

INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

ROADLESS AREA NAME: Rocky Pass (243)

ACRES (NFS): 79,103

BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: Kuiu Island and Kupreanof/Mitkof Islands

ECOLOGICAL SECTION: Kupreanof Lowlands

2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING: 26

I. Overview and Description

(1) Location and Access: The Rocky Pass Roadless Area includes many small islands and is divided into two main portions separated by saltwater. The western portion lies on the eastern edge of Kuiu Island and the eastern portion lies on the western edge of Kupreanof Island, just south of Kake. Rocky Pass, which is a part of Keku Strait, divides the roadless area into the two parts.

The area is approximately 25 miles west of Petersburg, which is served by the Alaska Marine Highway and daily jet service. It is accessed primarily from saltwater via boat or by floatplane. A number of good anchorages are located along Rocky Pass. There are no sites suitable for landing wheeled aircraft. Several Forest Roads adjoin Rocky Pass Roadless Area near the head of Big John Bay, providing road access to the northeastern portion of the area from Kake, approximately 15 road miles away. Access to the interior is by foot or helicopter. The roadless area also includes Horseshoe, Hound, Entrance, Summit, and Eagle Islands and numerous small islands and islets within Rocky Pass.

(2) History: The area lies within the traditional territory of the Kake Tlingit. Cultural resources are numerous along the shoreline, representing a wide variety of archaeological site types and use. These include historic period cabins, fur farms, cemeteries, gardens and culturally modified trees that may represent prehistoric use as well. Prehistoric period archaeological sites include fish traps, villages, and camps. The Kuiu Island portion of this roadless area was part of the Alaska Pulp Corporation long-term timber sale area from 1960 until the late 1990s, although no timber harvest or road building occurred in this area.

A logging camp was developed at nearby Rowan Bay (on the west side of Kuiu Island), and is still used during active timber harvest operations. Road development and timber harvesting have occurred along the southwestern edge of the roadless area following the northern shore of Threemile Arm (on Kuiu Island), and along the northeastern edge in the Hamilton and Big John Creek drainages (on Kupreanof Island). A minor amount of beach logging has occurred within the area.

(3) Geography and Topography: Bedrock lithology is dominated by extrusive igneous rocks. Rock types are primarily rhyolite, rhyodiorite, basalt and other mafic extrusive rocks that have been extremely altered and brecciated in many areas. Volcanic conglomerate and volcanoclastic graywackes are scattered throughout the area. Volcanoclastic deposits, such as mafic tuff and tuff breccia; volcanic flows; and flow breccias occur within this area, notably the area between Crane Creek and Kadake Bay on the west side of Port Camden. This landscape is much younger than the rest of Kuiu Island, as these rocks are of Pleistocene age (less than a million years old). The older volcanic rocks of Triassic age (180 to 225 million years ago) on the Cornwallis Peninsula northwest of Port Camden are included in this geophysical area because of similarity of bedrock type and landform physiography.

Landforms within this area are characterized by rolling to moderately steep hills, typically less than 1,500 feet in elevation. Slopes are generally short and extremely broken or benched. The area is separated north and south by Rocky Pass, a navigable channel separating Kuiu and Kupreanof Islands. The narrow and often shallow channel of Rocky Pass is distinguished by numerous small islands and rock outcroppings. Islands and islets account for 2,023 acres in the roadless area, of which, five islands are over 50 acres. The area contains 245 miles of saltwater shoreline. Stream density is relatively low (2.6 miles/1,000 acres). In areas of volcanoclastic bedrock, actively

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eroding gullies (V-notches) are prominent features and contribute a large amount of bedload sediments. This roadless area has 7 acres of alpine and 4 acres of rock. There are no ice or snow features mapped in the area.

(4) Ecosystem:

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. The area is in the Kuiu Island and Kupreanof/Mitkof Islands Biogeographic Provinces. The Kuiu Island Province is deeply dissected, creating several prominent peninsulas. The topography is gentle compared to neighboring Baranof Island or the mainland. The eastern portion of the Kuiu province (which includes the western portion of the roadless area) is not subject to the severe windstorms, which occur on the western side of the province. The Kupreanof/Mitkof Islands Province is generally characterized by rolling, subdued topography and extensive muskeg areas, but may have localized, rugged terrain. This roadless area is noted for the diversity of shoreline and associated groups of small islands.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Rocky Pass Roadless Area is contained entirely within the Kupreanof Lowlands Ecological Section (M247G), represented by two ecological subsections (see table below). The Sumner Strait Volcanics Ecological Subsection represents the majority, 71 percent, of the Rocky Pass Roadless Area. Water-resistant volcanic flows of relatively recent origin arise from lowland glacial deposits. The interplay of volcanic and glacial forces have left a landscape of shallow organic soils on long, gentle slopes and mineral soils on short, steep slopes. Productive hemlock, Alaska yellow cedar, and spruce forests are found on the steep slopes. The remainder of the Rocky Pass Roadless Area, 29 percent, lies within the Kake Volcanics Ecological Subsection, which contains gently rolling hills of glacially reduced sedimentary and volcanic rock, usually below 1,000 feet elevation. Productive hemlock and spruce forests are found on the slopes (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Kupreanof Lowlands	Sumner Strait Volcanics	71%
	Kake Volcanics	29%

(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:** Muskeg/forest wetland timber complexes on excessively wet areas are interspersed with mixed conifer plant communities on better-drained sites and are believed to cover approximately 50 percent of this geophysical area. Muskegs are mapped as covering approximately 2,056 acres; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult. Timbered hill slopes are dominated by western hemlock, Sitka spruce, and Alaska-cedar plant communities. Subalpine ecosystems occupy about 5 percent of this geographic area.

There are approximately 75,491 acres mapped as forestland, of which 39,467 acres or 52 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 13,587 acres or 34 percent are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 2,739 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are 185 acres of second-growth forest where beach timber harvest has occurred in the past.

(d) **Fish Resources:** Twenty-five Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) numbered salmon-producing streams are present. Most of the streams on the west side of the roadless area are entirely within the roadless area, while many of the streams on the east side have upper watersheds outside of the area. The largest salmon producers are Big John Creek, Irish Creek, and Tunehean Creek, all on

Kupreanof Island. This area supports runs of steelhead and cutthroat trout; Dolly Varden char; and pink, chum, and coho salmon.

(e) Wildlife Resources: Sitka black-tailed deer, moose, beaver, river otter, marten, wolves, and black bear inhabit this roadless area. Black bears are especially abundant on Kuiu Island. Other terrestrial mammals include bats, mink, muskrat, ermine, red squirrel, mice, shrews, and voles. There are occasional sightings of fisher and wolverine, but these are considered incidental species at the edge of their range. One mountain lion, another incidental species, has been trapped on the south end of Kupreanof Island. This species may be migrating into Southeast Alaska from Canada along the major rivers.

Eagle nest-trees dot the shores from Big John Bay south through Rocky Pass. Large flocks of ducks and geese use this area during their fall migrations. Three northern goshawk nests were found in the Big John Creek drainage. Other bird species include red-tailed hawks, sharp-shinned hawks, great horned owls, western screech owls, saw-whet owls, pigmy owls, marbled murrelets, osprey, spruce grouse, ptarmigan, sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, and great blue herons. Red-throated, Pacific, and common loon all occur around Kuiu and 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.

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

Amphibians known to occur on Kuiu or Kupreanof Island include rough-skinned newt, western toad, and wood frog. 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. Wood frogs are found in most of the ecosystems found in Southeast Alaska except for marine, estuarine and riverine.

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

LUD	Acres
Modified Landscape	4,219
Timber Production	515
Scenic Viewshed	409
Remote Recreation	41,670
Semi-remote Recreation	22,577
Old-growth Habitat	9,714

Approximately 6 percent of the roadless area was allocated to development LUDs (Modified Landscape, Timber Production, Scenic Viewshed), which allow timber harvest and road building. Pockets along the border with Roadless Area 242 to the west on Kuiu Island were allocated to the Modified Landscape LUD and account for approximately 5 percent of the roadless area. Approximately 1 percent of the roadless area, on Kuiu Island, was allocated to the Timber Production LUD. Less than 1 percent of the roadless area, on Kupreanof Island, was allocated to the Scenic Viewshed LUD.

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The majority of the roadless area, approximately 94 percent, was allocated to non-development LUDs (Remote Recreation, Semi-remote Recreation, Old-growth Habitat). Along Rocky Pass, including most of the islands, approximately 53 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Remote Recreation LUD. At the northern end of the area (including the northern and other islands), approximately 29 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Semi-remote Recreation LUD. Approximately 12 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Old-growth Habitat LUD, located primarily in the southeast.

Recreation uses include black bear, moose, deer, and waterfowl hunting; coho salmon, pink salmon, steelhead, and trout fishing; rock hounding; sea kayaking; camping; hiking; recreation cabin use; viewing scenery; and motorized boating. A fish pass, two public recreation cabins, one short trail, and an offshore oyster farm are the only developments in the area. Sport fishing takes place in Tunehean Creek. The protected waters (from weather) of Rocky Pass are popular for sea kayaking, with the Alaska Marine Highway ferry terminal at Kake providing access. Irish and Keku Creeks are popular among recreationists and subsistence users. There were eight outfitter/guide permits issued in 2000, which produced 172 service days. There is State of Alaska land on High Island within Rocky Pass. There is Sealaska Corporation land at Dakaneek Bay. The Coast Guard maintains navigation aids for smaller vessels in Rocky Pass. At one time it was proposed that a road be built across Rocky Pass waterway at High Island, which would then tie together Kuiu and Kupreanof Islands. This is still a possibility, but not likely in the near future.

The Threemile Timber Harvest FEIS and ROD are scheduled for publication in January 2002. Timber harvest under this FEIS would occur on Kuiu Island on land adjacent to Threemile Arm.

(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness): Most of the area appears unmodified when viewed from the major travel routes (Rocky Pass). The area appears natural when viewed from Rocky Pass, Big John Bay, Keku Strait, Hamilton Bay, and Davidson Bay.

(7) Surroundings (External Influences): The Rocky Pass Roadless Area forms a link to other unroaded areas on both Kupreanof Island and Kuiu Island because it occupies land on both islands. A road from Kake and timber harvest areas lie along the northeastern boundary of this roadless area and a smaller area with roads and harvest units lies to the southwest. Light marine and air traffic pass through or over the area. Roadless Area 242 lies to the west and Roadless Area 214 lies to the east.

(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest: This area is prized for its geologic diversity, and is a prime area for rock hounds to visit. Big John Bay and Devil's Elbow recreation cabins are located within this roadless area. The area contains 11 inventoried recreation places, which cover 11,746 acres, or 15 percent of the roadless area. The unmodified nature of the waterway with its diversity of small islands makes this area attractive for explorers with small boats and kayaks. There is one short developed trail (Big John Bay) in the area. Bear hunting and sport fishing occur throughout the Rocky Pass area. There were 172 service days of outfitter/guide use of the area in 2000. One of the unique features of the Rocky Pass area is the shallowness of the water. It is only navigable by larger boats during high tides.

(9) Changes in Roadless Area Boundaries between 1989 and 2003: There have been minor changes to the boundaries. These include adding older harvest units along the shore and along Tunehean Creek that are not associated with roads, and dropping a relatively small area in the southwest that now contains a road and several harvest units.

II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness: The area is mostly unmodified, except for the remnants of historic fur farms, trapping cabins, temporary camps, a fish pass, two public recreation cabins, one short trail, and an offshore oyster farm. Even with these minor modifications, the landscape is dominated by a natural appearance. Based on appearance, the roadless area is suitable for wilderness designation. The roadless area has an unusual aspect—it is bisected by a saltwater travelway, Rocky Pass, which is part of Keku Strait.

(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation: There is a high opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation in the Rocky Pass area. Use of floatplanes and powerboats may disrupt visitors for brief periods. Present recreation use levels are moderate. Persons camped along the shore are generally unlikely to encounter another person, but might see or be visible to the occasional recreational boater.

A high degree of challenge and skill is needed to navigate through the scenic array of rocks and islands in Rocky Pass. Travel on land is relatively easy compared to many other unroaded areas in Southeast Alaska because of the relatively gentle terrain. 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 primitive recreation opportunities. The table below lists the acreage and percent of the various Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes that have been inventoried in the roadless area.

ROS Class	Acres	Percent of Total ROS
Primitive (P)	38,415	49%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	13,046	16%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	26,469	33%
Roaded Modified (RM)	1,173	1%

The area contains 11 inventoried recreation places, which cover 11,746 acres, or 15 percent of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places*	Total Acres
P	0	0
SPM	0	0
RN	9	11,597
RM	4	149

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

There are two public recreation cabins and one short, developed trail in the Rocky Pass Roadless Area.

(3) Wilderness Attribute Rating System: In 1977, the Forest Service, along with public interest groups, developed the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS), which was used to inventory the wilderness characteristics of roadless areas during the second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation process (referred to as RARE II). The purpose of WARS was to provide a measure of the area's wilderness quality, based on the key attributes of wilderness as defined in the Wilderness Act. It is largely based on the attributes described above in items 1 and 2 of this section (natural integrity, apparent naturalness, outstanding opportunity for solitude, and primitive recreation opportunities).

The inventoried roadless areas of the Tongass National Forest were rated according to this system in 1989 for the original Analysis of the Management Situation developed in support of the Forest Plan Revision. At that time, the Rocky Pass Roadless Area was given a rating of 26 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 also given a rating of 26.

(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values:

(a) Fish Resources: All VCUs (419, 425, 427, and 428) have been listed as primary producers of salmon by the Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment. Only VCU 425 in the north along Keki Strait is listed as a primary sport fish producer (ADF&G, 1998).

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Twenty-five ADF&G numbered salmon producing streams are present. Many of the streams have upper watersheds outside of the area. The largest salmon producers are Big John Creek, Irish Creek, Keku Creek, and Tunehean Creek. Big John Creek is blocked by falls approximately 1.5 miles upstream from the river's mouth. The lower reaches contain coho, chum, and pink salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout. Modification of the falls on Big John Creek is a potential fisheries enhancement project. ADF&G lists Tunehean Creek as significant overwintering habitat for Dolly Varden and a significant coho salmon and steelhead stream. Irish and Keku Creeks have high commercial value for coho salmon and sport value for steelhead. Keku Creek drainage is an important rearing area for juvenile coho salmon. Wire tag harvest data indicate that the additional habitat on Irish/Keku Creek alone contributed 32,000 coho in 1991 and 13,000 fish in 1992 to the commercial catch.

(b) Wildlife Resources: There are key wildlife east-west movement corridors along the Big John Creek drainage and along the Keku Creek drainage that lead from Rocky Pass to Duncan Canal. Sitka black-tailed deer, moose, beaver, river otter, marten, wolves, and black bear inhabit this roadless area. Black bears are especially abundant on Kuiu Island and bear hunting is popular along the shore and road systems. Based on harvest data compiled from 1985 to 1995, VCU's 419, 427, and 428 along Keku Strait, Rocky Pass, and Threemile Arm, respectively, were ranked in the second 25 percent of brown bear harvest areas on the Tongass. One mountain lion, another incidental species, has been trapped on the south end of Kupreanof Island. This species may be migrating into Southeast Alaska from Canada along the major rivers.

Eagle nest trees dot the shores from Big John Bay south through Rocky Pass. Large flocks of ducks and geese use this area during their fall migrations. Several seal haulouts are located on small islands within the Rocky Pass area. Sea otters occur but are only locally abundant in the western areas of Sumner Strait off southern Kupreanof and on both eastern and western shores of Kuiu Island. They are expanding their range northward into Keku Strait.

(c) Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species: The only federally listed threatened or endangered species likely to occur within or adjacent to the roadless area are the humpback whale (endangered) and the Steller sea lion (threatened). Both of these species are found in adjacent marine waters. Three Forest Service Region 10 Sensitive Species are suspected or known to occur within the area: the trumpeter swan, Peale's peregrine falcon, and the Queen Charlotte goshawk. Trumpeter swans nest in the lowlands on small lakes and along large rivers, and winter in ice-free areas throughout the Tongass. Peale's peregrine falcons nest on cliff faces and islands and feed primarily on seabirds. Inhabitants of late seral forests, Queen Charlotte goshawks are closely associated with productive old growth. Three goshawk nests were found in the Big John Creek drainage. 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 in this area. The Kuiu portion of Rocky Pass is in the Keku Volcanic Plateaus geophysical area. This geophysical area makes up much of the east side of Kuiu Island from No-Name Bay to Kadake Bay, including the entire Keku peninsula. Landforms are typically prominently benched hills and lava plateaus typical of volcanic terrain. Many volcanic landform features, such as volcanic cones and lahars, have likely been destroyed by glaciation since the entire area has been glaciated after volcanism ceased. The present landscape is largely the result of glacially eroded alternating strata of volcanic flows that dip in a southeast direction. Southeast-facing slopes are long and relatively gentle, while northwest facing slopes are typically steep and stair-stepped with numerous cliffs. Most hills are less than 1,500 feet in elevation.

(5) Scientific and Educational Values: The roadless area offers the opportunity to study agates, geodes, and other semi-precious stones, as well as petrified wood and fossils.

(6) Scenic Values: The majority of the area is unmodified and appears natural. No modification can be seen from Rocky Pass. Because of the topography, the roads built to the north of the roadless area probably cannot be seen through the trees when traveling in Big John Bay. The natural setting dominates the landscape when traveling along Keku Strait and in Davidson Bay. This also is the case when looking south in Hamilton Bay.

Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan that are within or adjacent to the area include Keku Strait, a tour ship and small boat route; Rocky Pass, a small boat route; Hamilton Bay, a saltwater use area and dispersed recreation area; Big John Bay public recreation cabin; Big John Bay Hiking Trail #465; and Hamilton Creek Hiking Trail #463.

Nine percent of this roadless area is inventoried Variety Class A (possessing landscape diversity that is unique for the character type). Twenty-three percent is inventoried Variety Class B (possessing landscape diversity that is common for the character type) and approximately 67 percent is inventoried Variety Class C (possessing a low degree of landscape diversity).

The majority of this roadless area, approximately 94 percent, is in Existing Visual Condition EVC Type I, where only ecological change has occurred. About 2 percent of the roadless area appears to be untouched by human activity and is in EVC Type II. Two 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, and appear to resemble natural patterns. About 2 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 Kake Tlingit. Cultural resources are numerous along the shoreline, representing a wide variety of archaeological site types and use. These include historic period cabins, fur farms, cemeteries, gardens and culturally modified trees that may represent prehistoric use as well. Road development and timber harvesting have occurred along the southwestern edge of the roadless area following the northern shore of Threemile Arm (on Kuiu Island), and along the northeastern edge in the Hamilton and Big John Creek drainages. A minor amount of beach logging has occurred within the area. There are two public recreation cabins and two developed trails in the Rocky Pass Roadless Area. Rocky Pass receives moderate recreation use. There were eight outfitter/guide permits issued in 2000, the activities included camping (29 service days), remote setting nature tours (9 service days), black bear hunting (132 service days), and wolf hunting (2 service days). Subsistence use in the area includes hunting, fishing, and shellfish and seaweed harvest. Only VCU 425 in the north of the area along Keku Strait was rated among the VCUs with the highest community use values. All VCUs (includes VCUs 419, 427, and 428) except VCU 425 were listed among the VCUs with the highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas (ADF&G, 1998).

(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes: The roadless area boundaries are well-defined by topography on the west, except for the southwest corner. On the east, the area is less well defined, especially on the northeast. It borders roadless areas on the east and west and opens to the wider portion of Keku Strait to the south and north. The southwest corner of Roadless Area 214 along Keku Strait could easily be managed with the Rocky Pass Roadless Area. Forest roads currently approach the northern boundary from Kake. Forest Road 6434, which connects Rowan Bay through the isthmus to Port Camden and Threemile Arm, is planned to be extended to within 0.5 mile of the southern end of Rocky Pass. The area is part of a larger roadless area to the east and could be managed separately or as part of a larger wilderness. Adjusting the area to provide boundaries that are better defined by topography, especially in the northeast and southwest, might help provide a more easily managed wilderness area.

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

(1) Recreation, Including Tourism Potential: Recreation potential for Rocky Pass is high, as there are opportunities for additional recreation cabins, trails, and outfitter and guide use. Tourism has been increasing in Southeast Alaska and is expected to continue to grow. There were eight outfitter/guide permits issued for this area in 2000. There is good potential to increase use.

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

(3) Fish Resources: Three major fish enhancement projects, including two fish ladders, have been constructed on the Irish and Keku Creek system. The Irish Creek vertical-slot fish ladder was completed in 1984, and is considered very successful. There is a proposed enhancement project on Tunehean Creek outside the roadless area

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to install large woody debris to improve fish habitat in areas where timber has been harvested. Falls modification for Big John Creek is a potential enhancement project.

- (4) **Wildlife Resources:** No wildlife enhancement projects have been identified for this area.
- (5) **Timber Resources:** There are approximately 39,467 acres inventoried as productive old-growth forest and 185 as second growth in the roadless area. Of this, approximately 27,981 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), 863 acres or 1 percent of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 388 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 40 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

Timber sales may result in increased roading on both islands, which may provide additional access to the Rocky Pass Roadless Area. The Threemile Timber Harvest FEIS (Kuiu Island) and Record of Decision are scheduled for publication in January 2002. Continued development of the road system south of Kake would parallel Rocky Pass and could make future management of the area in primitive settings more challenging. However, most of the area is not allocated to LUDs that allow roads.

- (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:** According to the Threemile DEIS (USDA Forest Service, 2001), there are no known mineral occurrences of commercial value within this area. BLM indicates Tunehean Creek has potential for mineral extraction of copper and molybdenum. No existing claims or patented claims exist.

This roadless area contains an estimated 6,439 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources (Brew et al., 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991). Approximately 1,319 of these acres are considered to have moderate potential for development.

- (8) **Transportation and Utilities:** No transportation or utility corridors are proposed for this roadless area. A potential powerline corridor would cross near or along the northeast corner of the area.

- (9) **Water Availability and Use:** The two recreation cabins create water demand for the Rocky Pass Roadless Area. There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects.

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

- (11) **Land Use Authorizations:** Special Use Permit authorizations in effect within this roadless area include maintenance of navigational aids at Salt Point for the U.S. Coast Guard, crabpot storage for several private individuals at Kakeneek Bay and Big John Bay, and storage of items associated with oyster farming at Stedman Cove.

- (12) **Land Status:** The roadless area is entirely National Forest System land. Encumbered lands within the roadless area are located around Point Hamilton and Hound Island. High Island has been conveyed to the State of Alaska (approximately 605 acres), and is in the center of the roadless area, in Rocky Pass, but it is not part of the roadless area.

IV. Wilderness Evaluation (Need for Wilderness)

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

- (a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** Residents of Kake have a traditional cultural interest in the Rocky Pass area. Recreationists from Wrangell and Petersburg 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. The bill did not include this area. In 2001, HR 2908 did not propose that the roadless area be designated as wilderness. However, it did recommend that most of the roadless area be classified as a Congressionally Designated LUD II area and managed in an unroaded condition.

(c) Public Input During Forest Plan Revision 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. However, timber industry organizations felt that areas not allocated to wilderness or LUD II should be allocated to Timber Management LUD.

Some comments suggested managing the area for wilderness and others as an Old-growth Habitat LUD. One commenter wanted the area managed as a Remote Recreation LUD. 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 or for remote recreation.

(d) Public Input During Roadless Area Conservation Rule and Road Management Policy Review: There were no specific comments on this roadless area. However, some commented that roads should either be maintained or closed. Many thought that there should be fewer roads because roads are the most destructive part of timber harvest. Some wanted to see helicopters used for timber harvest rather than building more roads.

(e) Public Input Expressed for Project-level EISs and Other Input: Public input received during the Kupreanof Island Analysis ranged from favoring logging to favoring protecting the area from logging and road building. Commenters specifically recommended protecting Rocky Pass, Hamilton Bay, Big John Creek, and Irish Creek. Some comments suggested slowing down the rate of development. Others wanted an emphasis on value-added-uses for timber harvested from the National Forest. Some wanted the Forest Service to build more developed recreation facilities, such as trails and tent platforms. A number of people doubted that additional roads would be beneficial to recreation. They felt that existing primitive and roadless areas should be maintained. Many people stated that the scenery was important for tourism while another said that scenery was not important and logging should not be reduced because of scenery concerns.

(f) Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process: The U.S. Department of the Interior identified this roadless area as having important fish and wildlife habitat and populations; although not a top priority for protection, it ranked in their top third among all roadless areas. They communicated that protection of this area, particularly in combination with the Camden (#242) and South Kupreanof (#214) Roadless Area, would conserve valuable remaining undisturbed forested habitats on the island.

The city of Petersburg said they were opposed to designation of this area as wilderness because of the potential long-term economic effects on the city.

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 Kupreanof recommends Rocky Pass for designation as wilderness.

The Organized Village of Kake passed a resolution requesting that “customary and traditional areas such as ... Rocky Pass (VCU 428)... be recommended for long-term protection.

The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) recommended Roadless Area 243 for permanent protection as LUD II. SEACC recommended the Rocky Pass roadless area for LUD II designation.

Appendix C

A number of individual commenters identified southeast Rocky Pass as an area that needed protection. This area is of special concern to residents of Point Baker.

(2) **Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses:** This area adjoins the Port Camden Roadless Area (242) to the west and South Kupreanof Roadless Area (214) to the east. Other roadless areas are contiguous to these. Use in all of these areas is generally light.

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

Community	Air Miles	Water Miles
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	100	110
Ketchikan (Pop. 14,070)	110	145
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	50	60
Petersburg (Pop. 3,324)	25	60

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

(4) **Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System:** The Rocky Pass Roadless Area includes many small islands and is divided into two main portions separated by saltwater. The western portion lies on the eastern edge of Kuiu Island and the eastern portion lies on the western edge of Kupreanof Island, just south of Kake. Rocky Pass, which is a part of Keku Strait, divides the roadless area into the two parts. Rocky Pass Roadless Area lies on both sides of Rocky Pass. Landforms within this area are characterized by rolling to moderately steep hills, typically less than 1,500 feet in elevation. Hill slopes are short and extremely broken or benched. Unlike most roadless areas, which are separated by waterways, this roadless area encompasses a waterway. The narrow and often shallow waterway has scores of small islands and rocks. In addition, the surrounding landform is an important backdrop in this setting. It is east of the Camden Roadless Area on Kuiu Island, and west of the South Kupreanof Roadless Area on Kupreanof Island.

The area is natural appearing. The natural integrity is very high and the apparent naturalness is outstanding. The opportunity for solitude is very high and the opportunity for primitive recreation is outstanding.

Approximately 9 percent of the landscape is considered distinctive for the character type from a scenery standpoint. The area has very high cultural, historic, and recreational values. This area is prized for its geologic diversity, and is a prime area for rock hounds to visit. The Kuiu portion of Rocky Pass is in the Keku Volcanic Plateaus geophysical area.

The roadless area includes about 13,587 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, 2,739 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

Approximately 39 percent of the Rocky Pass Roadless Area is classified as being in the Kuiu Island Biogeographic Province and makes about 6 percent of the province. It is one of eight inventoried roadless areas found within the province that collectively make up about 53 percent of the province. The Tebenkof Bay and the Kuiu Wildernesses are located in this province and make up about 26 percent of the province. The province also includes the Summer, Conclusion, and associated islands LUD II areas, which make up about 1 percent of the province. Approximately 61 percent of the Rocky Pass Roadless Area is classified as being in the Kupreanof/Mitkof Islands Biogeographic Province and makes up about 6 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 Rocky Pass Roadless Area lies completely within the Kupreanof Lowlands Ecological Section and represents 7 percent of the ecological section. Approximately 1 percent of the 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 (71 percent) of the roadless area is in the Sumner Strait Volcanics Ecological Subsection. This portion of the roadless area represents 16 percent of the entire ecological subsection, minor portions of which are protected by existing wilderness and LUD II (0.1 percent and 1 percent, respectively) and by other existing non-development LUDs (32 percent). The balance (29 percent) of the roadless area is in the Kake Volcanics Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 17 percent of the entire ecological subsection. Approximately 23 percent of this ecological subsection is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

The Rocky Pass Roadless Area was rated 26 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 5th from the highest (along with 6 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas.

There is strong local and national support for managing the area in an unroaded condition, as well as support for designation of the area as wilderness. Designation would create a wilderness with very high cultural, historic, geologic, and recreational values. Designation of the area would also add Congressional protection to about 16 percent of the Sumner Strait Volcanics Ecological Subsection and 17 percent of the Kake Volcanics Ecological Subsection that each have about 1 percent or less in wilderness or LUD II. The roadless area could also be designated as part of a larger wilderness that stretches from Kuiu Island east across Kupreanof Island and connects to the Petersburg Creek-Duncan Canal Wilderness. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System could be very high.

V. Environmental Consequences

The Rocky Pass Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1 or 2 is implemented. Approximately 94 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur in the remaining 6 percent located along the southwest boundary. The land in the development LUDs provides an estimated 863 acres that are suitable for timber production (1 percent of the suitable acres on the Petersburg Ranger District). Approximately 40 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. This roadless area contains an estimated 6,439 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources; approximately 1,319 of the acres are considered to have moderate potential for development. The timber sales, recreation, minerals, and special use programs would continue. The values associated with the natural settings of roadless area, especially in the southwestern boundary area, could be affected by developments allowed under the Forest Plan. The high cultural, historic, recreational, and geologic values are protected under the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 3, a 74,130-acre portion of the area in Remote Recreation, Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation, Scenic Viewshed, Modified Landscape, and Timber Production LUDs would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. The timber sales, recreation, minerals, and special use programs would continue outside the Recommended Wilderness, but could be restricted within. No timber harvest would be allowed in the Recommended Wilderness area and lands suitable for timber production would be reduced to approximately 33 acres. Designation of the area would add Congressional protection to a portion of the Sumner Strait Volcanics Ecological Subsection and of the Kake Volcanics Ecological Subsection that each have about 1 percent or less in wilderness or LUD II. The values associated with the natural settings of the majority of the roadless area, including cultural, historic, recreational, and geologic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Under Alternative 4, a 69,826-acre portion of the Remote Recreation, Old-growth Habitat, and Semi-remote Recreation LUDs would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. This would not affect timber sale programs because this area is currently allocated to non-development LUDs. The total area suitable for timber production would not change from Alternative 1. The recreation, minerals, and special use programs would continue outside the Recommended Wilderness, but could be restricted within. Designation of the area would add Congressional protection to a portion of the Sumner Strait Volcanics Ecological Subsection and of the Kake Volcanics Ecological Subsection that each have about 1 percent or less in wilderness or LUD II. The values associated with the natural settings of the majority of the roadless area, including cultural, historic, recreational, and geologic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

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Under Alternative 5, a 73,985-acre portion of the area in Remote Recreation, Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation, Scenic Viewshed, Modified Landscape, and Timber Production LUDs would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. The timber sales, recreation, minerals, and special use programs would continue outside the Recommended Wilderness, but would be restricted within. No timber harvest would be allowed in the Recommended Wilderness area and lands suitable for timber production would be reduced to approximately 60 acres. Designation of the area would add Congressional protection to a portion of the Sumner Strait Volcanics Ecological Subsection and of the Kake Volcanics Ecological Subsection that each have about 1 percent or less in wilderness or LUD II. The values associated with the natural settings of the majority of the roadless area, including cultural, historic, recreational, and geologic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Under Alternative 6, nearly the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended LUD II. The ongoing recreation, minerals, and special uses programs would continue. No timber harvest would be allowed. Designation of the area would add Congressional protection to about 16 percent of the Sumner Strait Volcanics Ecological Subsection and 17 percent of the Kake Volcanics Ecological Subsection that each have about 1 percent or less in wilderness or LUD II. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including cultural, historic, recreational, and geologic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated LUD II.

Under Alternative 7, a 74,132-acre portion of the area in Remote Recreation, Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation, Modified Landscape, and Timber Production LUDs would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. The timber sales, recreation, minerals, and special use programs would continue outside the Recommended Wilderness, but could be restricted within. No timber harvest would be allowed in the Recommended Wilderness area and lands suitable for timber production would be reduced to approximately 60 acres. Designation of the area would add Congressional protection to a portion of the Sumner Strait Volcanics Ecological Subsection and of the Kake Volcanics Ecological Subsection that each have about 1 percent or less in wilderness or LUD II. The values associated with the natural settings of the majority of the roadless area, including cultural, historic, recreational, and geologic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Under Alternative 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. No timber harvest would be allowed and the 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. Designation of the area would add Congressional protection to about 16 percent of the Sumner Strait Volcanics Ecological Subsection and 17 percent of the Kake Volcanics Ecological Subsection that each have about 1 percent or less in wilderness or LUD II. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including cultural, historic, recreational, and geologic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Appendix C

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 243 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness			74,130	69,826	73,985	119	74,132	79,103
Wilderness								
Recommended Wilderness Nat. Mon.								
Wilderness National Monument								
Non-wilderness National Monument								
Research Natural Area								
Special Interest Area								
Remote Recreation	41,670	41,670	14	23	14		14	
Enacted Municipal Watershed								
Old-growth Habitat	9,714	9,714	3,912	3,915	4,006		3,913	
Semi-remote Recreation	22,577	22,577	197	197	134		81	
Recommended LUD II						78,984		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed	409	409	332	409	406		406	
Modified Landscape	4,219	4,219	193	4,219	233		233	
Timber Production	515	515	324	515	324		324	
TOTAL	79,103	79,103	79,103	79,103	79,103	79,103	79,103	79,103
Suitable Timber Lands	863	863	33	863	60	0	60	0