

INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

ROADLESS AREA NAME: Point Craven (314)

ACRES (NFS): 10,961

BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: East Chichagof Island

ECOLOGICAL SECTION: Baranof-Chichagof Fjordlands, Northeast Chichagof Fjordlands

2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING: 18

I. Overview and Description

(1) Location and Access: The Point Craven Roadless Area is located on East Chichagof Island. Sitkoh Bay and an area of forest roads and associated developments border the area to the northeast and east. Similarly, developed areas border the area to the north and west. Peril Strait and developed areas border the area to the south. Sitkoh Lake is located in the area. The nearest communities are Angoon, approximately 12 miles east across Chatham Strait from the area, and Tenakee Springs, about 20 miles to the north. The closest larger community is Juneau located approximately 60 miles northeast of the area. Angoon, Tenakee Springs, and Juneau are all served by the Alaska Marine Highway.

Access to the area is by boat or floatplane. Roads along the border to the north, east, south, and west provide foot or vehicle access to the edges of the area. All-terrain vehicles (ATV) use these roads.

Access into the interior is by foot or helicopter. There are no places suitable for landing wheeled airplanes.

(2) History: The oldest known site within the Point Craven Roadless Area dates to approximately 3,000 BP. This date may be pushed back by future field investigations. This area was apparently used by Native peoples from the Sitka, Hoonah, and Angoon areas. A permanent village was located at Point Craven, with seasonal sites located in Sitkoh Bay and on the coast. Tlingits fleeing Sitka after the 1804 battle with the Russians, may have retreated to the Point Craven area, where a community of up to 1,000 people was established.

Early European entries were tied to hunting and exploration. Lt. Lisiansky of the Russian Navy mapped the Peril Strait area in 1805. Peril Strait was important then, as now, for access to the inland waterways that provide protected north-south water travel, as well as for access to the inland islands. The primary activities in this area have remained fishing, hunting, and fur gathering. Fish canneries and traps were important in the whole area in the early 20th Century, generally replacing fur gathering as furs became both more scarce and less of an economic factor. A cannery was located within this roadless area on Sitkoh Bay.

Recent activities include ongoing development and associated management activities along all sides of the area. Sitkoh Bay and Sitkoh Creek are heavily used by sport and subsistence fishers.

(3) Geography and Topography: The topography of this area is typical of most of the island areas. It is characterized by narrow river valleys, surrounded by mountains. Terrain relief ranges from sea level to more than 2,600 feet in elevation. The mountains are steep and highly dissected by streams. Terrain features are such that stream runs are relatively short, with a high gradient. Because of this, broad river valleys have not developed. The one exception is Sitkoh Creek and the lower reaches of its tributaries on the northern boundary of the evaluation area. There are several small lakes scattered about the area, generally above the 1,000-foot elevation. Sitkoh Lake lies to the north, partially within the Point Craven Roadless Area.

Other terrain features in this area include approximately 222 acres of alpine, 1 acre of rock and no acres of ice or snow features. There are 5 miles of saltwater shoreline and 1 acre of islands.

Appendix C

(4) Ecosystem:

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. This area is located within the East Chichagof Island Biogeographic Province. This province has a dryer and colder climate than the outer coast of Chichagof Island and the winter snow pack is generally greater. Chichagof Island is deeply dissected into three peninsulas that may be functioning biologically more like separate islands. Vegetation in this province represents a modal condition similar to Admiralty Island Province.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Point Craven Roadless Area is contained within the Baranof-Chichagof Fjordlands (M247B) and Northeast Chichagof Fjordlands Ecological Sections (M247C). These areas are represented by two ecological subsections (see table below). The lithology of Kook Lake Carbonates Ecological Subsection is primarily comprised of intrusive igneous and locally metamorphosed rocks and secondarily of limestone and marble. Inland, mineral soils with distinct organic layers dominate. Higher elevations support small alpine vegetative communities and the moderately sloped mountains support productive hemlock-spruce forests. The Peril Strait Granitics Ecological Subsection is characterized by well-rounded granodiorite and gabbro rocks with few slivers of marble. Alpine barrens and meadows are common atop the mountains, and brush fields are found on the upper slopes. Torrential debris flows are common in this area, producing colluvial cones that support productive hemlock-spruce forests. Mid- and low gradient streams have broad floodplains that also support productive forests (Nowacki et al., 2001).

| <u>Ecological Section</u> | <u>Ecological Subsection</u> | <u>Percent of Roadless Area</u> |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Northeast Chichagof Fjordlands | Kook Lake Carbonates | 59% |
| Baranof-Chichagof Fjordlands | Peril Strait Granitics | 41% |

(b) **Soils:** Glacial activity, combined with basically sedimentary bedrock, are primary factors in soil development in this roadless area. Other factors are high rainfall, cool summer temperatures, and a short growing season. Because of rainfall, many soils are highly leached. Dense vegetative growth, combined with a slow breakdown of organic matter, leaves a thick duff layer on most of the subalpine soils.

The soils are highly variable and range from exposed bedrock and very shallow, poorly developed soils in the higher elevations to fluvial and colluvial deposits in the river bottoms. There are large areas of deep supersaturated or inundated organic soils (muskeg) over much of the area, particularly at elevations above 1,000 feet. The steeper slopes are generally well drained, shallow, moderately productive soils. The stream bottoms are generally better soils, well to poorly drained, and highly productive.

(c) **Vegetation:** Dense western hemlock-Sitka spruce forests dominate the overstory, with an understory of shrubs, such as red huckleberry, rusty menziesia, and devil's club, and a forest floor that is covered with a mat of mosses, liverworts, and plants such as deerheart, bunchberry dogwood, single delight, and skunk cabbage. Streamside riparian vegetation is characterized by salmonberry, devil's club, alder, grasses, ferns, and currants.

Muskegs, dominated by sphagnum mosses, sedges, and shrubs of the heath family, are interspersed among low elevation timber stands where drainage is restricted. Trees are sparse and consist mainly of stunted hemlock, lodgepole pine, and Alaska-cedar. Approximately 319 acres of muskeg are mapped for the area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult.

At elevations above about 2,000 feet, alpine plant communities (222 acres) are characterized by low shrubs, grasses, and sedges. Subalpine forests and meadows occur at the interface between the forested communities and the alpine tundra.

There are approximately 10,048 acres mapped as forest land of which 6,907 acres or 69 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 2,423 acres (35 percent) are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 109 acres of high-volume,

coarse-canopy old growth. There are 32 acres of second growth forest where timber harvest has occurred in the past.

(d) Fish Resources: Sitkoh Creek and parts of two unnamed Class I streams lie within this roadless area. There are four Pacific salmon (sockeye, coho, pink, and chum) valuable for commercial, subsistence, and sport fishing that spawn and rear in these waters. In addition, steelhead trout, anadromous cutthroat trout, Dolly Varden char, stickleback, and smelt inhabit the area.

(e) Wildlife Resources: Wildlife species present in this roadless area include brown bear, Sitka black-tailed deer, pine marten, mink, and land otter, as well as smaller mammals and several amphibians. MacDonald and Cook (1999) do not list black bears or mountain goats as inhabiting Chichagof Island. There are relatively few resident bird species; however, the area is used by many migratory species. Eagles are common in the coastal zone. A goshawk nest was identified in Sitkoh Bay, and that area is also heavily used by marbled murrelets (USDA Forest Service, 1999).

(5) Management Direction and Current Uses: This area was allocated to four different Land Use Designations (LUDs) in the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. The four LUD areas are Timber Production, Scenic Viewshed, Modified Landscape, and Old-growth Habitat.

| LUD | Acres |
|--------------------|-------|
| Timber Production | 4,224 |
| Scenic Viewshed | 1,032 |
| Modified Landscape | 276 |
| Old-growth Habitat | 5,430 |

Approximately 50 percent of this roadless area was allocated to development LUDs (Timber Production, Scenic Viewshed, and Modified Landscape). The Timber Production LUD was assigned to approximately 39 percent of this roadless area. Near Lindenburg Head, approximately 9 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Scenic Viewshed LUD. Along Sitkoh Bay, approximately 3 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Modified Landscape LUD.

Approximately 50 percent of this roadless area was allocated to one non-development LUD, Old-growth Habitat.

Forest Service management activities within the roadless evaluation area have been limited to permit administration. A Public Recreation Cabin (Sitkoh Lake East) is located on the east side of Sitkoh Lake within the boundaries of the roadless area. A second cabin, Sitkoh Lake West, is located immediately west of the area. The Sitkoh Lake hiking trail extends from Sitkoh Bay along Sitkoh Creek. Outfitter/guide use was reported at two locations in this roadless area in 1999. A total of 17 groups and 75 clients were reported. Outfitter/guide use activities included fishing and hiking. Subsistence use occurs in the area.

Timber management and associated developments are ongoing along parts of the north, east, south, and west borders of the area. The entire roadless area was historically within Management Area 6 of the Alaska Pulp Corporation (APC) Long-Term Timber Sale Contract area.

(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness): The area generally appears natural and unmodified. However, the boundaries adjacent to developed areas (about 80 percent of the boundary) appear highly modified. Viewed from Florence Bay and Sitkoh Bay, this area provides a natural background to the developments that have occurred in adjacent areas. This is also the case from parts of Peril Strait, where developments have occurred in the foreground. Once in the roadless area, the scenery is natural appearing.

(7) Surroundings (External Influences): There are several non-National Forest System tracts within, but excluded from, the roadless area. These are located north of Point Craven, on Sitkoh Bay at Chatham Strait, and just northwest of Chatham Strait. Peril Strait, which partially borders the area to the south, is the Alaska Marine Highway route connecting Sitka with the rest of Southeast Alaska. During the summer months there are approximately ten weekly ferry passages that pass the Point Craven Roadless Area. Peril Strait is also used by cruise ships and tour boats. This Strait is the major connecting corridor between the west side of Baranof and

Appendix C

Chichagof Islands and the inland waterways. Therefore, it is popular with sport and commercial fishing boats, as well as supporting barge traffic. Sitkoh Bay gets pleasure and commercial fishing craft use. Once away from the coastal areas, the rugged terrain provides some protection from surrounding activities. High altitude overflights by commercial airliners (approximately six per day) and occasional small floatplane flights are also apparent in the area.

(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest: Although the wildlife and natural beauty of the area are attractions, there is little to distinguish the Point Craven Roadless Area from many other areas. Basic attractions are the opportunity to "get away from it all" (solitude), sportfishing, and hunting. The area contains four inventoried recreation places, which cover 1,416 acres, or 13 percent of the roadless area. A public recreation cabin (Sitkoh Lake East) is located on the east side of Sitkoh Lake. A hiking trail leads from Sitkoh Bay to this cabin along the northern edge of the area.

Features of special interest in the area may be the diverse cultural resource sites in the general area; however, there are no interpretative or information programs at present.

(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary: There is an area of non-National Forest System lands located north of Point Craven that is excluded from the 2003 area. A second smaller area of non-National Forest System land located on the northeast shore is also excluded from the boundaries of the 2003 area. These areas were part of the 1989 area. In addition, the buffers around existing roads have been adjusted slightly since 1989. Several smaller areas were excluded from the area between the Draft and Final SEIS to improve the potential manageability of the area as wilderness.

II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness: This roadless area is unmodified except for minor activities, such as tent frames, and for early cabin and campsites including those where early Native activity occurred. Most of the early sites have now deteriorated and grown over, making them apparent only with close examination. Existing cabins/camps are fairly unobtrusive and infrequent, and do not detract from the natural integrity of the total area. Overall, the area has relatively high natural integrity and moderate apparent naturalness. The highly modified areas surrounding this roadless area coupled with its relatively small size may reduce the suitability of this natural appearing area for wilderness classification.

(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation: The opportunity for solitude is moderate and the opportunity for primitive recreation is somewhat higher. Once away from the coastal areas, the rugged terrain provides for protection from surrounding activities. High altitude overflights by commercial airliners (approximately six per day) and occasional small aircraft flights may provide some distraction.

Outfitter/guide use was reported at two locations in this roadless area in 1999. A total of 17 groups and 75 clients were reported. Outfitter/guide use activities included fishing and hiking.

The area provides primarily semi-primitive recreation opportunities. The table below lists the acreage and percent of the various Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes that have been inventoried in the roadless area.

| ROS Class | Acres | Percent of Total ROS |
|-------------------------------------|-------|----------------------|
| Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM) | 9,404 | 86% |
| Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) | 423 | 4% |
| Roaded Modified (RM) | 1,133 | 10% |

The area contains four inventoried recreation places, which cover 1,416 acres, or 13 percent of the roadless area.

| ROS Class | # of Rec. Places | Total Acres |
|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| SPNM | 1 | 1,141 |
| SPM | 0 | 0 |
| RM | 4 | 274 |

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

A Public Recreation Cabin (Sitkoh Lake East) is located on the east side of Sitkoh Lake within the boundaries of the roadless area. A second cabin, Sitkoh Lake West, is located immediately west of the area. The Sitkoh Lake hiking trail extends from Sitkoh Bay along Sitkoh Creek.

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

In 1979, during the RARE II process, the Tongass National Forest applied WARS for the first time and rated each unroaded VCU on the Tongass. In 1989, the inventoried roadless areas (which generally include more than one VCU) were rated according to this system for the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) developed in support of the Forest Plan Revision. This original version of the AMS (dated 1990) included both the individual VCU ratings done in 1979 and the composite rating that was done for each roadless area in 1989. The 1989 rating for the Point Craven Roadless Area was 21 out of 28 possible points, with a separate rating given to a portion of the area which scored 22. The 1989 rating was re-evaluated for this updated version of the AMS. Based on this re-evaluation, the area was given a rating of 18. The roadless area has been slightly reduced in size since 1989 and management activities are ongoing in adjacent developed areas, which has affected the rating.

(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values: This roadless area is located on the east side of Chichagof Island. The area is separated from other nearby roadless areas, Chichagof (#311) and Trap Bay (#312), by developed areas.

(a) Fish Resources: The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) listed two of the three VCUs, Sitkoh Bay (243) and False Island (245), as primary salmon producers, and the third VCU, Sitkoh Creek (244), as a primary sportfish producer.

There are four Pacific salmon (sockeye, coho, pink, and chum) valuable for commercial, subsistence, and sport fishing that spawn and rear in these waters. In addition, steelhead trout is a favored sportfishing species. The steelhead run in Sitkoh Creek is considered valuable. Annual peak escapement of pink salmon in Sitkoh Creek is 79,000 (USDA Forest Service, 1999). Other species include Dolly Varden char, anadromous cutthroat trout, stickleback, and smelt. Sitkoh Creek is listed among the ADF&G 65 "Important" watersheds for its fish values. Sitkoh Lake and Creek provide rearing habitat for juvenile sockeye salmon. The Anadromous Waters Catalogue (ADF&G, 2000) also shows two unnamed fish-bearing streams in this area providing habitat for coho, pink, and chum salmon.

(b) Wildlife Resources: Wildlife species present in this roadless area include brown bear, Sitka black-tailed deer, pine marten, mink, and land otter, as well as smaller mammals and several amphibians. MacDonald and Cook (1999) do not list black bears or mountain goats as inhabiting Chichagof Island. There are relatively few resident bird species; however, the area is used by many migratory species. Eagles are common in the coastal zone. The area may receive some migratory use by the peregrine falcon. A goshawk nest was identified in Sitkoh Bay, and that area is also heavily used by marbled murrelets (USDA Forest Service, 1999). Sport and subsistence deer hunting is very important in this area.

Based on harvest data compiled from 1985 to 1995, one of the three VCUs located in this area (VCU 243) was ranked in the top 25 percent of brown bear harvest areas on the Tongass (ADF&G, 1998).

Appendix C

(c) Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species: The only federally listed threatened or endangered species likely to occur within or adjacent to the roadless area are the humpback whale (endangered) and the Steller sea lion (threatened). Both of these species are found in adjacent marine waters. Three Forest Service Region 10 Sensitive Species are suspected or known to occur within the area: the trumpeter swan, Peale's peregrine falcon, and the Queen Charlotte goshawk. Trumpeter swans nest in the lowlands on small lakes and along large rivers and winter in ice-free areas throughout the Tongass. Peale's peregrine falcons nest on cliff faces and islands and feed primarily on seabirds. Inhabitants of late seral forests, Queen Charlotte goshawks, are closely associated with productive old growth. A goshawk nest was identified in Sitkoh Bay (USDA Forest Service, 1999). In addition, 12 sensitive plant species are known or suspected to occur in the Sitka Ranger District.

(d) Karst, Cave, and Other Geologic Resources: There are 41 acres, less than 1 percent of the area, of known low vulnerability karst or cave resources in this roadless area south of Sitkoh Lake in the western portion. There are no known glaciers or unique geologic features.

(5) Scientific and Educational Values: Although a high probability for numerous cultural resource sites exists, little study has been done. There are five known or suspected (unconfirmed) sites, dating back about 3,000 years. Future surveys may find sites contemporary with older sites in the general area and may add substantially to knowledge of pre-European culture. Most known sites are located in the coastal zone. Further field investigation may reveal an opportunity to add to the pool of scientific or ecological knowledge for other resources; however, current indications are that there is nothing unique about the area.

There are no Research Natural Areas in the Point Craven Roadless Area. Angoon, located approximately 12 miles east across Chatham Strait from the area, is the closest community with school-age children. Sitka, located approximately 30 miles south, is the closest larger community.

(6) Scenic Values: The area is largely unmodified with a visual character type of Admiralty-Chichagof. Landforms are generally rounded, low mountains. Rocky shorelines, interspersed with gravel beaches, are found along Sitkoh Bay and Peril Strait. Streams, with the exception of Sitkoh Creek, are short and swift, flowing directly to saltwater. Small bays and estuaries are present and show a range of visual characteristics. Lower slopes are densely vegetated and are interspersed with muskeg and small lakes. Upper slopes appear bare from a distance, but often contain muskeg, alpine tundra vegetation, and scattered tree cover. There are some areas along the coastline where beach logging has occurred in the past. These areas are relatively unobtrusive and do not generally detract from the naturalness. There are no other readily apparent signs of human activities within the area itself. However, the boundaries adjacent to the developed areas (about 80 percent of the boundary) appear highly modified.

Viewed from Florence Bay and Sitkoh Bay, this area provides a natural background to the developments that have occurred in adjacent areas. This is also the case from parts of Peril Strait, where developments have occurred in the foreground. Once in the roadless area, the scenery is natural appearing.

Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan that are within or adjacent to the area, include: Chatham Strait and Peril Strait (Alaska Marine Highway, tour ship routes, and small boat routes); Sitkoh Creek (dispersed recreation area); Florence Bay (saltwater use area); the East Sitkoh Lake recreation cabin (public recreation cabin); and the Sitkoh Lake Trail (#553) (hiking trail).

Approximately 82 percent of this roadless area was inventoried as Variety Class B (possessing landscape diversity that is common for the character type). About 18 percent of the roadless area is Variety Class C (possessing a low degree of landscape diversity).

The majority of the area, approximately 74 percent, was inventoried in Existing Visual Condition (EVC) I, which appears untouched by human activity. Approximately 1 percent was inventoried as EVC IV, where changes in the landscape are easily noticed by the average visitor and may attract some attention. Twenty-four percent was inventoried as EVC V, where changes to the landscape are obvious to the average visitor. Approximately 2 percent of the area was inventoried as EVC VI, where changes in the landscape are in glaring contrast to the natural landscape.

(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values: The oldest known site within the Point Craven Roadless Area dates to approximately 3,000 BP. This date may be pushed back by future field investigations. This area was apparently used by Native peoples from the Sitka, Hoonah, and Angoon areas. A permanent village was located at Point Craven, with seasonal sites located in Sitkoh Bay and on the coast. Tlingits fleeing Sitka after the 1804 battle with the Russians, may have retreated to the Point Craven area, where a community of up to 1,000 people was established.

Early European entries were tied to hunting and exploration. Lt. Lisiansky of the Russian Navy mapped the Peril Strait area in 1805. Peril Strait was important then, as now, for access to the inland waterways that provide protected north-south water travel, as well as for access to the inland islands. The primary activities in this area have remained fishing, hunting, and fur gathering. Fish canneries and traps were important in the whole area in the early 20th Century, generally replacing fur gathering as furs became both more scarce and less of an economic factor. A cannery was located within this roadless area on Sitkoh Bay. Sitkoh Bay and Sitkoh Creek are heavily used by sport and subsistence fishers.

A Public Recreation Cabin (Sitkoh Lake East) is located on the east side of Sitkoh Lake within the boundaries of the roadless area. Subsistence use occurs in the area. One of the VCUs partially located within this area (VCU 244) was included among the VCUs with highest community use value. This VCU includes Sitkoh Lake, which is only partially located within the Point Craven Roadless Area. The two other VCUs partially located within the area (VCUs 243 and 245) were included in the second tier of highly valued community use areas. None of the VCUs were listed among the VCUs with highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas (ADF&G, 1998).

(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes: Manageability of this area as wilderness is low. Sitkoh Bay and an area of developments border the area to the northeast and east. Developments also border the area to the north and west. Peril Strait and an area with developments border the area to the south. While the effects of current activities are minimal because they are transitory in nature, past developments may detract from the majority of the boundary of the roadless area. However, these areas may provide better access into the interior of the area.

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

(1) Recreation, Including Tourism Potential: The potential exists to enhance recreation opportunities in this area; however, the opportunity for development of anything other than a trail system seems to be low. The presence of the East Sitkoh Lake Cabin, and the absence of any distinguishing features, would limit management needs for development in the area. There are opportunities for interpretative activities associated with the cultural and historical sites. The potential is considered high for a significant increase in permits for outfitter/guides in the Sitkoh Creek area.

In 1996, the Alaska Visitors Association (AVA) proposed the following recreation developments for Sitkoh Bay and Sitkoh Lake: day-use recreation facility for 150 persons, a day-wildlife observatory for 30 persons, a backcountry recreation lodge for 50 persons, and a small cruise ship shore-walk for 25 persons.

(2) Subsistence Uses: The existing patterns of subsistence activities in the area would not be affected by wilderness designation.

(3) Fish Resources: There are no fish habitat enhancement projects identified for this roadless area at this time.

(4) Wildlife Resources: There are no wildlife habitat improvement projects planned for this area.

(5) Timber Resources: There are 6,907 acres mapped as productive old growth in the roadless area. There are also 32 acres of second growth where timber harvest has occurred in the past. Of these acres, 3,469 acres are categorized as tentatively suitable for timber production. Based on the Forest Plan LUDs assigned to this area (and estimated falldown and scheduling reduction factors), 895 acres or 8 percent of this roadless area are estimated to be

Appendix C

suitable for timber production. Approximately 192 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, less than 10 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

This area was historically part of the Alaska Pulp Corporation Long-Term Contract Area. The potential for managing timber in this roadless area is high. The evaluation area is partially roaded on all four sides and has a reasonable potential for future road development. Large areas of mature-overmature timber that meet operability criteria, coupled with accessibility from existing road systems, make timber harvest a viable proposition. This area is within the False Island Timber Sale planning area scheduled for analysis beginning in 2002.

- (6) **Fire, Insects, and Disease:** The area has no significant fire history. Endemic tree diseases common to Southeast Alaska are present. There are no known epidemic disease occurrences.
- (7) **Minerals:** The development potential for locatable minerals is estimated to be low or non-existent in this area. No known mining claims exist.
- (8) **Transportation and Utilities:** There are no proposed transportation or utility corridors within or adjacent to this area.
- (9) **Water Availability and Use:** The public recreation cabin at Sitkoh Lake is the only facility within this roadless area that creates a demand for water. There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects in the area.
- (10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** The mapped karst resources encompass approximately 41 acres or less than one percent of the roadless area. There are no other known areas of scientific interest in this roadless area.
- (11) **Land Use Authorizations:** No special use permits have been issued for use of this roadless area; however, the area is commonly used by outfitter/guides. There is one structure, located on private land on Sitkoh Bay that is partially on the National Forest. Probable future permits would be for subsistence or recreational facilities or for outfitter/guide services. The potential is considered high for a significant increase in permits for outfitter/guides in the Sitkoh Creek area.
- (12) **Land Status:** All of this roadless area is National Forest System land. Encumbered land within the roadless is located on Point Craven and along Sitkoh Bay. There are two parcels of private land located within the boundaries, but these are excluded from the roadless area.

IV. Wilderness Evaluation (Need for Wilderness)

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

(a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** The nearest communities are Tenakee Springs (population 104), about 25 water miles to the north, and Angoon (population 572), 12 miles to the east. Sitkoh Bay is the primary site for use in the general area. Activities are primarily subsistence hunting and fishing; there is some sport fishing, particularly for steelhead trout. These activities do not necessarily take place in the roadless area. The heaviest subsistence use is indicated to be from Angoon.

There has been strong concern expressed about the ability to maintain subsistence use in the Sitkoh Bay area. This concern is tied to a desire to restrict timber harvest around Sitkoh Bay and the adjacent outside coastline.

(b) **Congressional Interest:** In 1989, U.S. House of Representatives Bill HR 987 proposed to designate 23 areas as wilderness on the Tongass National Forest. This bill did not include the Point Craven Roadless Area. In 2001, HR 2908 identified the area as a proposed LUD II addition. It also proposed that Sitkoh Creek be protected as a Wild and Scenic River. The majority of the developed areas that partially border the area to the north, east, south, and west were identified as “roaded areas available for logging.” Other areas where timber harvest has occurred along the perimeter were identified for protection as Restoration Areas.

(c) Public Input During Forest Plan Revisions and Appeals: Parts of the area were specifically mentioned in public input provided during the Forest Plan revisions and appeals. Sitkoh Bay was identified as an area that is highly important for commercial fishing, year-round recreation, and subsistence use and should be protected from further timber harvest. Sitkoh Bay was identified as a traditional use area for the people of Angoon. Commenters stated that existing roads should be closed to maintain subsistence opportunities in this area. Timber industry representatives requested that Management Area (MA) C37, which includes the Point Craven Roadless Area, be managed for timber production. Another commenter requested that logging not be permitted in MA C37 and other nearby areas until future tourism resources are assessed. The Sierra Club Juneau Group requested that no roads be built in this area. The Sitka Area State Park Advisory Board requested that MA C37 be managed to emphasize subsistence and wildlife. The AVA proposed the following recreation developments for Sitkoh Bay and Sitkoh Lake: day-use recreation facility for 150 persons, a day-wildlife observatory for 30 persons, a backcountry recreation lodge for 50 persons, and a small cruise ship shore-walk for 25 persons.

The area was also mentioned in a number of appeals including the following. The appeal filed by the Hoonah Indian Association et al. requested that logging not be permitted along the “stretch of lands and islands on both sides of the various narrows that span from Sitka Sound to Hoonah Sound” because the subsistence harvest of deer in this area “already exceeds the sustainable hunting level by a wide margin” and logging would exacerbate this situation. This appeal also identified west Chatham Strait as a customary and traditional hunting and fishing area for Angoon and expressed concern that the alternatives presented in the Forest Plan did not adequately protect this area from logging.

The appeal filed by the Sitka Conservation Society (SCS) noted its support of the “Citizens proposal” that identified a number of rivers in the Chatham/Sitka area, including Sitkoh Creek, for Wild and Scenic River designation. The SCS appeal also requested that lands allocated to the Scenic Viewshed LUD along Peril Strait be reallocated to the Old-growth Habitat LUD. The appeal filed by the Prince of Wales Conservation League identified south Chichagof Island as an area where the location and distribution of roadless reserves for brown bear habitat should be re-evaluated.

(d) Public Input During Roadless Area Conservation Rule and Road Management Policy Review: This area was not specifically identified in the comments received on the Roadless Area Conservation Rule or Road Management Policy Review. However, some commenters wanted all unroaded lands in the Tongass to be protected from development.

(e) Public Input Expressed for Project-level EISs and Other Input: This area was included in the project area of the Southeast Chichagof Landscape Analysis (USDA Forest Service, 1999). There were no public comments on this document.

(f) Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process: The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) recommended Roadless Area 314 for permanent protection as LUD II.

SEACC recommended Point Craven for LUD II designation.

(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses: The Admiralty Island National Monument-Kootznoowoo Wilderness is located approximately 15 miles across Chatham Strait from the Point Craven Roadless Area. The West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness is located approximately 45 miles west of the area.

Adjacent roadless areas include Chichagof (#311) (to the north and west, separated from the Point Craven Roadless Area by developed areas) and North Baranof #330 (across Peril Strait to the south). Other roadless areas in the general area include Trap Bay (#312), North Kruszof (#326), Hoonah Sound (#328), and Sitka Urban (#331).

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

Appendix C

| <u>Community</u> | <u>Air Miles</u> | <u>Water Miles</u> |
|----------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Juneau (Pop. 30,711) | 60 | 90 |
| Sitka (Pop. 8,835) | 30 | 65 |
| Hoonah (Pop. 860) | 45 | 70 |
| Angoon (Pop. 572) | 12 | 12 |

The closest Alaska Marine Highway terminals are at Angoon, Tenakee Springs, Hoonah, and Sitka. Commercial airline service is available in Sitka.

(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System: The Point Craven Roadless Area is located on east Chichagof Island. Sitkoh Bay and an area of forest roads and associated developments border the area to the northeast and east. Similarly, developed areas border the area to the north and west. Peril Strait and developed areas border the area to the south. The topography of the Point Craven Roadless Area is characterized by narrow river valleys, surrounded by mountains. Terrain relief ranges from sea level to more than 2,600 feet in elevation. The mountains are steep and highly dissected by streams. Because of this, broad river valleys have not developed. The one exception is Sitkoh Creek and the lower reaches of its tributaries on the northern boundary of the evaluation area. There are several small lakes scattered about the area, generally above the 1,000-foot elevation. Sitkoh Lake lies to the north, partially within the Point Craven Roadless Area.

The area generally appears natural and unmodified; however, the boundaries adjacent to developed areas (about 80 percent of the boundary) appear highly modified. This is also the case from parts of Peril Strait, where developments have occurred in the foreground. Overall, the area has relatively high natural integrity and moderate apparent naturalness. The opportunity for solitude is moderate and the opportunity for primitive recreation is somewhat higher.

None of the landscape in this area is considered distinctive from a scenery standpoint. The area has some localized zones of karst development south of Sitkoh Lake. It also has several known cultural sites, some dating back to nearly 3,000 years.

The roadless area includes about 2,423 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, approximately 109 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The Point Craven Area is classified as being in the East Chichagof Island Biogeographic Province. This small roadless area is located on a peninsula on the southern tip of the province and makes up about one percent of the province. It is one of 12 inventoried roadless areas found in the province that collectively make up about 72 percent of the province. Most of the islands in Icy Strait that comprise the Pleasant-Lemesurier-Inian Islands Wilderness are also located within this province, as is a very small portion of the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness. The portions of the two wildernesses make up approximately 6 percent of the province. The province also includes all or portions of three LUD II areas, which make up approximately 25 percent of the province.

The Point Craven Roadless Area lies within two ecological sections; it represents 0.2 percent of the Baranof-Chichagof Fjordlands Ecological Section and 1 percent of the Northeast Chichagof Fjordlands Ecological Section. The Baranof-Chichagof Fjordlands Ecological Section is well represented by existing wilderness and non-development LUDs (28 and 35 percent, respectively) with an additional 13 percent in LUD II. The Northeast Chichagof Fjordlands Ecological Section is well represented in non-development LUDs (26 percent) and a small portion (7 percent) is within LUD II.

The majority of this roadless area (59 percent) is within the Kook Lake Carbonates Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 6 percent of the entire ecological subsection, which is well represented in other non-development LUDs (31 percent, including 15 percent of LUD II). The remainder of the roadless area (41 percent) is located within the Peril Strait Granitics Ecological Subsection. This portion represents 2 percent of the entire ecological subsection, which is well represented in other non-development LUDs (40 percent, including 25 percent of LUD II).

The Point Craven Roadless Area was rated at 18 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 84th from the highest (along with 8 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas.

There is both local and national support for managing the roadless area in an unroaded condition, but there has been little support for designating the area as wilderness. Designation would create a small wilderness nearly surrounded by developed areas and would not include any outstanding or unique wilderness values. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be low.

V. Environmental Consequences

The Point Craven Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 7 is implemented. Approximately 50 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur within the remaining 50 percent of the roadless area. The land in the development LUDs includes an estimated 895 acres that are suitable for timber production (2 percent of the suitable acres on the Sitka Ranger District). Approximately 5 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. The potential for mineral development is very low. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area could be affected by ongoing developments allowed by the Forest Plan. The cultural and karst values are protected by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 6, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended LUD II. Mineral prospecting and recreation developments could continue, but no timber harvest would be allowed. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including the cultural and karst values, would be provided long-term protection if designated LUD II.

With Alternative 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. The potential for development, including recreation, mineral, and timber management, would be significantly restricted. Mineral prospecting would be allowed up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including the cultural and karst values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

| Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 314 (in acres) | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Land Use Designation | Alt 1 | Alt 2 | Alt 3 | Alt 4 | Alt 5 | Alt 6 | Alt 7 | Alt 8 |
| Recommended Wilderness | | | | | | | | 10,961 |
| Wilderness | | | | | | | | |
| Recommended Wilderness Nat. Mon | | | | | | | | |
| Wilderness National Monument | | | | | | | | |
| Non-wilderness National Monument | | | | | | | | |
| Research Natural Area | | | | | | | | |
| Special Interest Area | | | | | | | | |
| Remote Recreation | | | | | | | | |
| Enacted Municipal Watershed | | | | | | | | |
| Old-growth Habitat | 5,430 | 5,430 | 5,430 | 5,430 | 5,430 | | 5,430 | |
| Semi-remote Recreation | | | | | | | | |
| Recommended LUD II | | | | | | 10,961 | | |
| LUD II | | | | | | | | |
| Wild, Scenic, Recreational River | | | | | | | | |
| Experimental Forest | | | | | | | | |
| Scenic Viewshed | 1,032 | 1,032 | 1,032 | 1,032 | 1,032 | | 1,032 | |
| Modified Landscape | 276 | 276 | 276 | 276 | 276 | | 276 | |
| Timber production | 4,224 | 4,224 | 4,224 | 4,224 | 4,224 | | 4,224 | |
| TOTAL | 10,961 | 10,961 | 10,961 | 10,961 | 10,961 | 10,961 | 10,961 | 10,961 |
| Suitable Timber Lands | 895 | 895 | 895 | 895 | 895 | 0 | 895 | 0 |