

## Background

The project area, located on southeast Chichagof Island along the north shore of Peril Strait, was clearcut logged in the late 1960s. The harvest was completed in upland and beach fringe areas, impacting wildlife. Due to its southern exposure and proximity to the shoreline, the project area is considered to be important deer winter range. Initial on the ground reviews revealed a very limited and patchy distribution of important browse species and a very high utilization of these browse patches by deer. Reducing the number of trees per acre was necessary to increase understory light levels and promote growth of understory shrub species important to deer during the winter months. This objective was accomplished primarily by creating gaps approximately 100 feet in diameter and thinning trees to create a wider tree spacing. Other prescriptions included pruning, retaining thickets, and maintaining wildlife travel corridors. Pruning was utilized on a select basis adjacent to created gaps or in beach fringe areas to promote understory herbaceous vegetation by varying understory light regimes. The silvicultural prescriptions were developed to meet the following objectives:

- Promote development of diverse vertical and horizontal forest structures.
- Minimize understory depletion during the stem exclusion phase (maximize quantity and quality of understory vegetation and/or reduce time in stem exclusion).
- Maintain or enhance species richness and diversity.

## Outcomes

- Gaps were created and thinning was completed to increase tree spacing to approximately 16 to 20 feet after treatment.

**Successes** Understory vegetation has begun to re-establish in those areas that have been thinned, providing forage for wildlife. Local thinning contractors were employed to perform most of the thinning completed between 2003 and 2005.

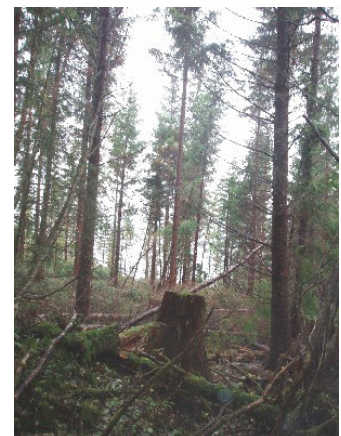
**Timeline** Canopy gaps were created in 2003 and 2004 with thinning completed in 2004 and 2005.

**Future Work** Up to 400 additional acres will be thinned as funding allows. Monitoring of past thinning will be completed on an ongoing basis.

**Details** Project Coordinator: USFS; Funding: Wildlife Program Funds; Business Contractor: USFS crews and private thinning contractors.



*Project site before thinning*



*The same spot after thinning*