

CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE AND NEED

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Purpose and Need

Introduction

The purpose and need for this Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) is to respond to a March 2001 U.S. District Court Order for evaluating and considering roadless areas within the Tongass National Forest for recommendations as potential wilderness. The National Forest System Land and Resource Management Planning Regulations of September 30, 1982 (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 219.17) provide the manner in which roadless areas are to be evaluated for recommendations as potential wildernesses.

This Draft SEIS analyzes eight alternatives in detail, including the No-Action Alternative, for wilderness recommendations with regard to the roadless areas of the Tongass National Forest. If the Regional Forester selects an alternative in the Record of Decision that recommends new wilderness, the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan Revision (referred to as the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan in this document) will be amended to ensure that these areas are managed to maintain their wilderness eligibility. Any new wilderness recommendations are a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and, lastly, Congress. The amended 1997 Tongass Forest Plan would guide management of areas recommended for wilderness to preserve the option of wilderness designation until Congress acted on such recommendations or the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan is revised in the future.

Forest Plan History on the Tongass National Forest

LUD II Area: A special land use designation identified by TTRA for areas to be permanently managed in a roadless state to retain their wildland characteristics. Unlike wilderness, limited development is permitted under certain circumstances (including water and power, mining, habitat, and transportation developments).

The original Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1979 Tongass Forest Plan) was completed in April 1979 and recommended ten areas for wilderness totaling 5.4 million acres. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) passed December 2, 1980, and made these ten areas, with some minor boundary adjustments, part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The 1979 Tongass Forest Plan was amended in 1986. The Tongass Forest Plan Revision process began in 1987 and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was published in June 1990. That Draft EIS had two alternatives that included wilderness recommendations. In November 1990, the Tongass Timber Reform Act (TTRA) was passed. This Act added five new wildernesses and one wilderness addition for a total of 296,000 acres. In addition, it added 12 legislated Land Use Designation (LUD) II areas totaling 727,000 acres to retain their roadless and wildland character. The 1986 Tongass Forest Plan was amended in February 1991 to incorporate the TTRA changes. The Revision process continued with a Supplement to the Draft EIS published in September 1991 to incorporate all changes required by TTRA and to evaluate a new set of alternatives. Because Congress had just acted on the wilderness issue following the June 1990 Draft EIS, the Forest Service did not reconsider roadless areas for potential wilderness recommendation. The Forest Service prepared a Final EIS in the fall of 1992 but did not publish a Record of Decision (ROD). The Regional Forester found that there likely was new information that should be collected to respond to 36 CFR 219.19. That process took several years, leading to the eventual 1997 Final EIS and Forest Plan Revision ROD.

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Completion of the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision

Roadless Area Terms

Roadless Area: For purposes of this SEIS, this is a generic term that includes inventoried roadless areas and unroaded areas.

Inventoried Roadless Area: An undeveloped area typically exceeding 5,000 acres that meets the minimum criteria for wilderness consideration under the Wilderness Act.

Unroaded Area: An undeveloped area typically less than 5,000 acres, but of a size and configuration sufficient to protect the inherent characteristics associated with its roadless condition.

The 1982 forest planning regulations provided guidance on evaluating roadless areas for potential wilderness recommendation; therefore, the Forest Service has chosen to complete this SEIS under the 1982 regulations for this court-ordered process.

The mix of land uses and associated activity planned for in the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan was the result of significant collaborative efforts throughout Southeast Alaska, the state, and across the nation. Additionally, the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan used the best available science and scientists to ensure that the Forest Plan was physically, biologically, economically, and socially sound.

The 1997 Tongass Forest Plan did not include wilderness recommendations in the Final EIS. It did, however, offer for analysis and public comment alternatives that would manage portions of the Tongass roadless areas in non-development LUDs. Roadless values were analyzed and incorporated in the mix of LUDs, and in appropriate standards and guidelines used for implementing the Revision.

The 1997 Tongass Forest Plan was the subject of 33 separate appeals by organizations and individuals. In 1999, the Under Secretary of Agriculture affirmed the Regional Forester's decision regarding all 33 appeals based on the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS and planning record. The Under Secretary also issued a new Record of Decision (1999 ROD) for the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan.

Two lawsuits challenged the 1997 and 1999 RODs in the U.S. District Court for the District of Alaska. The Alaska Forest Association and some Southeast Alaska communities challenged many aspects of the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan and the process by which the 1999 ROD was issued. The Sierra Club and other environmental groups challenged the lack of consideration of wilderness recommendations in the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS and ROD. The Court issued one opinion for both cases in March 2001.

In the Alaska Forest Association case (*Alaska Forest Ass'n v. United States Dep't of Agric.* No. J99-0013 CV [JKS] [D. Alaska]), the Court upheld the 1997 ROD against all of the challenges, but it also held that the 1999 ROD was not properly adopted. The Court vacated the 1999 ROD and enjoined the Forest Service from implementing it unless an SEIS was prepared addressing the changes from the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan. Because of the extensive public involvement and scientific review in the 1997 ROD, and its thorough policy and legal review in the administrative appeal process and by District Court, the Forest Service does not intend to propose changes to the 1997 ROD similar to those that were enjoined by the District Court. The Sierra Club has intervened in the Alaska Forest Association case and appealed the decision vacating the 1999 ROD to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

In the Sierra Club challenge of the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS (*Sierra Club v. Lyons*, No. J00-0009 CV [JKS] [D. Alaska]), the Court found that the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan should have considered making wilderness recommendations in the Final EIS. The Court ordered the Forest Service to prepare an SEIS evaluating wilderness recommendations for roadless areas on the Tongass and to provide the relative contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System in its Analysis of the Management Situation as follows:

The Court finds that the Forest Service violated NFMA [National Forest Management Act] and NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] in the revised TLMP by failing to consider any alternatives with new wilderness recommendations, and hereby enjoins the Forest Service from taking any action to change the wilderness character of any, eligible roadless area until

the Forest Service complies with NEPA and NFMA. To that end, the Forest Service shall prepare a SEIS that evaluates and considers roadless areas within the Tongass for recommendations as potential wilderness areas. The Forest Service shall also provide the relative contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System in its analysis of the management situation (*Sierra Club, et al. v. Lyons, J00-0009 CV [JKS]*).

On May 23, 2001, the Court suspended the injunction against actions in roadless areas on May 23, 2001, and subsequently undertook additional legal briefing and an evidentiary hearing on February 13-15, 2002, to determine an appropriate remedy for the decision. On April 26, 2002, the Court reinstated the injunction, but did not include the Swan Lake-Lake Tyee Intertie, nor timber sale EISs published in the Federal Register prior to April 13, 1999.

Forest Location and Description

The 16.8-million acre Tongass National Forest occupies about 7 percent of the area of Alaska. The Tongass is located in Southeast Alaska, the area commonly called the panhandle of Alaska, and extends from Dixon Entrance in the south to Yakutat in the north; it is bordered on the east by Canada and on the west by the Gulf of Alaska. The Tongass National Forest extends approximately 500 miles north to south, and approximately 120 miles east to west at its widest point. Figure 1-1 is a vicinity map of the Tongass National Forest.

The Tongass includes a narrow mainland strip of steep, rugged mountains and icefields, and more than 1,000 offshore islands known as the Alexander Archipelago. Together, the islands and mainland have nearly 11,000 miles of meandering shoreline, with numerous bays and coves. A system of seaways separates the many islands and provides a protected waterway called the Inside Passage. Federal lands comprise about 95 percent of Southeast Alaska, with about 80 percent in the Tongass National Forest (and most of the rest in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve). The remaining land is held in State, Native corporation, and other private ownerships.

Most of the area of the Tongass is wild and undeveloped. Approximately 73,000 people inhabit Southeast Alaska, most living in 32 communities located on island or mainland coasts. Only eight of the communities have populations greater than 1,000 persons. Most of these communities are surrounded by, or adjacent to, National Forest System land. Only three towns are connected to other parts of the mainland by road: Haines and Skagway to the north, and Hyder to the south.

The economies of Southeast Alaska's communities are largely dependent on the Tongass National Forest to provide natural resources for uses, such as fishing, timber harvesting, recreation, tourism, mining, and subsistence. Maintaining the abundant natural resources of the Forest, while also providing opportunities for their use, is a major concern of Southeast Alaska residents.

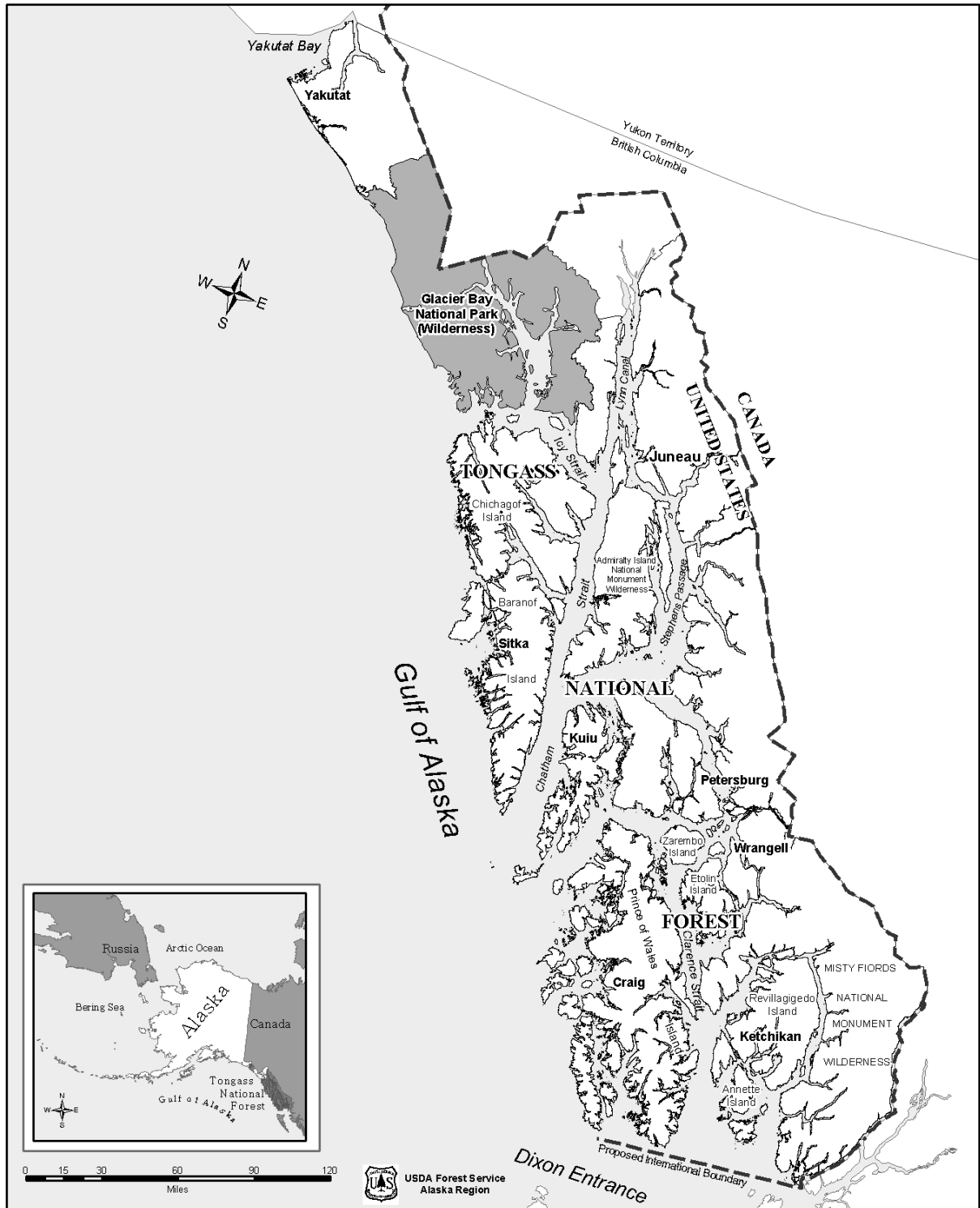
Ranger District offices on the Tongass National Forest are located in Yakutat, Juneau, Hoonah, Sitka, Petersburg, Wrangell, Thorne Bay, Craig, and Ketchikan. There are also two National Monuments (Admiralty Island and Misty Fjords) with offices in Juneau and Ketchikan (see Figure 1-1).

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for this SEIS is to respond to the District Court's decision in *Sierra Club v. Lyons*, by evaluating roadless areas of the Tongass National Forest for wilderness recommendations. In the roadless area evaluation process, the relative contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System has been considered. Appendix C of this SEIS includes documentation of the analysis and evaluation for each inventoried roadless area as directed by the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) requirements pertinent to roadless areas for Forest planning. As a result, Appendix C provides an update to the AMS done in 1989 for

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**Figure 1-1
Tongass National Forest Vicinity Map**



the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision, and also responds to the District Court's decision. The purpose and need for this SEIS is, therefore, narrow in focus and has been developed to specifically respond to the March 2001 Court order.

Since the preparation of the AMS in 1989, and especially during the last few years, there has been heightened national interest in the conservation of roadless areas. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule of January 12, 2001, is the subject of a number of lawsuits. While the Roadless Area Conservation Rule was being developed, the Forest Service was also developing a revised National Forest Transportation Policy that addressed road-related activities on National Forest System roadless lands. In 2001, the Secretary of Agriculture began a review of the roadless area rule and the Chief of the Forest Service undertook a review of the road management policy. These reviews have led the Forest Service to initiate several Interim Directives with the intent that the values associated with inventoried roadless areas are fully considered within the context of forest planning. One of the key elements of the interim directives continues to be that roadless values need to be incorporated into each Forest's planning efforts. The update of the AMS, which is incorporated into Appendix C of this Draft SEIS, provides baseline information that reflects current conditions for incorporation of inventoried roadless areas into this SEIS.

What is a Wilderness?

Only Congress can create, modify, or eliminate wilderness. Wildernesses are federal land designated by Congress to "be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness" (*Wilderness Act of 1964, P.L. 88-577, Sec. 2. [a]*). Wilderness is further defined in the Act as:

an area of underdeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Past Congressional Actions

Congress, with the passage of ANILCA and TTRA, designated wildernesses on the Tongass National Forest and included special provisions to recognize the unique conditions found in Southeast Alaska. These provisions include recreation developments relative to safety and continued use of motorized access, such as boats and floatplanes.

Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act

Congress has twice acted to designate wildernesses on the Tongass National Forest. ANILCA was enacted in 1980 and included as Section 703 (a) the establishment of ten wildernesses totaling 5.4 million acres within the Tongass. Two of the areas, Admiralty Island and Misty Fjords, were also designated as National Monuments. ANILCA also had several provisions relating to future wilderness considerations:

Sec. 101 (d) - *This Act provides sufficient protection for the national interest in the scenic, natural, cultural, and environmental values on the public lands in Alaska, and at*

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the same time provides adequate opportunity for satisfaction of the economic and social needs of the State of Alaska and its people; accordingly, the designation and disposition of the public lands in Alaska pursuant to this Act are found to represent a proper balance between the reservation of national conservation system units and those public lands necessary and appropriate for more intensive use and disposition, and thus Congress believes that the need for future legislation designating new conservation system units, new conservation areas, or new national recreation areas, has been obviated thereby.

Sec. 708(b) (3) - *areas reviewed in such Final Environmental Statement and not designated as wilderness or for study by this Act or remaining in further planning upon enactment of this Act need not be managed for the purpose of protecting their suitability for wilderness designation pending revision of the initial plans; and*

(4) - *unless expressly authorized by Congress the Department of Agriculture shall not conduct any further statewide roadless area review and evaluation of National Forest System lands in the State of Alaska for the purpose of determining their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.*

Sec. 1326 (b) - *No further studies of Federal lands in the State of Alaska for the single purpose of considering the establishment of a conservation system unit, national recreation area, national conservation area, or for related or similar purposes shall be conducted unless authorized by this Act or further Act of Congress.*

This SEIS and consideration of recommending wilderness is part of the Forest Plan Revision Final EIS and is consistent with ANILCA §708(b)(4) because the 1997 Forest Plan Revision is a forest-specific evaluation and not a statewide evaluation. This SEIS is also consistent with ANILCA §1326 (b) because the 1997 Forest Plan Revision is a general land management plan and not a single purpose study. Section 101 of ANILCA provides important congressional determinations, findings and information relating to additional wilderness in Alaska and will be considered in making the recommendation for additional wilderness.

Tongass Timber Reform Act

In November 1990, TTRA amended ANILCA and designated five new wildernesses and one wilderness addition totaling 296,080 acres. The Act also designated 12 permanent LUD II areas totaling 727,765 acres. Congressionally designated LUD II areas are to be managed in a roadless state to retain their wildland characteristics; however, they are less restrictive on access and activities than wilderness, primarily to accommodate recreation and subsistence activities and to provide vital Forest transportation and utility system linkages, if necessary.

The 18 areas designated as wilderness or LUD II in TTRA included all or portions of 17 of the 23 areas included in the US House of Representatives Bill HR 987: 1.02 million out of 1.82 million acres. After the passage of TTRA, further wilderness recommendations were not considered in detail during the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision process.

Prior Work on Wilderness Evaluation

Early in the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision process, 110 inventoried roadless areas were examined for potential wilderness recommendations. Each of these roadless areas was analyzed and results were recorded in Appendix C of the AMS in 1989. For this SEIS, all roadless Tongass National Forest System land was assessed in order to update Appendix C of the 1989 AMS to better reflect current conditions. The assessment included all inventoried roadless areas, as well as

unroaded lands of less than 5,000 acres. The smaller areas were evaluated to determine if they were eligible for wilderness consideration (based on the Wilderness Act, see *What is a Wilderness?* above), and thus should be carried forth as inventoried roadless areas in the evaluation. This Draft SEIS includes 115 inventoried roadless areas. The increase in number from 110 inventoried roadless areas primarily reflects inclusion of smaller individual roadless areas that are located within roaded areas that the 1997 Forest Plan considered as developed and/or marginally eligible for wilderness recommendation. These areas have been included in the roadless area analysis for the Draft SEIS primarily because of the high public interest in management of roadless areas on the Tongass. The inventoried roadless areas are mapped on each of the alternative maps included in the map section. Descriptions of each inventoried roadless area are provided in Appendix C of the SEIS.

The 1997 Tongass Forest Plan is used as a baseline for land allocation and serves as the No-Action Alternative. This represents Alternative 11 in the 1997 Forest Plan Revision Final EIS, adjusted by the 1997 ROD and subsequent non-significant Forest Plan Amendments made by projects since 1997. A range of alternatives has been developed relative to wilderness recommendations for all inventoried roadless areas on the Tongass National Forest.

The Tongass National Forest contains approximately 16.8 million acres, of which about 6.6 million acres are Congressionally designated wilderness, National Monument, or LUD II lands occurring throughout the Forest. The 110 inventoried roadless areas in the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS covered about 9.4 million acres, including the LUD II lands described above. The 115 inventoried roadless areas analyzed in this Draft SEIS cover approximately 9.7 million acres.

Forest Plan Decisions

Six types of decision are made in forest plans. The following briefly describes the decisions already made in the 1997 ROD, along with how this SEIS could affect each category of decision.

- A. Recommendations on Special Management Areas.** The primary purpose of this SEIS is to consider recommendations for new wildernesses on the Tongass National Forest. The 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision ROD included two types of recommendations on special management areas: 1) new Research Natural Areas and 2) additions of rivers to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- B. Land Suitable for Timber Production.** Under the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS, lands were made available for a variety of uses including timber production. The methodology for determining the location of suitable lands for timber production (the “suitable” land base) was revised under the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan. No further changes are being proposed to the methodology for determining forest land suitability; however, the amount and distribution of land suitable for timber production may vary with the alternatives analyzed in the SEIS.
- C. Allowable Sale Quantity.** The 1997 Tongass Forest Plan established an allowable sale quantity (ASQ) (a decadal ceiling on the amount of timber that can be supplied, expressed on an annual basis) at 267 million board feet (MMBF) per year. The ASQ reflects the maximum quantity of timber available that can be removed from suitable forest lands in perpetuity and on a sustained yield basis. This quantity was also determined to be sufficient to provide a supply to help meet market demands in Southeast Alaska, and to provide a significant contribution to Southeast Alaska’s employment and local community stability while meeting multiple-use resource goals. Potential changes to the ASQ are analyzed for the different alternatives presented in this SEIS.

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- D. Multiple-use goals and objectives.** The goals and objectives of the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS provide a balanced approach to multiple resource needs and conditions. These goals and objectives are still valid and no changes are proposed in this SEIS.
- E. Management prescriptions.** The 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS uses 19 LUDs with a range of management objectives. Four broad groups of LUDs, similar in management direction and environmental effects, have been identified:
- 1) Wilderness and National Monument (5.9 million acres),
 - 2) Mostly Natural (7.2 million acres),
 - 3) Moderate Development (1.1 million acres), and
 - 4) Intensive Development (2.5 million acres).
- Management prescriptions consist largely of standards and guidelines. The SEIS creates two new management prescriptions to delineate “Recommended Wilderness” and “Recommended LUD II” areas. The Recommended Wilderness prescription falls into LUD group 1 and the Recommended LUD II falls into LUD group 2. The SEIS considers reallocation of lands from LUD groups 2, 3, and 4, under the 1997 Forest Plan, to groups 1 and 2.
- F. Monitoring and Evaluation.** The 1997 Tongass Forest Plan provides direction for monitoring and evaluation. The SEIS proposes no changes to the existing monitoring and evaluation program.

Issues

Identification of issues helps define or predict the resources or uses that could be most affected by the management of National Forest System lands. These issues are then used as a basis to formulate alternatives or to measure differences between alternatives. Ten public issues were originally identified in 1988 for the Forest Plan Revision. These original issues included scenic quality, recreation, fish habitat, wildlife habitat, subsistence, timber harvest, roads, minerals, roadless areas, and local economy. The 1991 Forest Plan Revision Supplemental Draft EIS (SDEIS) added an additional concern, identifying and considering for recommendation potential wild, scenic, and recreational rivers.

After the release of the 1991 SDEIS, considerable new information pertaining to the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS became accessible. Out of this information emerged five additional issues, determined by the Regional Forester to need more study and evaluation before a final revised Forest Plan could be adopted. Some of these issues were aspects or extensions of the ten public issues previously considered, others were new as issues or had not been considered as issues in themselves. The five issues were wildlife viability, fish habitat, karst and caves, alternatives to clearcutting, and socioeconomic considerations. These issues were assessed in the 1996 Revised SDEIS and the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS.

Public Input

The scope of this SEIS was initially determined by the Court in its ruling on the 1997 ROD. Additional information was analyzed to help clearly define the issues for this Draft SEIS and for use in the development and analysis of alternatives. For this Draft SEIS, comments and information from a wide variety of public inputs that were related to wilderness and management of roadless areas on the Tongass National Forest were evaluated. Sections reviewed included:

- ◆ public comments that were generated during the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision process that related to wilderness and roadless area issues,

- ◆ Tongass Forest Plan Revision appeals;
- ◆ public input on the Forest Service's 2001 National Roadless Area Conservation Rule that was specific to the Tongass National Forest,
- ◆ congressional proposals for wilderness that have been developed recently and during the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision process,
- ◆ public input related to roadless areas, expressed during project-level EIS analyses over approximately the past 10 years, and
- ◆ public input on the National Forest Transportation Rule and Policy that was specific to the Tongass National Forest.

This record of public input on the management of the Tongass covers a period of more than 10 years. Of special note are the public meetings on roadless area issues that were recently conducted for the National Roadless Area Conservation EIS. This project involved extensive meetings in Southeast Alaska and covered similar issues.

In addition to the above, public involvement has occurred over the past 8 months during the development of the SEIS. Public involvement activities that have taken place during this time frame include:

- ◆ The Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register in September 2001.
- ◆ A notification letter was sent in November 2001 to a mailing list of approximately 550.
- ◆ An SEIS Web site was developed in November 2001 and has been maintained to inform and engage the public since then. It is updated as new information is developed or published and provides a mechanism for public input. A number of comments and questions have been received through the Web site.
- ◆ A working interdisciplinary team meeting that was open to the public was held in November 2001 regarding the definition of issues and alternatives (specific public input was received at this meeting regarding these topics).
- ◆ A project update (newsletter) was sent in January 2002 to a mailing list of approximately 600.
- ◆ In response to the above items, a number of letters have been received containing comments regarding the issues and alternatives (these have included letters from environmental organizations, the timber industry, Southeast Alaska community organizations, and a number of individuals from Southeast Alaska and across the nation).
- ◆ A number of group-specific meetings have also occurred with various organizations (including Alaska Native groups).

This input has been reviewed and synthesized into a Supplemental Scoping Report that is maintained in the planning record. Appendix A (Issue Identification) to this SEIS presents a summary of this synthesis.

Key Issues

Any alternative that proposes new wilderness recommendations would create some change in effects and/or outputs in relation to the existing 1997 Tongass Forest Plan. Chapter 3 of the SEIS shows the effects for all relevant resources. Some of these

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changes are, however, more likely to influence the comparison between alternatives, and more emphasis and analysis is placed on these issues. Based on the public input examined, it was clear that the specific issues to be considered in this analysis should be grouped into two broad issue categories, which are referred to as key issues. These key issues are the major issues driving the alternatives and the analysis. In general, they represent two very different sets of strongly held values and viewpoints.

Key Issue 1 – Additional wilderness designation will provide greater long-term protection of roadless areas on the Tongass National Forest than is provided by the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan.

Approximately 6.6 million acres of Congressionally designated wilderness, National Monument, or LUD II lands occur throughout the Tongass National Forest. Aside from wilderness, there are approximately 9.7 million acres of inventoried roadless areas (including legislated LUD II) on the Tongass. The 1997 Tongass Forest Plan allocated 74 percent of the roadless areas to non-development LUDs; however, because that designation is not permanent (and may be subject to future Forest Plan amendments and revisions) some segments of the public would rather have permanent protection status. There is concern by some that the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan does not provide sufficient recognition and long-term protection for Tongass roadless areas. Much of this concern is related to roadless area protection, rather than wilderness designation. Some hold the belief that many areas would be of more value to Americans as wilderness rather than as other LUDs. There is, however, no consensus on which areas should be recommended for wilderness.

The review of public input conducted for this SEIS indicated that concerns for additional wilderness protection primarily center around two themes. These can be generally characterized as the *symbolic* and *spiritual* value of wilderness and the value of wilderness as a means for additional *ecological* protection, including protection of wildlife viability, biodiversity, and fish populations. These themes, which are discussed in the following paragraphs, are important to segments of the public in Southeast Alaska and across the nation, and possibly internationally.

Symbolic and Spiritual Value of Wilderness – In a world characterized by rapid change and complexity, the symbolic or spiritual value of wilderness may be increasingly important. Wilderness can be viewed as symbolic of the nation's heritage. It may also be viewed as a symbol of restraint, a self-imposed limit on technological and economic development that reflects a wider awareness of environmental responsibility. The spiritual values associated with wilderness can be specific religious and cultural values attributed to particular places or types of landscapes. Alternatively, they may represent the feelings that people have for wild, natural landscapes that are often difficult to put into words. Although difficult to characterize or value in monetary terms, these types of values are very important for a lot of people.

Segments of the public place high value on the knowledge that wilderness exists, whether they use it or not. This value increases as more areas and larger areas are designated. There is interest in preserving large portions of the Tongass because the majority of the Forest is in a natural condition, unlike most other national forests, and the Tongass represents a significant portion of the world's remaining temperate rainforests.

Indicators: Analysis relative to this issue compares the amount and proportion of land protected as wilderness and in other non-development LUDs. Also, the values of the lands protected are considered. Non-use values are discussed qualitatively, with examples provided from other studies.

Ecological Values of Wilderness – Many people believe that roadless areas should be allowed to evolve naturally through their own dynamic processes and should be afforded permanent protection to ensure that this will occur. The Tongass includes very large undeveloped land areas, with several portions of the Forest consisting of contiguous roadless areas that exceed one million acres and represent large, unfragmented blocks of wildlife habitat. This scale of habitat protection is not possible elsewhere in the National Forest System, except on the Chugach National Forest.

Ecological values can be protected through a number of forest management approaches, including wilderness designation. Wildlife population viability is addressed on the Tongass by a conservation strategy consisting of two key components of the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan: the Forest-wide system of reserves (including all non-development LUDs), and the standards and guidelines that apply in development LUDs. The 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision ROD concluded that the old-growth conservation strategy and specific species management prescriptions represent a balance of wildlife habitat conservation measures that consider the best available scientific information and, within an acceptable level of risk inherent in projecting management effects, will provide sufficient fish and wildlife habitat to maintain well-distributed viable populations of vertebrate species in the planning area, and maintain the diversity of plants and animals on the Forest. Providing long-term protection for additional areas could further reduce these risks.

Indicators: Analysis relative to this issue compares the amount of productive old-growth forest and inventoried roadless areas that would be protected under each alternative, as well as the percentages of ecoregions and biogeographic provinces that would be protected in reserves.

Key Issue 2 – Additional wilderness designation will affect the social and economic well-being of the communities of Southeast Alaska.

Many communities in Southeast Alaska depend on the Tongass National Forest to provide the foundation for natural resource-based industries, including wood products, commercial fishing and fish processing, recreation, tourism, mining, and mineral development. Many residents also depend on subsistence hunting and fishing to meet their basic needs. There is very little private land throughout the region to provide these resources. Some people are concerned that wilderness recommendations could negatively affect employment and income generated by natural resource-based industries, including wood products, mining, and recreation and tourism. The employment and income associated with these industries is important to the economic and social well-being of many Southeast Alaskan communities. In addition, wilderness designation could affect transportation and utility projects that are considered by some as essential for continued economic development and well-being in the region.

This issue focuses on the social and economic effects of recommended wilderness designation on communities in Southeast Alaska. There are three central themes to this issue: natural resource-based industry, transportation and utility projects, and the regional economy and local communities.

Natural Resource-Based Industry

Wood Products – Sawmills in Southeast Alaska are dependent on the availability of timber resources from the Tongass National Forest, which provided 92 percent of the volume processed in local mills in 2000 (USDA Forest Service, 2001a). Timber harvest would not be allowed in areas recommended for wilderness or LUD II and

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reductions in the supply of available timber could have short- and long-term effects on the wood products industry.

Indicators: The analysis of short-term effects on the wood products industry focuses on the existing Tongass timber sale volume under contract (i.e., National Forest timber sales that have been sold but not yet harvested) and proposed sales that are not yet under contract. The long-term effects analysis focuses on the number of acres suitable for timber production, as well as potential changes to the Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ), which is the maximum quantity of timber that may be scheduled from suitable lands on the entire Forest for a 10-year period.

Mining – The Tongass National Forest contains many important mineral resources, from precious metals to chemical-grade minerals. Except for designated wildernesses and other withdrawn areas, all Tongass National Forest lands are open to mineral exploration and development. Recommendations for additional wilderness may have an effect on the exploration and development of minerals. However, recommended areas would remain open to mineral exploration and development until Congress acted to designate areas as wilderness.

Indicators: Analysis related to the mining issue focuses on changes in the amounts of identified mineral tracts and undiscovered mineral areas that could be withdrawn from mineral production or made more costly to develop.

Recreation and Tourism – The recreation and tourism industry in Southeast Alaska has grown significantly over the past decade, with much of this growth associated with a dramatic increase in the number of cruise ship passengers visiting the region.

Changes in the land base available for tourism and recreation developments could affect this industry. In addition, potential use restrictions associated with wilderness designation could affect the size of commercially guided groups visiting particular locations.

Indicators: Analysis related to the recreation/tourism issue considers the effects of wilderness designation on Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) settings, outfitter/guide use, recreation places important for tourism, and the percent of the Forest available for tourism developments. The ROS system identifies the appropriate combination of activities, settings, and experience for different types of recreation experience, ranging from primitive to urban settings.

Transportation and Utility Projects

Residents of the region are dependent on air and water transportation for travel between most communities. The 1999 Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, 1999) identified future investments in roads, ferry terminals, and ferries to develop a comprehensive regional transportation system. Similarly, proposals exist to develop a power grid to inter-connect electrical generating facilities with most of the communities throughout Southeast Alaska. Full implementation of these plans would require construction of new roads and facilities within the National Forest.

Recommendations for additional wilderness may have an effect on the development of potential transportation or utility corridors or other land uses.

Indicators: Effects on transportation and utilities are analyzed by identifying the corridors that could be precluded or otherwise affected by the alternatives.

Regional Economy and Local Communities

As noted above, many communities in Southeast Alaska depend on the Tongass National Forest to provide the foundation for natural resource-based industries, as well as subsistence hunting and fishing. Recreation opportunities associated with the Tongass also play an important role in the quality of life of many Southeast Alaskans. Many families have favorite places where they fish, hunt, beachcomb, or just go to get away.

Regional Employment and Income

Wilderness recommendations could affect Southeast Alaskan communities and residents by affecting employment and income in natural resource-based industries. Wilderness recommendations may also restrict proposed transportation and utility projects and affect future economic development and associated employment opportunities, as well as travel between communities and, in some cases, local power sources.

Indicators: This analysis focuses on the potential effects on wood products and recreation and tourism employment and income at the regional level. Short-term effects on wood products employment focus on the potential effects associated with reductions in the existing volume under contract. Long-term effects on wood products employment address the potential effects of changes in the ASQ. Changes in recreation and tourism employment are based on projected changes in Recreation Visitor Days (RVDs). The potential effects of restrictions on mining and transportation and utility projects are also considered.

Local Communities

Employment - Timber and logging activities play an important role in at least 10 of Southeast Alaska's 32 communities. These communities would be affected by reductions in wood products employment.

Subsistence - For many rural Alaskans, subsistence means hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering natural resources to provide needed food and supplement rural incomes. For Native Alaskans and other rural Alaskans, subsistence is that and more: a lifestyle that preserves customs and traditions reflecting deeply held attitudes, values and beliefs. Concerns about subsistence include maintaining subsistence opportunities and protecting traditional subsistence areas. The alternatives considered here would result in the same or greater protection for subsistence resources; however, the effects are evaluated in Chapter 3 and by community.

Recreation - Resident recreation patterns may be affected by new wilderness recreation proposals, due to potential restrictions on recreation facility developments and numbers of visitors, as well as the long-term effects of maintaining areas in the primitive ROS.

Indicators: The discussion of community effects focuses on changes in jobs and income, subsistence, and recreation opportunities, and the resultant effects on the communities as a whole. The subsistence analysis is based on the subsistence analysis conducted for the 1997 Forest Plan Revision Final EIS, which used deer as the main "indicator" species for potential subsistence resource consequences. The percent change in the amount of productive old growth available after 120 years relative to the current (1997) Forest Plan is used as an indicator. The percent of the inventoried recreation places within 20 miles of one or more communities that would

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be in Wilderness or Recommended Wilderness is used as an indicator for recreation.

Updated Information

Several areas of information have been updated in this SEIS to better reflect current conditions on the Tongass as a whole and within roadless areas in particular.

- ◆ The 1996 Roadless Inventory Map used in the 1997 Forest Plan Revision Final EIS has been updated to reflect the most current land ownership information and new developments (roads, timber harvests, powerlines, etc.) implemented since 1996.
- ◆ The individual roadless area descriptions from the 1989 Analysis of the Management Situation (Appendix C) have been updated to reflect current conditions and to describe the various resources and uses associated with each area, including the relative contribution of each area to the National Wilderness Preservation System.
- ◆ In addition to updating roads, harvest areas, and ownership (as identified above) a variety of other resource databases were updated, including the existing productive old growth, suitable timber, LUD, and certain visual and recreation information.
- ◆ Updated information that has become available since the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS has been incorporated into the affected environment descriptions and the effects analyses for each resource area in Chapter 3. These updates are relatively extensive in the *Economic and Social Environment* section.

Organization of the Document

This SEIS is organized into seven chapters and five appendices. Chapter 1, Purpose and Need, describes the reasons for proposing and completing the SEIS. Chapter 2, Alternatives, describes the process used to develop alternatives, discusses alternatives not considered in detail, and then describes in detail a No-Action Alternative and seven other alternatives. Chapter 2 also includes comparisons of these alternatives based on the issues and significant environmental effects and identifies the Preferred Alternative.

The discussions on the affected environment and the environmental consequences are combined in Chapter 3, Environment and Effects. The environmental consequences (effects) of the alternatives on forest resources, and the background information needed to understand these consequences, are discussed together for each resource. The focus is on significant effects, with the analysis centered on the public issues related to recommendations for wilderness.

Chapter 3 begins with an introductory section that discusses the analysis and lays the groundwork for the sections that follow, including a general description of the Tongass National Forest. The remainder of Chapter 3 is divided into three parts. First, the resources that make up the Physical and Biological Environment are described and the effects of the alternatives are analyzed. This part sets the stage for the next part—the evaluation of Human Uses and Land Management. Finally, both of these parts set the stage for the final part—the Economic and Social Environment. The general outline of Chapter 3 is as follows:

- Introduction
- Physical and Biological Environment
 - Soils
 - Water
 - Fish
 - Biodiversity
 - Wildlife
 - Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species
- Human Uses and Land Management
 - Timber
 - Minerals
 - Transportation and Utilities
 - Lands
 - Recreation and Tourism
 - Scenery
 - Subsistence
 - Roadless Areas
 - Wilderness
 - Other Special Land Use Designations
- Economic and Social Environment
 - Regional Economy
 - Subregional Overview and Communities

This Draft SEIS also includes a list of preparers; a list of agencies, organizations and persons receiving copies of the document; cited literature; and a glossary (Chapters 4 through 7, respectively), as well as an index. Appendix A summarizes information on the issue identification process, Appendix B describes the modeling and analysis process used to support the analyses in the SEIS, and Appendix C provides detailed descriptions of the inventoried roadless areas. Appendix C is divided into two parts (Part 1 and Part 2) and is contained in two separate volumes (Volume II and Volume III). Descriptions for the new LUDs proposed in this SEIS (see Chapter 2) are presented in Appendix D.

Additional information, maps, and reference documents used in the SEIS are contained in the planning record. The planning record, in its entirety, is incorporated here by reference and is located at the office of Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation in Bothell, Washington. This SEIS also incorporates, by reference, the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS, the 1997 ROD, the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan, and all associated published documents, as well as the planning record associated with these documents.