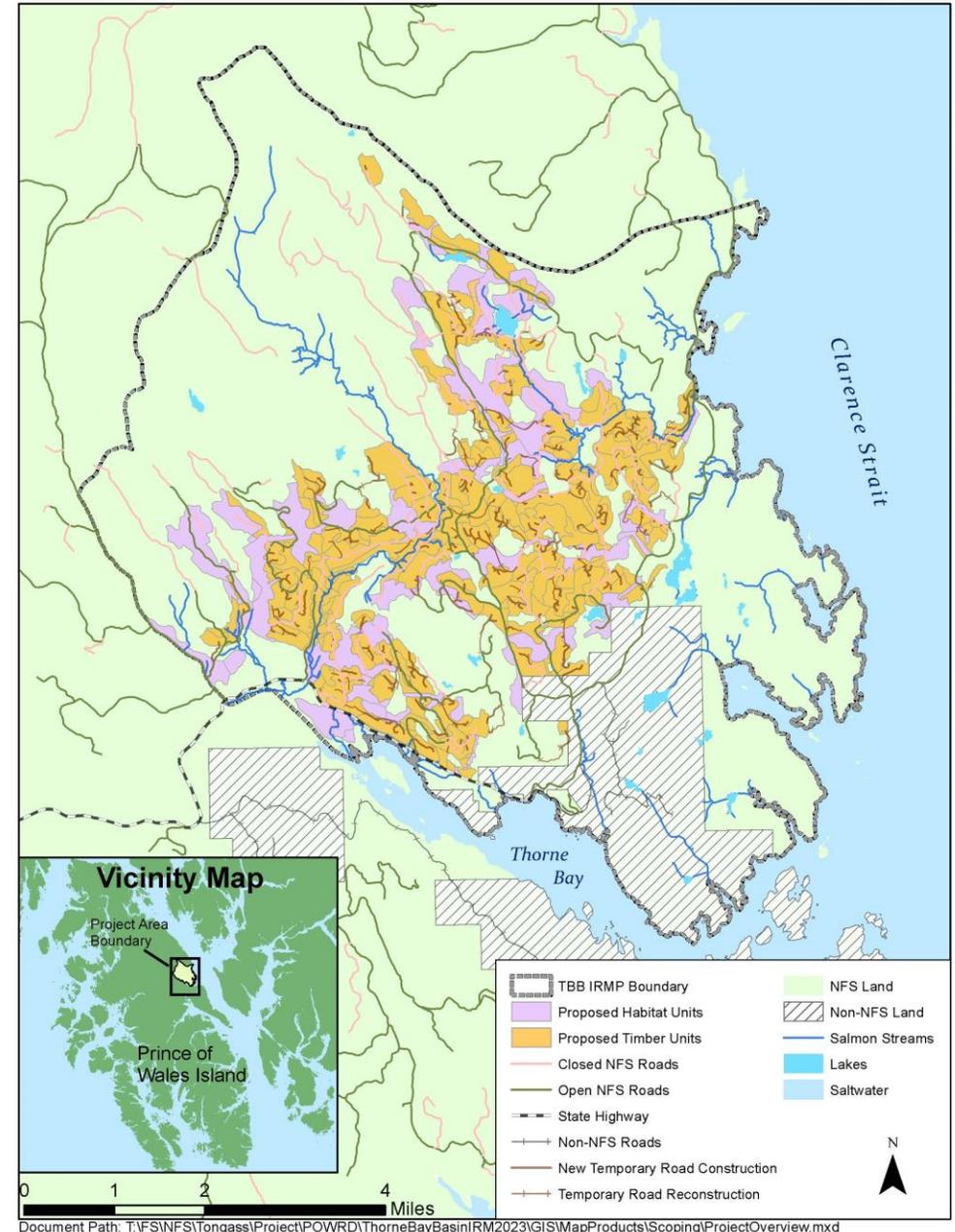
Moving Forward

- Remainder of presentation focuses on:
 - Original Proposed Action detailed in rescoping document.
- Project details could change as we develop potential alternatives and begin resource analyses.

- **Project Area**
 - 26,371 acres of NFS lands.
 - 3,604 acres of other ownership.

- **Treatment Area**
 - Wildlife = ~2,702 acres
 - Timber = ~2,437 acres

- **Project Duration: 15 years**



Project Details: Wildlife

- **Current Conditions:**
 - Stem exclusion stage.



- **High density stems.**
 - Little light on ground.
 - ❖ Poor forage.
 - Small crowns.
 - ❖ Poor snow intercept.

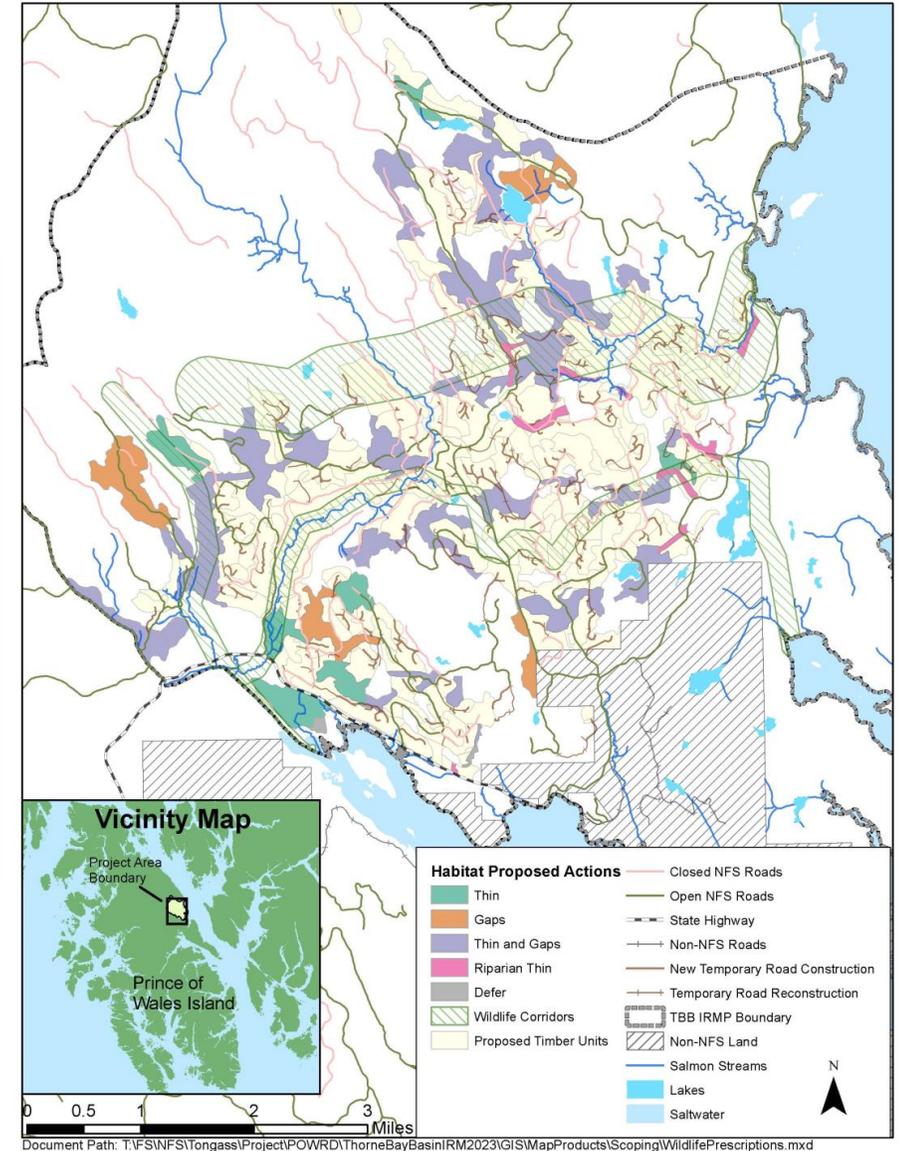


Project Details: Wildlife



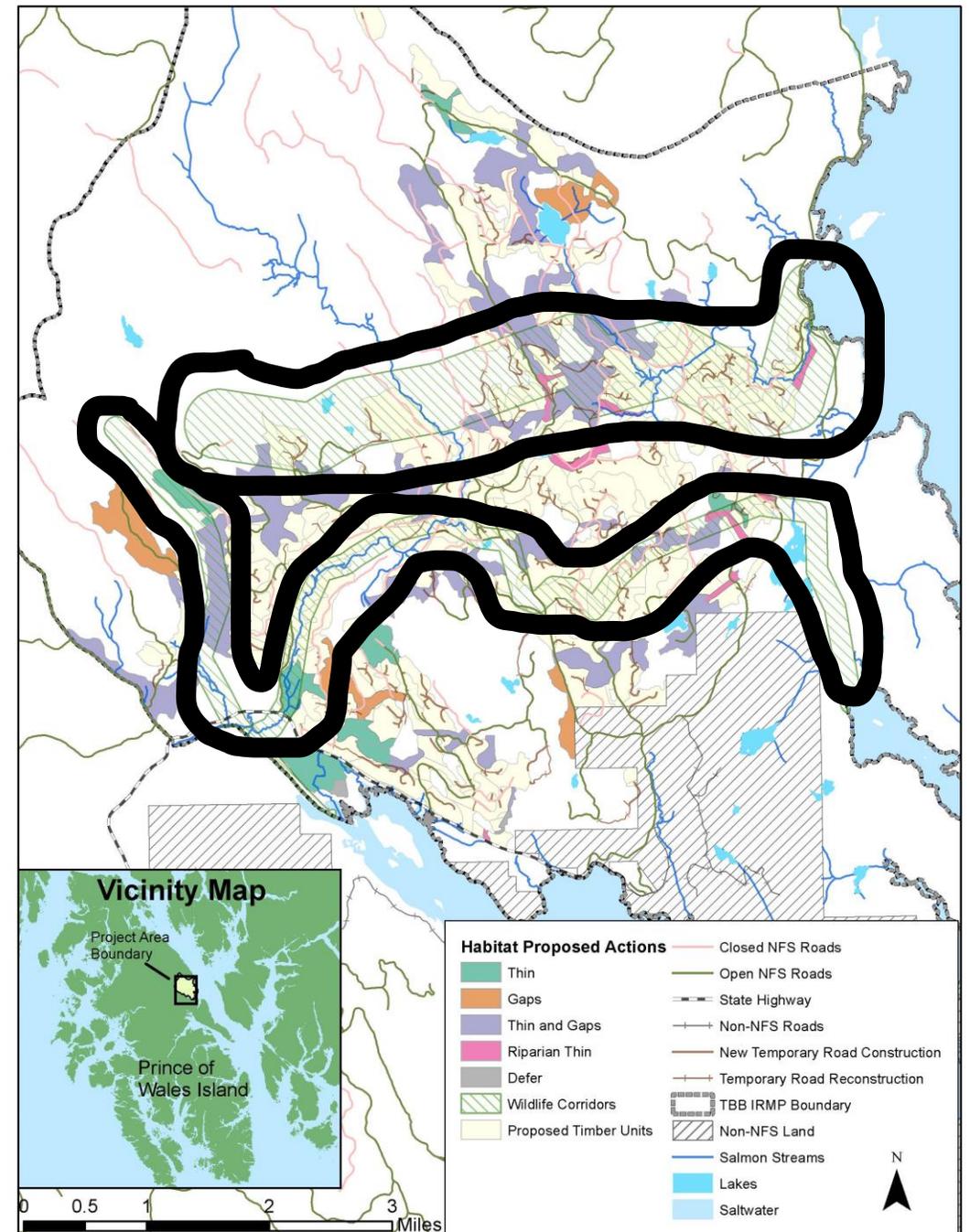
Project Details: Wildlife

Treatment	Total Stand Area (Acres)	Treatment intensity or limitations
Thinning only	388	Variable spacing or strip thinning a maximum of 10% of the area; includes girdling
Gaps only	375	Average 80 ft. diameter, for a maximum of 5 to 10% of the area; includes girdling
Thinning & Gaps	1,822	Same as above; total of strip thinning and gaps is not to exceed 10% of the area
Riparian Thinning	118	Variable spacing, includes girdling
Total	2,702	Slash management and biomass utilization may be applied to all of the above



Project Details: Wildlife and Timber

- **Wildlife Corridors to provide:**
 - Elevational movement.
 - Riparian habitat access.
 - Connectivity between residual old growth.
- **Overlap Wildlife and Timber Units.**
- **When overlapping Timber Units:**
 - Harvest size and intensity reduced.
 - Two-aged or uneven aged management.
 - 10 acre \geq openings.
 - No more than 1/3 stand area harvested.



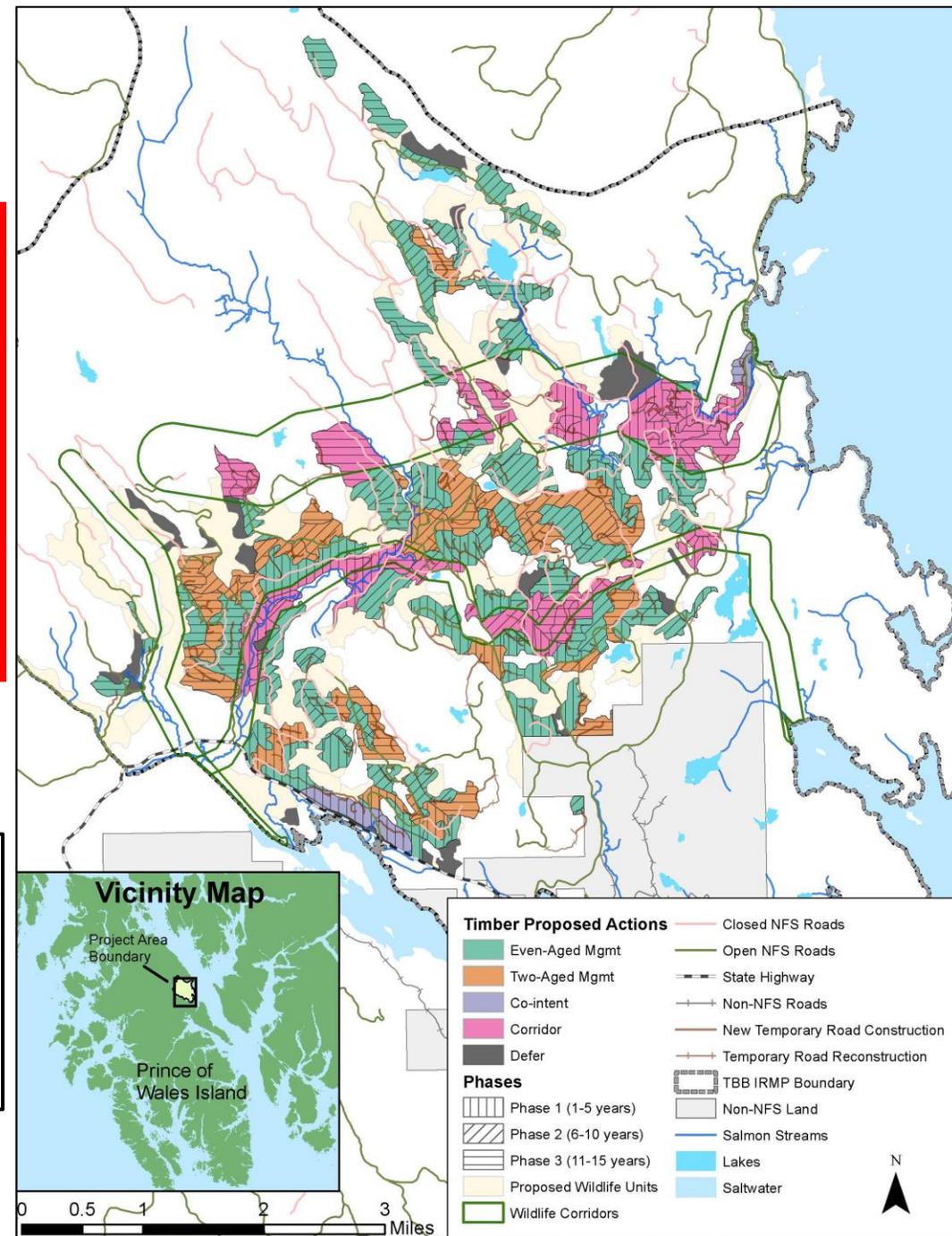
Project Details: Timber

Treatment	Total stand area (acres)	Suitable for timber harvest (acres)	Maximum percent of stand area for harvest	Maximum opening size allowed (acres)	Estimated actual harvest (acres)
Even-aged Management	2,612	2,246	100%	100 ^a	1,797
Two-aged Management	1,174	1,016	50%	20	406
Co-intent	124	103	33%	10	27
Corridor	1,223	781	33%	10	206
Total	5,132	4,146			2,437

Co-intent: areas suitable for producing timber volume when treatments improve habitat conditions and long-term ecological function in young growth. For this project, these stands are referred to as the co-intent units where uneven-aged management with group or individual tree selection is the proposed treatment.

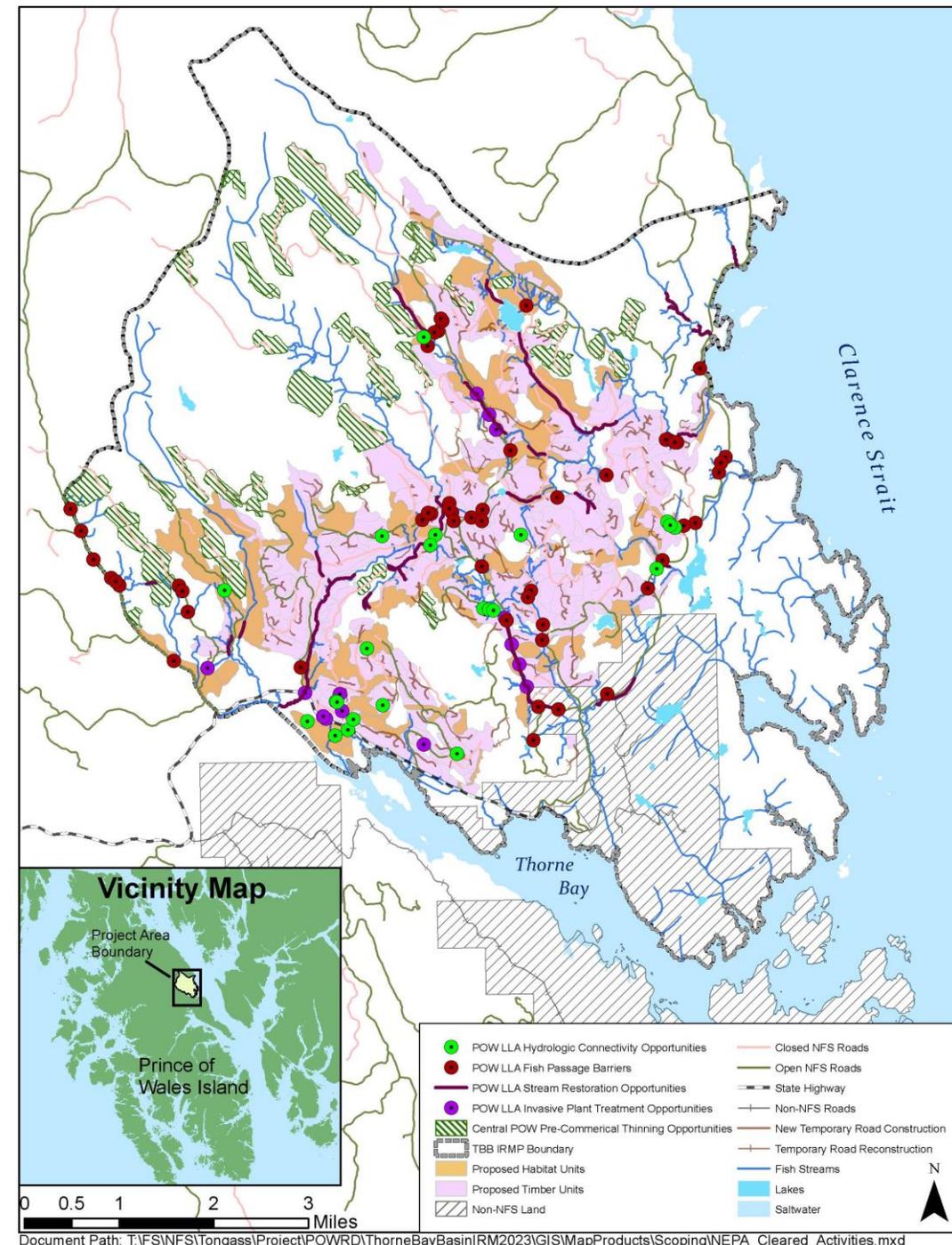
$$2,437 \text{ ac} \div 15 \text{ yr} = \sim 162 \text{ ac/yr}$$

- Phase 1 (1-5 years): ~30%
- Phase 2 (6-10 years): ~33%
- Phase 3 (11-15 years): ~37%
- ~2-5 MMBF/yr



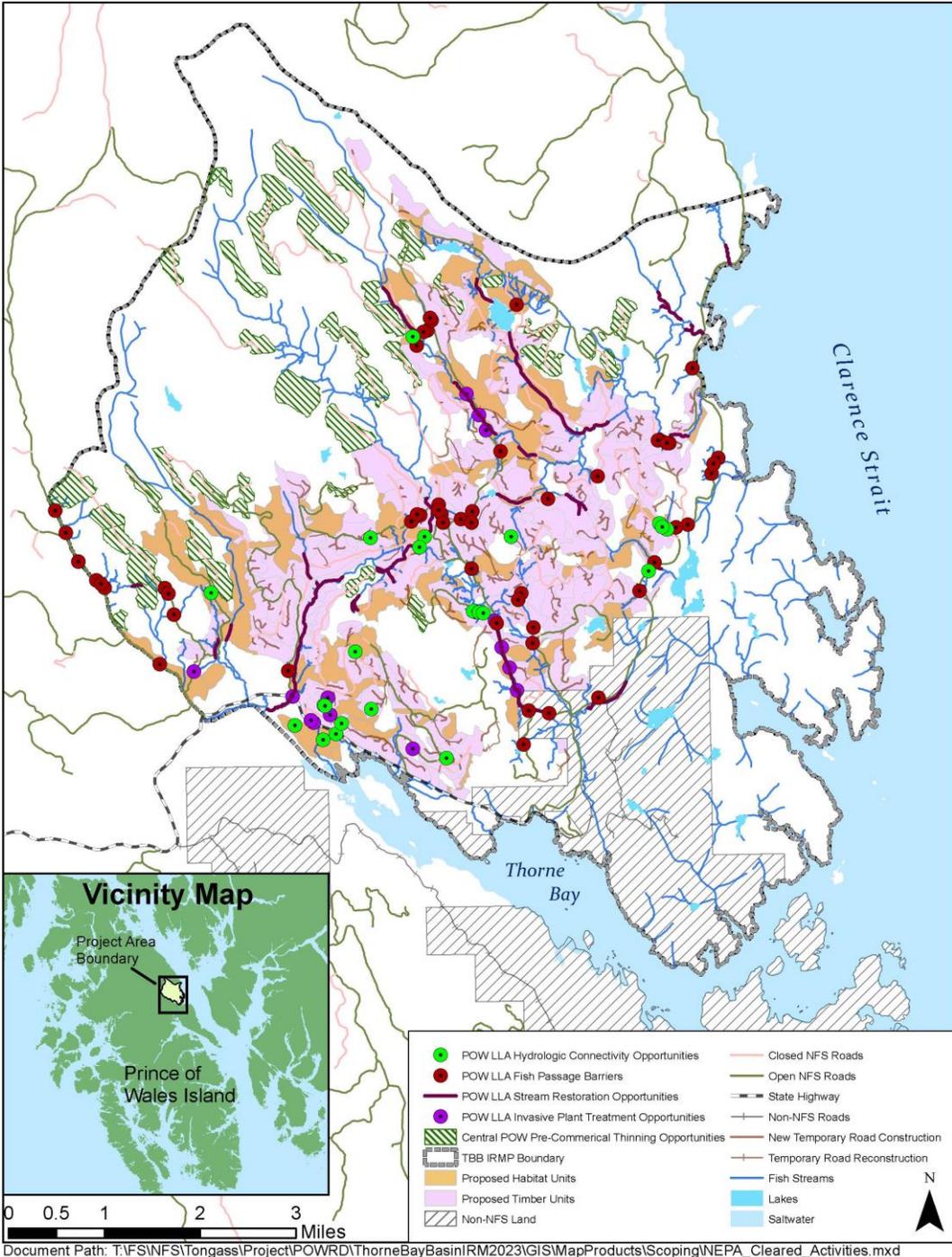
Project Details: Aquatics and Botany Restoration

- Numerous fisheries, hydrological, and invasive plant-related restoration opportunities have been identified in the project area.



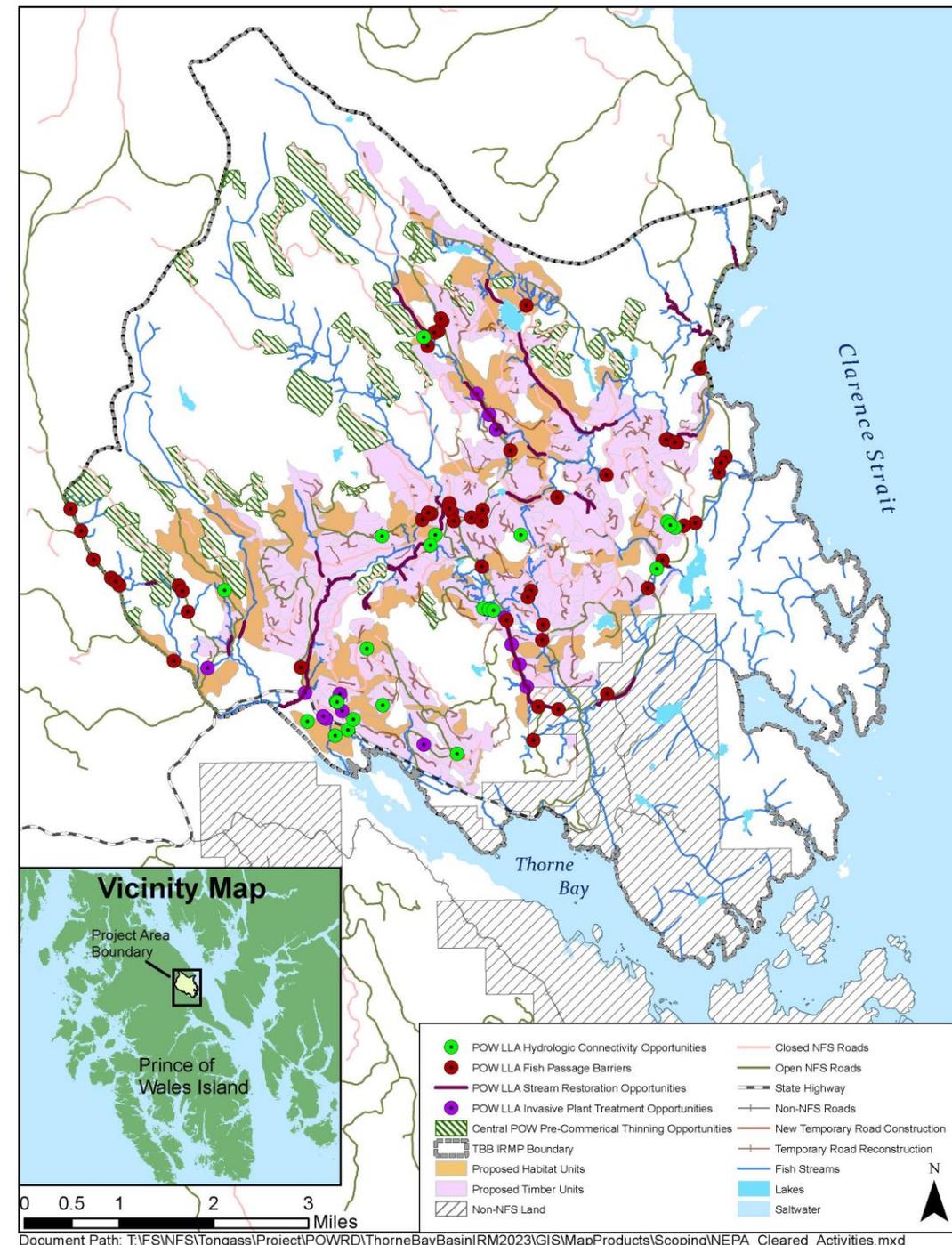
Project Details: Aquatics and Botany Restoration

- Many of these are already NEPA-cleared through the POWLLA, however there are accessibility and funding constraints.



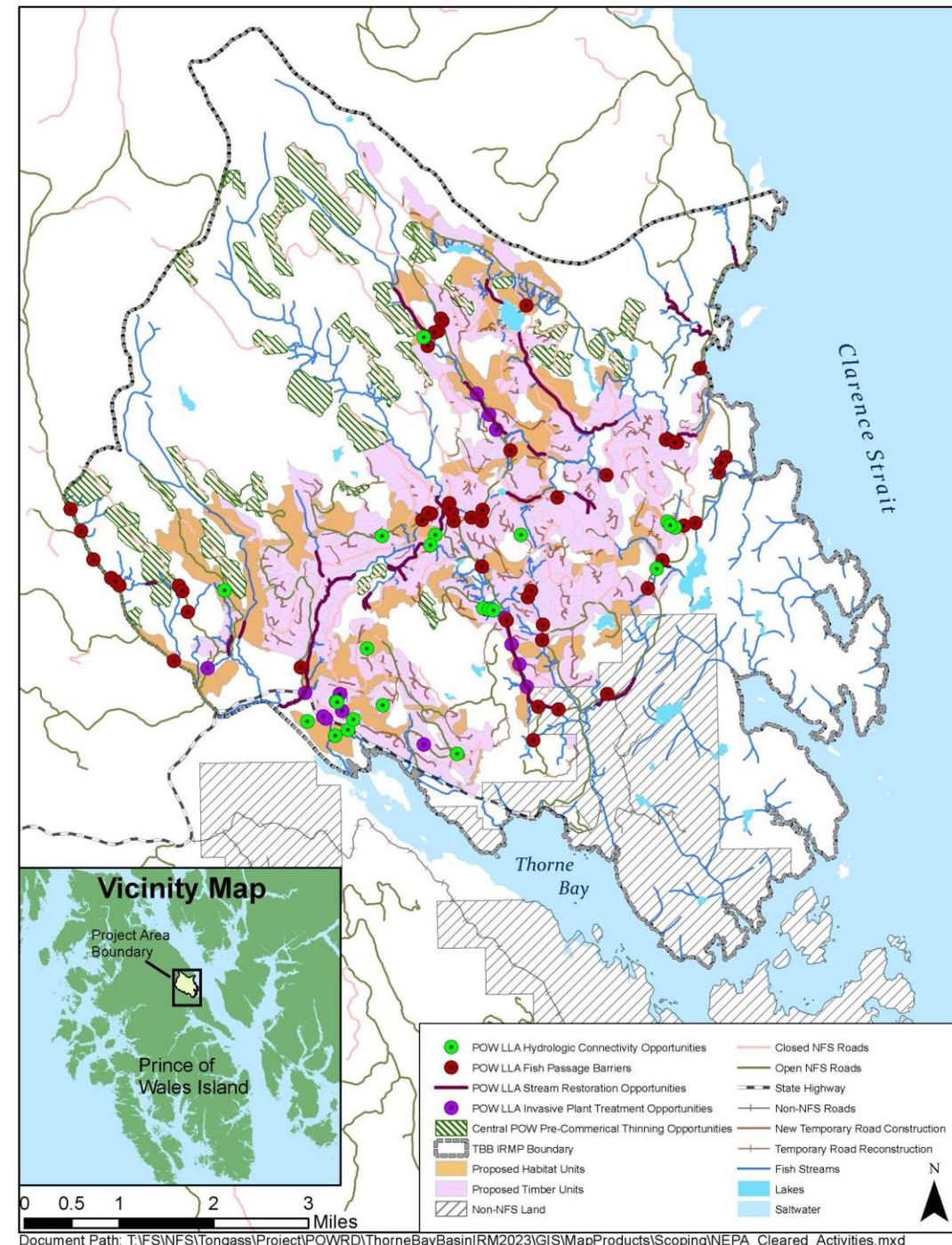
Project Details: Aquatics and Botany Restoration

- Coordinate restoration activities covered under the POWLLA/Central POW PCT with TBB IRMP implementation.



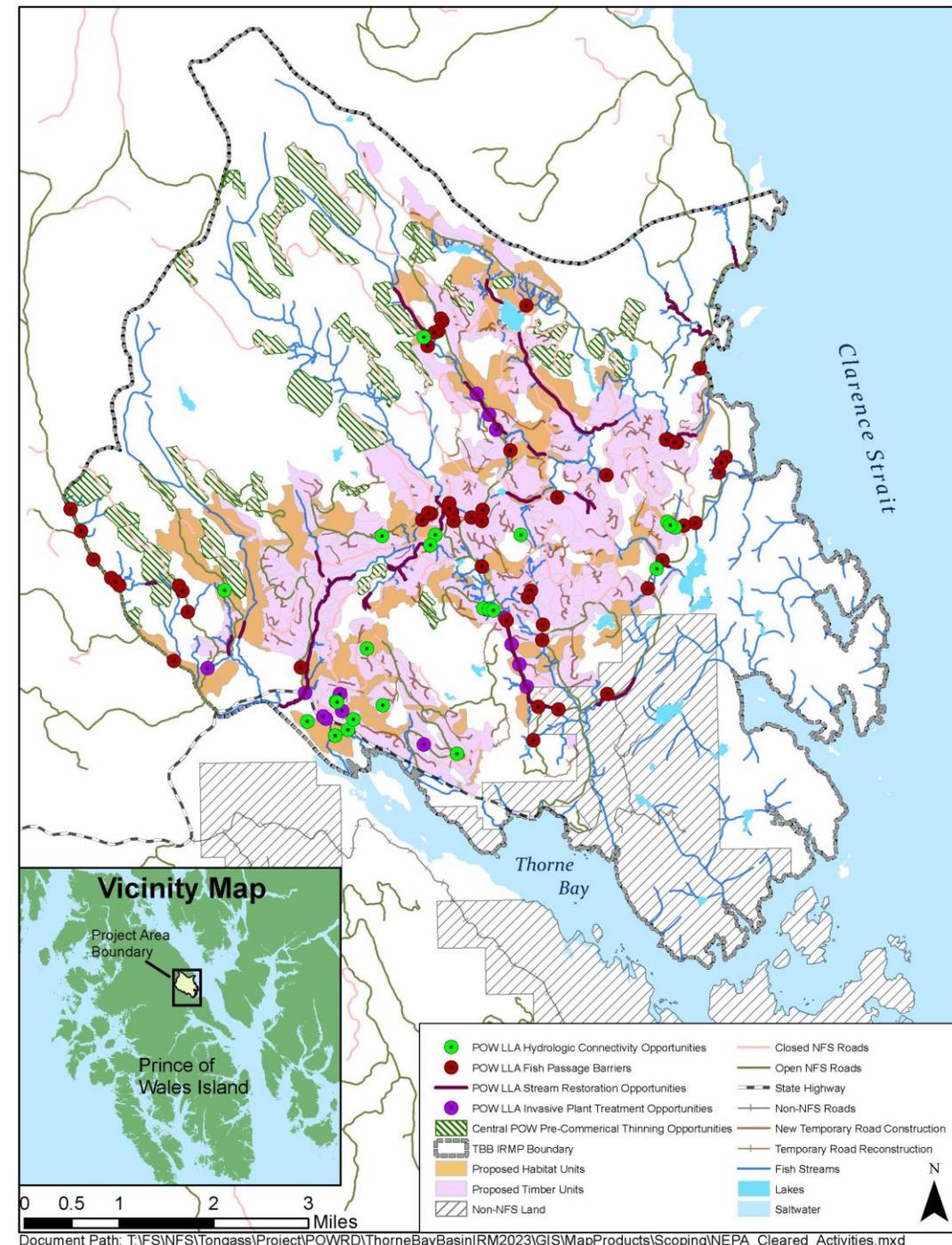
Project Details: Aquatics and Botany Restoration

- Allows for potential pooling of resources, funding, and personnel.
 - Example: Share equipment mobilization costs.



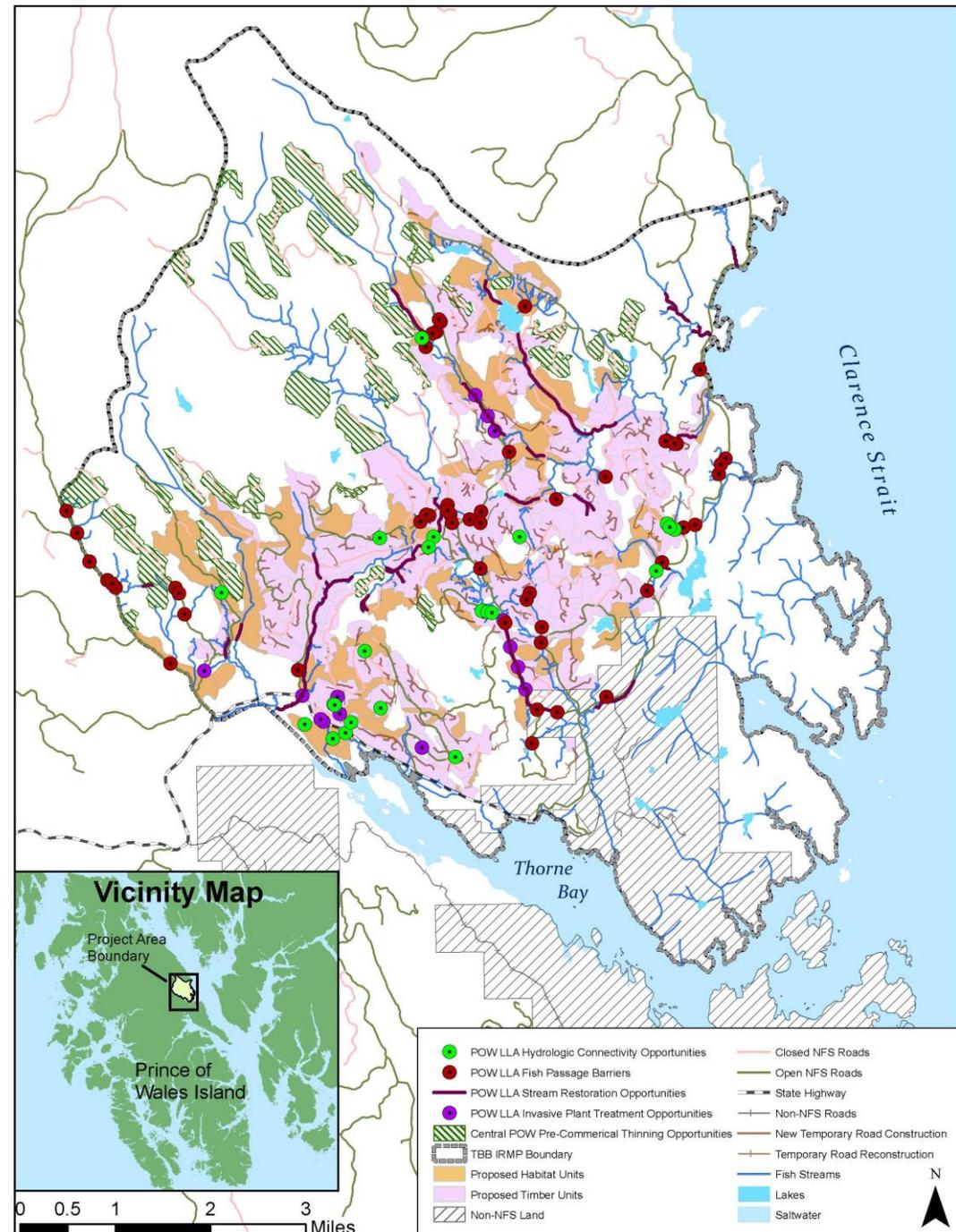
Project Details: Aquatics and Botany Restoration

- Prevents “random acts of conservation”.
- Allows multiple restoration projects across numerous resources to occur in the same area at the same time.



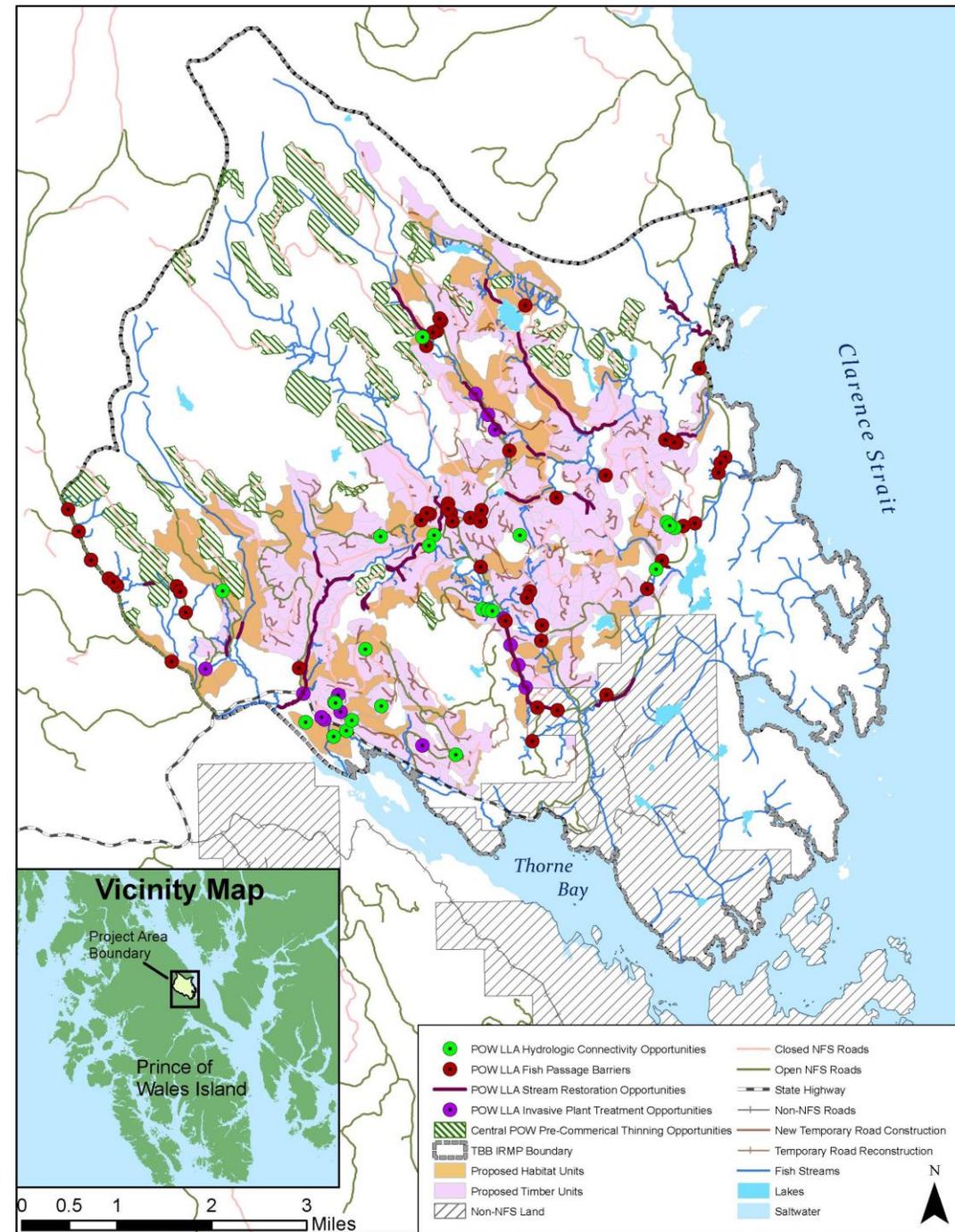
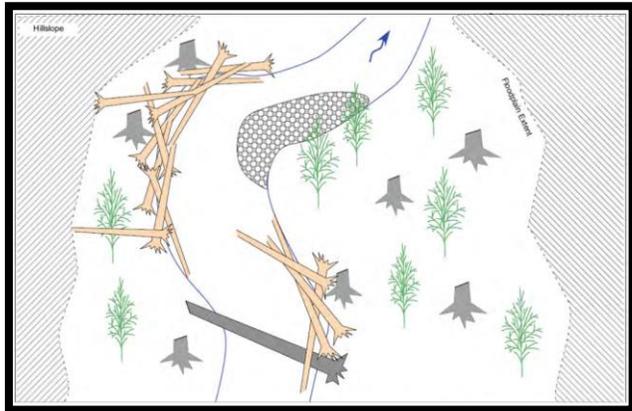
Project Details: Aquatics Restoration Example

- Aquatic Organism Passages (AOP).



Project Details: Aquatics Restoration Example

■ Hydrological/In-stream Restoration



In Closing

- Next Steps:
 - Alternative development based on rescoping comments.
 - Analysis of Proposed Action and Alternatives.



Questions