

Appendix C

INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

ROADLESS AREA NAME: Soda Bay (505)

ACRES (NFS): 63,147

BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: North Central Prince of Wales Island

ECOLOGICAL SECTION: Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands, Prince of Wales Mountains

2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING: 20 (20, 20)

I. Overview and Description

(1) **Location and Access:** The Soda Bay Roadless Area is on the west side of Prince of Wales Island, approximately 50 air miles west of Ketchikan, 6 air miles south of Craig, and 3 air miles northwest of Hydaburg. The roadless area borders developed lands to the east. These developments along with non-National Forest System lands divide the roadless area into two portions, which are generally located north and south of Trocadero Bay. Non-National Forest System lands lie to the north, the west, and the southeast. Waterfall, a world class fishing resort, is near the southwestern boundary. Hollis is the nearest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway and is approximately 10 miles to the east via the Craig-Klawock-Hollis Road. Access is via the Prince of Wales road system and by boat through Trocadero and Soda Bays and North Pass/Tlevak Straight. Access to uplands is by foot or helicopter. There are no places suitable for landing wheeled aircraft. In addition, there are three Forest Service maintained trails that access the area that include Trocadero, Soda Lake, and Canoe Point Trails.

(2) **History:** The Soda Bay area is known to have been an important site for the indigenous peoples. The area was inhabited by the Tlingit until the Haida, who migrated north from the Queen Charlotte Islands, displaced them in the early 1700s. The coastal area was used from the late 1800s through the early 1900s as a base for the commercial fishing industry. In recent times, the community of Craig and the community of Hydaburg have been connected by a road that now serves as the east boundary of this roadless area. The construction of the road has resulted in the Trocadero Bay and the Soda Bay areas being used for recreation and subsistence activities by local residents.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** The area is characterized by low elevation, gently rolling topography; however, there are also steep, rugged areas. The highest point is nearly 2,500 feet. There are several lakes in the roadless area, the largest of which is Lake St. Nicholas. Freshwater lakes cover approximately 223 acres. There are also several island clusters in the bays bordering the roadless area. The area includes approximately 128 islands and islets (31 of these are greater than 10 acres) totaling 1,921 acres. There are approximately 83 miles of saltwater shoreline, 174 of rock, and 1,109 acres of alpine tundra. Trocadero and Soda Bays are prominent features.

(4) **Ecosystem:**

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. The area is in the North Central Prince of Wales Island Biogeographic Province. This province is characterized by rolling, gentle landforms with localized rugged topography. Limestone is common and overall forest productivity is high. Karst topography and caves are present.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Soda Bay Roadless Area is contained within the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247F) and the Prince of Wales Mountains Ecological Section (M247I). These areas are represented by four ecological subsections (see table below). The Soda Bay Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection (54% of the roadless area) is composed of a rolling landscape of rounded hills and broad valleys underlain by sedimentary and volcanic bedrock. Forested wetlands, bogs, and fens, comprising a majority of the landcover, are found on poorly drained soils, while productive hemlock or

hemlock-spruce forests are found on colluvium or well-drained till of the hillslopes. The Central Prince of Wales Volcanics Ecological Subsection (44% of the roadless area) is mostly comprised of volcanic bedrock, though outcrops of dioritic and conglomerate rocks exist. The shallow, unproductive, and organic soils of the higher elevations support wetlands and forests of mixed-conifers and logdepole pines. The well-drained till soils of the lower elevations support moderate to highly-productive hemlock and hemlock-spruce forests which comprise more than half the landcover in this ecological subsection (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands	Soda Bay Till Lowlands	54%
	Klawock Inlet Till Lowlands	1%
Prince of Wales Mountains	Central Prince of Wales Volcanics	44%
	Hetta Inlet Metasediments	1%

(b) Soils: These highly organic, low clay content soils are generally formed over bedrock and are typically about 40 inches deep. Generally, steeper areas have better-drained soils and flat areas are poorly drained.

(c) Vegetation: Vegetation is typical Southeast Alaska coastal temperate rain forest. The forest is primarily western hemlock and Sitka spruce, with a large cedar component. Approximately 3,937 acres of muskeg are mapped for the area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult.

There are approximately 57,351 acres mapped as forest land of which 21,258 acres (37 percent) are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 8,542 acres (40 percent) are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 1,556 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are also 586 acres of second growth resulting from previous logging.

(d) Fish Resources: The primary species found in these streams are coho, pink, and chum salmon, as well as steelhead trout. Harris River, St. Nicholas Creek, the Trocadero Bay watershed, and Soda Creek are the primary producers in this area.

(e) Wildlife Resources: This area has high populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, wolves, river otter, marten, mink, loon, and common waterfowl. Brown bear and mountain goats are not found here (MacDonald and Cook, 1999).

(5) Management Direction and Current Uses: This roadless area was allocated to seven Land Use Designations (LUDs) under the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. These LUDs are Timber Production, Modified Landscape, Scenic Viewshed, Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation, Special Interest Area, and Municipal Watershed.

LUD	Acres
Timber Production	33,670
Modified Landscape	2,367
Scenic Viewshed	421
Old-growth Habitat	20,303
Semi-remote Recreation	3,738
Special Interest Area	818
Municipal Watershed	1,829

Approximately 58 percent of the roadless area was allocated to a development LUD (Timber Production, Modified Landscape, Scenic Viewshed). The Timber Production LUD accounts for approximately 53 percent of the roadless area.

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Approximately 4 percent of the roadless area, along Trocadero Bay and Ulloa Channel, was allocated to the Modified Landscape LUD. About 421 acres (approximately 1 percent of the roadless area) was allocated to the Scenic Viewshed LUD, primarily located along Trocadero Bay

Approximately 42 percent of the roadless area contains one of four non-development LUDs (Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation, Special Interest Area, Municipal Watershed). The Old-growth Habitat LUD was assigned to approximately 32 percent of the roadless area. Approximately 6 percent of the area was allocated to the Semi-remote Recreation LUD, including the islands in Trocadero Bay. A 818-acre parcel of land in upper Soda Bay (approximately 1 percent of the roadless area) was allocated to a geologic Special Interest Area LUD in recognition of the carbonated soda springs in the area. Land managed under this designation has unique features and is protected for public use, study, and enjoyment of these natural areas. Approximately 3 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Municipal Watershed LUD. North Fork Lake is the water source for the community of Craig. The city operates a dam and pipeline system at this lake under the authorization of a special use permit.

Much of Shelikof Island, off the coast of the roadless area, has been developed for timber management. Shelikof Island is visible from the roadless area. The area has been identified as having mineral development potential. The roadless area contains the 3,535-acre Big Harbor Mineral tract.

Dispersed recreation, mostly associated with hiking, fishing, and hunting, is the primary recreation use of the area. Recreation facilities located within the roadless area include the Trocadero Trail, Soda Lake Trail (there are no interpretive signs or platforms on the Soda Lake Trail), and Canoe Point Picnic Area and Trail. Recreation facilities located directly adjacent to the roadless area along the road corridor include Harris River Campground and Picnic Area, Trocadero Overlook Picnic Area, and Cable Creek Fish Pass Interpretive Site. Trocadero Bay is popular for marine based recreation by the residents of Craig and Klawock. Sport fishing is popular in the estuary at Trocadero Bay. Black bear viewing is popular along Snipe and Cable Creeks. Two kayak outfitter/guides operate in this area for approximately 12 service days in 2000.

(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness): The interior of this roadless area is unmodified and in a natural condition although timber related developments border much of the area. Developments along the eastern and northern boundaries and to the north of Lake Nicholas adversely affect the apparent naturalness of nearby portions of the roadless area from important viewpoints and travelways.

(7) Surroundings (External Influences): The large blocks of private land to the west, north, and southeast of this roadless area have been extensively developed. Timber harvest has occurred on nearby Shelikof Island, which is in Soda Bay and on Suemez Island, which is southwest of this roadless area. Waterfall, a world class fishing resort, is located on private land on the west side of this area. The road connecting Craig with Hydaburg forms the east boundary of this roadless area. There are large parcels of land surrounding Trocadero Bay and Soda Bay that have been conveyed to Native Corporations. Not all of the Native Corporation owned lands have received timber management activities. In addition, there are large parcels of land that have been encumbered by both the State of Alaska and Native Corporations that have yet to be conveyed. Also, there are developed recreation facilities including the Harris River Campground and Picnic Area and the Trocadero Overlook Picnic Area that are located just outside the roadless area boundary.

(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest: The limestone formations and carbonate mineral springs along Soda Lake and Soda Creek have been recognized as unique and interesting by their designation as a Special Interest Area and may have potential for increased recreation through trails and interpretation. The karst and caves on the peninsula where Meares Passage meets Tlevak Strait are also of special interest. The natural features of the area, the scenery, the saltwater bays and inlets, and the opportunity to see wildlife and to study the processes which formed this country may all be attractions. The excellent saltwater salmon fishing is a major attraction in the vicinity of this roadless area. The area contains 20 inventoried recreation places, which cover 20,440 acres (32 percent) of the roadless area black bear viewing in the Trocadero Bay area and sport fishing in the streams.

(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary: Additional developments on National Forest System lands to the east have modified the eastern boundary somewhat. Several small areas along the beach that were logged, but not roaded, have been included in the roadless area. Trees have regrown in these old beach-logged areas and they no longer dominate the foreground views. There are large parcels of land surrounding Trocadero Bay and

Soda Bay that have been conveyed to Native Corporations. Several smaller areas along the developed boundaries have been excluded between the Draft and Final SEIS to improve the potential for manageability of the area as wilderness.

II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness: The interior of the roadless area is unmodified and in a natural condition although developments border much of the area. The only boundaries adhering to topographic features are the coastline of Trocadero Bay, Soda Bay, and North Pass. Although some human activity surrounds the area, the land within this area is in a natural state and is suitable for wilderness classification. Overall, the area has very high, to high natural integrity and apparent naturalness.

(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation: There is moderate opportunity for solitude and high opportunity for primitive recreation within this roadless area. The sights and sounds of adjacent management activities may be evident from much of the interior of this roadless area. Visitors are likely to encounter other people during fishing and hunting season, especially in the Trocadero Bay and Soda Bay tidal flats.

The roadless area contains some steep, rugged terrain, rising to over 2,000 feet in elevation in several places. The steep nature of portions of the area, its size, the lack of developed trails, and the presence of black bears present a degree of challenge and the need for woods skills and experience. Other portions of the roadless area have relatively gentle topography, are close to roads leading to nearby communities, and are less challenging to cross. Overall, the roadless area is less challenging than many other more remote roadless areas.

Most of the recreation potential centers around primitive and semi-primitive marine opportunities in Trocadero and Soda Bays. The table below lists the acreage and percent of the various Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes that have been inventoried in the roadless area.

ROS Class	Acres	Percent of Total ROS
Primitive	28,698	45%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	27,676	44%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	4,897	8%
Roaded Natural (RN)	258	0%
Roaded Modified (RM)	1,586	3%

The area contains 20 inventoried recreation places, which cover 20,440 acres (32 percent) of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places*	Total Acres
P	2	7,311
SPNM	5	8,634
SPM	5	3,192
RN	3	258
RM	10	1,045

* Rec. Places may occur in more than one ROS Class; the sum of this column may exceed the total number of Rec. Places.

Developed recreation facilities in the roadless area include the Trocadero Bay and Soda Bay Trail and Canoe Point Picnic Area and Trail. There is also an opportunity to develop a wildlife viewing platform in the Trocadero Bay area. Waterfall, a world class fishing resort, is located on private land near the southwest boundary of the roadless area.

(3) Wilderness Attribute Rating System: In 1977, the Forest Service, along with public interest groups, developed the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS), which was used to inventory the wilderness characteristics of roadless areas during the second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation process (referred to as RARE II). The purpose of WARS was to provide a measure of the area's wilderness quality, based on the key attributes of wilderness as defined in the Wilderness Act. It is largely based on the attributes described above in

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items 1 and 2 of this section (natural integrity, apparent naturalness, outstanding opportunity for solitude, and primitive recreation opportunities).

In 1979, during the RARE II process, the Tongass National Forest applied WARS for the first time and rated each unroaded VCU on the Tongass. In 1989, the inventoried roadless areas (which generally include more than one VCU) were rated according to this system for the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) developed in support of the Forest Plan Revision. This original version of the AMS included both the individual VCU ratings done in 1979 and the composite rating that was done for each roadless area in 1989. The 1989 rating for the Soda Bay Roadless Area Roadless Area was 23 out of 28 possible points. The 1989 rating was re-evaluated for this updated version of the AMS. Based on this re-evaluation, the area was given a rating of 20. The difference in ratings is primarily due to changes in ownership and ongoing developments in adjacent lands. Separate ratings for the two large parcels were also completed; these resulted in a score of 20 for both the north and the south parts of the roadless area.

(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values: The limestone formations and carbonate mineral springs in the geologic special interest area along Soda Lake and Soda Creek and the karst and caves on the peninsula where Meares Passage meets Tlevak Strait are special geologic features. The area has high deer and salmon populations.

(a) Fish Resources: The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) lists all the VCUs in this area as primary salmon producers. VCU 622, a small section in the northeast of the roadless area, is also listed as a primary sportfish producer (ADF&G, 1998).

The primary species found in these streams are coho, pink, and chum salmon, as well as steelhead trout. Harris River, St. Nicholas Creek, the Trocadero Bay watershed, and Soda Creek are the primary producers in this area. The Harris River has an estimated annual peak escapement of 101,600 pink salmon and has very good coho production. St. Nicholas Creek, in VCU 623, has an estimated 44,600 pink salmon and good coho production (ADF&G, 1998). In addition to these species, Trocadero Bay Creek also provides habitat for Dolly Varden (ADF&G, 2000). Trocadero Bay has an estimated 126,400 pink salmon and very good coho production. Soda Creek has an estimated peak escapement of 139,200 pink salmon and excellent coho production. North Tlevak Strait, just south of Soda Bay, has an estimated annual peak escapement of 40,600 pink salmon and good coho production (ADF&G, 1998). There are numerous other unnamed creeks in this roadless area that provide anadromous fish habitat (ADF&G, 2000).

Fish pass weirs were completed on Cable Creek, which drains into Trocadero Bay, in 1986.

(b) Wildlife Resources: This area has high populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, wolves, river otter, marten, mink, loon, and common waterfowl. Brown bear and mountain goats are not found here (MacDonald and Cook, 1999). Based on data compiled from 1985 to 1994, VCUs 622 and 625 are listed among the top 25 percent of VCUs for black bear harvest (ADF&G, 1998).

(c) Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species: The only federally listed threatened or endangered species likely to occur within or adjacent to the roadless area are the humpback whale (endangered) and the Steller sea lion (threatened). Both of these species are found in adjacent marine waters. Three Forest Service Region 10 Sensitive Species are suspected or known to occur within the area: the trumpeter swan, Peale's peregrine falcon, and the Queen Charlotte goshawk. Trumpeter swans nest in the lowlands on small lakes and along large rivers and winter in ice-free areas throughout the Tongass. Peale's peregrine falcons nest on cliff faces and islands and feed primarily on seabirds. Inhabitants of late seral forests, Queen Charlotte goshawks are closely associated with productive old growth. In addition, nine sensitive plant species are known or suspected to occur in the Craig Ranger District.

(d) Karst, Cave, and Other Geologic Resources: There is one area of karst in this roadless area that is located on the peninsula where Meares Passage meets Tlevak Strait. Karst resources are mapped on approximately 1,058 acres (2 percent) of the roadless area. All the karst is mapped as low vulnerability. There are no glaciers, but the carbonate mineral springs along Soda Lake and Creek are a special geologic feature. There are a number of springs on both sides of the creek that have built up deposits of tufa. Although most of the area has not been studied, it is considered important enough geologically to have been designated as a special interest area.

(5) Scientific and Educational Values: The limestone formations and carbonate mineral springs along Soda Lake and Soda Creek are a geologic special interest area. The Forest Service has constructed a trail to draw attention to this site. There are also opportunities to study forests, wildlife, fish, and geologic processes.

(6) Scenic Values: The Soda Bay Roadless Area is part of the Coastal Hills character type, which is characterized by moderately steep landforms, predominantly rounded summits, elevations to 4,500 feet, and flat-floored, U-shaped valleys. Numerous island groups are also common. This area exhibits landscapes that are somewhat less rugged than is common in the character type. Peaks and ridgetops in the roadless area range from 1,500 to 2,500 feet. There are several island clusters in the bays bordering the roadless area.

The area appears natural when viewed from Meares Passage, Ulla Channel, and most of Soda Bay, and Hydaburg Highway. Human activity, mainly timber related developments, can be seen outside of the area in south Trocadero Bay and Shelikof Island, where this area provides a natural background to the modification. Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan that are within or adjacent to the area, include: FH#9, the road from Craig to Hydaburg; the small boat route from Ulla Channel to Hydaburg; Buccareli, Trocadero Bays, saltwater use areas; the Waterfall Resort Site and Ulla Channel north and south of the resort; and the Trocadero Bay and Soda Bay hiking trails.

The vast majority of the area, approximately 99 percent, was inventoried as a Variety Class B, landscape diversity that is common in character type. There are no outstanding large scenic features in the area, though small-scale scenic features may exist.

Approximately 93 percent of this roadless area is Type I Existing Visual Condition (EVC), the natural landscape has remained unaltered by human activity. Approximately 2 percent of the area has an EVC Type III, where changes in the landscape may be seen by the average person, but appear natural. Another 1 percent of the area is in EVC Type IV, where changes in the landscape are easily noticed by the average person, but resemble natural patterns. Approximately 2 percent of the area is in EVC Type V, where changes in the landscape are obvious to the average person, and appear to be major disturbances and about 1 percent of the area is not inventoried. Past development has moderately or heavily altered the landscape in small portions of Soda and Trocadero Bays.

(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values: The Soda Bay Roadless Area is known to have been an important site for the indigenous peoples. The roadless area was inhabited by the Tlingit until the Haida, who migrated north from the Queen Charlotte Islands, displaced them in the early 1700s. The coastal area was used from the late 1800s through the early 1900s as a base for the commercial fishing industry. In recent times, the community of Craig and the community of Hydaburg have been connected by a road that now serves as the east boundary of this roadless area. Recreation activities concentrate around semi-primitive marine opportunities in Trocadero and Soda Bays, as well as along the existing road system to existing recreation facilities. Although portions of these bays are fairly remote, one is likely to encounter recreation boaters or other marine traffic in much of this area. The construction of the Craig/Hydaburg road has resulted in the Trocadero Bay and the Soda Bay areas being more widely used for recreation and subsistence by local residents. The only developed recreation facilities in the roadless area are the Soda Bay Trail, Trocadero Trail, and Canoe Point Picnic Area and Trail. Waterfall, a world class fishing resort, is located on private land near the southwest boundary of the roadless area. VCUs 624 and 632 are listed among the VCUs with the highest community fish and wildlife values. VCUs 631 was listed in the second most important group, and VCUs 622 and 625 were listed in the third most important group. All VCUs except 625 were listed among those VCUs with the highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas. VCU 625 was listed as moderately sensitive (ADF&G, 1998).

(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes: The saltwater boundaries are well defined. The land boundaries consist primarily of roaded areas or land survey lines for the private land rather than topographic features. A road (and associated timber harvest) extends approximately 5 miles into the roadless area near Lake St. Nicholas. The North Fork Lake area, located in the northwestern part of the roadless area, is the community of Craig's domestic water source. A pipeline and other facilities are located in this portion of the roadless area. In addition, the roadless area is divided into two separate parts by Trocadero Bay and the roaded area at the head of the bay. These factors would complicate managing the area as a wilderness.

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III. Availability for Management as Wilderness (including effects of wilderness designation on adjacent areas)

- (1) **Recreation, Including Tourism Potential:** Tourism has been increasing in Southeast Alaska and is expected to continue to increase. The roadless area is close to Waterfall. Waterfall is a world-class resort that draws tourists interested in fishing in a wilderness-type setting. The roadless area is also near Hollis, a stop on the Alaska Marine Highway. There is the potential for some of the tourists visiting Waterfall and other visitors to the island to be drawn to fish, hunt, and camp in the roadless area. This area offers excellent opportunities to develop trails that connect the Prince of Wales Island road system to saltwater bays. This would support excellent fishing and waterfowl hunting during the appropriate seasons as well as provide day hiking opportunities for local residents and tourists. Outstanding freshwater fishing and scenic areas can be supported with public recreation cabins, mooring facilities, and trails. There is also potential for wildlife viewing opportunities by constructing wildlife viewing platforms and duck blinds. Much of the remaining area is well suited for dispersed recreation in a semi-primitive setting.
- (2) **Subsistence Uses:** Management as a wilderness would not conflict with current subsistence uses.
- (3) **Fish Resources:** No fish habitat enhancement projects are currently planned for the roadless area.
- (4) **Wildlife Resources:** No wildlife habitat enhancement projects are currently planned for the roadless area.
- (5) **Timber Resources:** There are 21,258 acres of productive old-growth forest and 586 acres of second-growth forest due to harvest mapped in the roadless area. Of this, approximately 17,993 acres are categorized as tentatively suitable for timber harvest. Based on the Forest Plan LUDs assigned to this area (and estimated falldown and scheduling reduction factors), 5,621 acres (9 percent) of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 2,347 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 508 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. Managing timber in most of the roadless area would require extending the existing road system into the roadless area.
- (6) **Fire, Insects, and Disease:** The area has no significant fire history. Endemic tree diseases common to Southeast Alaska are present.
- (7) **Minerals:** The potential for mineral development is very low. Canoe Point Stream falls on the edge of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management identified Big Harbor mineral tract, which contains silver, gold, and copper. The Big Harbor mine was active from 1913 to 1916. At Soda Creek, an estimated 3,546 acres of land was identified as a mineral activity tract having low potential for experiencing economic mineral exploration or development (Coldwell, 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991). In addition, this area contains an estimated 55,789 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources that are considered to have low potential for development (Brew et al., 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991).
- (8) **Transportation and Utilities:** A major road corridor connecting Craig and Klawock with Hydaburg runs along the eastern boundary of the roadless area. A powerline connecting Klawock and Hydaburg has been proposed. It would follow the Klawock/Hydaburg road. Craig's water supply facilities are located at North Fork Lake. The city operates a dam and pipeline system at this lake.
- (9) **Water Availability and Use:** There are no developed recreation cabins or other facilities to create a water demand within the roadless area. A 1,829-acre piece of land is dedicated to Municipal Watershed LUD to protect water sources for the Craig community.
- (10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** The limestone formations and carbonate mineral springs along Soda Lake and Soda Creek, part of a geologic special interest area, and karst and caves on the peninsula where Meares Passage meets Tlevak Strait may be of scientific interest. The mapped karst resources encompass approximately 1,058 acres or 2 percent of the roadless area. Management of these areas as wilderness may restrict opportunities for study.
- (11) **Land Use Authorizations:** Craig's water supply facilities located at North Fork Lake are under special use authorization.

(12) **Land Status:** No private inholdings occur in this roadless area. However, there are large parcels of land that have been encumbered by both the State of Alaska and Native Corporations that have yet to be conveyed.

IV. Wilderness Evaluation (Need for Wilderness)

(1) **Public and Congressional Interest:**

(a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** The area is important to local residents for subsistence and recreation use.

(b) **Congressional Interest:** In 1989, U.S. House of Representatives Bill HR 987 proposed to designate 23 areas as wilderness on the Tongass National Forest. This bill did not include the Soda Bay Roadless Area. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed managing the roadless area as LUD II in an unroaded condition.

(c) **Public Input During Forest Plan Revision and Appeals:** The City of Craig recommended that the Forest Service protect their municipal watershed, which is within the roadless area. Commenters from Craig stated that timber harvest near Trocadero Bay would be inconsistent with the subsistence and multiple-use needs of the people of the island and that Soda Creek and Canoe Point Stream should be protected as a wild and scenic rivers. The Alaska Forest Association, the Alaska Miners Association, and the Alaska Visitors Association recommended that no new wilderness be designated on the Forest. Others stated that all unroaded areas should be designated wilderness. Timber industry representatives recommended managing all areas not designated as wilderness for timber.

(d) **Public Input During Roadless Area Conservation Rule and Road Management Policy Review:** This area was not specifically identified in the public comments received during the Roadless Area Conservation Rule or Road Management Policy Review. However, some commenters wanted all unroaded lands on the Tongass to be protected from development.

(e) **Public Input Expressed for Project-level EISs and Other Input:** No project-level comments were available for the roadless area.

(f) **Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process:** The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) recommended Roadless Area 505 for permanent protection as LUD II. SEACC recommended this area for permanent protection through LUD II designation.

The President of the Hydaburg Cooperative Association spoke “against the wilderness plans for the south end of Prince of Wales Island” during the Craig Hearing. At the same hearing, the President of the Craig Community Association stated “they really can’t support any of the alternatives”.

(2) **Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses:** The Karta Roadless Area (510) lies to the northeast across a narrow developed area. The Karta River Wilderness is adjacent to the Karta Roadless Area, 4 to 5 miles northeast of the Soda Bay Roadless Area. The 12-mile Roadless Area (534) lies to the east across a narrow developed area. Sukkwan Roadless Area (504) lies to the southeast across North Pass. Dall Island (501) and Suemez Island (502) Roadless Areas lie to the southwest across Tlevak Strait. The Outer Islands Roadless Area (503) lies to the west across San Alberto Bay. Recreation and subsistence are major uses in these areas.

(3) **Distance From Population Centers (Accessibility):** Approximate distances from population centers are as follows:

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Community	Air Miles	Water Miles
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	205	230
Ketchikan (Pop.14,070)	50	115
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	75	130
Petersburg (Pop. 3,324)	95	140

Hollis, approximately 10 miles by road to the east is the nearest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway.

(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System: The Soda Bay Roadless Area is located on the west side of Prince of Wales Island southeast of Craig. The area is characterized by low elevation, gently rolling topography; however, there are also steep, rugged areas. The highest point is nearly 2,500 feet.

The interior of the roadless area is unmodified and in a natural condition, although developments border much of the area. The only boundaries adhering to topographic features are the coastline of Trocadero Bay, Soda Bay, and North Pass. Overall, the area has very high, to high natural integrity and apparent naturalness. The natural integrity and apparent naturalness scores were the same as they were for the overall roadless area when the north and southern portions were rated separately. There is moderate opportunity for solitude and high opportunity for primitive recreation within this roadless area. The sights and sounds of adjacent management activities may be evident from much of the interior of this roadless area. Visitors are likely to encounter other people during fishing and hunting season, especially in the Trocadero Bay and Soda Bay tidal flats.

None of the area is rated as distinctive for the character type from a visual perspective. The area has moderate to high special geologic features, which include the limestone formations and carbonate mineral springs along Soda Lake and Soda Creek, and karst development on the peninsula where Meares Passage meets Tlevak Strait. The area associated with Soda Lake and Soda Creek are managed as Special Interest Areas under the Forest Plan.

The roadless area includes about 8,542 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, approximately 1,556 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The roadless area is in the North Central Prince of Wales Island Biogeographic Province and makes up about 4 percent of the province. It is one of 15 inventoried roadless areas (small parts of 4 other roadless areas are also in the province) found in the province and that make up about 44 percent of the province. The province includes one designated wilderness. The Karta River Wilderness represents about 3 percent of the province. This province also contains the Mt. Calder-Mt. Holbrook, Pt. Baker-Port Protection, and the Salmon Bay Congressionally-designated LUD II areas, which make up about 5 percent of the area, and are managed to remain roadless.

The Soda Bay Roadless Area lies within two ecological sections; it represents 3 percent of the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands Ecological Section and 3 percent of Prince of Wales Mountains Ecological Section. Both of these ecological sections contain relatively small areas in existing wilderness (13 and 8 percent, respectively) and existing LUD II (8 and 3 percent, respectively), but are well represented by other existing non-development LUDs (33 and 22 percent, respectively).

Over half (54 percent) of the roadless area is in the Soda Bay Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 23 percent of the entire ecological subsection, none of which is in existing wilderness or LUD II, but 44 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs. Less than half (44 percent) of the roadless area is in the Central Prince of Wales Volcanics Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 6 percent of the entire ecological subsection. Approximately 8 percent of this ecological subsection is located in existing wilderness and another 23 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs. The Klawock Inlet Till Lowlands Ecological Subsections and Hetta Inlet Metasediments each comprise 1 percent of the roadless area; these portions of the roadless area represent 2 percent and 0.4 percent of their respective ecological subsections. None of the Klawock Inlet Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection is in existing wilderness or LUD II and 7 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs. Within the Hetta Inlet Metasediments Ecological Subsection, 2 percent is in existing wilderness, 9 percent in existing LUD II, and 14 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

The Soda Bay Roadless Area is rated at 20 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 53rd from the highest (along with 16 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas. Both the northern and southern portions of the roadless area scored 20 when rated separately.

There is both local and national support for managing the roadless area in an unroaded condition but there is little support for designating the area as a wilderness. The WARS score is moderate, relative to other areas of Southeast Alaska. The area has special geologic features associated with the limestone and carbonate mineral springs and localized karst development. The degree of timber harvest in adjacent lands adds importance to the old growth within the roadless area. Designation of the area would add Congressional protection to about 23 percent of the Soda Bay Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection and 2% of the Klawock Inlet Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection; neither of these ecological subsections are currently represented in wilderness or LUD II. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be moderate to high.

V. Environmental Consequences

The Soda Bay Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 7 is implemented. Approximately 42 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur in the remaining 58 percent; however, the potential for developing timber is relatively good. The land in the development LUD provides an estimated 5,621 acres that are suitable for timber production (8 percent of the suitable acres on the Craig Ranger District). Approximately 508 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. The potential for mineral development is low. Canoe Point Stream falls on the edge of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management identified Big Harbor mineral tract, which contains silver, gold, and copper. The Big Harbor mine was active from 1913 to 1916. This area contains 3,546 acres of land identified as a mineral activity tract having low potential for experiencing economic mineral exploration or development. In addition, this area contains an estimated 55,789 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources that are considered to have low potential for development. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area could be affected by ongoing developments allowed by the Forest Plan. The high karst values are protected by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 6, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended LUD II. Mineral prospecting and development and recreation developments could continue but timber harvest would not be allowed. Designation of the area would add Congressional protection to about 23 percent of the Soda Bay Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection and 2 percent of the Klawock Inlet Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection; neither of these ecological subsections are currently represented in wilderness or LUD II. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including old growth and karst values, would be provided long-term protection if designated LUD II

With Alternative 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. Timber harvest would not be allowed. The potential for development, including recreation, mineral, and hydroelectric, would be significantly restricted. Mineral prospecting and development would be allowed up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. Designation of the area would add Congressional protection to about 23 percent of the Soda Bay Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection and 2 percent of the Klawock Inlet Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection; neither of these ecological subsections are currently represented in wilderness or LUD II. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including old growth and karst values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Appendix C

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 505 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness								63,147
Wilderness								
Recommended Wilderness Nat. Mon.								
Wilderness National Monument								
Non-wilderness National Monument								
Research Natural Area								
Special Interest Area	818	818	818	818	818		818	
Remote Recreation								
Enacted Municipal Watershed	1,829	1,829	1,829	1,829	1,829		1,829	
Old-growth Habitat	20,303	20,303	20,303	20,303	20,303		20,303	
Semi-remote Recreation	3,738	3,738	3,738	3,738	3,738		3,738	
Recommended LUD II						63,147		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed	421	421	421	421	421		421	
Modified Landscape	2,367	2,367	2,367	2,367	2,367		2,367	
Timber production	33,670	33,670	33,670	33,670	33,670		33,670	
TOTAL	63,147	63,147	63,147	63,147	63,147	63,147	63,147	63,147
Suitable Timber Lands	5,621	5,621	5,621	5,621	5,621	0	5,621	0