

INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

ROADLESS AREA NAME: Windham-Port Houghton (308)

ACRES (NFS): 161,922

BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: Northern Coast Range

ECOLOGICAL SECTION: Inside Passage Fjordlands and Boundary Ranges

2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING: 25 (25, 25)

I. Overview and Description

(1) **Location and Access:** The Windham-Port Houghton Roadless Area is located directly south of the Chuck River and Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wildernesses and is bordered on the west by Stephens Passage. The Fanshaw and Spires Roadless Areas lie to the south. This roadless area is approximately 35 air miles east of Angoon and 50 air miles south of Juneau. Both cities are served by the Alaska Marine Highway, and Juneau has daily jet service. There are non-National Forest System lands along Hobart Bay and Port Houghton, near the center of the roadless area. These private lands have an extensive road network. The roadless area can be accessed by floatplane and boat at several points along the shore. There are no places suitable for landing wheeled airplanes. Access to the interior is by foot or helicopter.

(2) **History:** There is evidence, including petroglyphs, that the area has been used since prehistoric times, probably by Tlingit people. In more recent history, evidence of small homesteads, logging, mining activities, and fox farms can still be found dating back to the 1800s and early 1900s. A large area surrounding Hobart Bay and a smaller portion on Port Houghton, near the center of the roadless area, has been conveyed to the Goldbelt Village Corporation. Most of this area has been actively managed for timber resources, dividing portions of the roadless area in two.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** The topography of the area is typical of glaciated valleys in Southeast Alaska. The area contains U-shaped valleys with steep, glacially scoured sidewalls and mountainous ridgetops. Elevations range from sea level to over 5,000 feet. There are 133 miles of shoreline on saltwater, and 68 islands and islets (3 of which are greater than 10 acres) totaling 252 acres. Rock comprises 8,599 acres of this area and alpine 1,084 acres. Ice and snow total 75 acres. Freshwater lakes cover 215 acres of this area.

(4) **Ecosystem:**

(a) **Classification: Biogeographic Province.** This roadless area is classified as being in the Northern Coast Range Biogeographic Province. This province is generally characterized by rugged, heavily glaciated terrain with extensive alpine environments. The province has little maritime influence. Yellow-cedar plant associations occur in this province.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Windham-Port Houghton Roadless Area is contained almost entirely within the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247E), with a small portion in the Boundary Ranges Ecological Subsection (M246B). These areas are represented by three ecological subsections (see table below). The Holkam Bay Complex Ecological Subsection covers the majority of the roadless area. It has rounded mountains with steep sidewalls. The mostly mineral soils reflect the sedimentary strata and plutonic intrusions underlying most of this area, and glacial till is generally absent. Alpine vegetation communities dominate about a quarter of this subsection, while the lower slopes support productive hemlock-spruce forests. The poorly drained organic soils of the lowlands support substantial forested wetlands. The Cape Fanshaw Complex, approximately 9 percent of the roadless area, is very similar to the Holkam Bay Complex, but glacial till is present. The northernmost extent of sword fern and western redcedar occurs in this subsection (Nowacki et al., 2001).

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Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Inside Passage Fjordlands	Holkam Bay complex	91%
	Cape Fanshaw Complex	9%
Boundary Ranges	Boundary Ranges Icefields	<1%

(b) Soils: Soils on the sideslopes are predominantly shallow residuals, which have developed from metasediments. Rooting strength is an important factor in slope stability, because of its anchoring effect on the shallow soil mantle. Valley bottom soils on floodplains and terraces are composed primarily of alluvial silts, sands, and gravel.

(c) Vegetation: Most forest timber stands are composed primarily of western hemlock and Sitka spruce. Alaska-cedar is found scattered throughout the spruce/hemlock stands, and lodgepole pine can be found on poorly drained sites. Red alder and Sitka alder line some streams and shorelines, and dominate landslides and other areas where soil disturbance has occurred. There are 512 acres of muskeg mapped in this area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult. There are 1,084 acres of alpine vegetation mapped within the roadless area.

There are approximately 137,646 acres mapped as forest land of which 107,199 acres or 78 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 44,842 acres or 42 percent are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 10,439 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are 127 acres of second-growth forest where timber harvest has occurred in the past. The second growth is the result of beach logging about 30 to 40 years ago. Approximately 109 acres are in VCU 690 at Dry Bay and 19 acres are in VCU 700 on the north shore of the mouth of Windham Bay.

(d) Fish Resources: Streams in this area support pink, coho, chum, and sockeye salmon; cutthroat and steelhead trout; and Dolly Varden Char. The major fish producers are Thistle Ledge Creek, Point League Creek, Libby Creek, Nancy Creek, Glen Creek, Rusty River, Sandborn River, and Negro Creek.

(e) Wildlife Resources: The area supports a rich wildlife population. Larger mammal species include both black and brown bear as well as moose, Sitka black-tailed deer, wolves, and, at the higher elevations, mountain goats. Smaller animals include furbearers such as mink, marten, and beaver. Bald eagles, marbled murrelets, trumpeter swans, and goshawks are also found here. There are numerous harbor seal haul-out sites along the shoreline.

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

LUD	Acres
Timber Production	103,879
Scenic Viewshed	25,616
Old-growth Habitat	32,210
Semi-remote Recreation	218

Approximately 80 percent of the roadless area was allocated to land use designations (LUDs) that allow development (Timber Production, Scenic Viewshed). Most of the roadless area, approximately 64 percent, was allocated to the Timber Production LUD. Approximately 16 percent of the roadless area, near Sand Bay, Dry Bay, Sunset Cove, Port Houghton, North Arm, and Salt Chuck, was allocated to Scenic Viewshed LUD.

Approximately 20 percent of the roadless area was allocated to a non-development LUD (Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation). The Old-growth Habitat LUD was assigned to approximately 20 percent of the roadless area.

Less than 1 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Semi-remote Recreation LUD. This LUD is located primarily on Sunset Island, Walter Island, and smaller islands near the roadless area.

There are no trails in this roadless area. Most use is focused along shorelines and at several upland mining claims. Windham Bay is a popular bay for fishing, crabbing, black bear hunting, and other recreational and commercial activities, and the bay provides access routes to some of the mining claims to the east. Negro Creek has a fish ladder improvement. Recreation and subsistence use is low. Only one deer was reported harvested in the Wildlife Analysis Area (2926) that contains this roadless area in 2000. The area near Dry Bay and Port Houghton are used for black bear hunting but harvest levels have not been high. The Forest Service has an uncompleted administrative cabin at Little Lagoon on the south side of Port Houghton.

Timber sale planning is under way in this roadless area. Future potential projects include Hobart and North Windham, which are scheduled to sell about 65 MMBF of timber in 2004 through 2009.

(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness): Most of the area appears unmodified except for the occasional remains of old fox farms, cabins, or evidence of mining claims. The appearance of portions of the roadless area and the Chuck River Wilderness have been affected by the developments on private lands in Hobart Bay.

(7) Surroundings (External Influences): This roadless area is adjacent to Stephens Passage. The Alaska Marine Highway ferries and tour boats sail Stephens Passage on a regular basis, but because of the vastness of the area, usually appear only as small ships in the distance. Windham Bay is a popular bay for fishing, crabbing, and other recreational and commercial activities, and the bay provides access routes to some of the mining claims to the east. Floatplanes and boats may be seen in Windham Bay more frequently than in the other bays of this roadless area. The adjacent wilderness is steep and remote and access is difficult. Port Houghton is a large bay with a public recreation cabin, but no other permanent facilities. Commercial fishing and crabbing boats use the bay. The area is large enough to minimize the external influences of these activities. There has been extensive development on private lands along Hobart Bay and the northwest shores of Port Houghton, which is owned by the Goldbelt Village Corporation. This has affected the appearance of a large portion of the roadless area, as well as the adjacent Chuck River Wilderness. Patented mining claims are also located adjacent to the roadless area boundary.

(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest: The area is immediately adjacent to saltwater bays that are valued for fishing, crabbing, and other recreational and commercial activities. The salt chuck at the head of Port Houghton is the only salt chuck on the mainland. The area contains 10 inventoried recreation places, which cover 85,165 acres, or 53 percent of the roadless area. There are no trails in the area and one public recreation cabin, but no other developments.

(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary: Approximately 72,500 acres in the northeast portion of the roadless area was designated as the Chuck River Wilderness in 1990. This area, though still unroaded, is no longer part of the Windham-Port Houghton Roadless Area.

II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness: A large area surrounding Hobart Bay and a small portion of Port Houghton near the center of the roadless area are privately owned. Most of this area has been developed, dividing portions of the roadless area into two parts, and affecting the apparent naturalness and integrity portions of the roadless area. The rest of the area is unmodified except for the remains of fox farms, cabins, and mining claims mentioned above, and has high natural integrity and apparent naturalness. Generally, long-term ecological processes operate intact throughout the area, making it suitable for wilderness classification.

(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation: There are vast opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within a large portion of the area, and especially when adjacent roadless lands are factored in. The Alaska Marine Highway has only a slight effect on one's feelings of solitude, and there is no regular air traffic into or over the area. The area directly adjacent to developed private land in Hobart Bay is most affected by external influences. Access is primarily gained from commercial fishing boats, private recreational boats, or floatplanes.

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Accessing the roadless area by boat from the community of Petersburg requires a 4- to 6-hour crossing on exposed waters. There are no trails accessing the roadless area. This roadless area is very large and difficult to cross. The presence of both brown and black bears also presents a degree of challenge and a need for woods skills and experience.

The area primarily provides 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	Acre	Percent of Total ROS
Primitive (P)	79,304	49%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	63,797	39%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	9,662	6%
Roaded Motorized (RM)	9,046	6%

The area contains 10 inventoried recreation places, which cover 85,165 acres, or 53 percent of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places	Total Acres
P	3	41,039
SPNM	4	34,518
SPM	3	9,608
RM	0	0

The Chuck River Wilderness Area and Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wilderness Area border this roadless area to the east.

There is one public recreation cabin in the area at Little Lagoon on the south shore of Port Houghton. There are no trails in the 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 Windham-Port Houghton 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 large size of the area, coupled with adjacent roadless lands, and its ability to absorb effects of developments in Hobart Bay and Port Houghton. Separate ratings were done for the area north of Hobart Bay and south of Hobart Bay. Both areas received scores of 25, similar to the overall rating for the roadless area.

(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values: The roadless area is part of a very large unroaded area extending along the mainland from the Misty Fiords National Monument Wilderness in the south to Glacier Bay National Park in the north. This extensive unroaded area borders unroaded areas to the north and east in Canada.

(a) Fish Resources: The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment listed VCUs 75, 79, and 84, around Hobart Bay and at the end of Port Houghton, as primary salmon producers. None of the VCUs were listed as primary sport fish producers (ADF&G, 1998).

Streams in this area support pink, coho, chum and sockeye salmon; cutthroat and steelhead trout; and Dolly Varden char. The major fish producers are Thistle Ledge Creek, Point League Creek, Libby Creek, Nancy

Creek, Glen Creek, Rusty River, Sandborn River, and Negro Creek. Nancy Creek has an estimated annual peak escapement of 70,400 pink salmon, while Glen Creek has an estimated 36,200 pink salmon. Large runs of sockeye salmon have been reported for the Rusty River. The Lower Sandborn River is second only to the Rusty River in terms of productivity, with an estimated annual peak escapement of 80,300 pink and 26,000 chum salmon. Coho salmon, steelhead and Dolly Varden are also produced in the Lower Sandborn River. Coho and pink salmon, cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char were observed in Negro Creek. Peak escapement surveys indicate as many as 40,000 pink and 2,800 chum salmon. A fishpass was completed on Negro Creek in 1986, which has been determined unsuccessful. The ADF&G Anadromous Stream Catalogue (1998) lists Haystack Creek, Placer Creek, and Walters Island Creek among other streams used by pink and chum salmon.

(b) Wildlife Resources: The area supports a rich wildlife population. Larger mammal species include both black and brown bear as well as moose. Based on information collected from 1985 to 1994, VCU 75, partially in this roadless area and surrounding Hobart Bay, is listed in the top 25 percent of VCUs for brown bear harvest (ADF&G, 1998). Sitka black-tailed deer, wolves, and at the higher elevations, mountain goats also inhabit the area. Smaller animals include furbearers such as river otter, mink, marten, and beaver. Black bears are most plentiful near the Sandborn Canal. Information from the Port Houghton EIS indicates that bald eagles and their nest sites are observed frequently along the shoreline (USDA Forest Service, 1998). Since 1979, the USFWS has observed 186 nest sites along the shoreline of Port Houghton and Sandborn Canal. Marbled murrelets inhabit the area, but no nest sites have been identified. Harbor seal haul-out sites occur on an island in the salt chuck, at the mouth of Sandborn Canal, on Rabbit and Walter Islands, and at the mouth of Port Houghton at Robert and Foot Islands.

(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. As many as 200 Steller sea lions have been reported in the Port Houghton Salt Chuck during the summer months. 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 such as Sandborn Canal. 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. Goshawk nests were noted throughout the southern portion of the roadless area in the Port Houghton Draft EIS. 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 no known karst or cave resources in this roadless area. There are no major glaciers in this area. The salt chuck at the head of Port Houghton is a unique geologic feature.

(5) Scientific and Educational Values: There are opportunities to observe and study fish and wildlife throughout the area. Historic and prehistoric sites are special features within this area, including petroglyphs in Windham Bay. Within Port Houghton, the salt chuck at the head of the bay is an interesting feature.

(6) Scenic Values: There are several inholdings and mining claims near Windham Bay, as well as private cabins, that are occasionally visible. Large areas surrounding Hobart Bay have been developed by the private landowner. These developments are visible and affect the apparent naturalness of the general area. These developments extend around and in to the north side of the entrance to Port Houghton, so viewsheds from Stephens Passage into Hobart bay appear highly modified on the developed area of the north shore. Viewing this area from Port Houghton to the south, Dry Bay and Sandy Bay, the landscape appears natural.

Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan that are within or adjacent to the area include Stephens Passage (a part of the Alaska Marine Highway and a tour ship and small boat route) and Windham Bay, Port Houghton, North Arm, Sandborn Canal, and Hobart Bay, which are small boat routes and boat anchorages.

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Four percent of the roadless area is considered Variety Class A (possessing landscape diversity that is unique for the character type) and 59 percent is in Variety Class B (possessing landscape diversity that is common for the character type). Approximately 37 percent is in Variety Class C (possessing a low degree of landscape diversity). The vast majority of this area, approximately 99 percent, is in Existing Visual Condition (EVC) Type I, where only ecological change has occurred.

(7) **Social, Cultural, and Historical Values:** There is evidence, including petroglyphs, that this area has been used since prehistoric times, probably by Tlingit people. In more recent history, evidence of small homesteads, logging, mining activities, and fox farms can still be found dating back to the 1800s and early 1900s. VCU 82, at the mouth of Port Houghton, is among the VCUs with highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas. VCU 84, on the southern side of Port Houghton, was listed among the VCUs with the highest community use values. VCU 79, at the end of Port Houghton, was listed in the second most important group of VCUs (ADF&G, 1998).

(8) **Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes:** The Windham-Port Houghton Roadless Area is contiguous with Chuck River Wilderness to the northeast and with the Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wilderness to the east, and with the Fanshaw (201) and Spires (202) Roadless Areas to the south. The western boundary is primarily Stephens Passage, except for the area adjacent to Hobart Bay and the northwest shore of Port Houghton. The boundary between private land and the roadless area is not defined by natural features. Activities on private lands could affect a user's experience in that portion of the roadless area. These private lands divide the roadless area into two parts. In addition, the northern half is divided into two separate parts by Windham Bay. The northern-most portion has well-defined boundaries, has a high degree of natural integrity, and could easily be added to the Chuck River Wilderness, which lies on its eastern border. Alternately, the northern portion of the roadless area south of Windham Bay could be divided at the ridge north of Libby Creek and everything north of that natural boundary could be added to the Chuck River Wilderness. Topographic features could also be used to define a portion of the southern segment of the roadless area and that area could be added to the Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wilderness, which lies to the east. Much public interest has been expressed regarding the Port Houghton area. Adding the Port Houghton and Sanborn Canal watersheds to the Tracy Arms-Fords Terror Wilderness or managing them in a non-development LUD would maintain this area of high resource values and public interest. This area could also be managed with the Spires Roadless Area to the south. The remaining area, which is affected by development on the private land, could be managed separately, either in a roadless condition or under existing LUDs.

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. Petersburg and Juneau are hubs for this increase in tourism and are expected to continue to be. The distance of this roadless area from Petersburg and Juneau and the difficulty in reaching the area is likely to limit tourist interest in the roadless area. There is potential for developing recreation facilities such as public recreation cabins and trails in the area, but because of the distance from any population center, use may be low. Recreation potential focuses primarily on primitive and semi-primitive opportunities.

In 1996, the Alaska Visitors Association (AVA) proposed the following recreation developments in the Windham-Port Houghton Roadless Area: a leased proprietary camp for 15 persons, a day-use wildlife observatory for 30 persons, and an overnight wildlife observatory for 30 persons in the Port Houghton area; a back-country recreation lodge for 50 persons and a leased proprietary camp for 15 persons in Windham Bay; and a leased proprietary camp with a 15 person capacity in Sands Bay.

(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 for the roadless area.

(4) **Wildlife Resources:** No wildlife habitat enhancement projects are planned for this roadless area.

(5) **Timber Resources:** There are approximately 107,199 acres inventoried as productive old-growth forest in the roadless area. There are 127 acres of second-growth forest. Of these acres, 66,819 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), 20,546 acres or 13 percent of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 8,136 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 1,758 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

A Position Statement (Gate 1) for the proposed Hobart Bay Timber Sale was completed in May 2001. Based on this report, the potential for developing a viable timber sale in the roadless area is good. The 10-year action plan schedules 35 MMBF of sales under the Hobart Project in 2004 and 2007. In addition, the North Windham Project is also in the 10-year plan. The project includes 30 MMBF of timber sales in 2008 and 2009.

(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:** Portions of this area, especially in the Windham Bay area, are considered to have high mineral development potential, priority three. There are current claims near Endicott Arm and Windham Bay. Former mining activities are obvious in the salt chuck area.

The roadless area contains 1,567 acres of land identified as a mineral activity tract having a low potential for experiencing mineral exploration and development of locatable minerals (Coldwell, 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991). In addition, the roadless area contains an estimated 86,237 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:** There are no transportation or utility corridors proposed in the roadless area.

(9) **Water Availability and Use:** The existing public recreation cabin creates some domestic water demand. There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects within the roadless area.

(10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** The salt chuck at the head of the Port Houghton is a rare mainland salt chuck.

(11) **Land Use Authorizations:** A land exchange was completed in 1988 with Goldbelt, Inc. in which the National Forest System received parcels in Port Houghton in exchange for land near Libby Creek. Sealaska Corporation retains subsurface rights on portions of the Port Houghton tract.

(12) **Land Status:** All land within the roadless area is part of the National Forest System.

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 fishing (both commercial and sport), hunting, beachcombing, mining, and crabbing. Much of the use in the Port Houghton area originates from Petersburg. Residents of Hobart Bay logging camp also use 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 included the Windham-Port Houghton Roadless Area. The northeastern portion of the roadless area (approximately 72,500 acres) was designated as the Chuck River Wilderness. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed that the northern portion be designated as the Chuck River Wilderness and that the remaining area be designated as part of the Port Houghton-Farragut Bay Wilderness.

(c) **Public Input During Forest Plan Revisions and Appeals:** The Alaska Rainforest Campaign and the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC) commented that the Port Houghton and Sanborn

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Canal area deserved special protection to preserve the integrity of the area. The SEACC sent out an alert that generated approximately 100 letters. Most mentioned that the Port Houghton/Sanborn Canal area should be LUD II. Several other individuals recommended the area be designated wilderness or LUD II. An article in Greenpeace Magazine resulted in over 100 letters. Most writers opposed managing the area for timber. Several people that attended public hearings also recommended against roading and harvesting the area. In 1996, the Alaska Visitors Association (AVA) proposed the following recreation developments in the Windham-Port Houghton Roadless Area: a leased proprietary camp for 15 persons, a day-use wildlife observatory for 30 persons, and an overnight wildlife observatory for 30 persons in the Port Houghton area; a back-country recreation lodge for 50 persons and a leased proprietary camp for 15 persons in Windham Bay; and a leased proprietary camp with a 15-person capacity in Sands Bay. Over 100 individuals cited the need to protect the area for tourism and recreation, especially the Sandborn Canal and the salt chuck at the head of the North Arm of Port Houghton. Others felt that the area should be managed for timber production.

(d) Public Input During Roadless Area Conservation Rule and Road Management Policy

Review: SEACC recommended this area for protection. Other commenters wanted all unroaded lands in the Tongass to be protected from development.

(e) Public Input Expressed for Project-level EISs and Other Input:

Comments were received on the Port Houghton/Cape Fanshaw Timber Sale Project DEIS. Seventy-four individuals, organizations, and agencies submitted written comments; most were against the project. A Revised DEIS was issued in 1998. The Forest Service has not prepared a Final EIS. Most comments were concerned about the size of the harvest and other details and did not comment directly on the roadless issue. A guide service, Wilderness Swift Charters, commented that all the action alternatives posed a “dire threat to the stability of our business.” Other guide services also expressed their opposition to timber management in the area. Many commenters felt that timber harvest would harm fishery resources in the area. Timber industry comments supported development. One commenter noted that subsistence use was practically nonexistent.

(f) Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process: The U.S. Department of the Interior identified this roadless area as having outstanding fish and wildlife values. They consider it to have the most important habitat on the central mainland.

In comments relative to the 1997 Forest Plan, the Governor of Alaska recommended that logging and construction of logging roads be avoided in important public interest areas such as Port Houghton (the southern portion of RA# 308). This comment was reiterated by the Governor in scoping comments regarding the SEIS and in comments by the Division of Governmental Coordination on the Draft SEIS.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game recommended permanent roadless status for Port Houghton in their comments on the Draft SEIS. They rated the Windham-Port Houghton roadless area as the seventh highest priority for protection in the Stikine Area. 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 city of Petersburg said they were opposed to designation of this area as wilderness because of the potential long-term economic impacts on the city. However, they encouraged the Forest Service not to log or build logging roads in watersheds that are primary salmon-producing watersheds or otherwise community use areas important to Petersburg residents, including Port Houghton.

The city of Kupreanof recommends the entire Port Houghton drainage, Cape Fanshaw, Farrugut Bay, and the shoreline from Farrugut Bay to Thomas Bay for designation as wilderness.

The Organized Village of Kake passed a resolution requesting that “customary and traditional areas such as ... Cape Fanshaw/Farragut Bay (VCUs 860-900), Port Houghton (VCUs 790-840)... be recommended for long-term protection.”

The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) identified Roadless Areas 201, 202, 203, and 308 as a contiguous complex of roadless areas that should be considered one roadless area and recommended it for permanent protection as wilderness. SEACC identified the Windham-Port Houghton roadless area as part of the Port Houghton/Cape Fanshaw complex (RAs 201, 202, and 308), which should be considered one contiguous roadless area and recommended for permanent protection as wilderness. They commented that if this complex were designated, it would create a contiguous wilderness along the central mainland coast of nearly 2 million acres, making it the second largest Forest Service Wilderness in the nation.

Audubon Alaska recommended that Port Houghton be protected from logging and road building.

Many individuals identified Port Houghton as an area that needed protection and some included Sandborn Canal. One individual noted that the area north of Wyndham Bay should be protected to preserve a large segment of forest in this area (instead of mostly icefields and barren rock in Tracy Arm-Fords Terror).

(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses: The roadless area is part of a very large unroaded area extending along the mainland from the Misty Fiords National Monument Wilderness in the south to Glacier Bay National Park in the north. This extensive roadless area borders unroaded areas to the north and east in Canada. The Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wilderness is adjacent to this roadless area along the eastern boundary and the Chuck River Wilderness is adjacent to the northeast boundary. To the south lie the Fanshaw (201) and Spires (202) Roadless Areas. Use levels for these four areas are low to moderate.

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

Community	Air Miles	Water Miles
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	50	50
Stika (Pop. 8,835)	70	150
Hoonah (Pop. 860)	70	115
Angoon (Pop. 572)	35	80

The closest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway is Petersburg.

(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System: The Windham-Port Houghton Roadless Area is located directly southeast of the Chuck River and Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wildernesses and is bordered on the west by Stephens Passage. The Fanshaw and Spires Roadless Areas lie to the south. There are developed private lands along Hobart Bay and Port Houghton, near the center of the roadless area. The topography of the area contains U-shaped valleys with steep, glacially scoured sidewalls and mountainous ridgetops. Elevations range from sea level to over 5,000 feet.

The area is mostly unmodified; however, it is somewhat influenced by the developments on adjacent private lands. The natural integrity and apparent naturalness is rated as very high. The areas north and south of Hobart Bay were each rated separately, and both areas had very high natural integrity and apparent naturalness. The opportunity for solitude is very high, and the opportunity for primitive recreation is outstanding.

Approximately 4 percent of the landscape is considered distinctive for the character type from a scenery standpoint. The salt chuck at the head of Port Houghton is a unique geologic feature.

The roadless area includes about 44,842 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, 10,439 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. It ranks as the sixth highest Tongass roadless area in terms of acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth; the majority of this old growth is contained within non-development LUDs.

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The Windham-Port Houghton Roadless Area is classified as being in the Northern Coast Range Biogeographic Province and makes up about 15 percent of the province. It is one of six inventoried roadless areas found in the province that collectively make up about 66 percent of the province. Portions of the Chuck River and Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wildernesses are within the province and make up about 23 percent of the province.

The Windham-Port Houghton Roadless Area lies within two ecological sections; it represents 6 percent of the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section and less than 1 percent of the Boundary Ranges Ecological Section. Both of these ecological sections are well represented by existing wilderness (20 and 33 percent, respectively) and by other existing non-development LUDs (30 and 61 percent respectively, including 2 and 1 percent, respectively, of LUD II).

The majority of this roadless area (91 percent) is within the Holkam Bay Complex Ecological Subsection. This portion of the roadless area represents 29 percent of the entire ecological subsection, which is well represented in existing wilderness (32 percent) and other non-development LUDs (28 percent). The Cape Fanshaw Complex Ecological Subsection represents 9 percent of the Windham-Port Houghton roadless area. This portion of the roadless area represents 21 percent of the entire ecological subsection, which is poorly represented in existing wilderness (0.1 percent) and well represented in other non-development LUDs (29 percent). A very small portion of the Boundary Ranges Icefields Ecological Subsection (0.5 percent) is within this roadless area. This portion of the roadless area represents less than 0.1 percent of the entire ecological subsection. Approximately 32 percent of this ecological subsection is in existing wilderness, an additional 1 percent is in existing LUD II, and an additional 61 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

The Windham-Port Houghton 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 12th from the highest (along with 12 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas. Both the areas north and south of Hobart Bay were rated separately, and each rated 25.

There is strong local support for managing the area in a roadless condition, and there is both local and national support for wilderness designation for the roadless area. Designation would create a wilderness that would be a relatively large addition to the combined designated wildernesses adjacent to the area. Designation of the area as wilderness would add Congressional protection to approximately 21 percent of the Cape Fanshaw Complex Ecological Subsection that is poorly represented in wilderness or LUD II. The area abuts large parcels of private lands in the Hobart Bay and Port Houghton areas that are managed primarily for timber production. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of at least portions of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be relatively high.

V. Environmental Consequences

The Windham-Port Houghton Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, or 4 is implemented. Approximately 20 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur in the remaining 80 percent. The land in the development LUDs provides an estimated 20,546 acres that are suitable for timber production (50 percent of the suitable land on the Juneau Ranger District). Approximately 1,758 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. The roadless area contains 1,567 acres of land identified as a mineral activity tract having a low potential for experiencing mineral exploration and development of locatable minerals. In addition, the roadless area contains an estimated 86,237 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources that are considered to have low potential for development. Timber sale, recreation, minerals, and special uses programs would continue. The values associated with natural settings of the roadless area could be affected by developments allowed by the Forest Plan. The geologic and most of the scenic values of the roadless area are protected by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 5, a 123,602-acre portion of the area in Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation, Scenic Viewshed, and Timber Production LUDs would be converted to Recommended Wilderness LUD. No timber harvest would be allowed and the potential for other uses and development, including recreation, minerals and some special uses, would be restricted within the Recommended Wilderness LUD area. Lands suitable for timber production would be reduced to approximately 3,941 acres. 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

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natural settings of the majority of the roadless area, including the scenic and geologic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Under Alternatives 6, 7, or 8, the entire area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness LUD. No timber harvest would be allowed and the potential for other uses and development, including recreation, minerals, and some special uses, would 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 and geologic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 308 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness					123,602	161,922	161,922	161,922
Wilderness								
Recommended Wilderness Nat. Mon.								
Wilderness National Monument								
Nonwilderness National Monument								
Research Natural Area								
Special Interest Area								
Remote Recreation								
Enacted Municipal Watershed								
Old-growth Habitat	32,210	32,210	32,210	32,210	5,871			
Semi-remote Recreation	218	218	218	218				
Recommended LUD II								
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed	25,616	25,616	25,616	25,616	782			
Modified Landscape								
Timber Production	103,879	103,879	103,879	103,879	31,666			
TOTAL	161,922	161,922	161,922	161,922	161,922	161,922	161,922	161,922
Suitable Timber Lands	20,546	20,546	20,546	20,546	3,941	0	0	0