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INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

ROADLESS AREA NAME: East Mitkof (220)

ACRES (NFS): 9,444

BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: Kupreanof/Mitkof Islands

ECOLOGICAL SECTION: Inside Passage Fjordlands

2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING: 15

I. Overview and Description

(1) **Location and Access:** The East Mitkof Roadless Area is located on the eastern side of Mitkof Island, near the southern end of Frederick Sound. The area is approximately 10 air miles or 15 road miles southeast of the city of Petersburg, which is served by the Alaska Marine Highway and daily jet service. Forest roads that connect the area with the city of Petersburg, and areas developed for timber management, make up the irregularly-shaped western, southern, and northern boundaries. The eastern boundary is defined by the shoreline along Frederick Sound. The roads and Frederick Sound provide access to portions of this roadless area. Trails in the Three Lakes area provide good access to that portion of the roadless area. There are no sites suitable for landing wheeled aircraft or floatplanes in the roadless area. Access to the interior is by foot or by helicopter.

(2) **History:** The area is in the traditional territory of the Stikine Tlingit. An abandoned village site and petroglyphs are reported in the vicinity of Ideal Cove. A saltery and cold storage plant was established in Ideal Cove beginning in 1901 and some remnants of these cabins remain. There is a Civilian Conservation Corps shelter, built around 1938, at Shelter Lake.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** The area encompasses the mostly gradual slopes of the lower Bear Creek drainage. The terrain north of Bear Creek is generally flat and predominantly muskeg. Narrow bands of forest vegetation define the drainage patterns. To the south the terrain exhibits some relief, but for the most part consists of rolling hills of spruce-hemlock forest. The southern portion includes Sand, Hill, and Crane lakes. Elevations range from sea level to just over 1,000 feet. The area contains approximately 10 miles of saltwater shoreline and 104 acres of freshwater lakes. The majority of the area is forested with no alpine or rock habitat mapped in this area. There are approximately 29 acres of islands off the coast.

(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. There are no known areas of unique or uncommon plant/soils associations or geologic formations in the area.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The East Mitkof Roadless Area is contained entirely within the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247E), Wrangell Narrows Metasediments Ecological Subsection (see table below). Mountains of sedimentary origin 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 relief, depositional areas. Thick peat deposits have accumulated in some sites with poor drainage (Nowacki et al., 2001).

<u>Ecological Section</u>	<u>Ecological Subsection</u>	<u>Percent of Roadless Area</u>
Inside Passage Fjordlands	Wrangell Narrows Metasediments	100%

(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.

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.

(c) Vegetation: Vegetation of the lower, poorly-drained portions of this roadless area consists of large muskegs vegetated primarily with scattered shore pine and small, slow-growing cedar. Approximately 1,837 acres of muskeg are mapped for the area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult. The better-drained hills support more typical forest stands of spruce-hemlock and Alaska yellow-cedar.

There are approximately 7,458 acres mapped as forest land, of which 3,219 acres or 43 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, approximately 636 acres or 20 percent are mapped as high-volume, old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 377 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are approximately 411 acres of second-growth forest where beach logging has occurred in the past.

(d) Fish Resources: There are four Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) numbered streams in this roadless area. These streams support pink, chum, and coho salmon, as well as steelhead, cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char. Nearby marine waters support significant populations of Tanner, Dungeness, and king crab.

(e) Wildlife Resources: A small population of Sitka black-tailed deer, wolves, and black bear range over the roadless area. There is a small moose population in the area. Elk have been sighted on Mitkof Island. Bald eagles, northern goshawk, osprey, and red-tailed hawks may be found in this area. Mountain lions have recently been reported on the island, one near the roadless area. They are probably migrating into Southeast Alaska from Canada via the river corridors, and are considered incidental species at the edge of their range. The brown bear is another incidental species that is rarely seen on Mitkof Island.

Mink, river otters, beaver, marten, ermine, red squirrel, northern flying squirrel, porcupine, mice, shrew, and voles are well distributed over Mitkof Island. There are occasional sightings of fisher and wolverine but they are considered an incidental species at the edge of their range. Bats are present during the summer months and occasionally over winter in man-made structures.

Numerous duck and goose species, sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, marbled murrelets, great blue herons, spruce grouse, blue grouse, and ptarmigan may be found on Mitkof Island. Other bird species include sharp-shinned hawks, American kestrel, great horned owls, western screech owl, saw-whet owls, and pigmy owls. The kestrel is found only on the southern end of the island near the Stikine River.

Red-throated, Pacific, and common loons all occur on the Mitkof 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 Mitkof 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 Mitkof Island include the rough-skinned newt, the western toad, and spotted frogs. The rough-skinned newt is found primarily in lacustrine, palustrine, hemlock/spruce forests,

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and muskeg bog ecosystems. The western toad is also found primarily in lacustrine, palustrine, hemlock/spruce forests, and in clearcuts. Spotted frogs are found primarily in lacustrine, palustrine ecosystems and were probably introduced by local residents who brought them back from the Stikine River as pets.

Sea mammals known to inhabit the waters surrounding Mitkof Island are the Pacific white-sided dolphin, killer whale, harbor porpoise, Dall's porpoise, humpback whale, Steller sea lion, and the harbor seal.

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

LUD	Acres
Timber Production	2,737
Modified Landscape	1,239
Old-growth Habitat	3,148
Semi-remote Recreation	2,320

Approximately 42 percent of the roadless area was allocated to LUDs that allow roads and timber harvest (Timber Production, Modified Landscape). The Timber Production LUD was assigned to approximately 29 percent of the roadless area. Approximately 13 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Modified Landscape LUD.

Most of the roadless area, approximately 58 percent, was allocated to non-development LUDs (Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation). Approximately 33 percent of the roadless area, located in the Bear Creek, or Big Creek area, was allocated to the Old-growth Habitat LUD. Approximately 25 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Semi-remote Recreation LUD.

Recreation uses of the area include black bear, moose, deer, waterfowl, and grouse hunting; coho salmon, pink salmon, steelhead, and trout fishing; sea kayaking; boating; swimming; picnicking; ice skating; snowmobiling; cross-country skiing; hiking; camping; and gathering forest products. Due to its proximity to Petersburg and easy access, the East Mitkof Roadless Area receives relatively heavy recreational use. Much of this use is centered around the Three Lakes area, which has a system of interconnecting plank and boardwalk trails. Such an interconnecting trail system is unique for Southeast Alaska. The trails are short and gentle, adding to their popularity. Each of the lakes has a boat for general public use, and there is an old Civilian Conservation Corps shelter at Shelter Lake. Wintertime use of the area, mainly snowmobile use, is growing. Cross-country ski use is also growing in popularity, and is related to accessibility of the roads in winter to vehicles. The area around Ideal Cove receives a moderate amount of marine recreation use. One outfitter/guide permit was issued for the roadless area in 2000 (4 service days for camping and 10 service days for nature tours). The roads which border three sides of the area provide the access for a variety of uses in the area. There is some subsistence use in the area, primarily by the residents of the Petersburg area. An area of about 910 acres around Ideal Cove has been conveyed to the State of Alaska.

(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness): The majority of the area appears unmodified. Exceptions are the trails and shelter, and areas adjacent to timber harvest activity and roads.

(7) Surroundings (External Influences): State and National Forest System lands are adjacent to the roadless area. Road use and timber management activities are most noticeable from those portions of the area nearest the roads. Commercial and recreational boat traffic may be seen and heard along the northeastern edge of the roadless area bordering Frederick Sound. Low-flying aircraft may occasionally be noticed by people in the area.

(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest: Being accessible by road from a population center (Petersburg), this roadless area is a popular recreation area. The main attractions of the area are the complex of freshwater lakes and trails, and Ideal Cove. Although Ideal Cove has been conveyed to the State of Alaska, the Forest Service maintains a boardwalk trail from the Three Lakes area to saltwater near the cove. The area contains 7 inventoried recreation places, which cover 5,369 acres, or 57 percent of the roadless area.

(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary: There have been minor changes in the boundaries since 1989. Old timber harvest units along the shore that do not contain roads have been included. Also, the area along the roaded and harvested portions has been more carefully defined, adding to the size of the roadless area. The State lands near Ideal Cove have also been removed. Small areas around the boundaries along developed areas have been excluded between the Draft and Final SEIS to improve manageability of the boundaries in those areas. This has included the removal of the southeastern tip which was nearly pinched off by developed areas.

II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness: Except for the plank trails and minor development at the lakes, the area is unmodified and appears natural, and has maintained its overall integrity. However, adjacent developments, including one of the most heavily traveled roads on Mitkof Island, have negatively affected some of the natural integrity and apparent naturalness of this area. This impact is considered moderate.

(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation: There is a moderate to low opportunity for solitude within the roadless area. Air traffic and marine traffic pass nearby and may be heard and observed by people in this roadless area. The trails and lakes also attract day hikers, lessening the probability of solitude. Vehicle traffic on the roads along the north, west, and south sides of this narrow roadless area can be heard at times. Management activities in the adjacent areas would have a significant impact on the opportunity for solitude when they are occurring. During periods of low use in the area, visitors may feel remote from the sights and sounds of human activity.

There are few opportunities for self-reliance, adventure, and challenging experiences. The area is relatively flat and easily accessed at many points from the extensive road system along the boundaries and trail system in the Three Lakes area.

Overall, recreation use levels are moderate, except along the trail corridor and some easily-accessible locales, where use levels are high. Generally, a person camping or traveling away from the trail corridors is unlikely to see others.

The area provides primarily 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
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	6,641	70%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	1,496	16%
Roaded Natural (RN)	11	0%
Roaded Modified (RM)	2,296	14%

The area contains 7 inventoried recreation places, which cover 5,369 acres, or 57 percent of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places*	Total Acres
SPNM	2	3,224
SPM	1	1,496
RN	2	11
RM	5	638

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

(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).

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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 East Mitkof Roadless Area was given a rating of 16 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 15. This rating reflects the effects on the area from developments in adjacent areas.

(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values: The roadless area is small and narrow. It is not connected to any other roadless areas or wilderness. It has no known unique ecologic or geologic values.

(a) Fish Resources: The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) listed VCU 450 along Frederick Sound as both a primary salmon producer and a primary sport fish producer.

Streams in this roadless area support pink, chum, and coho salmon, as well as steelhead, cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char. Bear (Big) Creek has an estimated annual peak escapement of 5,500 pink salmon, and also provides habitat for chum and coho salmon; steelhead; and Dolly Varden char. Three other unnamed Class I streams provide habitat for coho and pink salmon; cutthroat trout; and Dolly Varden char. Sand, Hill, and Crane lakes are popular recreational fisheries for cutthroat trout. The nearby marine waters support significant commercial, personal use, and recreational fisheries.

(b) Wildlife Resources: The roadless area supports a population of Sitka black-tailed deer, wolves, marten, river otter, northern flying squirrel, and black bear. There is also a small moose population in the area. Elk sightings have occurred on Mitkof Island. Rarely, brown bears are seen on Mitkof Island. Mountain lions have recently been seen on the island near this roadless area. They are probably migrating into Southeast Alaska from Canada along the major river corridors, such as the Stikine. They are considered an incidental species here. Bald eagles, northern goshawk, osprey, and red-tailed hawks may occur in this area.

(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. 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 glaciers or unique geologic features.

(5) Scientific and Educational Values: There are no known unique scientific or educational values identified in this roadless area, although the trail system is well suited for guided educational walks.

(6) Scenic Values: Overall, the roadless area has retained its scenic integrity when viewed from Frederick Sound and Dry Bay, major travel routes. Area modifications include the plank trails and minor development at the lakes. The area is bounded on three sides by roads and timber management activities. There are few topographic breaks or other features to define the area. Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan within or adjacent to the area include: Frederick Sound, a part of the Alaska Marine Highway and a tour ship route; Dry Strait, a marine travel route; Ideal Cove, a saltwater use area; Ideal Cove Hiking Trail #508; and Three Lakes Loop Hiking Trails #600-603.

Twenty percent of the roadless area is inventoried Variety Class B (possessing landscape diversity that is common for the character type). Most of the roadless area, about 78 percent, is inventoried in Variety Class C (possessing a low degree of landscape diversity). Approximately two percent of the area was not inventoried.

Most of the roadless area, 85 percent, is in Existing Visual Condition (EVC) I, where areas appear to be untouched by human activity. About 8 percent of the area is in EVC III, in which the average person notices change to the landscape but it does not attract attention. The natural appearance of the landscape still remains dominant. About 3 percent is in EVC IV, in which changes to the landscape are easily noticed by the average person and may attract some attention. They appear to be disturbances but resemble natural patterns. EVC V accounts for approximately 3 percent, where changes to the landscape are obvious to the average person, and appear to be major disturbances. Two percent of the area was not inventoried.

(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values: The area is in the traditional territory of the Stikine Tlingit. An abandoned village site and petroglyphs are reported in the vicinity of Ideal Cove. A saltery and cold storage plant was established in Ideal Cove in 1901 and some remnants of these cabins remain. There is a Civilian Conservation Corps shelter, built in 1938, at Shelter Lake. The Three Lakes area and its interconnected trail system is an important recreation area for nearby Petersburg. The area is popular for fishing, and deer and moose hunting. Subsistence uses include hunting, fishing, and berry picking. The area is used for subsistence, primarily by the people from the Petersburg area. VCU 450 along Frederick Sound is listed as having the highest community fish and wildlife values. Both the VCUs in this area (VCUs 450 and 453) are listed among the VCUs with the highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas (ADF&G, 1998).

(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundaries Conditions/Changes: The area is bounded on three sides by roads and timber management activities. Except along the shore, there are few topographic breaks or other features to define the area. Feasibility of management in a wilderness condition is low due to the amount of managed activities adjacent to this relatively narrow strip of roadless area. The level of development of planked trails and the amount of use in the Three Lakes area is also inconsistent with wilderness designation. The land around Ideal Cove is owned by the State, which is now outside the roadless area. Future management of this area is not known. If the state land is developed, the wilderness value of the roadless area may be further reduced.

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 is a hub for this increase in tourism and is expected to continue to be. The close proximity of the roadless area to Petersburg is likely to result in an increase in tourist interest in the roadless area. There is potential for outfitter and guide permits, winter trails, and for additional summer trails. Potential also exists for additional cabins, shelters, and roaded recreation activities, such as sightseeing and interpretation. In cooperation with the State, Ideal Cove could provide an important trail access to the Stikine-LeConte Wilderness and could be used more extensively by watercraft and other marine-activities.

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

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

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

(5) Timber Resources: There are approximately 3,219 acres inventoried as productive old-growth forest in the roadless area. Approximately 411 acres are second growth from beach logging in prior years. Of this, approximately 2,263 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), 427 acres (6 percent) of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 196 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 46 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

A road system and/or logging systems capable of harvesting the area would be necessary. Nearby roads could be extended to accomplish some of this.

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- (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:** The area has low minerals potential.
- (8) **Transportation and Utilities:** There are no transportation or utility corridors proposed for the roadless area.
- (9) **Water Availability and Use:** There are no developed recreation sites or other facilities located in this roadless area that would create a demand for domestic water use. There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects.
- (10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** The area has no Research Natural Areas nor has it been identified for any other scientific purpose.
- (11) **Land Use Authorizations:** Forest Service records show that one outfitter/guide used this area in 2000 for 10 service days for remote setting nature tours and 4 service days for camping.
- (12) **Land Status:** All land within the roadless area is part of the National Forest System. Ideal Cove, an area of about 910 acres on the shore of Frederick Sound, has been conveyed to the State of Alaska.

IV. Wilderness Evaluation (Need for Wilderness)

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

- (a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** Portions of the area are traditional and/or popular recreation areas.
- (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 East Mitkof Roadless Area. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed that the roadless area be managed as LUD II in an unroaded condition.
- (c) **Public Input During Forest Plan Revisions and Appeals:** There were no direct comments on the roadless area. The Narrows Conservation Council, the Wrangell Resource Council, and others felt that the undeveloped areas on the island should be protected from timber harvest. The Southeast Alaska Conservation Council and the Alaska Rainforest Campaign recommended that the remaining unroaded areas on the island be managed as LUD II. However, timber industry organizations felt that there was no justification for this.
- (d) **Public Input During Roadless Area Conservation Rule and Road Management Policy Review:** This area was not specifically identified in the public comments received during the Roadless Area Conservation Rule or Road Management Policy Review. However, some commenters wanted all unroaded lands on the Tongass to be protected from development.
- (e) **Public Input Expressed for Project-level EISs and Other Input:** No comments have been received on project-level NEPA documents. Comments were received on the 1995 Final Mitkof Landscape Design. There were no specific comments on the East Mitkof Roadless Area dealing with the roadless/wilderness issue. There were general comments concerning this issue for Mitkof Island. Some commenters wanted more roads to allow better access and some wanted roadless and unroaded areas to remain unroaded. Some favored timber harvest and some wanted the remaining old growth (and deer habitat) protected.

(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 roadless areas on heavily logged Mitkof Island be designated LUD II. The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) recommended Roadless Area 220 for permanent protection as LUD II.

(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses: The nearest roadless areas are Crystal and Manzanita. All are within 2 to 4 miles, and are separated by roads and developed areas. The nearest wilderness is the Stikine-LeConte, portions of which are about 1 to 6 miles away, across Frederick Sound and Dry Strait.

(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)	15	15
Ketchikan (Pop. 14,070)	90	115

Petersburg is the nearest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway.

(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System: The East Mitkof Roadless Area is located on the eastern side of Mitkof Island, near the southern end of Frederick Sound. Forest roads that connect the area with the city of Petersburg, and areas developed for timber management, make up the irregularly-shaped western, southern, and northern boundaries. The eastern boundary is defined by the shoreline along Frederick Sound. The area generally slopes to the east in a gentle manner. Terrain in the northern portion is nearly flat. Terrain in the southern portion exhibits some relief, but is only gently rolling. The highest point is just over 1,000 feet in elevation and the lowest point is at sea level.

The area is heavily influenced by developments and activities on adjacent lands. The natural integrity and apparent naturalness is moderate for the area. The opportunity for solitude is low and the opportunity for primitive recreation is moderate.

None of the area is rated as distinctive for the character type from the scenery perspective. There are no known features of ecologic, geologic, scientific, or cultural significance in this roadless area.

The roadless area includes about 636 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, 377 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The East Mitkof Roadless Area is classified as being in the Kupreanof/Mitkof Islands Biogeographic Province and makes up about 1 percent of the province. It is 1 of 12 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 East Mitkof Roadless Area lies completely within the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section and represents 0.5 percent of the 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.

The East Mitkof Roadless Area lies completely within the Wrangell Narrows Metasediments Ecological Subsection and represents 3 percent of the ecological subsection. Approximately 11 percent of the Wrangell Narrows Metasediments Ecological Subsection is in existing wilderness and 18 percent is protected in other non-development LUDs.

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The East Mitkof Roadless Area was rated 15 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 103rd from the highest (along with 3 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas.

There is some local and national support for managing the area in an unroaded condition, and very little support for designating the area as wilderness. Designation would create a small wilderness that is heavily influenced by developments and activities on adjacent lands, and that has no wilderness attributes or features of significance. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be very low.

V. Environmental Consequences

The East Mitkof Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 7 is implemented. Approximately 58 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur in the remaining 42 percent. The land in the development LUDs provides an estimated 427 acres that are suitable for timber production (less than 1 percent of the suitable acres on the Petersburg Ranger District). Approximately 46 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. 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 roadless area would be converted to Recommended LUD II. The ongoing recreation, minerals, 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. 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.

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Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 220 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness								9,444
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	3,148	3,148	3,148	3,148	3,148		3,148	
Semi-remote Recreation	2,320	2,320	2,320	2,320	2,320		2,320	
Recommended LUD II						9,444		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed								
Modified Landscape	1,239	1,239	1,239	1,239	1,239		1,239	
Timber Production	2,737	2,737	2,737	2,737	2,737		2,737	
TOTAL	9,444	9,444	9,444	9,444	9,444	9,444	9,444	9,444
Suitable Timber Lands	427	427	427	427	427	0	427	0