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Forest Service purchases land in Cube Cove returning it to Wilderness

JUNEAU, Alaska—September 16, 2016. Today marks the completion of the purchase of the first two segments of a multi-segment land acquisition in Cube Cove on Admiralty Island. Funds for this purchase come from the congressionally-designated Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

In July, a landmark purchase agreement between the Forest Service and Shee Atiká Corporation that will return over 22,000 acres of land back into Wilderness within the million-acre Admiralty Island National Monument was signed. Due to the size of the property, the purchase agreement established a method to acquire the property in segments through the LWCF. Today's purchase of 4,463.45 acres represents approximately 20% of the total purchase.

When this purchase is completed it will be the largest transfer of lands from a private inholding back into Forest Service-managed Wilderness in the history of the agency. Admiralty Island is located within the Tongass National Forest, which is the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world, home to large populations of brown bears and other wildlife and also critical watersheds for salmon and fish stocks.

Cube Cove is located 30 miles south of Juneau, Alaska, and 20 miles north of Angoon, Alaska, and is an inholding within the boundaries of the Admiralty Island National Monument and within the Kotznoowoo Wilderness area.

The land owner, Shee Atiká Corporation, is a Sitka-based urban Native corporation organized under terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). The Cube Cove lands were conveyed to Shee Atiká in the early 1980s as part of ANCSA, and the federal government has long been interested in reacquiring the inholding.

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“I’m pleased to finalize the purchase of Cube Cove and see these lands become a part of the Admiralty Island National Monument and Kootznoowoo Wilderness,” said Alaska’s Regional Forester, Beth Pendleton.

"The return of the Cube Cove land to the Monument has been a team effort by the U.S. Forest Service, Shee Atiká and the Alaska Congressional delegation," said Kenneth Cameron, President/CEO and Chairman of Shee Atiká, Incorporated.

Extensive logging took place on the property from 1984 to 2002. The phased purchase is of the surface estate, with its former logging infrastructure now removed, and will be allowed to return to a more natural state over time. Purchase of Wilderness inholdings is a high priority for land acquisition in the Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

The Alaska Region of the Forest Service manages almost 22 million acres of land within the Chugach and Tongass National Forests to meet society’s needs for a variety of goods, services, and amenities while enhancing the Forests’ health and productivity, and to foster similar outcomes for State and private forestland across Alaska. The U.S. Forest service is an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture.

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