

# Appendix C

## INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

**ROADLESS AREA NAME:** South Kuiu (246)

**ACRES (NFS):** 63,063

**BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE:** Kuiu Island

**ECOLOGICAL SECTION:** Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands

**2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING:** 27

### **I. Overview and Description**

(1) **Location and Access:** The South Kuiu Roadless Area is south of the Kuiu and Tebenkof Bay Wildernesses on Kuiu Island. The Coronation Island and Warren Island Wildernesses lie to the south, across Decision Passage. Chatham Strait lies to the west and Sumner Strait lies to the east. The roadless area is approximately 15 air miles west of Point Baker and 50 air miles southwest of Petersburg, which is served by the Alaska Marine Highway and daily jet service. It is accessed by boat or floatplane and several good anchorages can be found in the numerous bays and inlets. There are no sites suitable for landing wheeled aircraft. There is no ferry service to Kuiu Island. Access inland is by foot or helicopter. There is a trail that was once maintained by the Coast Guard from Cape Decision north to Port McArthur. The lower portion of the trail has recently been reconstructed.

(2) **History:** The area is in the traditional territory of the Kuiu Tlingit, who eventually settled in Klawock. Archaeological sites include villages, forts, camps, fish traps, and petroglyphs. Historic period sites include a cannery, fur farms, cabins, and a Coast Guard lighthouse at Cape Decision. The lighthouse and surrounding land may be conveyed to a private, non-profit corporation that maintains the lighthouse. There has been no timber harvest within the roadless area.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** Landform types within this area are varied and represent all of the geomorphic types found on Kuiu Island. Most of this roadless area lies within the Affleck Lowlands geophysical area. This geophysical area is characterized by broad, undulating lowlands and gently rolling hills. These are areas of low relief with only a few hills that are above 800 feet in elevation. Moderately sloping to steep forested hill slopes, most of which are adjacent to the beach, make up a minor portion of this landscape. The far western portion (VCU 410) lies in the Rowan Sedimentary Hills area to the north and in the Alvin Graywacke Hills to the south. The landscape in the north is characterized by long, smooth, forested hill slopes bisected by broad "U" shaped glacial valleys. Hill summits are well rounded and most are less than 2,000 feet in elevation. Broad undulating glacial valleys are typically ¼ to ¾ mile wide and are less than 400 feet in elevation. They are underlain with thick glacial till deposits. The south half of VCU 410 is characterized by a series of rolling hills, most of which are less than 1,500 feet in elevation. Hill slopes are typically short, broken and irregular in shape, with well-rounded summits typical of glaciated terrain. Glacial deposits are scattered throughout this landscape on the more gentle slopes from valley bottom to hilltops.

Bedrock lithology throughout this roadless area consists primarily of sedimentary rocks of the Bay of Pillars formation. Common rock types are graywackes and turbidites. These rocks are Silurian in age (400 to 440 million years old).

Stream density is relatively low for most of the area, 2.9 miles/1,000 acres. Watersheds are generally small, with many first and second order streams in glacial sediments. In the northwestern portion of the area, watersheds are relatively large, with main channels flowing through broad glacial valleys. Stream density is 3.7 miles/1,000 acres.

The area includes the southern half of Affleck Canal, the shores of which are heavily dissected with smaller bays and coves. Kell Bay, Table Bay, and Port McArthur are other major water features. Mount McArthur and Mount Howard, located in the southwest portion of this roadless area, rise sharply from saltwater to their summit peaks.

The area contains 195 miles of saltwater shoreline. Islands make up 417 acres, lakes make up 97 acres, alpine makes up 116 acres, and exposed rock makes up 500 acres.

**(4) Ecosystem:**

**(a) Classification:** Biogeographic Province. This roadless area is in the Kuiu Island Biogeographic Province. It is deeply dissected by water, creating several prominent peninsulas. This area displays much greater relief and landform variety than is typical of the province. The western portion of the area is subject to the severe windstorms. There are no unique or uncommon plant/soil associations or geologic formations in the roadless area.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The South Kuiu Roadless Area is contained entirely within the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247F) represented by four ecological subsections (see table below). The Affleck Canal Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection covers half the roadless area. It is restricted to the glacially exposed peninsulas and low coastal hills. Poorly drained soils and wetlands cover most of the area. Productive hemlock stands are found in mineral soil on hillsides. The Kuiu-Prince of Wales Granitics Ecological Subsection covers a quarter of the roadless area and is found on the west-side. It is typified by rugged mountaintops of igneous rock which rise above rounded peaks. The higher crests capture incoming precipitation which remains as snowpack much of the year. Moderately productive hemlock forests are found below the alpine zone. The Alvin Bay Sediments Ecological Subsection covers the remaining quarter. It includes sedimentary coastal lowlands and angular-sided hills with smooth summits, remnants of substantial glaciation. Well-drained, productive soils, found on upland slopes, are cloaked in forests of hemlock and hemlock-Alaska yellow cedar, while poorly drained soils and associated wetlands are found in coastal lowlands (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands	Affleck Canal Till Lowlands	51%
	Kuiu-Prince of Wales Granitics	24%
	Alvin Bay Sediments	23%
	Rowan Sediments	2%

**(b) Soils:** Soils in this area are formed in a wide variety of parent material, including bedrock, colluvium, and glacial drift. In general, soils in the Affleck Lowlands geophysical area are dominantly poorly drained mineral soils and very poorly drained organic soils. Shallow to moderately deep, well-drained soils occupy the more sloping positions adjacent to the beaches.

Well-drained or moderately well-drained soils are on moderate to steep mountain slopes with permeable parent materials. These soils are very 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.

Alpine soils, generally above 2,000 feet elevation, are mostly shallow, very wet organic soils or extremely shallow and rocky soils.

**(c) Vegetation:** Muskeg/forested wetland complexes cover a good portion of the South Kuiu Roadless Area. Less than 100 acres of muskeg are mapped for the area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult. Mixed conifer plant communities are interspersed on better-drained sites. Forested hill slopes are dominantly Sitka spruce/western hemlock, and more poorly drained slopes consist of western hemlock/Alaska-cedar plant communities. Subalpine plant communities occupy many of the hilltop positions but are not extensive. Alpine vegetation covers most areas above 2,000 feet. The vegetation in the Rowan Sedimentary Hills area is distinct from the rest of the roadless area. Nearly all of the well-drained hill slope positions in this geophysical area are occupied by the highly productive western hemlock/blueberry/shield fern plant associations. This plant community forms rather large, contiguous forested areas on these hill slope

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positions. About 20 percent of this geophysical area is occupied by wetlands. Sitka Spruce plant communities are on some relatively narrow floodplain soils adjacent to major streams.

There are approximately 60,949 acres mapped as forest land of which 37,339 acres (61 percent) are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 13,063 acres (35 percent) are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 2,382 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are 56 acres of second-growth forest where beach harvest has occurred in the past.

**(d) Fish Resources:** This large roadless area has 34 Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) numbered salmon-producing streams. The area is a good producer of anadromous fish, supporting runs of pink, chum, and coho salmon. One of the best producing streams is at the head of Kell Bay in the northwestern portion of the roadless area.

**(e) Wildlife Resources:** The area displays the typical array of wildlife found on Kuiu Island, including black bears, Sitka black-tailed deer, wolves, furbearers, and waterfowl.

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.

Bird species include bald eagles, 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, Canada geese, and great blue herons. Red-throated, Pacific, and common loons all occur around Kuiu 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 in the western areas of Sumner Strait off southern Kupreanof Island 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 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:** This roadless area was allocated to one Land Use Designation (LUD) under 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. The one LUD assigned to this area is the Semi-remote Recreation non-development LUD.

<b>LUD</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Semi-remote Recreation	63,063

Recreation uses include black bear hunting; coho salmon, pink salmon, and steelhead fishing; sea kayaking; camping; marine wildlife viewing; beachcombing; viewing scenery; resort use; and viewing from marine waters. Two outfitter/guide permits were issued in 2000, which resulted in 156 service days of camping and 8 service days

of black bear hunting. The bays and coves are used for commercial and recreational fishing. The area is also used for subsistence hunting and fishing. The US Coast Guard (Coast Guard) maintains navigation aids in the area, and once maintained an access trail from Port McArthur to the Cape Decision Lighthouse for supplies. The Cape Decision Lighthouse Society, a non-profit Alaskan corporation, was awarded the stewardship of the Cape Decision Light Station and Lighthouse Reserve by the Coast Guard in 1997. They plan to maintain the lighthouse, the trail, and the surrounding areas for public recreational use. They plan to rent the lighthouse by the day, week, or by the month to groups of 6 to 10 people. The lighthouse is accessible by helicopter, float plane, or passenger boat.

**(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness):** With the exception of the lighthouse, the area appears unmodified from major travel routes in Chatham Strait and Sumner Strait.

**(7) Surroundings (External Influences):** Kuiu and Tebenkof Bay Wildernesses and East Kuiu Roadless Area lie north and adjacent to South Kuiu Roadless Area. The rest of the area is surrounded by saltwater. The Coronation Island and Warren Island Wildernesses lie to the south across Decision Passage. The Spanish Islands, which are part of the Coronation Wilderness, are less than 1 mile to the south. Occasional aircraft and marine traffic are present.

**(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest:** The area includes numerous bays and inlets, which provide many anchorages, and beachcombing opportunities. Sport fishing guides and a limited number of outfitter/guides operate within the roadless area. The area contains 11 inventoried recreation places, which cover 4,175 acres (7 percent) of the roadless area. The presence of numerous anchorage sites throughout the area allows visitors to “boat camp” overnight. A non-profit Alaskan corporation was awarded the stewardship of the Cape Decision Light Station and Lighthouse Reserve by the Coast Guard in 1997. They plan to maintain the lighthouse, the trail that once ran north to Port McArthur, and the surrounding areas for public recreational use.

**(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary:** Approximately 60,576 acres in the northern half of the roadless area were designated as the Kuiu Wilderness by the Tongass Timber Reform Act of 1990. There have been no other changes to the boundary since 1989.

## **II. Capability for Management as Wilderness (including effects of wilderness designation on adjacent areas)**

**(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness:** The area is essentially unmodified and is highly suitable for wilderness classification.

**(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation:** There is a high opportunity for solitude in the South Kuiu Roadless Area. Floatplanes and powerboats may only infrequently be seen or heard. Persons camped along the shore are generally unlikely to encounter other recreationists, but they might see the occasional fishing boat offshore.

The roadless area is extremely rugged and is difficult to cross. An old trail goes from Cape Decision to Port McArthur. The lower portion of the trail was recently maintained by the Cape Decision Lighthouse Society. 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.

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ROS Class	Acres	Percent of Total ROS
Primitive (P)	36,417	58%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	26,646	42%

The area contains 11 inventoried recreation places, which cover 4,175 acres (7 percent) of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places	Total Acres
P	1	136
SPM	10	4,039

There are no developed recreation facilities at this time.

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

The inventoried roadless areas of the Tongass National Forest were rated according to this system in 1989 for the Analysis of the Management Situation developed in support of the Forest Plan Revision. At that time, the South Kuiu Roadless Area was given a rating of 28 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 27. The difference in the rating is due to a lower score for solitude because of increasing outfitter and guide use, and uses associated with the lighthouse and trail.

**(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values:** There are no known areas of unique or uncommon plant/soils associations or geologic formations in the area. The roadless area could be added to the Kuiu and Tebenkof Bay Wildernesses, which lie to the north and, possibly, to other roadless areas on the island. This would create a larger wilderness.

**(a) Fish Resources:** No VCUs in this area have been listed as primary salmon producers or sport fish producers by the Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998).

This large area has 34 ADF&G numbered salmon-producing streams. The general area is a good producer of anadromous fish, supporting runs of pink, chum, and coho salmon; steelhead and cutthroat trout; and Dolly Varden char. The best-producing stream in the roadless area is Kell Bay Creek, which has an escapement of 39,000 pink salmon and 600 chum salmon. All of the anadromous fish-bearing streams have runs of coho salmon.

**(b) Wildlife Resources:** The area displays the typical array of wildlife found on Kuiu Island, including black bears, Sitka black-tailed deer, wolves, furbearers and waterfowl. Sea otters occur in the western areas of Sumner Strait off southern Kupreanof Island and on both eastern and western shores of Kuiu Island. They are expanding their range northward into Keku Strait. The Peale's Peregrine Falcon is known to nest on the western side of this roadless area, and a northern goshawk nesting area is suspected in this area.

**(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, including 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. Peale's peregrine falcon is known to nest on the western side of this roadless area, and a northern

goshawk nesting area is suspected in this area. 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; however, this area displays much greater relief and landform variety than is typical of the region.

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

**(6) Scenic Values:** The landscape in this area has a natural appearance. The roadless area includes gently rolling hills that are typically short, extremely broken and benched, in stark contrast to the sharply rising, heavily dissected mountain slopes. The area appears unmodified from visual priority areas, such as Chatham Strait and Sumner Strait.

Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan, that area within or adjacent to the area include Sumner and Chatham Strait, which are tour ship routes.

About 1 percent of this roadless area is inventoried Variety Class A (possessing landscape diversity that is unique for the character type). Most of the area, 91 percent, is inventoried Variety Class B (possessing landscape diversity that is common for the character type) and approximately 7 percent is inventoried Variety Class C (possessing a low degree of landscape diversity). Approximately 2 percent of the area was not inventoried.

Almost all of the roadless area, 98 percent, is in Existing Visual Condition (EVC) Type I, where only ecological change has occurred. Approximately 1 percent of the area is EVC Type III, where changes in the landscape are noticed by the average forest visitor. The natural appearance of the landscape remains dominant. Approximately 2 percent of the area was not inventoried.

**(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values:** The area is in the traditional territory of the Kuiu Tlingit, who eventually settled in Klawock. Archaeological sites include villages, forts, camps, fish traps, and petroglyphs. Historic period sites include a cannery in Kell Bay, fur farms, cabins, and the Cape Decision Lighthouse. Two outfitter/guide permits were issued in 2000, which resulted in 156 service days of camping and 8 service days of black bear hunting. The bays and coves are used for commercial and recreational fishing. In the past, subsistence hunting and fishing were conducted by the former occupants of the old villages, camps, and cabins in the area. Subsistence use is currently limited due primarily to the difficult access to and within the area. No VCUs are listed among those with the highest community use value or among those with the highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas.

The prime attraction in this area is the close proximity to the Kuiu and Tebenkof Bay Wildernesses and the combined primitive settings of the wilderness and the roadless area. The numerous bays, islets, and mountainous terrain provide ample opportunity for isolated, undeveloped forms of recreation.

**(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes:** The South Kuiu Roadless Area is bounded to the north by the Kuiu Wilderness. Affleck Canal divides this area into two separate areas. The roadless area is large and the boundaries are well-defined. To the south, east, and west, it is bordered by saltwater. Due to the dissected terrain, it is highly unlikely that a road system would be developed within this area. The existing wilderness areas to the north would preclude the development of a road connecting this roadless area to another part of Kuiu Island. If the land within the Cape Decision Lighthouse Reserve is conveyed to a non-profit group, the southern boundary would change slightly.

### **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. While the roadless area is not close to any tourist hubs, some increase is expected. The recreation potential for South Kuiu is moderate. There is potential for additional outfitter and guide permits,

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trails, cabins, and shelters. A non-profit Alaskan corporation was awarded the stewardship of the Cape Decision Light Station and Lighthouse Reserve by the Coast Guard in 1997. They plan to maintain the lighthouse, the trail that once ran north to Port McArthur, and the surrounding areas for recreational use by the public. They plan to rent the lighthouse by the day, week, or by the month to groups of 6 to 10 people. These plans should be compatible with wilderness designation. Wilderness designation would be compatible with dispersed recreation, but could conflict with some tourism development and may prevent use of helicopters for access.

- (2) **Subsistence Uses:** Management as wilderness would not conflict with current subsistence uses.
- (3) **Fish Resources:** No fish habitat enhancement projects are planned in the area.
- (4) **Wildlife Resources:** No wildlife habitat improvement projects are planned in the area.
- (5) **Timber Resources:** There are approximately 37,339 acres mapped as productive old growth and 56 acres mapped as second growth due to harvesting in the roadless area. Of these acres, 25,892 acres are categorized as tentatively suitable for timber production. Based on the Forest Plan LUDs assigned to this area, none of this roadless area is suitable for timber production.
- (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:** This roadless area contains an estimated 40,388 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources (Brew et al., 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991). All of these acres are considered to have moderate potential for development.
- (8) **Transportation and Utilities:** No transportation or utility corridors have been identified in the roadless area. Deep islets and broken terrain make development of a road system unfeasible.
- (9) **Water Availability and Use:** If the lighthouse is developed as a guest house, it could create a domestic water need. There are no existing or planned hydroelectric projects in the area.
- (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:** Forest Service records show that two outfitter/guides used this area in 2000 for 156 service days for camping and 8 service days for black bear hunting. The Coast Guard is authorized to maintain communication facilities near Mt. McArthur.
- (12) **Land Status:** The roadless area is entirely National Forest System land. The area near the Cape Decision Lighthouse, about 216 acres, was reserved for use by the Coast Guard for lighthouse purposes in 1921 and may be conveyed to a non-profit organization.

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

- (1) **Public and Congressional Interest:**
  - (a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** Residents of Point Baker/Port Protection use the area for subsistence crabbing and shellfish harvesting. The Cape Decision Lighthouse Society, a non-profit Alaskan corporation, was awarded the stewardship of the Cape Decision Light Station and Lighthouse. They have expressed an interest in renting the lighthouse to the public and managing the Cape Decision area for public recreational use.
  - (b) **Congressional Interest:** In 1989, U.S. House of Representatives Bill HR 987 proposed to designate 23 areas as wilderness on the Tongass National Forest. This bill included the South Kuiu Roadless Area as part of the South Kuiu Island Wilderness. The northern portion of the roadless area (approximately 60,576 acres) was designated as the Kuiu Wilderness by the Tongass Timber Reform Act

of 1990. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed that the roadless area be designated as part of the proposed Tebenkof Bay and Kuiu Wildernesses.

**(c) Public Input During Forest Plan Revision and Appeals:** Many comments specific to this area were received. The Wrangell Resource Council and the City of Port Alexander commented that all of South Kuiu is important for scenic quality, old-growth habitat, wildlife, and primitive recreation and should be maintained for those values. The Point Baker Community Council resolved that South Kuiu (VCUs 410, 411, and 414) should be allocated to the Old-growth Habitat LUD or the Primitive Recreation LUD due to its fishing and hunting values, its location along a migratory flyway, its value as wintering waterfowl habitat, and due to the occurrence of high concentrations of marbled murrelets in the area. The Sitka Conservation Society wanted VCUs 413 to 415 designated as LUD II and wanted VCUs 411 and 414 managed as Old-growth Habitat LUD. The Rainforest Campaign and the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council wanted the area managed as LUD II. The timber industry wanted the area managed for timber production. The Alaska Visitors Association wanted the area managed for developed recreation. Others recommended the strongest possible protection for the area. Some requested that there be no log transfer facilities developed. Others commented that the area should be managed to maintain a high-quality sport fishing experience. Others commented that the area should be managed as a mineral LUD. The Narrows Conservation Coalition, the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, and the Kake Native community recommended that the area be managed to preserve its integrity. They felt that the area merits special protection because of outstanding wildlife, fisheries, hunting, subsistence, recreation, and tourism values.

**(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 and 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:** There were no specific public comments on the roadless issue for this area.

**(f) Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process:** The U.S. Department of the Interior identified this roadless area as having important fish and wildlife habitat and populations; although not a top priority for protection, it ranked in their top third among all roadless areas. They indicated that protection of this area, particularly because it adjoins Tebenkof Bay Wilderness 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 Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) identified Roadless Areas 244, 245, and 246 as adjacent to the existing Tebenkof Bay Wilderness and Kuiu Wilderness and recommended them for permanent protection as wilderness. They indicated that this combination would create a contiguous wilderness area of approximately 265,000 acres. SEACC recommended that the Bay of Pillars, East Kuiu, and South Kuiu roadless areas be designated wilderness and added to the existing Tebenkof Bay and Kuiu Wilderness. This combination would create a contiguous wilderness of approximately 265,000 acres.

Many individuals commented in favor of permanent protection for this area

**(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses:** This area adjoins the Kuiu Wilderness. The Tebenkof Bay Wilderness, the East Kuiu Roadless Area, and the Bay of Pillars Roadless Area are north of the area. The Coronation Island and Warren Island Wildernesses lie to the south across Decision Passage.

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

<b>Community</b>	<b>Air Miles</b>	<b>Water Miles</b>
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	145	160
Petersburg (Pop. 3,224)	50	65
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	65	65
Ketchikan (Pop. 14,070)	105	125

Kake (approximately 42 miles to the north) and Petersburg are the nearest stops on the Alaska Marine Highway.

**(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System:** The South Kuiu Roadless Area is south of the Kuiu and Tebenkof Bay Wildernesses on Kuiu Island. The Coronation Island and Warren Island Wildernesses lie to the south, across Decision Passage. Chatham Strait lies to the west and Sumner Strait lies to the east. The roadless area occupies a large area on the southern portion of Kuiu Island. It is divided into two separate parts by Affleck Canal. Landforms within this area are varied and represent all geomorphic types found on Kuiu Island. Gently rolling hills that are typically short, extremely broken and benched, are in stark contrast to the sharply rising, heavily dissected mountain slopes to the north.

The area is mostly unmodified. The natural integrity and apparent naturalness is considered to be outstanding. The opportunity for solitude is very high and the opportunity for primitive recreation is outstanding.

Approximately 1 percent of the landscape is considered to be distinctive for the character type from a scenery standpoint. The area has important cultural, historic, and recreational values.

The roadless area includes about 13,063 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, 2,382 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The South Kuiu Roadless Area is classified as being in the Kuiu Island Biogeographic Province and makes about 13 percent of the province. It is 1 of 8 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 makes up about 26 percent of the province. The province also includes the Sumner, Conclusion, and associated islands LUD II area, which makes up about 1 percent of the province.

The South Kuiu Roadless Area lies completely within the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands Ecological Section and represents 6 percent of the ecological section. Approximately 13 percent of the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands Ecological Section is in existing wilderness, 8 percent is in existing LUD II, and an additional 33 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

Half (51 percent) of the roadless area is in the Affleck Canal Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 57 percent of the entire ecological subsection. Approximately 38 percent of this ecological subsection is protected by existing wilderness, 2 percent in existing LUD II, and 60 percent is in existing non-development LUDs. One-quarter (24 percent) of the roadless area is in the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Granitics Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 10 percent of the entire ecological subsection, 19 percent of which is protected in existing wilderness, 23 percent in existing LUD II, and 36 percent by existing non-development LUDs. Twenty-three percent of the roadless area is in the Alvin Bay Sediments Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 18 percent of the entire ecological subsection, 53 percent of which is in existing wilderness and 25 percent is protected by existing non-development LUDs. The remaining 2 percent of the roadless area is in the Rowan Sediments Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 1 percent of the entire ecological subsection, 27 percent of which is in existing wilderness and 27 percent is protected by existing non-development LUDs.

The South Kuiu Roadless Area was rated 27 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 2nd from the highest (along with 2 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas.

There is local support for managing the area in an unroaded condition, and there is both local and national support for designating the area as wilderness. Designation would create a wilderness with important cultural, historic, and recreational values. It would also expand the Kuiu and Tebenkof Bay Wildernesses to the south. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be very high.

**V. Environmental Consequences**

The South Kuiu Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1 or 2 is implemented. All of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. This area contains an estimated 40,388 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources; all of the acres are considered to have moderate potential for development. The recreation, minerals, and special use programs would continue. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area are protected by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. This would not affect timber sale projects because this area is currently allocated to a non-development LUD. The total area suitable for timber production would not change from Alternative 1. The ongoing recreation, minerals, and special use 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, including cultural, historic, and scenic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 246 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness			63,063	63,063	63,063	63,063	63,063	63,063
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								
Semi-remote Recreation	63,063	63,063						
Recommended LUD II								
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed								
Modified Landscape								
Timber Production								
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63,063</b>	<b>63,063</b>	<b>63,063</b>	<b>63,063</b>	<b>63,063</b>	<b>63,063</b>	<b>63,063</b>	<b>63,063</b>
Suitable Timber Lands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0