

INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

ROADLESS AREA NAME: Green Rocks (217)

ACRES (NFS): 11,059

BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: Kupreanof/Mitkof Islands

ECOLOGICAL SECTION: Inside Passage Fjordlands and Kupreanof Lowlands

2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING: 19

I. Overview and Description

(1) **Location and Access:** The area is located at the southern tip of the Lindenberg Peninsula of Kupreanof Island, between Wrangell Narrows and Duncan Canal. The area is within 10 miles of the City of Petersburg which is served by the Alaska Marine Highway and daily jet service. Roadless areas exist to the south, across Wrangell Narrows, and to the west, across Duncan Canal. A road system that nearly crosses the island separates this roadless area from the Lindenberg Roadless Area (216) and the Petersburg Creek/Duncan Salt Chuck Wilderness to the north. The northern and western portions of the roadless area can be accessed from these roads. The area borders private land with residential homes to the northeast and Beecher Pass State Marine Park, which is undeveloped, to the south. Saltwater access by boat or floatplane is by way of Wrangell Narrows (a part of the Alaska Marine Highway), Duncan Canal, and Beecher Pass. There are no sites suitable for landing wheeled aircraft. Access to the interior of the roadless area is by foot or by helicopter.

(2) **History:** The area lies within the traditional territory of the Stikine Tlingit. Known cultural resources in the area include historic period cabins, culturally modified trees, prehistoric period fish traps, villages and camps. The identified cultural resources occur on the shoreline, and are often on private lands. The Green Rocks area was a popular recreation destination in the early 1900s for area residents. Green Rocks Lake was known by local people as Mary's Lake, for Mary Allen, whose family lived near Green Rocks. A saltery and floating cannery operated in Beecher Pass at the turn of the century. A minor amount of beach logging occurred along Duncan Canal.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** The area is comprised of one major drainage, Colorado Creek. This area encompasses the southern tip of Lindenberg Peninsula and is very similar in description to the Lindenberg Roadless Area (216). As with the Lindenberg Roadless Area, it is bordered to the north by a valley feature. Mitchell Creek extends in an east-west direction from Mitchell Slough on Duncan Canal to the Tonka road terminus at Wrangell Narrows. Mountainous terrain is predominant. The area has an almost continuous forest cover on the mountain slopes. This area contains slightly less percentages of muskeg and alpine environments than the Lindenberg Roadless Area. This area contains 7 miles of shoreline and 30 acres of islands. There are no ice, alpine, or rock features mapped in this area.

(4) **Ecosystem:**

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. The area is classified as being in the Kupreanof/Mitkof Islands Biogeographic Province. The area is generally characterized by rolling, subdued topography and extensive muskeg areas.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Green Rocks Roadless Area is contained mostly within the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247E) and also contains a small portion within the Kupreanof Lowlands Ecological Section (M247G). These areas are represented by two ecological subsections (see table below). The Wrangell Narrows Metasediments Ecological Subsection covers the majority of the Green Rocks Roadless Area. It is typified by mountains of sedimentary origin which have been extensively reshaped by glaciers and glacial deposition. Slopes are forested with hemlock, spruce, and cedar while lodgepole pine and mixed-conifer stands are found in poorly drained soils. Wetlands are common in low

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relief, depositional areas. Thick peat deposits have accumulated in some sites with poor drainage. The balance of the roadless area is within the Duncan Canal Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection, a low relief landscape of high precipitation and depositional soils with an abundance of wetlands (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Inside Passage Fjordlands	Wrangell Narrows Metasediments	94%
Kupreanof Lowlands	Duncan Canal Till Lowlands	6%

(b) Soils: Soils in this area are formed in a wide variety of parent material, including bedrock and glacial drift. In general, well- or moderately-well-drained soils are on moderate to steep mountain slopes with permeable parent materials. These soils are acidic, have cold soil temperatures, and are very high in organic matter. Rooting is largely limited to the surface organic layers and the top few inches of mineral soil. These soils are usually moist, sometimes wet, but are never dry.

More poorly-drained soils developed on less-sloping areas and/or areas with impermeable soil materials. These soils have deep accumulations of organic matter and range from scrubby forested wetlands to open muskeg. Alpine soils, generally above 2,000 feet elevation, are mostly shallow, very wet organic soils or are extremely shallow and rocky.

(c) Vegetation: Typical Sitka spruce and western hemlock forest covers the area, and is concentrated on the steep landform on the northern and western portions. Low-lying, interior portions of the area are muskeg. Approximately 396 acres of muskeg are mapped for the area, however due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult.

There are approximately 10,638 acres mapped as forest land of which 5,048 acres or 47 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 2,377 acres or 47 percent are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 357 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are approximately 37 acres of second-growth forest where beach logging has occurred in the past.

(d) Fish Resources: Colorado Creek is the only large stream in the roadless area and it is the most productive stream. Species present in this area include chum, coho, and pink salmon; steelhead and cutthroat trout; and Dolly Varden char.

(e) Wildlife Resources: Sitka black-tailed deer and moose are present over most of Kupreanof Island. Suitable habitat for both is available and populations of both are stable and possibly growing. Black bears are abundant on Kupreanof Island. Wolves are located across all habitat types on Kupreanof Island. The mountain lion is present as an incidental species, probably migrating into Southeast Alaska from Canada along large rivers, such as the Stikine River. One mountain lion has been trapped on Kupreanof Island.

Mink, river otters, beaver, marten, ermine, red squirrel, porcupine, mice, shrews, and voles are well distributed over Kupreanof Island. Fishers and wolverines are incidental species. The northern flying squirrel has been migrating to Kupreanof Island but is not yet well distributed on the island.

Bald eagles, northern goshawks, ospreys, red-tailed hawks, sharp-shinned hawks, great horned owls, western screech owls, saw-whet owls, pigmy owls, spruce grouse, and ptarmigan all occur on Kupreanof Island. Bats are present during the summer months and occasionally over winter in man-made structures.

Numerous species of ducks and geese, sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, marbled murrelets, and great blue herons occur in and around Kupreanof Island, both during migration and, in some cases, during the nesting season.

Red-throated, Pacific, and common loons all occur on Kupreanof Island. Several plover, yellowlegs, and sandpiper species occur, mainly along the river corridors and in large muskeg systems. Two swift species, one hummingbird species, four woodpecker species, three flycatcher species, and five swallow species are also known on the island. Steller’s jay, northwestern crow, and common raven all occur. Chestnut-backed chickadee, red-breasted nuthatch, brown creeper, winter wren, American dipper, golden-crowned kinglet, ruby-crowned kinglet, Swainson’s thrush, and hermit thrush occur. American robin, varied thrush, American pipit, cedar waxwing, northern shrike, warbling vireo, and five warbler species occur. Additionally, the northern water thrush, common yellow throat, western tanager, dark-eyed junco, Lapland longspur, snow bunting, red-winged blackbird, rusty blackbird, brown-headed cowbird, eight sparrow species, pine grosbeak, red crossbill, white-winged crossbill, common redpoll, and pine siskin are found.

Amphibians known to occur on Kupreanof Island include the rough-skinned newt and western toad. The rough-skinned newt is found primarily in lacustrine, palustrine, hemlock/spruce forests and muskeg bog ecosystems. The western toad is also found primarily in lacustrine, palustrine, hemlock/spruce forests, and in clearcuts.

Sea mammals known to inhabit the waters surrounding Kupreanof Island are the Pacific white-sided dolphin, orca whale, harbor porpoise, Dall’s porpoise, humpback whale, Steller sea lion and harbor seal. Sea otters are expanding their range northward into Keku Strait, but are only locally abundant in the western areas of Sumner Strait off southern Kupreanof Island.

(5) Management Direction and Current Uses: The roadless area was allocated to five different Land Use Designations (LUDs) under the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. These five LUDs are Timber Production, Scenic Viewshed, Modified Landscape, Transportation and Utility System (TUS), and Old-growth Habitat. The TUS LUD is a secondary LUD that overlays the other land uses.

LUD	Acres
Timber Production	492
Scenic Viewshed	499
Modified Landscape	100
Transportation and Utility System	NA
Old-growth Habitat	9,968

Approximately 10 percent of the roadless area (not including the LUD overlay) was allocated to a development LUD (Timber Production, Scenic Viewshed, Modified Landscape). The Timber Production LUD was assigned to approximately 4 percent of the roadless area, located in the north interior section adjacent to existing harvested units. A section of the area near the Wrangell Narrows was allocated to the Scenic Viewshed LUD, which accounts for approximately 5 percent of the roadless area. Approximately 1 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Modified Landscape LUD. Pockets of this LUD are in the northeast and northwest corners of the roadless area. A potential powerline corridor, follows the roads across the Lindenberg Peninsula just north of the area, which was assigned to the Transportation and Utility System LUD overlay.

The majority of the roadless area, approximately 90 percent, was allocated to one non-development LUD. The Old-growth Habitat LUD is this widely allocated non-development LUD.

This roadless area, along with the Lindenberg Roadless Area (216), was analyzed for timber harvest and road construction in the mid-1990s. The resulting decision allowed for multiple sales in these areas. The South Lindenberg Mountain Timber Sale, which has already been sold, will extend the existing road system into the northeastern portion of the roadless area. The Dakota Timber Sale has been harvested, and the South Central Timber Sale is presently being harvested. Other smaller sales that will be offered in the near future will extend existing roads.

Non-National Forest System land containing private residences border the Wrangell Narrows to the northeast and Beecher Pass to the south. Recreation uses include deer and waterfowl hunting, and hiking. There is a one-mile trail, currently in poor condition, from saltwater to Green Rocks Lake. Comments for the South Lindenberg Timber Sale(s) EIS indicate that local residents, especially those living on the Lindenberg Peninsula, use this area

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extensively for subsistence activities such as deer hunting. Beecher Pass State Marine Park, which is currently undeveloped, lies to the south.

(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness): The area generally appears unmodified. However, roads and harvest units and private residences are visible from Duncan Canal and the Wrangell Narrows. Harvest units and roads adjacent to Duncan Canal and along the northern boundary, affect the appearance of nearby areas within the roadless area.

(7) Surroundings (External Influences): The area is within 10 miles by air or water of the city of Petersburg. In 1980, the State of Alaska sold numerous parcels of land, through the land lottery program, along the northeastern and southern boundary of the roadless area. Some of these land owners have built permanent, year-round residences on their property. Beecher Pass State Marine Park, an undeveloped area, lies to the south. The Alaska Marine Highway ferries and other commercial and recreation boat traffic pass within one-quarter mile of the east side of the area as they travel through the Wrangell Narrows. Extensive development has occurred along the north and northwest boundaries of the area.

(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest: The area contains four inventoried recreation places that cover 678 acres, or 6 percent of the roadless area. Green Rocks Lake, Green Rocks Trail, and several popular waterfowl hunting areas provide the greatest attraction to the recreating public. The scenery of the area is typical of much of the lowlands of Southeast Alaska.

(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary: There have been several changes to the boundaries since 1989. An old harvest unit along the southwest shore has been included in the roadless area. Areas in the north, which have been roaded, and land in the northeast, which has been conveyed to the State of Alaska, have been removed from the roadless area. Small adjustments have been made to the boundary along the developed areas 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 area is unmodified except for the Green Rocks Trail. The area is adjacent to areas developed for timber management on the north and northwest. Most of the roadless area has a natural appearance (57 percent). However, 40 percent of the area is inventoried as having changes in the landscape, which are easily noticed and may attract some attention or appear to be major disturbances. The area contains landscape features common for the area.

(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation: There is a moderate opportunity for solitude within the area. Low-flying airplanes traveling to and from Petersburg, Alaska State ferries, and recreational and commercial boaters may, at times, pass near the area and be observed by people in this roadless area. The area is accessible by boat from the community of Petersburg in less than 1 hour and from the community of Wrangell in approximately 2 hours. Present recreation use levels are low except around the trail. Generally, a person camping or traveling inland is unlikely to see others. The character of the landforms generally allows the visitor to feel remote from the sights and sounds of human activity, except for the frequent sound of airplanes flying over or boats passing nearby.

Travel within the area is less challenging than in most roadless areas in Southeast Alaska. Much of the eastern portion of the roadless area is flat. The Green Rocks Trail provides access to the Green Rocks Lake. As with all backcountry areas on the Tongass, the opportunity for challenge and risk in this area is high. The climate, the rugged terrain, the isolation and distance from population centers with medical facilities, the barriers to communication, and the presence of large wild animals all contribute to the need for good preparation and knowledge of backcountry survival skills for anyone using this area. Hypothermia and bear encounters are just two examples of the many risks that must be considered before traveling in the backcountry of southeast Alaska.

The area provides primarily semi-primitive and 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
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	4,030	36%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	4,163	38%
Roaded Natural (RN)	469	4%
Roaded Modified (RM)	2,397	22%

The area contains four inventoried recreation places that cover 678 acres, or 6 percent of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places	Total Acres
SPNM	1	130
SPM	1	80
RN	2	468
RM	0	0

The Green Rocks trail is the only recreation facility 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 original Analysis of the Management Situation developed in support of the Forest Plan Revision. At that time, the Lindenberg Roadless Area was given a rating of 22 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 19. This rating reflects the effects that the developments adjacent to the area have on the potential wilderness attributes, in conjunction with the relatively small size of the area.

(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values: There are no unique ecologic or geologic values in the area. The roadless area is relatively small and not connected to any other roadless areas or wildernesses.

(a) Fish Resources: The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) lists VCU 447 along Wrangell Narrows as a primary salmon producer and VCUs 447 and 448, both along Wrangell Narrows, as a primary sport fish producer. Both of these VCUs include streams that are outside the boundaries of the roadless area.

Colorado Creek, located in the eastern portion of the roadless area, flows into Wrangell Narrows. The stream network includes 11 miles of Class I and II streams. ADF&G has documented the presence of coho and pink salmon and Dolly Varden char.

(b) Wildlife Resources: South Lindenberg peninsula forms a migration corridor with the south part of Mitkof Island and Woewodski for species migrating down the Stikine River valley. This migration pattern has resulted in species that recently (in the past few decades) immigrated to the islands to the west. This area is also allowing the dispersal of elk, a non-native species that was introduced to Etolin Island in the south to colonize islands within these biogeographic provinces. There is a key wildlife movement corridor from the southern tip of the Lindenberg Peninsula across to Mitkof Island.

Sitka black-tailed deer and moose are present on the South Lindenberg peninsula. Suitable habitat for both is available and populations of both are stable and possibly growing. The Colorado Creek drainage is recognized as high-value deer winter habitat. Black bears are abundant within this roadless area. This area is popular for hunting by residents of Kupreanof and Mitkof Islands. Based on harvest data compiled from 1985 to 1995, VCU 447 along Wrangell Narrows, was ranked in the second 25 percent of black bear

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harvest areas on the Tongass (ADF&G, 1998). Several people trap furbearers along the shoreline and road system.

Great blue heron are known to nest within this area and the small bays provide habitat for nesting waterfowl. Humpback whales have been observed both in Duncan Canal and the Wrangell Narrows. Numerous species of ducks and geese, sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, marbled murrelets, and great blue herons occur in and around this roadless area, both during migration and, in some cases, during the nesting season.

(c) Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species: The only federally listed threatened and 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. Four Forest Service Region 10 Sensitive Species are suspected or known to occur within the area: the trumpeter swan, osprey, Peale's peregrine falcon, and the Queen Charlotte goshawk. Trumpeter swans nest in the lowlands on small lakes and along major rivers and winter in ice-free areas throughout the Tongass. Present from April through September, ospreys are rare in Southeast Alaska where they reach the northern extent of their nesting range. Feeding almost exclusively on fish, ospreys typically nest in large snags near lakes or the coast where fish are abundant. Ospreys have nested along Wrangell Narrows near Finger Point. 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, 12 sensitive plant species are known or suspected to occur in the Petersburg Ranger District.

(d) Karst, Cave, and Other Geologic Resources: There are no known karst or cave resources in this roadless area. There are no unique geologic features.

(5) Scientific and Educational Values: There are no unique scientific or educational values identified in the area.

(6) Scenic Values: Most of the area has a natural appearance and is unmodified, except for the Green Rocks Trail and the residences on adjacent private lands. Lands on the eastern portion are gently rolling with muskegs. The western portion, along Duncan Canal, contains gently rolling landscapes which rise to timbered hillsides up to 2,600 feet. The northwest side of the roadless area (adjacent to Duncan Canal) has been developed.

Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified in the Forest Plan that are within or adjacent to the roadless area include: Wrangell Narrows, a portion of the Alaska Marine Highway and a tour ship route; Duncan Canal, a small boat route and saltwater use area; and Beecher Pass State Marine Park.

Approximately 4 percent of this roadless area is inventoried Variety Class A (possessing landscape diversity that is unique for the character type). About 65 percent of the area is inventoried Variety Class B (possessing landscape diversity that is common for the character type) and 30 percent is inventoried Variety Class C (possessing a low degree of landscape diversity).

The majority of this roadless area, 65 percent, is Existing Visual Condition (EVC) Type I, where only ecological change has occurred. Two percent of this roadless area is EVC Type III, where the average forest visitor notices changes in the landscape, but the natural appearance of the landscape remains dominant. Four percent of the area is in EVC Type IV, where changes in the landscape are easily noticed by the average person and may attract some attention. They appear to be disturbances but resemble natural patterns. About 29 percent is in EVC Type V, where changes in the landscape are obvious to the average person, and appear to be major disturbances.

(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values: The area lies within the traditional territory of the Stikine Tlingit. Known cultural resources in the area include historic period cabins, culturally modified trees, prehistoric period fish traps, villages and camps. The identified cultural resources occur on the shoreline, and are often on private lands. The Green Rocks area was a popular recreation destination in the early 1900s for area residents. Green Rocks Lake was known by local people as Mary's Lake, for Mary Allen, whose family lived near Green Rocks, which is accessed by the Green Rocks Trail. A saltery and floating cannery operated in Beecher Pass at the

turn of the century. The South Lindenberg Mountain Timber Sale and the Dakota Timber Sale will extend the existing road system into the northern portion of the area and harvest timber. Recreation use is low, except at Green Rocks Lake and along the trail. Scoping comments for the South Lindenberg Timber Sale(s) EIS indicated that local residents, especially those living on the Lindenberg Peninsula, use the area extensively for fishing, hunting, and gathering. VCU 447 along the Wrangell Narrows was listed among the VCUs with the highest community use values. VCUs 447 and 448, both along Wrangell Narrows, were listed among the VCUs with the highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas (ADF&G, 1998). No outfitter/guide permits were issued for the area in 2000.

(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundaries Conditions/Changes: The area is bounded by saltwater and private land to the east and south and developed areas to the north. The west side is bounded by a combination of developed areas and saltwater. Except along the shore, the boundaries do not follow topographic features. Most of the area is managed as an old-growth reserve. Managing the area as wilderness can be consistent with managing the area as an old-growth reserve. Portions of the roadless area are allocated to LUDs that permit development. Wilderness designation would not be consistent with road building and timber management. Except for the areas adjacent to saltwater, there are no natural, well defined boundaries. The relatively small size of the area does not allow absorption of effects on potential wilderness attributes on adjacent lands.

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

(1) Recreation, Including Tourism Potential: There does not appear to be a large potential for outfitter and guide permits. There is potential for developed trails and public recreation cabins or shelters, perhaps near Green Rocks Lake. Tourism has been increasing in Southeast Alaska. The roadless area is near Petersburg, a common tourist destination. An increasing number of trail users are from outside of Southeast Alaska.

(2) Subsistence Uses: Management as a wilderness would not conflict with current subsistence uses.

(3) Fish Resources: There are no fish habitat enhancement projects currently planned for the roadless area.

(4) Wildlife Resources: There are no wildlife habitat improvement projects currently planned in the roadless area.

(5) Timber Resources: There are approximately 5,048 acres of productive old-growth forest and 37 acres of second growth due to timber harvest mapped in the roadless area. Of this, approximately 3,487 acres are categorized as tentatively suitable for timber harvest. Based on the Forest Plan LUDs assigned to this area (and estimated falldown and scheduling reduction factors), 337 acres, or 3 percent, of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 250 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 58 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The South Lindenberg Mountain Timber Sale is sold, and will harvest approximately 126 acres of forest in the roadless area. The Dakota Timber Sale harvested approximately 50 acres of forest in the roadless area. South Central Timber Sale is presently harvesting 37 acres. Several other small sales will affect portions of the roadless area with timber harvest and temporary roads. These sales will extend the existing road system from adjacent developed areas north of the roadless area.

(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: There are no known mining claims in this area. Information from the U.S. Bureau of Mines indicates the Duncan Canal/Zarembo Island mineral tract has a moderate to high mineral development potential for barite, zinc, lead, and silver. The roadless area contains an estimated 1,620 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources (Brew et al., 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991). All of these acres are considered to have low potential for development.

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(8) **Transportation and Utilities:** No transportation corridors cross the roadless area. A potential powerline corridor follows the roads across the Lindenberg Peninsula just north of the area. Sales from the South Lindenberg Timber Sale(s) EIS will extend the existing road system, from the adjacent developed area on the north, into the northern portion of the roadless area.

(9) **Water Availability Uses:** There are no recreation cabins or other facilities located in this roadless area. However, there are private residences adjacent to the roadless area whose domestic water supply comes from streams that begin within the area. No existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects are in the area.

(10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** The area contains no Research Natural Areas. The area has not been identified for any other scientific value.

(11) **Land Use Authorizations:** There is one special use authorization in this area for crab pot storage near Duncan Canal.

(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:** The area is primarily used for recreation by residents of Petersburg and Kupreanof. There is also some concern over the effects that roads would have on subsistence.

(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 Green Rocks Roadless Area. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed that the roadless area be managed as a LUD II area in an unroaded condition.

(c) **Public Input During Forest Plan Revisions and Appeals:** In 1996, the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council recommended managing the area to preserve its integrity. They felt that the area merited special protection for its outstanding wildlife, fish, hunting, subsistence, recreation, and tourism values. The Narrows Conservation Council felt that the area should be protected. Others, including timber industry organizations, felt timber harvest should be allowed in this area.

Some comments suggested managing the area as wilderness and others as an old-growth reserve. One commenter wanted the area managed as a Developed Recreation LUD while another wanted the existing developed recreation facilities maintained before new facilities were added. Several comments wanted the Forest Service to provide the strongest possible protection for the area. There were also general comments on Kupreanof Island. Some commenters wanted all unroaded areas developed and some wanted all unroaded areas protected. Some favored designating all unroaded lands as wilderness and some wanted them managed as roadless areas and for remote recreation.

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

(e) **Public Input Expressed for Project-level EISs and Other Input:** Public comments were received on the South Lindenberg Timber Sale(s) EIS and on the Kupreanof Island Analysis. In response to the South Lindenberg project, the Narrows Conservation Council and the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council felt that roads would harm Colorado Creek, an important fish resource. The City of Kupreanof stated that new roads would be contrary to their goal of maintaining a roadless community. Others commented that roads and timber harvest would be bad for wildlife, subsistence, and/or recreation. Owners

of adjacent land were concerned that roads would adversely affect the drinking water supply for homes they plan to build on their property, as well as disturb the wilderness-like setting. Some comments support the use of these area for timber harvest. Comments on the Kupreanof Island Analysis ranged from favoring protecting the area from logging and road building to increasing timber harvest.

(f) Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process: 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.

SEACC recommended that the remaining unlogged portions of the Lindenberg Peninsula of Kupreanof Island be designated LUD II to safeguard the area’s valuable fish and wildlife habitat. The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) recommended Roadless Area 217 for permanent protection as LUD II.

(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses: Green Rocks Roadless Area is separated from the Woewodski Island, Crystal, and Castle Roadless Areas by saltwater. It is separated from the Lindenberg Roadless Area to the north by a roaded area.

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

Community	Air Miles	Water Miles
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	125	130
Petersburg (Pop. 3,224)	10	10
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	30	35
Ketchikan (Pop. 14,070)	95	115

Petersburg and Wrangell are the nearest stops on the Alaska Marine Highway.

(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System: The Green Rocks Roadless Area is located at the southern tip of the Lindenberg Peninsula of Kupreanof Island, between Wrangell Narrows and Duncan Canal. The area borders private land with residential homes to the northeast and Beecher Pass State Marine Park, which is undeveloped, to the south. The area is comprised of one major drainage and several smaller ones. The eastern portion is gently rolling, with muskegs. In the western portion, gently rolling landscapes rise to timbered hillsides up to 2,600 feet. The landform drops steeply to Duncan Canal on the west side of the roadless area. There is one sizable stream in the area.

Most of area appears natural, but the area is heavily influenced by developments and activities in the adjacent areas. The area has high natural integrity and apparent naturalness. The opportunity for solitude is moderate and the opportunity for primitive recreation is moderate.

Approximately 4 percent of the landscape is considered distinctive for the character type from a scenery standpoint. The area does not have any other unique or significant features.

The roadless area includes about 2,377 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, 357 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The Green Rocks Roadless Area is classified as being in the Kupreanof/Mitkof Islands Biogeographic Province and makes up about 1 percent of the province. It is one 12 of inventoried roadless areas found within the province that collectively make up about 63 percent of the province. The Petersburg Creek-Duncan Salt Chuck Wilderness is located in this province and makes up about 6 percent of the province.

The Green Rocks Roadless Area lies within two ecological sections; it represents 0.5 percent of the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section and less than 0.1 percent of the Kupreanof Lowlands Ecological Section. Approximately 20 percent of the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section is in existing wilderness, 2 percent is in existing LUD II, and 30 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs, while 1 percent of the

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Kupreanof Lowlands Ecological Section is in existing wilderness, 1 percent is in existing LUD II, and an additional 33 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

The majority (94 percent) of the roadless area is in the Wrangell Narrows Metasediments Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 3 percent of the entire ecological subsection, which is protected by existing wilderness (11 percent) and other non-development LUDs (18 percent). Six percent of the roadless area is in the Duncan Canal Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 0.4 percent of the entire ecological subsection, 5 percent of which is in existing wilderness and is well represented by other existing non-development LUDs (35 percent).

The Green Rocks Roadless Area was rated 19 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 70th from the highest (along with 13 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas.

There is both local and national support for managing the area in an unroaded condition, and some local support for designating the area as wilderness. Designation would create a small wilderness with few significant values or features. The area has a timber sale under contract within it. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be low.

V. Environmental Consequences

The Green Rocks Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 7 is implemented. Approximately 90 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur in the remaining 10 percent. The land in the development LUDs provides an estimated 337 acres that are suitable for timber production (less than 1 percent of the suitable acres on the Petersburg Ranger District). Approximately 58 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. The roadless area contains an estimated 1,620 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources; all of the acres are considered to have low potential for development. The timber sales, recreation, minerals, and special use programs would continue. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area could be affected by ongoing developments in the area.

Under Alternative 6, the entire area would be converted to Recommended LUD II. The ongoing recreation, mineral, and special use programs would continue similar to current conditions. No timber harvest would be allowed. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area would receive long-term protection if designated LUD II.

Under Alternative 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness LUD. No timber harvest would be allowed and the ongoing recreation, minerals, and special uses programs could be restricted. Mineral prospecting 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 would receive long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Appendix C

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 217 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness								11,059
Wilderness								
Recommended Wilderness Nat. Mon.								
Wilderness National Monument								
Non-wilderness National Monument								
Research Natural Area								
Special Interest Area								
Remote Recreation								
Enacted Municipal Watershed								
Old-growth Habitat	9,968	9,968	9,968	9,968	9,968		9,968	
Semi-remote Recreation								
Recommended LUD II						11,059		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed	499	499	499	499	499		499	
Modified Landscape	100	100	100	100	100		100	
Timber Production	492	492	492	492	492		492	
TOTAL	11,059	11,059	11,059	11,059	11,059	11,059	11,059	11,059
Suitable Timber Lands	337	337	337	337	337	0	337	0