

SUMMARY

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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) would be amended to ensure that these areas are managed to maintain their wilderness eligibility. Any new wilderness recommendations are a preliminary administrative recommendation that would 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.

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 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

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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.

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 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.

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.

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. This record of public input on the management of the Tongass covers a period of more than 10 years. Additional public involvement has occurred over the past 8 months during the development of the SEIS.

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 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.

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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 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

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

Alternatives

Each alternative for this SEIS is presented in the same format in Chapter 2. Each alternative description includes a framework; a list and description of areas recommended for new wilderness or LUD II designation; a table with the acreages allocated to each LUD; a map showing the distribution of development, natural setting, and wilderness LUDs; a map (included in the *Map* section of this SEIS) showing locations of new wilderness and LUD II recommendations; and outputs and measures displayed numerically. The prescriptions of each LUD are included in the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan, as are the Forest-wide standards and guidelines applying to all alternatives. Prescriptions for the new LUDs are described in Appendix D to this SEIS. Details on the modeling of each alternative are included in Appendix B to this SEIS.

Alternative 1

This is the No-Action Alternative. The framework is defined by the current Tongass Forest Plan, which is based on Alternative 11 from the 1997 Forest Plan Revision Final EIS, as adjusted by the 1997 ROD and subsequent non-significant Forest Plan Amendments. All existing LUD allocations would remain unchanged, including existing wilderness and LUD II areas. This alternative does not respond to Key Issue 1, but responds to Key Issue 2 at a high level by not recommending any additional wilderness. The theme for Alternative 11 was to provide a mix of National Forest uses and activities with an emphasis on fish and wildlife habitat protection and the karst and caves resource, and less emphasis on some resource uses contributing to the local and regional economies of Southeast Alaska, relative to the other alternatives of the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS.

No new wilderness or LUD II areas are recommended under this alternative. The 5.8 million acres of existing wilderness and the 0.7 million acres of existing LUD II areas, as well as all other current LUDs, would remain unchanged (see the Alternative 1 map in the *Map* section of this SEIS).

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 would recommend approximately 721,000 acres for new wilderness designation. It would result in the conversion of all existing LUD II areas to the Recommended Wilderness LUD. As such, it responds to Key Issue 1 at a low level by recommending some new wilderness. It responds to Key Issue 2 at a high level by not affecting areas in development LUDs. In 1990, the Tongass Timber Reform Act established five new wildernesses, as well as 12 permanent LUD II areas. Under this alternative, the LUD II areas would be recommended for re-designation as wilderness. There would be no change to existing wilderness and all other existing LUD allocations would remain unchanged.

This alternative would result in the conversion of 12 areas, totaling approximately 721,000 acres, to the Recommended Wilderness LUD. If designated by Congress, this would ultimately result in 6.5 million acres of wilderness. No areas of LUD II designation would remain. If designated, the 12 Recommended Wildernesses would result in eight new wildernesses and four wilderness additions. The Alternative 2 map in the *Map* section of this SEIS displays the locations of the 12 areas.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 would recommend approximately 1,076,000 acres for new wilderness designation. It would result in the conversion of areas to the Recommended Wilderness LUD that have a relatively high score in the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS), along with relatively high public interest and/or high relative contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Areas were considered for inclusion only if they had a WARS score of at least 25 out of 28 possible points. This alternative responds to Key Issue 1 at a moderate level by recommending a group of high-value roadless areas for wilderness protection. It responds to Key Issue 2 also at a moderate level by only slightly reducing the area of development LUDs. Under this alternative, there would be no change to existing wilderness and LUD II areas.

This alternative would result in the conversion of seven areas, totaling approximately 1,076,000 acres, to the Recommended Wilderness LUD. If designated by Congress, this would ultimately result in a total of 6.8 million acres of wilderness. The 0.7 million acres of existing LUD II areas would remain. If designated, the seven Recommended Wildernesses would result in two new wildernesses and five wilderness additions. The Alternative 3 map in the *Map* section of this SEIS displays the locations of the seven areas.

Alternative 4

Alternative 4 would recommend approximately 736,000 acres for new wilderness designation. It would result in the conversion of non-development LUD portions of areas that have a relatively high score in the WARS, along with relatively high public interest and/or high relative contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Areas were considered for inclusion only if they had a WARS score of at least 25 out of 28 possible points. This alternative responds to Key Issue 1 at a low to moderate level by recommending a small group of high-value roadless areas for wilderness protection. It responds to Key Issue 2 at a high level by not reducing the area of development LUDs. Under this alternative, there would be no change to existing wilderness and LUD II areas.

This alternative would result in the conversion of six areas, totaling approximately 736,000 acres, to the Recommended Wilderness LUD. If designated by Congress, this would ultimately result in a total of 6.5 million acres of wilderness. The 0.7 million acres of LUD II areas would be unchanged. If designated, the six Recommended Wildernesses would result in three new wildernesses and three wilderness additions. The Alternative 4 map in the *Map* section of this SEIS displays the locations of the six areas.

Alternative 5

Alternative 5 would recommend approximately 2,005,000 acres for new wilderness designation. It would result in the conversion of all portions of the 23 areas proposed for wilderness by U.S. House of Representatives Bill HR 987 that are not already in wilderness, along with any additional areas identified by the 1999 Forest Plan Revision ROD as Areas of Special Interest, to the Recommended Wilderness LUD. There is substantial overlap in these two groups of areas. This alternative responds to Key Issue 1 at a moderate to high level by recommending areas of high public interest for long-term protection of fish, wildlife, scenic, and recreation values. It responds to Key Issue 2 at a low to moderate level by moderately reducing the area of development LUDs. Under this alternative, most existing LUD II areas would be converted to wilderness and there would be no change to existing wildernesses.

HR 987, which was introduced and passed in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1989, represented an alternative to the bill actually passed by both houses of Congress and signed into law as the Tongass Timber Reform Act. Included in this Bill was the proposed designation of 23 areas as wilderness. In TTRA, portions of these areas were designated as wilderness, portions were designated as LUD II, and portions were left undesignated. The lands recommended for wilderness in HR 987 included lands recommended for permanent protection by Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the United Fishermen of Alaska, the Sealaska Corporation, the Southeast Conference, the Governor of Alaska, and 11 Southeast Alaska communities. Protection of these areas was considered important by these entities for a variety of reasons, mostly for protection of fish, wildlife, scenic, and recreation values.

In the 1999 ROD, 18 Areas of Special Interest were identified where development LUDs would have been changed to mostly natural LUDs. These areas were identified by the public in comments and appeals on the Tongass Forest Plan EIS as having particularly high value for a number of resources. Because the 1999 ROD was vacated by court ruling in March 2001, the LUDs of these areas have not been changed from the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan.

This alternative would result in the creation of 26 Recommended Wildernesses totaling approximately 2,005,000 acres. If designated by Congress, this would ultimately result in 7.8 million acres of wilderness. Approximately 45,000 acres of areas with LUD II designations would also remain. If designated, the 26 Recommended Wildernesses would result in 16 new wildernesses and 10 wilderness additions. The Alternative 5 map in the *Map* section of this SEIS displays the locations of the 26 areas.

Alternative 6

Alternative 6 would recommend approximately 3,222,000 acres for new wilderness designation and 5,641,000 acres for new LUD II designation. It would result in the conversion of all areas recommended for wilderness or LUD II by HR 2908 to Recommended Wilderness and Recommended LUD II, respectively. It responds to Key Issue 1 at a high level by recommending most roadless areas for long-term protection of resource values. It responds to Key Issue 2 at a low level because, although it substantially reduces the area of development LUDs, the majority of the conversions are to Recommended LUD II, which is less restrictive than Recommended Wilderness. Three existing LUD II areas (Berners Bay, Trap Bay, and Kadashan) would be converted to wilderness; there would be no change to existing wildernesses.

HR 2908 is referred to as the Alaska Rainforest Conservation Act of 2001 and was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2001; it is currently available for consideration by the House. This Bill is intended to provide additional protections for National Forest System lands in Alaska (it includes both the Tongass and the Chugach National Forests) through the designation of wilderness, wilderness study areas, LUD II management areas, restoration areas, special management areas, and additional components of the national wild and scenic rivers system. Alternative 6 includes only the wilderness and LUD II components of the Bill.

This alternative would result in the creation of approximately 18 Recommended Wildernesses, totaling approximately 3,222,000 acres, as well as 5,641,000 acres of Recommended LUD II. If designated by Congress, this would ultimately result in a total of 9.0 million acres of wilderness and 6.4 million acres of LUD II areas. If designated, the 18 Recommended Wildernesses would result in 5 new wildernesses and 13 wilderness additions. Virtually all other roadless areas in the Tongass would

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be converted to Recommended LUD II. The Alternative 6 map in the *Map* section of this SEIS displays the locations of the Recommended Wildernesses, as well as the Recommended LUD II areas.

Alternative 7

Alternative 7 would recommend approximately 4,653,000 acres for new wilderness designation. It would result in the conversion of all areas recommended for wilderness under Alternatives 4, 5, and 6 to Recommended Wilderness. This alternative responds to Key Issue 1 at a moderate to high level by recommending for long-term protection a combination of the areas on the Tongass with the highest public interests and other values. It responds to Key Issue 2 at a low to moderate level by moderately reducing the area of development LUDs. Virtually all existing LUD II areas would be converted to wilderness.

This alternative would result in the creation of 32 Recommended Wildernesses totaling approximately 4,653,000 acres. If designated by Congress, this would ultimately result in 10.4 million acres of wilderness. Approximately 44,000 acres of areas with LUD II designations would also remain. If designated, the 32 Recommended Wildernesses would result in 18 new wildernesses and 14 wilderness additions. The Alternative 7 map in the *Map* section of this SEIS displays the locations of the 32 areas.

Alternative 8

Alternative 8 would recommend approximately 9,680,000 acres for new wilderness designation. It would result in the conversion of all inventoried roadless areas in the current roadless inventory to Recommended Wilderness. This alternative responds to Key Issue 1 at a very high level by recommending almost all roadless lands for long-term protection of resource values. It does not respond to Key Issue 2. Virtually all acres of LUD II would be included in this conversion. Under this alternative, there would be no change to existing wilderness.

This alternative would result in the creation of large tracts of land consisting of almost continuous wilderness and Recommended Wilderness across each of the islands and the mainland of the Tongass National Forest. If designated by Congress, this would result in 15.4 million acres of wilderness. Approximately 10,000 acres of LUD II areas (outside of current roadless areas) would remain. If designated, the Recommended Wildernesses would result in 22 new wilderness groupings. The Alternative 8 map in the *Map* section of this SEIS displays the locations of the areas.

Comparison of the Alternatives

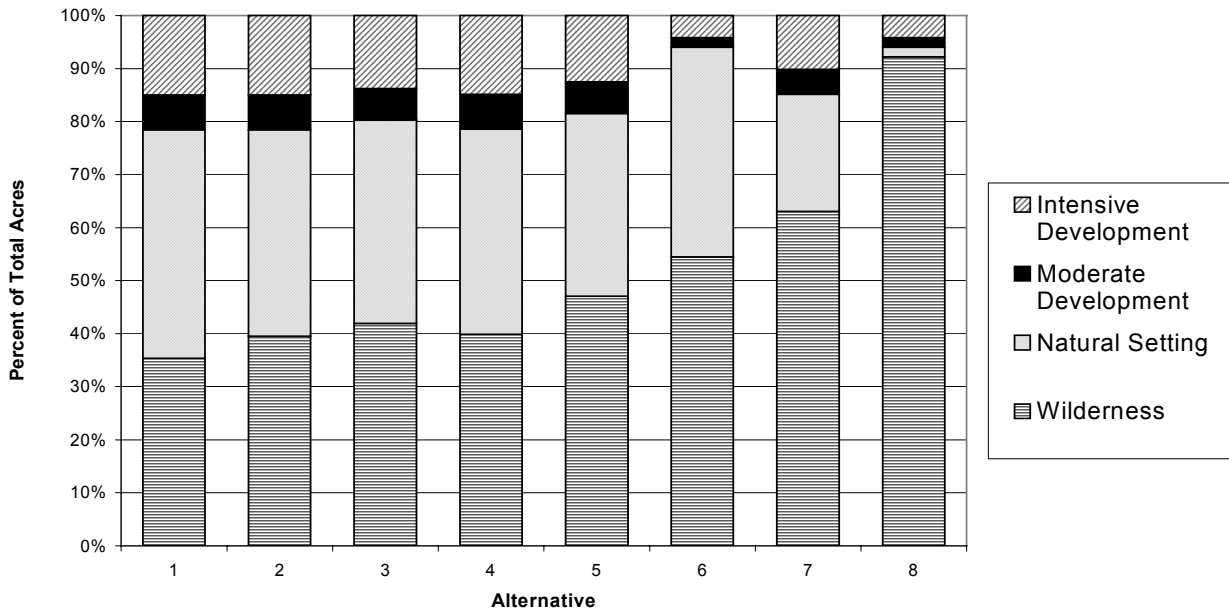
This section briefly compares the environmental consequences of the eight alternatives with respect to the key issues described in Chapter 1. This comparison is based on the effects analysis presented in Chapter 3. Table S-1 and Figure S-1 summarize the LUD allocations of the alternatives using LUD Group combinations. The four LUD Groups combine the individual LUDs in terms of similarities in management and/or potential effects as described in the *Introduction* to Chapter 3. Table S-2 displays some of the key indicators or measures that are used to quantitatively compare the alternatives relative to the key issues.

Table S-1
Land Use Designation Group Comparison by Alternative (million acres)¹

Alternative	Wilderness	Natural Setting	Moderate Development	Intensive Development
1	5.9	7.2	1.1	2.5
2	6.6	6.5	1.1	2.5
3	7.0	6.4	1.0	2.3
4	6.7	6.5	1.1	2.5
5	7.9	5.8	1.0	2.1
6	9.1	6.6	0.3	0.7
7	10.6	3.7	0.8	1.7
8	15.4	0.3	0.3	0.7

¹ LUD Group combinations are described in the *Introduction* to Chapter 3 (Table 3.1-1).

Figure S-1
Land Use Designation Group Comparison by Alternative (percent)



**Table S-2
Comparison of Alternatives**

Resource/Category	Unit of Measure	Alternative							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Key Issue 1—Additional Wilderness Designation for Long-Term Protection of Roadless Areas									
Amount of Wilderness and LUD II Protection									
Recommended Wilderness plus Current Wilderness and National Monument ¹	Millions of Acres	5.9	6.6	7.0	6.7	7.9	9.1	10.6	15.4
Recommended LUD II plus Current LUD II	Millions of Acres	0.7	0.0	0.7	0.7	<0.1	6.4	<0.1	<0.1
Percent of Inventoried Roadless Areas Currently in LUD II or in Recommended Wilderness or Recommended LUD II	Percent	9	9	20	17	23	100	50	100
Percent of Inventoried Roadless Areas Currently in Natural Setting LUDs or in Recommended Wilderness or Recommended LUD II	Percent	74	74	76	74	80	100	85	100
Ecological Values of Wilderness									
Productive Old Growth after 120 Years	Millions of Acres	4.52	4.52	4.56	4.52	4.60	4.84	4.67	4.83
Percentage of Original (1954) Productive Old Growth Remaining by the Year 2120	Percent	83	83	84	83	85	89	86	89
Ecoregions and Biogeographic Provinces									
Percent of Ecoregion Protected in Reserves									
Northern Pacific Coastal Forest	Percent	19	19	23	21	26	50	33	50
Pacific Coastal Mountain Tundra and Ice Fields	Percent	37	37	38	38	38	49	43	49
Number of Biogeographic Provinces with Greater than 12 Percent Protected (out of 21)	Count	18	18	19	19	21	21	21	21
Key Issue 2—Social and Economic Well-Being of Southeast Alaskan Communities									
Natural Resource-Based Industry									
Wood Products									
Short-Term Effects (2002 to 2005)									
Percent of Volume Under Contract Affected	Percent	0	0	3	0	11	65	17	59
Percent of Other Timber Sales in the 10-year Plan Affected	Percent	0	0	4	0	8	64	27	62
Long-Term Effects (2002 to 2012)									
Percent Change in Suitable Acres	Percent	0	0	-7	0	-13	-50	-23	-49
ASQ (average annual over the first decade)	MMBF	259	259	236	259	209	86	172	89
NIC I Component of the ASQ	MMBF	212	212	193	212	172	70	141	73

**Table S-2 (continued)
Comparison of Alternatives**

Resource/Category	Unit of Measure	Alternative								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Mining										
Mineral Areas/Tracts Withdrawn or Potentially Withdrawn										
Identified Mineral Tracts	Percent	25	31	28	27	34	33	41	64	
Undiscovered Mineral Areas	Percent	35	38	40	39	47	57	65	90	
Recreation and Tourism										
Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classes after 150 Years										
Primitive and Semi-primitive Non-motorized	Million Acres	11.9	11.9	12.1	11.9	12.3	13.3	12.6	13.4	
Semi-primitive Motorized	Million Acres	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.4	
Roaded Natural and Roaded Modified	Million Acres	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.7	3.3	2.1	2.9	2.0	
Recreation Places Important for Tourism in Wilderness or Recommended Wilderness	Percent	41	49	44	43	57	53	66	88	
Tongass Acres Available for Tourism Developments	Percent	20	20	16	16	18	1	11	1	
Regional Economy and Local Communities										
Short-Term Effects (2002 to 2005)										
Employment										
Sawmill and Logging Employment	Job-Years	1,323	1,323	1,278	1,323	1,182	465	1,098	540	
Net Change from Alternative 1	Job-Years	0	0	-45	0	-141	-858	-225	-783	
Income										
Sawmill and Logging Income	\$ million	58.6	58.6	56.7	58.6	52.4	20.6	48.7	23.9	
Net Change from Alternative 1	\$ million	0.0	0.0	-2.0	0.0	-6.3	-38.0	-10.0	-34.7	
Employment and Income Percent Change from Alternative 1	Percent	0.0	0.0	-3.4	0.0	-10.7	-64.9	-17.0	-59.2	
Long-Term Effects (2002 to 2012)										
Direct Employment										
Wood Products	Jobs	1,050	1,050	972	1,050	885	465	758	478	
Recreation/Tourism	Jobs	4,900	4,900	4,901	4,901	4,902	4,908	4,904	4,908	
Total	Jobs	5,950	5,950	5,873	5,950	5,787	5,374	5,661	5,386	
Subsistence										
Change in Amount of Productive Old Growth Available after 120 Years Relative to the Current Forest Plan	Percent	0	0	1	0	2	7	3	7	
Recreation										
Home Range Recreation Places in Wilderness	Percent of Acres	21	28	26	24	38	32	45	80	

¹Includes both Wilderness and Nonwilderness National Monument.

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 Forest Plan.

The review of public input conducted for this SEIS indicated that concerns for additional wilderness protection primarily center around two broad 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. The indicators of this key issue area are associated with quantifying the amount of additional protection, describing the values protected by additional wilderness designation, and assessing how well the ecoregions and biogeographic provinces of the Tongass are represented by wilderness and other forms of long-term protection. The indicators are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Amount of Wilderness and LUD II Areas on the Tongass

Approximately 5.9 million acres of Congressionally designated wilderness and National Monument lands occur throughout the Forest. In addition to these lands, there are approximately 9.7 million acres of inventoried roadless areas (including designated LUD II areas) on the Tongass. The 1997 (current) Forest Plan allocated 74 percent of the roadless areas to non-development LUDs. However, that designation is not permanent (and may be subject to future Forest Plan amendments and revisions); therefore, some segments of the public would rather have permanent protection status. Some hold the belief that many areas would be of more value to Americans as wilderness than as other LUDs.

Alternative 1 would not change the 5.9 million acres allocated to the Wilderness LUD Group or the 74 percent of the remaining roadless lands allocated to non-development LUDs under the current Forest Plan (Table S-1, Table S-2, Figure S-1). Under Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, from 6.6 to 7.0 million acres would be allocated to the Wilderness LUD Group, and the percentage of roadless lands allocated to non-development LUDs would range from 74 to 76. Alternative 5 would result in 7.9 million acres in the Wilderness LUD Group and 80 percent of the remaining roadless lands would be allocated to non-development LUDs. Alternative 6 would increase the area in the Wilderness LUD Group to 9.1 million acres and would protect essentially 100 percent of the remaining roadless lands in non-development LUDs, mostly consisting of Recommended LUD II areas. Under Alternative 7, 10.6 million acres would be allocated to the Wilderness LUD Group and 85 percent of the remaining roadless lands would be allocated to non-development LUDs. Alternative 8 would allocate 15.4 million acres to the Wilderness LUD Group, which would include all roadless lands.

A consistent theme with respect to protecting roadless areas on the Tongass is the idea that the Tongass represents the last, relatively intact, temperate rainforest on earth and should be maintained in a wilderness condition. The action alternatives would increase the net area of the Tongass allocated to wilderness; they would also result in combinations of new and existing wilderness that would result in extensive contiguous areas of mainland being preserved. On the north end of the Forest, new wilderness on the Tongass would connect the Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve with the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, creating a contiguous wilderness covering 12 or 13 million acres, depending upon the alternative. Much of this area would be comprised of the existing Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, which is presently approximately 9.7 million acres in size. Alternatives 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 would connect the Glacier Bay and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserves. Alternatives 1, 3, and 4 would also connect these National Park and Preserves if LUD II areas are considered.

Alternatives 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 would connect the existing Tracy Arm-Fords Terror and Stikine-LeConte Wildernesses, creating a contiguous wilderness ranging from 1.6 to 2.3 million acres in size, depending on the alternative. Alternative 8 would also connect these two areas with the Misty Fjords National Monument Wilderness to the south, forming a contiguous mainland wilderness over 7 million acres in size.

Productive Old-Growth Forest

Productive old growth provides essentially all of the highly important habitats and the preponderance of the moderately important habitats for the wildlife species of concern on the Tongass (including the management indicator species and those with viability concerns). In 1954, when commercial logging was initiated on the Tongass, the Forest contained approximately 5.4 million acres of productive old growth. Today, there are 5.0 million acres left (92 percent of the original acres). Based on implementing the current Forest Plan, there would be 4.5 million acres remaining after 120 years, when all productive old growth considered suitable for timber management by the Forest Plan is expected to be harvested.

Under Alternatives 1, 2, and 4, the minimum amount of productive old growth that would remain after all suitable lands are harvested would be the same (4.5 million acres) as under the 1997 (current) Forest Plan (Table S-2). Under Alternatives 3 and 5, this acreage would increase slightly to 4.6 million acres. Alternative 7 would result in 4.7 million acres, and Alternatives 6 and 8 would result in 4.8 million acres after all suitable lands have been harvested. These amounts represent between 83 percent and 89 percent of the original (1954) acreage of productive old growth (Table S-2).

Wildlife Species Viability

Alternative 11 was the selected alternative in the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision Final EIS. With some modification, it is being implemented as the current Forest Plan. All SEIS alternatives are being analyzed using the current Forest Plan as the baseline. Alternative 11 from the 1997 Final EIS was the Selected Alternative for the 1997 Forest Plan Revision because it represented an explicit attempt to address general, as well as specific, issues related to wildlife viability and conservation planning. Specifically, this alternative met the conservation planning measures considered important to sustain viable populations of the Alexander Archipelago wolf and Queen Charlotte goshawk as identified in interagency conservation assessments. The 1997 Final EIS Record of Decision concluded that because of its Forest-wide old-growth conservation strategy and Forest-wide standards and guidelines, Alternative 11 would provide an amount and distribution of habitat adequate to maintain viable populations of vertebrate species across the Tongass and to maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities.

Under the SEIS alternatives, the level of protection would be the same or improved, relative to Alternative 11 and the current Forest Plan. Based on the number of acres recommended for long-term protection as wilderness or LUD II designations, Alternatives 1, 2, and 4 are essentially the same as the current Forest Plan. Alternatives 3, 5, 7, 8, and 6, in order of increasing amount of acres protected for the long-term (Tables S-1 and S-2), would result in an even higher likelihood of maintaining viable well-distributed populations of old-growth associated species across the Tongass National Forest.

Ecoregion and Biogeographic Province Representation

Two ecoregions cover the Tongass National Forest: the Northern Pacific Coastal Forest and the Pacific Coastal Mountain Tundra and Ice Fields (Ricketts et al., 1999).

These two ecoregions extend from eastern Kodiak Island to the southern end of the Alaska panhandle. Approximately 19 percent of the Northern Pacific Coastal Forest and 37 percent of the Pacific Coastal Mountain Tundra and Ice Fields ecoregion are presently in reserves (DeVelice and Martin, 2001). The portions of both of these areas protected in wilderness are well above the 12 percent threshold considered by some authorities (e.g., Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna, 1994; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) as the minimum area for representation (DeVelice and Martin, 2001). Under the SEIS alternatives, the portion of these ecoregions protected in wilderness would remain the same or would increase.

Alternatives 1 and 2 are essentially the same as the current Forest Plan in terms of amount of area in reserves. Alternatives 3, 4, and 5 would increase the percentage in reserves to 23, 21, and 26 percent, respectively, for the Northern Pacific Coastal Forest and to 38 percent for the Pacific Coastal Mountain Tundra and Ice Fields ecoregion (Table S-2). Alternative 7 would result in these percentages increasing to 33 and 43 percent, respectively. Alternatives 6 and 8 would protect 50 and 49 percent of these ecoregions in reserves, respectively.

The Tongass National Forest can also be subdivided into 21 biogeographic provinces, characterized by similar species composition, similar patterns in distribution for many species, similar geologic barriers and historic events (such as glaciation), and similar climatic conditions. Using the 12 percent threshold identified above as a benchmark for evaluation, 18 of the 21 biogeographic provinces on the Tongass presently have more than 12 percent of their area protected in wilderness, wilderness national monument, or LUD II. Under the SEIS alternatives, the portion of these areas protected in wilderness would remain the same or would increase. The number of biogeographic provinces with more than 12 percent of their total area protected in wilderness, wilderness national monument, or LUD II would be 18 under Alternatives 1 and 2, 19 under Alternatives 3 and 4, and all 21 under Alternatives 5 through 8 (Table S-2).

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, 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.

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

The wood products analysis is divided into short- and long-term effects. The short-term effects analysis 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 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.

Short-Term Effects. The Forest Service had approximately 321 MMBF of timber under contract in January 2002. Existing volumes under contract likely represent the vast majority, if not the entire short-term timber supply, for the sawmills located in Southeast Alaska. Alternatives 1, 2, and 4 would have no effect on these sales. Alternatives 3 and 5 would affect approximately 3 percent (11 MMBF) and 11 percent (34 MMBF), respectively, and Alternative 7 would affect approximately 17 percent (55 MMBF). Alternatives 6 and 8 would affect 65 percent (209 MMBF) and 59 percent (191 MMBF) of the total volume under contract, respectively (Table S-2).

The effects on proposed sales that are not yet under contract would be similar. Alternatives 1, 2, and 4 would have no effect on the proposed sale area, and Alternatives 6 and 8 would affect the largest area, approximately 64 percent (955 MMBF) and 62 percent (918 MMBF), respectively (Table S-2).

The effects on these sales go beyond the loss of acres and volume. Sales are designed to constitute an economic package. When portions of a sale are removed, it may not be economically feasible to harvest the remaining portions. Also, portions of sales not located in a roadless area allocated to a non-development LUD may not be available for harvest because the road that would access that timber may go through the roadless area, or because the planned log transfer facility may be in the roadless area.

Long-Term Effects. Suitable acres would vary from approximately 663,000 under Alternatives 1, 2, and 4 to 330,000 acres and 336,000 acres under Alternatives 6 and 8, respectively (Table S-2). The percent reductions in suitable acres on individual ranger districts would vary substantially by alternative. Effects under Alternatives 6 and 8 would be most pronounced on the Juneau Ranger District (90 percent reduction), but would also be high in the Craig, Sitka, Petersburg, Ketchikan, Hoonah, Wrangell, and Yakutat Ranger Districts (45 to 60 percent reductions).

The average annual ASQ over the first decade would range from 259 MMBF under Alternatives 1, 2, and 4, to 86 and 89 MMBF under Alternatives 6 and 8, respectively (Table S-2). The ASQ (which is not a target, but a ceiling on how much timber may be sold) is divided into two non-interchangeable components (NICs) based on harvest economics and available technology. The NIC I portion is the amount considered likely to be economically viable over the next decade. The NIC I ASQ for each of the alternatives would range from 100 percent of the current Forest Plan level under Alternatives 1, 2, and 4, to a low of 33 percent of the current Forest Plan level under Alternative 6. The NIC I component of the ASQ is presented for each alternative in Table S-2.

Mining

Approximately 148 locatable mineral resource deposits have been identified on the Tongass and grouped into 52 identified mineral activity tracts. The percentage of these areas that are located in wilderness and other restrictive LUDs would range from 25 percent under Alternative 1 to 64 percent under Alternative 8. The percentage of areas that are believed to have undiscovered mineral resources that would be located in wilderness and other restrictive LUDs ranges from 35 percent under Alternative 1 to 90 percent under Alternative 8 (Table S-2).

Allocating areas to Recommended Wilderness would not prohibit existing or proposed mining activities, but may make minerals more costly to develop. If recommended areas are designated as wilderness by Congress, then these areas would be closed to mineral entry, subject to valid existing mineral rights.

Recreation and Tourism

The Forest Service's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) system is intended to identify the appropriate combination of activities, settings, and experiences for different types of recreation experience, ranging from primitive to urban settings. Viewed in terms of total Forest-wide acres over a 150-year planning horizon, Alternatives 6 and 8 would provide the greatest amount of primitive and semi-primitive opportunities, with little change occurring from the existing condition. They would result in approximately 12 percent of the Tongass in roaded ROS settings after 150 years. Alternatives 1, 2, and 4 would result in the greatest shift from the existing condition to roaded opportunities; roaded settings would represent approximately 22 percent of the ROS settings on the Tongass after 150 years. Alternatives 3, 5, and 7 would be intermediate, resulting in 17 to 21 percent of the Tongass in roaded ROS settings after 150 years, respectively (Table S-2).

Businesses serving large numbers of clients could be negatively affected, if one or more of the areas they regularly use is ultimately designated as wilderness. Outfitter/guide permits may be issued for wilderness if there is demonstrated need for the service and they are deemed appropriate for the area proposed. However, current wilderness management standards and guidelines on the Tongass direct the District Ranger to generally consider a party size of no more than 12 persons for any one site or activity. Businesses that rely on serving large group sizes in areas designated as wilderness could either be displaced to other areas or forced to change their operations. Displacing large guided tours from one location to another could also negatively affect users at other locations. These types of potential effects could be significant under Alternative 8, which would allocate all inventoried roadless areas as Recommended Wilderness. In the short term, there would only be limited effects because larger party sizes would be allowed in Recommended Wilderness. If Recommended Wildernesses were designated by Congress, however, there would be few locations on the Forest that could accommodate large outfitter/guide groups seeking undeveloped areas. Limiting the size of groups could, however, benefit other, smaller outfitter/guide businesses that consider high concentrations of other recreationists, particularly group sizes over 50, as detrimental to their business (Alaska DCBD, 2001).

The percent of existing recreation place acres important for tourism that would be located in wilderness would range from 41 percent under Alternative 1 to 88 percent under Alternative 8. The percent of Tongass acres compatible with major tourism developments would range from 20 percent under Alternatives 1 and 2 to 1 percent under Alternatives 6 and 8 (Table S-2).

Transportation and Utility Projects

Alternatives 1 through 7 would have little effect on the implementation of the 1999 Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan because most planned developments would take place in existing developed areas. Alternative 8 could, however, affect development of the proposed South Wrangell ferry terminal, as well as the ultimate development of a road connection between Kake and Petersburg.

With the exception of Alternatives 1, 3, and 4, which would have little to no effect, reclassifying land to Recommended Wilderness and eventual designation as wilderness under other alternatives, could affect opportunities for other regional transportation developments. Alternatives 2 and 5 could affect development of a road connection along the east-side of Lynn Canal. Alternatives 6 and 7 would restrict the potential for this road connection along both sides of Lynn Canal, as would Alternative 8. Alternative 8 would also affect a number of other potential transportation routes in Southeast Alaska, including a road to Canada along Taku Inlet, the East Bradfield River corridor, and other routes near Wrangell; a road from

Sitka to the east side of Baranof Island; a road connecting Whale Pass and Coffman Cove; a road connecting Thorne Bay and Coffman Cove; a road to the southeast tip of the Kasaan Peninsula; and a road from Carroll Inlet to Shrimp Bay and the northern end of Revillagigedo Island.

Alternatives 1 and 4 would have little or no effect on power transmission line development opportunities and Alternatives 2 and 3 would affect only a few potential projects. Alternatives 5, 6, 7, and 8 would, however, restrict a number of potential future projects; Alternative 8 would have the greatest potential effect. Alternative 8 is the only alternative that could restrict the development of the Swan Lake-Lake Tye Intertie Project.

Regional Economy and Local Communities

Regional Employment and Income

Short-Term Effects. Reductions in the volume under contract would affect both sawmill and logging employment. A potential loss of mill jobs would, for the most part, be concentrated in the community where the mill is located because the majority of mill workers reside close to their place of work. Potential reductions in logging employment are more difficult to tie to specific communities due to the mobility of sales and mobility of operations. There would be no effect on the areas containing timber volume under contract under Alternatives 1, 2, and 4. Potential reductions in employment under the other alternatives would range from approximately 45 job-years under Alternative 3 to approximately 858 job-years under Alternative 6. Projected overall direct job losses under Alternatives 5 and 7 would be 141 and 225 job-years, respectively. Projected job losses under Alternative 8 would be similar to those under Alternative 6, with an overall projected loss of approximately 783 direct sawmill and logging job-years (Table S-2).

Estimated changes in short-term sawmill and logging employment are presented in job-years; each job-year is the equivalent of one job lasting for 1 year. This potential employment loss would not all occur in one year and estimated job totals do not directly translate into estimated numbers of affected workers.

The preceding discussion implicitly assumes a linear relationship between reductions in the volume under contract and sawmill employment, with a 1 percent decline in harvest resulting in a 1 percent decline in sawmill employment. This type of relationship is also assumed with respect to logging employment. There are a number of factors that suggest that this type of direct relationship rarely exists. There is a possibility that the short-term supply reductions projected under the more restrictive alternatives could, in conjunction with current market conditions, result in the closure of one or more of the remaining sawmills in the region. If all remaining sawmills closed, approximately 459 and 413 direct sawmill and logging jobs would be lost, respectively. These estimates are based on the assumption that 212 MMBF is being harvested (the projected NIC I level under the No-Action Alternative). Total job loss (direct, indirect, and induced) would be approximately 1,752 jobs. This represents a worst-case scenario that assumes all projected Tongass-related sawmill and logging jobs would be lost.

Long-Term Effects. Long-term effects for the purposes of this analysis are considered to be those effects that would occur over the next 10 years. Direct employment in the wood products and recreation and tourism industries are estimated to range from 5,374 jobs under Alternative 6 to 5,950 jobs under Alternatives 1, 2, and 4 (Table S-2). Most of the difference between these two values (576 jobs) is caused by differences in timber-related employment. Recreation and tourism employment shows much less variation across the alternatives, with a difference between high and low employment levels of less than 10 direct jobs.

Direct earnings follow a similar pattern, as do total employment and earnings. Total wood products and recreation and tourism employment (direct, indirect, and induced) would range from 6,859 jobs under Alternative 6 to 8,023 jobs under Alternatives 1, 2, and 4.

The employment and income estimates for the wood products sector assume that the entire NIC I component projected for each alternative for 2002 to 2012 would be harvested. It would, however, take unprecedented conditions for the entire NIC I component of the ASQ to be sold and harvested. Realistically, approximately 70 percent of the estimated NIC I volume can be expected to be sold and harvested. Recreation and tourism employment and income estimates are for nonresident recreation and tourism activity only. The recreation and tourism analysis is based on the future supply of and demand for recreation opportunities by setting. Differences in projected levels of recreation use between alternatives are small because the Semi-primitive Motorized ROS setting is the only setting where demand exceeds supply in the first decade of this analysis, and the effects related to harvest activity have had little time to accumulate.

Projected recreation and tourism employment is expected to increase by approximately 17 percent from 2000 levels under all of the alternatives. The majority of this projected increase (approximately 90 percent) is due to the projected change in non-Tongass, nonresident, recreation-related employment, which does not vary by alternative. Changes in projected wood products employment range from a loss of approximately 53 and 52 percent of total 2000 employment under Alternatives 6 and 8, respectively, to a gain of about 6 percent under Alternatives 1, 2, and 4.

Congressional wilderness designation would not affect mining claims with existing rights, but designated areas would be withdrawn from future mineral exploration and development. Future mining employment and income could be reduced accordingly, depending on whether the affected resources would be economical to develop in the future.

Wilderness designation could affect regional transportation projects, which could, in turn, restrict transportation access to affected communities and the region as a whole. These restrictions could indirectly affect employment and income by limiting community and regional economic development opportunities. Restrictions on power transmission corridors could also affect future community development, as well as potentially limiting the provision of basic services to existing community residents and businesses.

Local Communities

Employment. Timber and logging activities play an important role in at least 10 of Southeast Alaska's 32 communities. The majority of these communities are located on Prince of Wales Island, including Coffman Cove, Craig, Hollis, Klawock, Naukati Bay, Thorne Bay, and Whale Pass. Other communities with a relatively heavy reliance on wood products employment include Wrangell, Ketchikan, and Saxman.

These communities would be affected by reductions in wood products employment. Under the worst-case, short-term scenario that would result in closure of the region's remaining larger mills and a partial reduction or complete halt in Tongass-related logging activity, these communities would likely be significantly affected. In some cases, this could result in relatively large numbers of residents moving elsewhere to look for work. Communities with relatively high concentrations of employment in the wood products sector would also be negatively affected by reductions in long-term harvest.

Subsistence. The subsistence analysis conducted for the 1997 Forest Plan Revision Final EIS used deer as the main “indicator” species for potential subsistence resource consequences. This analysis indicated that deer harvest capabilities in certain portions of the Tongass may not be adequate to sustain current levels of harvest, and that implementation of any Forest Plan alternative possibly could significantly restrict hunting.

Under the alternatives analyzed in this SEIS, the possibility of a significant restriction, resulting from a change in abundance or distribution, would be the same as, or less than, the possibility under Alternative 11 (Selected Alternative) of the 1997 Forest Plan Revision Final EIS. In the short term, the risk of a significant restriction would be about the same under any of the SEIS alternatives. This is because the effects of past harvest would override the effects of new harvest during the next 10 years. In the long term, those alternatives that reduce areas available for future timber harvesting the most, would result in the largest reduction in risk. Alternatives 1, 2, and 4 would result in the same possibility of a significant restriction relative to Alternative 11 of the 1997 Final EIS because they would not produce a change in old-growth harvest rates. Alternatives 3, 5, and 7 would reduce the possibility of a significant restriction due to a conversion of lands from development LUDs to non-development LUDs over 9, 18, and 33 percent of the area, respectively. Alternatives 6 and 8 would result in a larger reduction in the possibility of a significant restriction with reductions in development LUD acreage of 72 and 71 percent, respectively (Table S-2).

None of the alternatives would directly limit the use of public lands for subsistence purposes. Historical access (by foot, boat, and floatplane) would be available under all alternatives for present and proposed foreseeable future activities.

Recreation. Designating areas wilderness would have little immediate effect on resident recreationists, but could limit the types of recreation that may be pursued in the future. Wilderness designation would limit types of facility and trail development, which could affect the type of future recreation opportunities available to those communities located close to wildernesses. Wilderness designation could limit the development of commercial recreation facilities and restrict use by outfitter/guides that serve large groups of clients. Conversely, designating areas wilderness would retain their natural and wild character, a major attraction to the region for residents and visitors. This designation would also protect areas from being developed and benefit certain groups of recreationists and outfitter/guides.

Almost half of the inventoried recreation places on the Tongass are located within 20 miles of one or more communities. The proportion of these areas that would be Recommended Wilderness or wilderness would range from 21 percent under Alternative 1 to 80 percent under Alternative 8 (Table S-2). This designation would affect future management of these areas and may be viewed positively or negatively depending on the place and user group.

Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative for this Draft SEIS is Alternative 1, No Action. This alternative represents the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan Revision, including non-significant amendments made since 1997. The main reason for identifying Alternative 1 as the Preferred Alternative for the Draft SEIS is that the 1997 Revision was the result of a significant collaborative effort to seek a balance for protecting and managing the Tongass National Forest. The goal of this effort was to ensure that the many wild and beautiful areas along with the abundant fish and wildlife resources of the Tongass were protected, while maintaining the availability of some of the Tongass for more intensive resource management in support of the economies of Southeast Alaska and its scattered small communities.

This collaborative effort included other Federal and State agencies, Tribal governments and organizations, communities and related organizations,

Summary

environmental and industry organizations, and many individuals. Agency representatives from the Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, National Marine Fisheries Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station, Alaska Department of Environmental Coordination, and others worked with the Forest Service Planning Team to ensure that the Forest Plan Revision represented a balance of land protections and uses that is sustainable and scientifically credible. The effort also included extensive public involvement including more than 100 public meetings and hearings in virtually every community of Southeast Alaska.

We recognize that many of the 115 inventoried roadless areas have excellent resource and wilderness values important to Southeast Alaska and the nation. Additionally, we recognize that the industries of Southeast Alaska are changing and there is heightened interest in roadless areas on National Forest System lands across the nation. Thus, it is appropriate and timely to consider the inventoried roadless areas for different levels of protection than those that were determined to represent the best balance in 1997. It is expected that the Selected Alternative for the Final SEIS will be the result of collaborative efforts similar to that which led to the 1997 Forest Plan Revision.

We would like public input on the alternatives and, just as importantly, we would like public input on individual roadless areas. Information on individual roadless areas will help in the final analysis to determine how high each of them rates in terms of their wilderness values and the value of other uses that each area could provide.