

## INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

**ROADLESS AREA NAME:** Chilkat-West Lynn Canal (304)

**ACRES (NFS):** 198,109

**BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE:** Lynn Canal

**ECOLOGICAL SECTION:** Glacier Bay Fjordlands, and Kootznoowoo Fjordlands

**2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING:** 25

### I. Overview and Description

**(1) Location and Access:** The Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area, located on the mainland, is bordered on the east by Lynn Canal and St. James Bay State Marine Park. Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, Excursion Inlet, Icy Strait, and an area of non-National Forest System lands, border the area to the west. Endicott River Wilderness forms the north border of the area, along with a small, developed area where road construction and timber harvest has occurred. The Sullivan Roadless Area is located north of this small, developed area and the Endicott River Wilderness. The Chilkat-West Roadless Area is bordered to the south by an area of road construction and timber harvest, an area of non-National Forest System lands, and saltwater.

The communities closest to the roadless area are Gustavus (approximately 10 miles west), Juneau (approximately 25 miles directly east of the southern tip of the area), Hoonah (approximately 10 miles across Icy Strait), and Haines (35 miles directly north of the northern portion of the area).

The closest regularly scheduled airplane or Alaska Marine Highway ferry service stops are Juneau and Hoonah. Access to the area is possible via saltwater, as well as float plane. There are no places suitable for landing wheeled airplanes. There are a number of roads leading close to the area. These include the forest roads associated with the timber management areas that border the roadless area in the southwest, as well as the roads located near Excursion Inlet on the west. Access into the interior is by foot or helicopter.

**(2) History:** The southern end of the Chilkat Peninsula has been suitable for human occupation for at least the last 11,000 years, and documented prehistoric sites have been recorded there. Tlingit tribes were the primary inhabitants of the area. Goldschmidt and Haas (1946) identified a number of native facilities and uses in the immediate vicinity of this roadless area. These included cemeteries, villages, and cabin/smokehouses, as well as commercial fish traps.

More recent history includes mining activities, significant black bear and mountain goat hunting in the southern Chilkat area, and three timber sales: the Home Shore Sale (1976), the Couverden Timber Sale (1980s), and the Home Shore II Timber Sale (1991). These timber sale areas are outside but adjacent to the Roadless Area.

**(3) Geography and Topography:** The Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area is characterized by rugged topography. The Chilkat Mountain Range runs the entire north-south length of the roadless area; its lateral, glacially formed valleys are typically U-shaped. Highland elevations range from 2,000 to 4,500 feet with alpine covering 36,828 acres, rock covering 27,397 acres, and ice and snowfields covering 9,840 acres. The entire area has been extensively glaciated and contains many glacial features, including glacial cirques and tarns. The Endicott terraced alluvial plain is significant topographically in the northern portion of this area. The side walls of many of the valleys have been scoured by ancient ice sheets, and bedrock outcroppings are common throughout the area.

The southern coastline, along Excursion Inlet, is comprised of moderate to steeply sloping forest terrain supporting relatively small drainage systems. The area's southern slopes are, for the most part, gently rolling and uniformly forested, particularly in foreground situations. Rugged, snow-clad peaks form an impressive backdrop panorama. There are 63 miles of shoreline on saltwater. This area contains 20 islands and islets (5 of these are greater than 10 acres) totaling 518 acres. Freshwater lakes comprise only 207 acres in the area.

## Appendix C

### (4) Ecosystem:

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. This area is located within the Lynn Canal Biogeographic Province. The topography in this province is typically rugged and glaciated. Western and mountain hemlock, and Sitka spruce plant associations are common. Alpine tundra and extensive rock/lichen communities dominate much of the land over 2,000 feet. Rain shadows and the dominating influence of the continental climate make this the driest and seasonally warmest province in Southeast Alaska.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area is contained almost entirely within the Glacier Bay Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247A) and a very small area is contained within the Kootznouwo Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247D). These areas are represented by two ecological subsections (see table below). The Chilkat Peninsula Carbonated Ecological Subsection, covering the vast majority of the roadless area, branches south of the St. Elias-Fairweather mountains to form a peninsula separating Lynn Canal and Glacier Bay. A matrix of sedimentary sandstone with carbonate bands comprises the lithology, with epikarst present as well. Due to the high elevations, alpine snowfields and meadows dominate the vegetation community. Lower elevations support subalpine shrublands and hemlock-spruce forests. (Nowacki et al., 2001).

<b>Ecological Section</b>	<b>Ecological Subsection</b>	<b>Percent of Roadless Area</b>
Glacier Bay Fjordlands	Chilkat Peninsula Carbonates	100%
Kootznouwo Fjordlands	Stephens Passage Glaciomarine Terraces	<1%

(b) **Soils:** Glacial till from local glacial origin is the predominant soil parent material and has been deposited on valley side walls to approximately 1,500 feet in elevation. The glacial till thins as it reaches higher elevations. Deeper, well-drained, forested soils occur along the lower slopes and valley bottoms. The valley bottoms are alluvial with outwash materials of stratified sands, gravels, and silts of glacial or recent stream origin. Some landslides have occurred as a result of natural erosion processes. Snow avalanche paths are present, reaching valley bottoms in many cases. Timbered, organic, muskeg soils are found throughout the area.

(c) **Vegetation:** Timber stands within this area are composed primarily of western hemlock and Sitka spruce. The forest understory varies in density and composition depending on the percent of canopy closure, which, in turn, is affected by soil type, incidence of blowdown, and soil drainage. Understory vegetation of blueberry, huckleberry, rusty menziesia, and devil's club is typical. Muskeg, mapped at 585 acres in this area, is dominated by sphagnum mosses, sedges, rushes and ericaceous shrubs. Muskeg is interspersed within other types in units too small to map; therefore, the acreage for muskeg may be substantially understated. Grass-sedge meadows are located at lower elevations along the coast. Low mat-forming vegetation adapted to snowpack and wind abrasion dominates alpine areas; heaths, grasses and low plants, such as deer cabbage, are typical. There are 36,832 acres mapped as alpine in this area.

There are approximately 82,300 acres mapped as forest land, of which 47,442 acres or 58 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 23,789 acres (50 percent) are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 4,607 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are also 41 acres of second growth due to beach harvest.

(d) **Fish Resources:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G, 1983) rated fish resources in its Forest Habitat Integrity Program. These ratings describe the value of VCUs for sport fish, commercial fish, and estuaries. None of the VCUs in this area was rated as highly valued for sport fish. Seven VCUs in the area were rated as high value for commercial fish. In some cases, only small portions of these VCUs are included within the roadless area boundaries.

VCUs located partially within the area that were rated as highly valued estuaries included Boat Harbor (109) and St. James Bay (111). It should, however, be noted that in both cases the estuary portion of these VCUs is located outside the boundary of the Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area.

The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) did not identify any of the VCUs in the area as primary salmon producers. One of the VCUs in the area (VCU 123) was listed as a non-producer.

Many streams in this area support runs of Dolly Varden, steelhead, and cutthroat trout. Humphy Creek, Teardrop Creek, Mirror Creek, and the Sullivan River are some of the named streams in this area.

**(e) Wildlife Resources:** This roadless area commonly supports mountain goats, black and brown bear, Sitka black-tailed deer, bald eagles, and wolves. Moose are also present.

**(5) Management Direction and Current Uses:** This area was allocated to five Land Use Designations (LUDs) in the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. These five LUDs are Scenic Viewshed, Timber Production, Transportation and Utility System (TUS), Semi-remote Recreation, and Old-growth Habitat. The TUS LUD is a secondary LUD, which overlays the other land uses.

LUD	Acres
Scenic Viewshed	31,003
Timber Production	15,221
Transportation and Utility System	NA
Semi-remote Recreation	138,818
Old-growth Habitat	13,066

Approximately 23 percent of this roadless area (not including the LUD overlay) was allocated to a development LUD (Scenic Viewshed and Timber Production). Lands along the shoreline north and south of St. James Bay State Marine Park were allocated to the Scenic Viewshed LUD. The Scenic Viewshed LUD accounts for approximately 16 percent of the roadless area. Approximately 7 percent of the roadless area, along the southern boundary, was allocated to the Timber Production LUD. A proposed State road corridor along the west shore of the Lynn Canal was assigned to the Transportation and Utility System LUD overlay.

Most of the roadless area, approximately 77 percent, was allocated to one of two non-development LUDs (Semi-remote Recreation, Old-growth Habitat). Most of the land in the Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area, approximately 70 percent, was allocated to the Semi-remote Recreation LUD. The Old-growth Habitat LUD was assigned approximately 7 percent of the roadless area.

Current recreation uses within this roadless area are, for the most part, dispersed. Hunting (moose, mountain goat, and black bear), fishing (fin and shellfish), and pleasure boating adjacent to the roadless area are the most popular pursuits. The highland core of the southern Chilkat Peninsula remains a remote and challenging environment for the backpacker, mountaineer, and hunter. There is one Special Use Permit recreation cabin on Teardrop Creek. There are no trails within the area. The National Guard, in recent years, has conducted maneuvers in this area. Subsistence use occurs in the area.

Timber sale evaluations are being initiated for the Couverden Project (25 MMBF), located in the western side of the southern tip of the peninsula. The majority of the area being evaluated is developed, but it slightly extends into the roadless area. The Couverden FEIS and ROD are scheduled for 2003.

**(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness):** Overall, this roadless area has high scenic quality with a mostly natural appearing landscape that provides a scenic backdrop for those traveling Lynn Canal, as well as Chatham and Icy Straits aboard cruise ships and State ferries. Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas within or adjacent to the area include Lynn Canal and Icy Strait, which are part of the Alaska Marine Highway and tour ship routes. The Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area appears largely natural and unmodified from the Forest Service designated visual priority routes and use areas.

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The area's apparent naturalness is, however, affected by developed areas that border parts of the area and appear to be part of the roadless area when viewed from some locations, especially Icy Strait, which borders the area to the south. Adjacent developed areas include areas where road building and timber harvest have occurred along the shoreline of the peninsula.

**(7) Surroundings (External Influences):** The area is part of a larger unroaded mainland land mass. The area extends south from the Endicott River Wilderness and is partially bordered to the west by Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve. The area is bordered to the east by Lynn Canal, which serves as a major travel corridor for flights, ferries, ships, and boats. Small planes, ferries, small boats, and cruise ships traveling the Lynn Canal corridor are visible from some locations within the area. Mining and other activities across Lynn Canal in the Berners Bay area may also be visible from some locations. In addition, air and water traffic to both Gustavus (Glacier Bay National Park) and Hoonah use Icy Strait. There are also popular commercial fishing grounds located adjacent to the south portion of the area. These activities are visible from some locations within the roadless area.

The area is separated from the Sullivan Roadless Area to the north by a narrow roaded area that was harvested in the 1960s.

There is also an unmaintained airstrip located on a section of system road in this roaded area. This airstrip is currently overgrown and unusable. Planes using this airstrip would be visible from within the Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area.

Additional timber harvest is planned in the Couverden Timber Sale area, which borders the roadless area to the south. A final decision (Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision) on timber harvest in this area is expected to be made in 2003. Additional development in this area may affect a portion of the Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area in terms of noise and visual impacts, and extension into the roadless area within the development LUDs.

**(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest:** The complexities of alpine tundra, scrub and old-growth forest, numerous small lakes, snowfields, steeply walled glacial valleys, and waterfalls offer a variety of attractions and features of interest. In reasonable proximity to Juneau, recreation and hunting opportunities serve to draw people to the southern portion of this roadless area along the coast and where roads occur. The area contains 12 inventoried recreation places, which cover 27,194 acres, or 14 percent of the roadless area. There are a number of anchorages within or adjacent to the area, including Howard Bay, St. James Bay, Couverden Island, Ansley Island, and William Henry Bay.

An equally important asset of the southern Chilkat Peninsula, from a more passive standpoint, relates to the Peninsula's importance as a scenic backdrop for those traveling Lynn Canal (Juneau/Haines/Skagway) and Chatham and Icy Straits aboard cruise ships and State ferries.

**(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary:** There are three differences between the 1989 and 2003 roadless area boundaries. First, the southern tip of the area is no longer National Forest System lands and is, therefore, excluded from the roadless area. This excluded area includes Couverden Island and Swanson Harbor. Second, harvest activities have occurred in the Couverden Timber Sale area since 1989, thereby slightly altering the south boundary of the Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area. Third, the narrow undeveloped area between the Couverden Timber Sale's south boundary and the shoreline has been excluded from the 2003 area. Additionally, several smaller areas in the Couverden area have been excluded along the boundary between the Draft and Final SEIS to improve manageability in those areas.

## **II. Capability for Management as Wilderness**

**(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness:** The roadless area is largely unmodified and, therefore, maintains its natural integrity and apparent naturalness very well. Timber harvest has occurred in a small area north of St. James Bay State Marine Park. Long-term ecological processes are generally intact and operating. The area's overall appearance is, therefore, generally appropriate for wilderness designation.

**(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation:** There is a very high opportunity for solitude and outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation within the interior of the area, especially when the large roadless areas adjacent to the area are factored in. The highland core of the southern Chilkat Peninsula remains a remote and challenging environment for the backpacker, mountaineer, and hunter. The potential for solitude is affected along the shore of the area by the substantial boating activities and flight corridors. There are no public recreation facilities within this area and recreation remains primarily dispersed, with the majority of use occurring along the coastline. Hunting (moose and black bear), fishing (fin and shellfish), and pleasure boating adjacent to the roadless area are the most popular pursuits. All-weather anchorages and interesting coves and beaches within the Point Couverden/St. James Bay area offer excellent opportunities for beachcombing, camping, and picnicking. Access is from private boats or private or chartered aircraft. Outfitter/guide use was reported in two locations in 1999. Seven groups, with a total of 27 clients, fished at Mirror Creek on the east side of the peninsula. Three groups, with a total of 10 clients, fished at Howard Bay.

The area provides primarily primitive and semi-primitive recreation opportunities. 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 (P)	95,650	48%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	87,744	44%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	8,886	4%
Roaded Natural (RN)	206	0%
Roaded Modified (RM)	5,562	3%

The area contains 12 inventoried recreation places, which cover 27,194 acres, or 14 percent of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places*	Total Acres
P	0	0
SPNM	2	14,484
SPM	5	8,626
RN	2	47
RM	9	4,038

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

The St. James Bay Marine State Park is adjacent to the northwest part 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 items 1 and 2 of this section (natural integrity, apparent naturalness, outstanding opportunity for solitude, and primitive recreation opportunities).

The inventoried roadless areas of the Tongass National Forest were rated according to this system in 1989 for the Analysis of the Management Situation developed in support of the Forest Plan Revision. At that time, the Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area was given a rating of 23 out of 28 possible points. The rating was re-evaluated for this updated version of the Analysis of the Management Situation. Based on this re-evaluation, the area was given a rating of 25. This rating reflects the ability of the large roadless area along with other adjacent roadless lands to absorb the localized developed areas along some of the edges.

**(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values:** The area is part of a larger mainland roadless area that includes the Endicott River Wilderness, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, and the Sullivan Roadless Area.

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**(a) Fish Resources:** The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment did not identify any of the VCUs in the area as primary salmon producers or sport fish producers. All the VCUs are identified as secondary salmon producers (ADF&G, 1998).

Many streams in this area support runs of Dolly Varden, steelhead, and cutthroat trout. Humphy Creek, Teardrop Creek, Mirror Creek, and the Sullivan River are some of the named streams in this area.

**(b) Wildlife Resources:** This roadless area commonly supports mountain goats, black and brown bear, Sitka black-tailed deer, bald eagles, and wolves. Moose are also present. Marine mammal rookeries are found throughout the area along the coastline.

Based on data compiled from 1985 to 1994, three VCUs partially located in the area (VCUs 111, 117, and 120) were rated in the top 25 percent of black bear harvest on the Tongass National Forest. One VCU (VCU 119) was rated in the second 25 percent, with another three (VCUs 107, 110, and 115) rated in the third 25 percent (ADF&G, 1998). A total of 184 black bears was harvested in this roadless area between 1985 and 1994.

**(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. Marine mammal rookeries are found throughout the area along the coastline. 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, eight sensitive plant species are known or suspected to occur in the Juneau Ranger District.

**(d) Karst, Cave, and Other Geologic Resources:** There are numerous areas of low to medium vulnerability karst in this roadless area. Areas of low vulnerability karst can be found near Lance Point and north and south of Boat Harbor. An area of mostly low vulnerability karst is located around William Henry Bay. Mostly medium vulnerability areas are found in the mountainous regions in the middle of the roadless area, from Yang Webster Peak to Nun Mountain. A large, narrow swath of medium and low vulnerability karst extends from the Glacier Bay National Park boundary to Teardrop Lake, and a small area of karst is located at the north end of Howard Bay. The karst resources are mapped at 19,402 acres, or approximately 10 percent, of the roadless area. All of the karst is mapped as medium or low vulnerability. The entire area has been extensively glaciated and contains many glacial features, including glacial cirques and tarns.

**(5) Scientific and Educational Values:** There are no known special features in this area.

**(6) Scenic Values:** Overall, this roadless area has high scenic quality with a mostly natural appearing landscape. The area's southern slopes are, for the most part, gently rolling and uniformly forested with rugged, snow-clad peaks forming an impressive backdrop panorama for those traveling Lynn Canal, and Chatham and Icy Straits aboard cruise ships and State ferries. The area's apparent naturalness is, however, affected by developed areas that border the area and appear to be part of the roadless area when viewed from some locations, especially Icy Strait, which borders the area to the south. Adjacent developed areas include areas where road building and timber harvest have occurred along the shoreline of the peninsula.

A number of Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan are within or adjacent to the area. Visual Priority Routes include Lynn Canal and Icy Strait (Alaska Marine Highway and Tour Ship Routes), Howard Point, St. James Bay, William Henry Bay, West Lynn Canal, Lynn Canal, Icy Strait, and Excursion Inlet (Small Boat Routes). Use Areas include St. James Bay State Marine Park; Couverden Island, Howard Bay and Point, and Lynn Canal (Saltwater Use Areas); St. James Bay, Couverden Island and Mainland No Use Ledge to Point Howard, (Dispersed Recreation Areas); Excursion Inlet (Community); and St. James Bay, Couverden Island, Ansley Island, and William Henry Bay (Boat Anchorages).

Approximately 11 percent of this roadless area was inventoried in Variety Class A (possessing landscape diversity that is unique for this character type), 77 percent in Variety Class B (possessing landscape diversity that is common for the character type), and 12 percent in Variety Class C (possessing a low degree of landscape diversity).

The vast majority of the roadless area (approximately 95 percent) is in Existing Visual Condition (EVC) I and appears untouched by human activity. Three percent of the acreage is in EVC III where changes in the landscape are noticed by the average person, but do not attract attention, and the natural appearance of the landscape still remains dominant. Approximately 1 percent of this roadless area is in EVC IV where changes in the landscape are easily noticed by the average person and may attract some attention. These changes appear as disturbances but resemble natural patterns. Approximately 1 percent of the area is in EVC V, where changes in the landscape are in glaring contrast to the natural condition and appear to be drastic disturbances.

**(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values:** The southern end of the Chilkat Peninsula has been suitable for human occupation for at least the last 11,000 years, and documented prehistoric sites have been recorded there. Tlingit tribes were the primary inhabitants of the area. More recent history includes mining activities, significant black bear hunting in the southern Chilkat area, and three timber sales southwest of the roadless area.

The communities closest to the roadless area are Gustavus (approximately 10 miles west), Juneau (approximately 25 miles directly east of the southern tip of the area), Hoonah (approximately 10 miles across Icy Strait), and Haines (35 miles directly north of the northern portion of the area).

There are no public recreation facilities within this area and recreation remains primarily dispersed, with the majority of use occurring along the coastline. Access is from private boats or private or chartered aircraft. Hunting (moose, mountain goat, and black bear), fishing (fin and shellfish), and pleasure boating adjacent to the roadless area are the most popular pursuits. The highland core of the southern Chilkat Peninsula remains a remote and challenging environment for the backpacker, mountaineer, and hunter. All-weather anchorages and interesting coves and beaches within the Point Couverden/St. James Bay area offer excellent opportunities for beachcombing, camping, and picnicking. Outfitter/guide use was reported in two locations in 1999. Seven groups, with a total of 27 clients, fished at Mirror Creek on the east side of the peninsula. Three groups, with a total of 10 clients, fished at Howard Bay.

The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) indicated that subsistence use in the VCU that includes St. James Bay (VCU 111) had a high sensitivity to disturbance. It should, however, be noted that the lands along the shoreline of the bay are not part of the Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area. Two of the VCUs in this area (VCU 120, Porpoise Island, and VCU 121, both along Chatham Strait) were included among the highest value community use areas (ADF&G, 1998).

**(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes:** The area is generally well defined by topographic features. The area is bordered by adjacent bodies of water, the Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, and the Endicott River Wilderness. There are some State-owned or private parcels of land in St. James Bay and at the north end of Excursion Inlet.

LUD designations adjacent to the north boundary of the area include Wilderness, Scenic Viewshed, and Semi-remote Recreation. The area is bordered to the west by non-National Forest System lands (Glacier Bay National Park and Monument).

Designating this area wilderness would extend the Endicott River Wilderness and the boundaries of the larger wilderness area that includes Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, as well as the Endicott River Wilderness. The feasibility of managing this area as wilderness or in a roadless condition is generally high throughout the area. The drainages in the southern portion of the roadless area that includes developments associated with the Couverden area could be excluded to improve overall manageability.

## Appendix C

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

(1) **Recreation, Including Tourism Potential:** There is great potential to provide a variety of recreation opportunities within this roadless area. High wildlife values coincide with high-quality dispersed recreation areas. The rugged interior of the Chilkat Peninsula offers the hiker, backpacker, and mountaineer diverse and imposing scenery, a high degree of challenge, and unlimited opportunities to experience solitude. All-weather anchorages and interesting coves and beaches offer excellent opportunities for beachcombing, camping, and picnicking. The presence of heavy boat and air traffic does, however, limit the potential for solitude along the shoreline.

In 1996, the Alaska Visitors Association (AVA) proposed the following recreation developments in this roadless area: a leased proprietary camp with a 15-person capacity in Excursion Inlet; a backcountry recreation lodge for 50 persons/day, leased proprietary camps for 15 persons per site, and boardwalks, trails and paths for the Endicott River.

(2) **Subsistence Uses:** The existing patterns of subsistence activities in the area would not be affected by wilderness designation.

(3) **Fish Resources:** A fish habitat improvement project was completed on Humphy Creek. No other fish habitat enhancement projects have been identified.

(4) **Wildlife Resources:** No wildlife habitat enhancement projects have been identified for this area.

(5) **Timber Resources:** There are approximately 47,442 acres mapped as productive old growth in the roadless area. In addition, 41 acres of second growth have resulted from beach logging activities. Of these acres, 32,898 acres are categorized as tentatively suitable for timber production. Based on the Forest Plan LUDs assigned to this area (and estimated falldown and scheduling reduction factors), 5,981 acres (3 percent) of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 2,924 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 535 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

Timber sale evaluations are being initiated for the Couverden Project (25 MMBF), located on the western side of the southern tip of the peninsula. The majority of the area being evaluated is developed, but it slightly extends into the roadless area. The Couverden FEIS and ROD are scheduled for 2003.

(6) **Fire, Insects, and Disease:** The area has no significant fire history. Endemic tree diseases common to Southeast Alaska are present. There are no known epidemic disease occurrences.

(7) **Minerals:** Mineral activity and prospecting have been concentrated along the coast and more accessible areas inland. Locations of copper and silver have been made on small, weakly mineralized areas on the west side of Point Howard. Generally, the area has low mineral potential. As a result, it has not been heavily prospected, but there are numerous known current claims. The roadless area contains approximately 75,809 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources that are considered to have low or very low potential for development. (Brew et al., 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991).

(8) **Transportation and Utilities:** The 1997 Juneau Access Draft EIS prepared by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Utilities evaluated the possibility of constructing a road from Juneau to Haines/Skagway. A route along the west side of the Lynn Canal was one of the alternatives considered. This project is not currently being pursued as part of Southeast Alaska's transportation planning efforts; however, it remains in the Transportation and Utility System LUD.

(9) **Water Availability and Use:** No developed recreation or other facilities exist to create a water demand. There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects in the area.

(10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** There are no areas of scientific interest in this area.

(11) **Land Use Authorizations:** There is a Special Use Permit for a recreation cabin on Teardrop Creek. The Forest Service has a radio repeater on William Henry Peak. The Federal Aviation Authority has a Special Use Permit for a radio site near Point Howard. This site is known as Lynn's Interchange. Alascom-AT&T has a special use permit for a radio facility near William Henry Bay.

(12) **Land Status:** All lands in the roadless area are a part of the National Forest System. A few areas of encumbered land exist within this roadless area.

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

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

(a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** Most use of the area is associated with recreation, hunting, and some mining activities. Commercial fisheries occur on saltwater south and west of the area.

(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 Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area. In 2001, HR 2908 identified the entire area as Proposed Wilderness. The bill also proposed that the river flowing into St. James Bay receive Wild and Scenic River designation.

(c) **Public Input During Forest Plan Revisions and Appeals:** Parts of this area were specifically addressed in public input received during the Forest Plan revision and appeal. The AVA proposed the following recreation developments in this roadless area: a leased proprietary camp with a 15-person capacity in Excursion Inlet; a backcountry recreation lodge for 50 persons/day, leased proprietary camps for 15 persons per site, and boardwalks, trails and paths for the Endicott River.

Commenters specifically requested that Porpoise Island, located south of the peninsula, not be logged because logging activities would have drastic effects on this small island. The Friends of Glacier Bay organization requested that Management Areas (MAs) C18 and C19 be managed in a "natural setting" in recognition of the potential effect that development could have on the adjacent Glacier National Park and Preserve. A number of commenters also requested protection for Point Couverden, which has since been conveyed to the state.

Other comments addressed the Chilkat Range, which is partially located within the boundaries of the Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area. Commenters requested that the range not be developed for timber harvest due to its high scenic value and its importance as wildlife habitat. A number of comments addressing the West Lynn Canal Area identified it as a great tourist and scenic corridor and requested the land be preserved or managed for semi-primitive recreation. Timber industry representatives requested that the entire west shore of Lynn Canal, including the portion located within the Sullivan Roadless Area, be developed for timber harvest and motorized recreation, as well as a north-south road connection.

Lower Endicott River, St. James Bay area, and Point Couverden/Homeshore were identified in the September 24, 1997 appeal filed by Lynn Canal Conservation, Inc. (LCC). Point Couverden/Homeshore was also identified in the appeal filed by the Friends of Glacier Bay. LCC requested that Lower Endicott River be classified as a Wild and Scenic River because of its high value fisheries and wildlife habitat and its tourism and scenic values. They also objected to the potential effects of logging in the Lynn Canal corridor. In addition, LCC requested that the St. James Bay and Point Couverden/Homeshore areas be protected from logging and mineral development. The Friends of Glacier Bay requested that Point Couverden/Homeshore be managed under a natural setting LUD.

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

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**(e) Public Input Expressed for Project-level EISs and Other Input:** This area is not within the study area of any recently completed project-level EISs.

**(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. They indicated that protection of this area, particularly because it adjoins the Endicott River Wilderness and Glacier Bay National Park, would conserve valuable remaining undisturbed forested habitats on the mainland.

SEACC recommended that the Sullivan and Chikat-West Lynn roadless areas, which are adjacent to the existing Endicott River Wilderness and to Glacier Bay National Park, should be permanently protected through expansions of the Endicott River Wilderness. They indicated that this combination would create a contiguous wilderness of over 3.1 million acres.

The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) identified Roadless Areas 303 and 304 as adjacent to the existing Endicott River Wilderness and to Glacier Bay National Park. They recommended the two roadless areas for permanent protection as wilderness and as an addition to Endicott River Wilderness to create a contiguous wilderness area of just over 3.1 million acres.

The Gustavus Community Association recommended increased protection for Roadless Area 304 because the current Forest Plan fails to adequately protect areas of particular concern to the community of Gustavus, such as Point Couverden.

A number of individual commenters identified Point Couverden, Homeshore, and St. James Bay as areas in need of protection and some recommended the entire roadless area.

**(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses:** The Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area is part of a larger mainland roadless area located between the northern National Forest boundary at Point Sullivan and the southern tip of the Chilkat Peninsula at Point Couverden. This larger area includes the Endicott Wilderness and the Sullivan Roadless Area (303). In addition, this area is adjacent to Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve.

**(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)	25	30
Sitka (Pop. 8,835)	80	125
Hoonah (Pop. 860)	10	15
Angeon (Pop. 572)	50	55

The Alaska Marine Highway provides service to Juneau, Haines, and Hoonah.

**(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System.** The Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area is located on the mainland and bordered on the east by Lynn Canal and St. James Bay State Marine Park. Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, Excursion Inlet, Icy Strait, and an area of non-National Forest System lands border the area to the west. Endicott River Wilderness forms the north border of the area along with a small developed area. The roadless area is bordered to the south by a developed area, an area of non-National Forest System lands, and saltwater. The area is characterized by rugged topography. The Chilkat Mountain Range runs the entire north-south length of the roadless area; its lateral, glacially formed valleys, are typically U-shaped. Highland elevations range from 2,000 to 4,500 feet. The entire area has been extensively glaciated and contains many glacial features, including glacial cirques and tarns. The Endicott terraced alluvial plain is significant topographically in the northern portion of this area. The side walls of many of the valleys have been scoured by ancient ice sheets, and bedrock outcroppings are common throughout the area. The southern coastline, along Excursion Inlet, is comprised of moderate to steeply sloping forest terrain supporting relatively small drainage systems. The area's southern slopes are, for the most part, gently rolling and uniformly forested, particularly in foreground situations.

The area is mostly unmodified and in a natural condition. The natural integrity is very high and the apparent naturalness is very high. The opportunity for solitude is very high and the opportunity for primitive recreation is outstanding.

Approximately 11 percent of the landscape is considered distinctive for the character type from a scenery standpoint. The rugged glaciated features of the area are an important geologic feature, along with fairly extensive karst. The area also has important cultural values.

The roadless area includes about 23,789 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, 4,607 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area lies within the Lynn Canal Biogeographic Province and makes up about 30 percent of the province. It is one of four inventoried roadless areas that collectively make up about 77 percent of the province. The Endicott River Wilderness makes up about 15 percent of the Lynn Canal province, and the Berners Bay LUD II area makes up another 6 percent of the province.

The Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area lies within two ecological sections; it represents 57 percent of the Glacier Bay Fjordlands Ecological Section and 0.1 percent of the Kootznoowoo Fjordlands Ecological Section. Both Ecological Sections are well represented by existing wilderness (28 and 78 percent, respectively) and by other existing non-development LUDs (50 and 11 percent respectively). The Kootznoowoo Ecological Section has 1 percent of land in LUD II.

Almost all of this roadless area (100 percent) is within the Chilkat Peninsula Carbonates Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 59 percent of the entire ecological subsection, which is well represented by existing wilderness and other non-development LUDs (26 and 51 percent, respectively). The Stephens Passage Glaciomarine Terraces Ecological Subsection represents less than 1 percent of the Chilkat-West Lynn Canal roadless area. This portion of the roadless area represents 0.1 percent of the entire ecological subsection, which is well represented by existing wilderness and other non-development LUDs (36 and 31 percent, respectively) with an additional 5 percent in LUD II.

The Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area was rated 25 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 12<sup>th</sup> from the highest (along with 12 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas.

There is considerable local and national support for wilderness designation for the area. Designation would create a wilderness that would add to a much larger wilderness, including the Endicott River Wilderness and the Glacier Bay National Park Wilderness. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be very high.

### **V. Environmental Consequences**

The Chilkat-West Lynn Canal Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 is implemented. Approximately 77 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur in the remaining 23 percent. The land in the development LUDs provides an estimated 5,981 acres that are suitable for timber production (15 percent of the suitable land on the Juneau Ranger District). Approximately 535 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. The roadless area contains approximately 75,809 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources that are considered to have low or very low potential for development. Recreation, minerals, timber sales, and special uses programs would continue. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area could be affected by timber management related activities in the southern part of the area and in the vicinity of St. James Bay. The cultural, karst and most scenic values are protected by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 6 or 7, almost the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. No timber harvest would be allowed in the roadless area. The potential for other uses and development, including recreation, minerals, and some special uses, could be restricted in the Recommended Wilderness area. Mineral prospecting and development would be allowed up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by

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Congress. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including the scenic, karst, and cultural values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Under Alternative 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. No timber harvest would be allowed and the potential for other uses and development, including recreation, minerals, and some special uses, could be restricted. Mineral prospecting and development would be allowed 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 scenic, karst, and cultural values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

<b>Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 304 (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>						197,942	197,942	198,109
<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>								
<b>Enacted Municipal Watershed</b>								
<b>Old-growth Habitat</b>	13,066	13,066	13,066	13,066	13,066			
<b>Semi-remote Recreation</b>	138,818	138,818	138,818	138,818	138,818		167	
<b>Recommended LUD II</b>						167		
<b>LUD II</b>								
<b>Wild, Scenic, Recreational River</b>								
<b>Experimental Forest</b>								
<b>Scenic Viewshed</b>	31,003	31,003	31,003	31,003	31,003			
<b>Modified Landscape</b>								
<b>Timber Production</b>	15,221	15,221	15,221	15,221	15,221			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>198,109</b>	<b>198,109</b>	<b>198,109</b>	<b>198,109</b>	<b>198,109</b>	<b>198,109</b>	<b>198,109</b>	<b>198,109</b>
<b>Suitable Timber Lands</b>	5,981	5,981	5,981	5,981	5,981	0	0	0