

## INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

**ROADLESS AREA NAME:** Nutkwa (531)

**ACRES (NFS):** 56,818

**BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE:** South Prince of Wales

**ECOLOGICAL SECTION:** Prince of Wales Mountains

**2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING:** 23

### **I. Overview and Description**

(1) **Location and Access:** The Nutkwa Roadless Area is located on the southwest corner of Prince of Wales Island, northeast of the South Prince of Wales Wilderness. It is approximately 30 air miles southwest of Ketchikan while Hollis, the closest community on the Alaska Marine Highway, is approximately 20 miles to the north. The Eudora Roadless Area (507) is northeast of the Nutkwa Roadless Area. Cordova Bay lies to the southwest and Haida Native Corporation lands lie to west. Access to Keete, Hassiah, and Kassa Inlets and Mabel Bay is by boat or floatplane. Floatplanes can also land in Nutkwa Lagoon, Lake Josephine, and Summit Lake. Access away from water is by foot or helicopter.

(2) **History:** South Prince of Wales Island was inhabited by the Tlingit until the Haida, who migrated north from the Queen Charlotte Islands, displaced them in the early 1700s. Since then, the roadless area has been within the principal traditional-use area of the Haida. Prior to use by the Haida culture, there is evidence that there was considerable prehistoric use of coast sites. In recent years, land northwest of the current roadless area has been conveyed to the Haida and two small parcels along Kassa Inlet have been conveyed to the State. The Nutkwa Roadless Area has always been considered a remote area of Prince of Wales Island. The major sounds and bays provide bases for commercial fishing including anchorages, fish processing facilities, and fish buying stations. Since the early 1900s, there has been an interest in the mineral resources. As a result, there are two patented mining claims and several unpatented claims that are currently active.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** The Nutkwa Roadless Area is located on the southwest corner of Prince of Wales Island, northeast of the South Prince of Wales Wilderness. There are 1,050 acres of alpine, 1,669 acres of rock, and 82 miles of shoreline on saltwater. There are a number of large and small freshwater lakes that total 1,074 surface acres. The area also includes 119 islands and islets (6 of these are greater than 10 acres) totaling 762 acres.

(4) **Ecosystem:**

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. The roadless area is in the South Prince of Wales Island Biogeographic Province. The climate is warm and wet; deep snow is rare or highly transient depending on elevation. The topography is steep and rugged and the coastline is highly dissected. The vegetation in this province is strongly influenced by southwesterly storms.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Nutkwa Roadless Area is contained entirely within the Prince of Wales Mountains Ecological Section (M2471), represented by two ecological subsections (see table below). Terrain in the Hetta Inlet Metasediments Ecological Subsection (84% of the roadless area) rises from deep fjords to sedimentary and volcanic peaks over 3,000 feet in elevation. The steep slopes are prone to frequent landslides. Soils in the lowlands, lying over poorly drained glacial till, support wetlands. Productive forests are rare in the Hetta Inlet Metasediments Ecological Subsection. Found along the eastern edge of the Nutkwa Roadless Area, the Moira Sound Complex Ecological Subsection (16% of the roadless area) is a deeply dissected landscape of sedimentary and volcanic bedrock carved in to fjords and

## Appendix C

broad valleys. Bogs and wetlands are common on the poorly drained colluvial soils. Hemlock and hemlock-spruce forests are found along the wetland margins (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Prince of Wales Mountains	Hetta Inlet Metasediments	84%
	Moira Sound Complex	16%

**(b) Soils:** Soils are generally highly organic with low clay content. They are formed over bedrock and their typical depth is 40 inches. Generally, steeper areas have better-drained soils and flat areas are poorly drained.

**(c) Vegetation:** Vegetation in this area is typical of Southeast Alaska coastal temperate rain forests. Mixed conifer and western hemlock-red-cedar plant associations dominate the area. Western hemlock, Sitka spruce, and cedar are the most common trees. There are less than 100 acres of muskeg mapped in the area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult. There are approximately 1,050 acres of alpine mapped in the area.

There are approximately 51,162 acres mapped as forest land of which 32,739 acres or 64 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 20,823 acres or 64 percent are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 13,348 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are also 252 acres of second growth resulting from beach logging in the 1960s.

**(d) Fish Resources:** Productive waters in the area include streams draining into Nutkwa Lagoon, Keete Inlet, Hassiah Inlet, Mabel Bay, and Kassa Inlet. The Anadromous Waters Catalogue (ADF&G, 2000) shows that most of these streams provide habitat for coho, pink, and chum salmon. In addition, sockeye salmon and steelhead trout inhabit the stream flowing into Nutkwa Lagoon.

**(e) Wildlife Resources:** This area has populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, wolves, river otter, marten, mink, loon, and common waterfowl. Moose reportedly inhabit Prince of Wales Island, but they have not been reported here. Brown bear and mountain goats do not inhabit the area (MacDonald and Cook, 1999).

**(5) Management Direction and Current Uses:** This area was allocated to six Land Use Designations (LUDs) under the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. These six LUDs are Timber Production, LUD II, Old-growth Habitat, Remote Recreation, and Semi-remote Recreation.

LUD	Acres
Timber Production	26,675
Modified Landscape	711
LUD II	21,455
Old-growth Habitat	4,035
Remote Recreation	3,229
Semi-remote Recreation	713

Approximately 48 percent of the roadless area was allocated to a development LUD. The development LUDs in this roadless area are Timber Production and Modified Landscape.

Approximately 52 percent of the roadless area was allocated to a non-development LUD (LUD II, Old-growth Habitat, Remote Recreation, Semi-remote Recreation). Approximately 38 percent of the roadless area was designated to LUD II. This LUD includes most of the Nutkwa watershed. The Old-growth Habitat LUD was assigned to approximately 7 percent of the roadless area. About 3,229 acres in eastern Kassa Inlet was allocated to the Remote Recreation LUD, which makes up approximately 6 percent of the roadless area. The Semi-remote Recreation LUD was assigned to approximately 1 percent of the roadless area.

The area receives little use due to its remoteness. There is one public recreation cabin located in the northwest corner. Several mineral claims are also located in the northwest corner. No outfitter/guide permits were issued for the roadless area in 2000.

**(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness):** The area appears unmodified, except for the mineral patents in the northwest corner of this roadless area, which create the only break in its natural integrity.

**(7) Surroundings (External Influences):** This roadless area is bounded on the southeast by the South Prince of Wales Wilderness. The Eudora Roadless Area (507) is northeast of the Nutkwa Roadless Area. Cordova Bay lies to the southwest, Sealaska Regional Corporation lands lie to the west and Haida Native Corporation lands lie to the northeast. The northwest boundary is Native Corporation land while the remaining boundary is saltwater. Much of the Native Corporation land to the west has been managed for timber production, which has affected the apparent naturalness of portions of the adjacent roadless area.

**(8) Attractions and Features 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 alpine lakes around the Lake Josephine public recreation cabin are an outstanding attraction. The fishing and solitude of the area are also attractions. Lake Josephine, Gertrude, and Summit lakes were stocked with fish by the State in years past. A big attraction to visitors staying at Lake Josephine public cabin is the extensive hunting opportunities for black-tailed deer in the alpine areas. Also, cross-country hiking along the alpine areas and ridge tops are another major draw. The area contains seven inventoried recreation places, which cover 23,718 acres, or 42 percent of the roadless area.

**(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary:** There have been minor changes in the boundaries since 1989. Additional areas in the northwest are now non-National Forest System land. Several small areas along the shore that were beach logged but not roaded have been included in the roadless area. Trees in these logged areas have re-grown and the areas no longer appear modified.

## II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

**(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness:** This area is in a natural, unmodified condition. The mineral patents in the northwest corner of this roadless area create the only break in its natural integrity. These mineral patents have a relatively low effect on suitability of the roadless area for wilderness classification based on natural appearance. The private lands along much of the west boundary have been developed for timber management and affect the natural integrity and apparent naturalness of the area. Overall, the area has high natural integrity and apparent naturalness because of the size of the area coupled with adjacent roadless lands that can absorb nearby effects.

**(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation:** Except for the western boundary of the area where sights and sounds of management activities and vehicle traffic may be evident, the area provides very high opportunities for solitude and outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation, especially when adjacent roadless lands are factored in. The remoteness and difficult access make it unlikely that there would be much human activity in the area in the foreseeable future. Visitors could also be distracted by the sounds of active mining (blasts) in the northwest portion, but these activities are rare.

The roadless area contains steep, rugged terrain, rising to over 3,000 feet in elevation. The steep nature of portions of the area, its vastness, and the presence of black bears present a high degree of challenge and the need for woods skills and experience.

There are outstanding opportunities primarily for primitive recreation in many parts of this area due to the scenic, fishing, and canoeing opportunities in the Nutkwa Lagoon area, and the scenic, hiking and camping opportunities in the Lake Josephine area. The table below lists the acreage and percent of the various Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes that have been inventoried in the roadless area.

## Appendix C

ROS Class	Acres	Percent of Total ROS
Primitive (P)	56,679	100%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	109	0%

The area contains seven inventoried recreation places, which cover 23,718 acres, or 42 percent of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places	Total Acres
P	7	23,718
SPNM	0	0

There is a public recreation cabin near Lake Josephine.

**(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 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 Nutkwa Roadless Area Roadless Area was 25 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 23. This rating is reflective of developments on private lands to the west of the roadless area.

**(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values:**

**(a) Fish Resources:** The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) listed VCU 686, just north of South Prince of Wales Wilderness Area, as a primary salmon producer. No VCUs were listed as primary sport fish producers.

The Anadromous Waters Catalogue (ADF&G, 2000) shows that most of the streams in this area provide habitat for coho, pink, and chum salmon. In addition, sockeye salmon and steelhead trout inhabit the stream flowing into Nutkwa Lagoon. Nutkwa Lagoon receives an estimated peak escapement of 155,000 pink salmon (ADF&G, 1998). Other productive streams in the area drain into Keete Inlet, Hassiah Inlet, Mabel Bay, and Kassa Inlet (ADF&G, 2000).

**(b) Wildlife Resources:** The roadless area has populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, wolves, river otter, marten, mink, loon, and common waterfowl. Moose reportedly inhabit Prince of Wales Island, but they have not been reported here. Brown bear and mountain goats do not inhabit the area (MacDonald and Cook, 1999).

**(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 are several small areas of high vulnerability karst in the northern part of this roadless area. These areas are located near Lake Marge. A second small karst area can be found along the point projecting into Hassiah Inlet from the peninsula to the north. The karst resources represent 260 acres of mostly high vulnerability karst and less than 1 percent, of the roadless area. There are no glaciers or unique geologic features known in this area.

**(5) Scientific and Educational Values:** There are no known features with scientific values within the area. There are opportunities to study forests, fish, wildlife, and geologic processes.

**(6) Scenic Values:** The entire area is part of the Coastal Hills character type which is characterized by moderately steep landforms, elevations reaching 4,500 feet, and flat-floored, U-shaped valleys. Numerous island groups are also common. This roadless area is representative of the character type, exhibiting all the above features except for the absence of any significant island clusters.

The area appears natural when viewed from surrounding waterways or within the area. Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan, that are within or adjacent to the area, include the Kassa Inlet and Mabel Bay boat anchorages and the Lake Josephine public recreation cabin.

Approximately 28 percent of the area is rated as Variety Class A, possessing landscape diversity that is unique for the character type. These outstanding landscapes are primarily the rugged, high elevations between the head of Nutkwa Lagoon and the West Arm of Cholmondeley Sound, and the alpine area around Josephine Lake near Copper Mountain. These landscapes exhibit a diversity of rugged alpine terrain, several different lake basins, and diverse vegetative patterns. Approximately 71 percent of the roadless area is rated as a Variety Class B, possessing landscape features that are common for the character type.

Almost the entire area, approximately 99 percent, is in Type I Existing Visual Condition, the natural landscape remains unaltered by human activity.

**(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values:** South Prince of Wales Island was inhabited by the Tlingit until the Haida, who migrated north from the Queen Charlotte Islands, displaced them in the early 1700s. Since then, the roadless area has been within the principal traditional-use area of the Haida. Prior to use by the Haida culture, there is evidence that there was considerable prehistoric use of coast sites. In recent years, land northwest of the current roadless area has been conveyed to the Haida and two small parcels along Kassa Inlet have been conveyed to the State. The Nutkwa Roadless Area has always been considered a remote area of Prince of Wales Island. The major sounds and bays provide bases for commercial fishing including anchorages, fish processing facilities, and fish buying stations. Since the early 1900s, there has been an interest in the mineral resources. As a result, there are two patented mining claims and several unpatented claims that are currently active. There are outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation in many parts of this area due to the scenic, fishing, and canoeing opportunities in the Nutkwa Lagoon area, and the scenic, hiking and camping opportunities in the Lake Josephine area. There is one public recreation cabin located in the northwest corner. No outfitter/guide permits were issued for the roadless area in 2000. However, recreation or subsistence use is low due to the remoteness and difficulty of access. None of the VCUs in the roadless area is listed among the VCUs with the highest or second or third community fish and wildlife values. VCUs 6731, 685, and 6851 in the center and adjacent to Prince of Wales Wilderness Area are listed among the VCUs with the highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas (ADF&G, 1998).

**(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes:** There are a few places where the mineral patents may affect the ability to manage the area around them in a roadless condition. Also, the long western boundary is not based on topographic features. Dropping the area northwest of the Nutkwa LUD II area could reduce conflicts with mining.

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

## Appendix C

- (1) Recreation, including Tourism Potential:** Tourism has been increasing in Southeast Alaska and is expected to continue to increase. Cruise ships regularly stop in Ketchikan. There is the potential for some of these tourists to be drawn to fish, hunt, and camp in the roadless area. There is a potential for outfitter/guide permits to increase. There is good opportunity for primitive and semi-primitive recreation within this roadless area. Because of its remoteness and difficult access, it is unlikely that there will be a need to develop facilities or trails in the rugged alpine areas. However, there is the potential for campsites or recreation shelters in Nutkwa Lagoon area. In 1996, the Alaska Visitors Association (AVA) proposed a backcountry recreation lodge in Mabel Bay to accommodate 480 people.
- (2) Subsistence Uses:** Management as a wilderness would not conflict with current subsistence use.
- (3) Fish Resources:** No fish habitat enhancement projects are currently planned within the roadless area.
- (4) Wildlife Resources:** No wildlife habitat enhancement projects are currently planned within the roadless area.
- (5) Timber Resources:** There are 32,739 acres of productive old-growth forest and 252 acres of second-growth forest due to harvest mapped in the roadless area. Of this, approximately 13,030 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), 4,697 acres or 8 percent of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 2,622 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 1,187 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. The area has very good timber potential; however, the roadless area is remote and difficult to access. Managing timber in most of the roadless area would require developing LTFs and a road system.
- (6) Fire, Insects, and Disease:** The area has no significant fire history. Endemic tree diseases common to Southeast Alaska are present.
- (7) Minerals:** The Josephine Lake area is famous for its quartz and epidote crystals. There are several mining claims in the area. Some are active, and others have been idle for some time (Tongass National Forest Recreation Cabin website, 2001). Copper and gold deposits were mined in the Nutkwa area but the mine is no longer operating (TLMP, 1997). There is potential for further mineral development in the northern part of the roadless area. The USGS Mineral Resources Data website (2001) shows numerous prospects for copper, lead, and iron in this area. This area contains 6,974 acres of land identified as a mineral activity tract. In the tract, 4,962 of the acres is considered to have high and 2,012 is considered to have low potential for experiencing mineral exploration and development of locatable minerals (Coldwell, 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991). In addition, this area contains 54,787 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources (Brew et al., 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991); 12,034 of these acres are considered to have moderate to high potential for development.
- (8) Transportation and Utilities:** There are no existing or planned transportation or utility corridors in the roadless area.
- (9) Water Availability and Use:** The public recreation cabin around Josephine Lake is the only water demand in this area. There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects within the roadless area.
- (10) Areas of Scientific Interest:** The mapped karst resources encompass approximately 260 acres or less than one percent of the roadless area. There are no other known areas of special scientific interest in the roadless area.
- (11) Land Use Authorizations:** There are no special use permits or land use authorizations in the roadless area.
- (12) Land Status:** The northwest corner of this roadless area has 2 blocks of private lands as a result of patented mining claims totaling about 300 acres. This roadless area contains encumbered lands in the northwest corner of the roadless area and around Mabel Bay.

#### IV. Wilderness Evaluation (Need for Wilderness)

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

(a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** There is local interest in the roadless area 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. The portion of the Nutkwa watershed that is National Forest System land was designated as LUD II by the Tongass Timber Reform Act of 1990. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed designating the area south of the Nutkwa LUD II area as wilderness and managing the remainder of the roadless area as LUD II in an unroaded condition.

(c) **Public Input During Forest Plan Revision and Appeals:** The Southeast Alaska Conservation Council and others recommended managing Kassa Inlet to preserve its integrity. They stated that the island merited special protection for its outstanding wildlife, fisheries, hunting, subsistence, recreation, and tourism values. Others recommended that the area be given LUD II status. The Alaska Rainforest Campaign also recommended that Kassa Inlet be given LUD II status. There was a concern that logging in the Inlet would affect Haida cultural values. In 1996, the Alaska Visitors Association (AVA) proposed a backcountry recreation lodge in Mabel Bay to accommodate 480 people. The Alaska Forest Association, the Alaska Miners Association, and the Alaska Visitors Association recommended that no new wilderness be designated on the Tongass National 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 on this roadless area are available.

(f) **Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process:** The U.S. Department of the Interior identified this roadless area as having important fish and wildlife habitat and populations; although not a top priority for protection, it ranked in their top third among all roadless areas.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game recommended permanent roadless status for the Honker Divide area in their comments on the Draft SEIS.

ADF&G rated the Nutkwa roadless area (VCUs 685, 686, and 689) as the third highest priority for protection on Prince of Wales Island and Adjacent Islands. This rating is based on the VCUs with the highest value fish and wildlife resources needing additional protection. VCUs are prioritized for their very high productivity, essential role in connectivity, and/or very high value as community use areas.

The city of Pelican passed a resolution stating that the important watersheds identified as areas of special interest in the 1999 ROD and HR 987 should given long-term protection.

The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) identified Roadless Areas 507 and 531 as adjacent to the existing South Prince of Wales Wilderness and recommended them for permanent protection as wilderness. They indicated that this combination would create a contiguous wilderness area of approximately 350,000 acres. SEACC recommended that this area be designated as LUD II and added to the existing Nutkwa LUD II. Note that this recommendation is different than Alternative 6

## Appendix C

A number of individual commenters identified the Keete and Kassa Inlets and Mabel Bay as areas in need of protection.

**(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses:** This area is part of a larger contiguous unroaded area that includes the South Prince of Wales Wilderness, the Eudora (507), and McKenzie (519) Roadless Areas. This combined area totals 533,474 acres. Recreation and subsistence are the primary uses in these areas. Generally, use is light.

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

<b>Community</b>	<b>Air Miles</b>	<b>Water Miles</b>
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	225	290
Ketchikan (Pop. 14,070)	30	85
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	85	170
Petersberg (Pop. 3,324)	110	175

Hollis, located on Prince of Wales Island, currently is the nearest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway. Hollis is 30 miles from Hydaburg by road. The roadless area is 15 to 20 air miles from Hydaburg.

**(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System:** The Nutkwa Roadless Area is located on the southwest corner of Prince of Wales Island, northeast of the South Prince of Wales Wilderness. The Eudora Roadless Area (507) is northeast of the Nutkwa Roadless Area. Cordova Bay lies to the southwest and Haida Native Corporation lands lie to west. The topography is steep and rugged and the coastline is highly dissected, and has steep, rugged terrain, rising to over 3,000 feet in elevation. The vegetation in this province is strongly influenced by southwesterly storms.

Most of the area is unmodified and natural appearing. However, developments along the western boundary influence that portion of the area. The natural integrity and apparent naturalness of the area is high. The opportunity for solitude is very high and the opportunity for primitive recreation is outstanding.

The roadless area has moderate to high scenic quality; approximately 28 percent of the landscape is considered distinctive from a scenery standpoint. Recreation is relatively high, especially around the lakes of the area, and minerals related activity is high. There are a few small areas of karst development in the area. There are no other significant or unique features in the area.

The roadless area includes about 20,823 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, approximately 13,348 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. It ranks among the top five Tongass roadless areas in terms of acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth; the majority of this old growth is contained within non-development LUDs.

The Nutkwa Roadless Area is classified as being in the South Prince of Wales Island Biogeographic Province and makes up about 14 percent of the province. It is one of three inventoried roadless areas found within the province which makes up about 66 percent of the province. The South Prince of Wales Wilderness is also in the province and makes up about 22 percent of the province. Additionally, about 5 percent of the province is located within the Nutkwa LUD II area.

The Nutkwa Roadless Area lies completely within the Prince of Wales Mountains Ecological Section and represents 15 percent of the ecological section. Approximately 7 percent of the Prince of Wales Mountains Ecological Section is in existing wilderness, 3 percent is in existing LUD II, and 22 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

The majority (84 percent) of the roadless area is in the Hetta Inlet Metasediments Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 21 percent of the entire ecological subsection, 2 percent of which is in existing wilderness, 9 percent in LUD II, and 14 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs. The remainder (16 percent) of the roadless area is in the Moira Sound Complex Ecological Subsection; this portion of

the roadless area represents 8 percent of the entire ecological subsection, 23 percent of which is protected in existing wilderness and 35 percent in other existing non-development LUDs.

The Nutkwa Roadless Area was rated 23 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 30<sup>th</sup> from the highest (along with 7 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas.

There is both local and national support for designating all, or part of the roadless area as wilderness and for managing the remainder in an unroaded condition. Designation would create a wilderness that would be an addition to the South Prince of Wales Wilderness. The relatively high minerals-related activity would likely conflict with wilderness objectives in portions of the area. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be moderate.

### **V. Environmental Consequences**

The Nutkwa Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 3, or 4 is implemented. Approximately 53 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur within the remaining 47 percent of the roadless area. The land in the development LUDs includes an estimated 4,697 acres that are suitable for timber production (7 percent of the suitable acres on the Craig Ranger District). Approximately 1,187 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. This area contains 6,974 acres of land identified as a mineral activity tract. In the tract, 4,962 of the acres are considered to have high and 2,012 are considered to have low potential for experiencing mineral exploration and development of locatable minerals. In addition, this area contains 54,787 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources; 12,034 of the acres are considered to have moderate to high potential for development. The recreation, minerals, and special use programs would continue. Planning for timber sales would continue. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area could be affected by management activities allowed in the non-LUD II portion by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 2, all of the existing LUD II area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness LUD. This would not affect timber sale projects because this area is currently allocated to a non-development LUD. The total area identified as suitable for timber harvest would not change from Alternative 1. Ongoing recreation, special use, and minerals programs could be restricted in the Recommended Wilderness LUD area. Mineral prospecting would be allowed in the Recommended Wilderness LUD up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. The values associated with the natural settings of the existing LUD II portion of the roadless area, including the high scenic, historic, recreation, and karst values, would continue to be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Under Alternatives 5 or 7, from 51,907 to 51,997 acres of the roadless area in Remote Recreation, Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation, LUD II, and Timber Production LUDs would be converted to Recommended Wilderness LUD. Lands suitable for timber production in the roadless area would be reduced to 32 acres. Timber harvest would not be allowed and ongoing recreation, special use, and minerals programs could be restricted in the Recommended Wilderness LUD area. Mineral prospecting would be allowed in the Recommended Wilderness LUD up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. The values associated with the natural settings of the majority of the roadless area, including the high scenic, historic, recreation, and karst values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Under Alternative 6, a 4,824-acre portion of the area would be converted to Recommended LUD II, and a 30,539-acre portion converted to Recommended Wilderness LUD. This would convert all lands not currently designated as LUD II to Recommended LUD II or Recommended Wilderness. No timber harvest would be allowed. Ongoing recreation, special use, and minerals programs could continue similar to current conditions with little restriction in the LUD II and Recommended LUD II areas but could be restricted in the Recommended Wilderness area. Mineral prospecting would be allowed in the Recommended Wilderness LUD up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including the high scenic, historic, recreation, and karst values, would be provided long-term protection if designated LUD II or wilderness.

## Appendix C

Under Alternative 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness LUD. No timber harvest would be allowed. Ongoing recreation, special use, and minerals programs could be restricted. Mineral prospecting would be allowed in the Recommended Wilderness LUD up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including the high scenic, historic, recreation, and karst values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

<b>Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 531 (in acres)</b>								
<b>Land Use Designation</b>	<b>Alt 1</b>	<b>Alt 2</b>	<b>Alt 3</b>	<b>Alt 4</b>	<b>Alt 5</b>	<b>Alt 6</b>	<b>Alt 7</b>	<b>Alt 8</b>
<b>Recommended Wilderness</b>		21,455			51,907	30,539	51,997	56,818
<b>Wilderness</b>								
<b>Recommended Wilderness Nat. Mon.</b>								
<b>Wilderness National Monument</b>								
<b>Non-wilderness National Monument</b>								
<b>Research Natural Area</b>								
<b>Special Interest Area</b>								
<b>Remote Recreation</b>	3,229	3,229	3,229	3,229	20			
<b>Enacted Municipal Watershed</b>								
<b>Old-growth Habitat</b>	4,035	4,035	4,035	4,035	47			
<b>Semi-remote Recreation</b>	713	713	713	713				
<b>Recommended LUD II</b>						4,824		
<b>LUD II</b>	21,455		21,455	21,455		21,455		
<b>Wild, Scenic, Recreational River</b>								
<b>Experimental Forest</b>								
<b>Scenic Viewshed</b>								
<b>Modified Landscape</b>	711	711	711	711	711		711	
<b>Timber production</b>	26,675	26,675	26,675	26,675	4,133		4,110	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56,818</b>	<b>56,818</b>	<b>56,818</b>	<b>56,818</b>	<b>56,818</b>	<b>56,818</b>	<b>56,818</b>	<b>56,818</b>
<b>Suitable Timber Lands</b>	4,697	4,697	4,697	4,697	32	0	32	0