

## INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

**ROADLESS AREA NAME:** Hoonah Sound (328)

**ACRES (NFS):** 97,329

**BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE:** East Chichagof Island

**ECOLOGICAL SECTION:** Boundary Ranges

**2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING:** 25

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

(1) **Location and Access:** The Hoonah Sound Roadless Area is located on Chichagof Island. The West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness borders the area to the north and west. Hoonah Sound and Peril Strait border the area to the east and south, respectively. The area also includes Moser and Emmons Islands, which are separated from the Chichagof Island portion of the area by the South Arm of Hoonah Sound. A small peninsula just north of Moser Island, adjacent to the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness, is also part of this area. The city of Sitka is located approximately 25 miles south of the area. The community of Hoonah is located about 30 miles to the north. Access to the area is by boat or floatplane.

There are roads in exclusion areas at Ushk Bay, Fick Cove, and Patterson Bay that provide foot or vehicle access to the associated river valleys and the edge of the roadless area. There is all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use on these roads as well as some off-road use. There are no trails in the area. Access into the interior is by foot or helicopter. There are no places suitable for landing wheeled airplanes.

(2) **History:** Southeast Alaska is believed to have been settled about 10,000 to 11,000 years ago. There are human occupancy sites in the general vicinity of the Hoonah Sound roadless area that date to 9,000+ years before present (BP). The oldest known site within the Hoonah Sound Roadless Area dates to approximately 3,000 BP. This date may be pushed back by future field investigations.

Tlingit oral history indicates that the upper areas of Hoonah Sound were not used except for seasonal hunting, fishing, and gathering. The northernmost known permanent village site in the Hoonah Sound area is located in this roadless area. Seasonal villages have been located along Hoonah Sound to Patterson Bay. The area was apparently used by Alaska Native peoples from the Sitka, Hoonah, and Angoon areas. In 1799, 100 to 150 of Alexandra Baranov's Aleut hunters died at Poison Cove from eating "mussels" from the tideflats.

Early European entries were for trade, 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, which provide protected north-south water travel, as well as access to the inland islands.

The primary activities in this area have remained fishing, hunting, and fur gathering. Although fish canneries and traps were important in Hoonah Sound in the early 20th Century, none have been found in the roadless area. Emmons and Vixen Islands were used for fox farming from 1920 to 1925. Rodgers Point was the site of a Federal Aviation Administration VHF radio site from 1950 to 1966 and an Alaskan Coastal Airlines "Radio-H" station from 1953 to 1960. Recent activities include logging and road construction activities in Ushk and Patterson Bays and Fick Cove.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** This area displays a wide terrain variation. The topography, typical of most of the larger island areas, is characterized by flat river valleys surrounded by mountains. Terrain relief ranges from sea level to more than 2,500 feet in elevation at Pinnacle Peak. Although these mountains are not among the highest in the area, they are steep and highly dissected by streams. The lower reaches of the rivers follow

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meandering courses in broad, flat floodplains, while the headwaters are in steep, narrow valleys. There are numerous small lakes scattered about the area. Most of the smaller lakes lie above 1,000 feet in elevation. There are a total of 315 acres of freshwater lakes.

There are approximately 101 miles of saltwater shoreline and 6,620 acres of small islands, including Mercer Island. There are also 77 acres of snow and ice, 4,880 acres of alpine tundra, and 5,185 acres of rock.

### (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 Hoonah Sound Roadless Area is contained entirely within the Baranof-Chichagof Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247B). This area is represented by three ecological subsections (see table below). The Ushk-Patterson Bay Granitics Ecological Subsection dominates the roadless area. It contains granitic mountains that hug the shores of Peril Strait. Topographic relief is relatively less here, yet the steep slopes create a rugged terrain. Alpine meadows and barrens thrive on the rounded mountaintops while hemlock-spruce forests are present on the well-drained soils of the slopes and some valleys. Neighboring volcanic explosions blanketed this area long ago and much of the ash that once covered the peaks is now settled in the valley bottoms and coupled with organic soils, support vast wetland complexes. The West Chichagof Complex is underlain by bedrock comprised of metamorphosed greenstones, phyllites, and graywacke rock. A unique Whitestrip Marble formation with caves, sinkholes, and shafts crosses this landscape. Spodosol soils cover a majority of this subsection. Atop the mountains, alpine barrens, meadows, and rock outcrops are prominent. The mid to lower elevations have well drained soils that support productive hemlock-spruce and scrubby mixed-conifer forests (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Baranof-Chichagof Fjordlands	Ushk-Patterson Bay Granitics	92%
	West Chichagof Complex	8%
	North Baranof Complex	<1%

(b) **Soils:** Glacial activities, combined with a 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. Dense vegetative growth, combined with a slow organic matter breakdown, leaves a thick duff layer on most of the subalpine soils.

The roadless area's soils are highly variable and range from exposed bedrock and very shallow, poorly developed soils in the higher elevations to deep fluvial and colluvial deposits in the flat river bottoms. There are large areas of deep supersaturated or inundated organic soils (muskeg) over much of the area. The steeper slopes are generally well-drained, shallow, moderately productive soils. The valley bottoms are generally deep, well- to poorly-drained soils, and are highly productive. Many of the soils are highly leached because of the rainfall.

(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 covered with a mat of mosses, liverworts, and plants such as deerheart, bunchberry dogwood, single delight, and skunk cabbage. Streamside riparian understory 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 6,524 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 approximately 2,000 feet, alpine plant communities (mapped as 4,880 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 75,659 acres mapped as forest land, of which 34,805 acres or 46 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 11,310 acres or 32 percent are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 1,542 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are 769 acres of second growth resulting from earlier beach harvest.

**(d) Fish Resources:** 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, the area provides habitat for steelhead trout, Dolly Varden char, stickleback, and smelt. Small populations of chinook salmon reportedly inhabit bays and estuaries of the area. Deep Bay Creek produces the largest runs of pink salmon in the area. Other highly productive streams include Ushk Bay, Fick Cove, and Patterson Bay.

**(e) Wildlife Resources:** Wildlife species present in this roadless area include brown bear, Sitka black-tailed deer, mountain goats, pine marten, river otter, mink, and beaver, as well as smaller mammals and several amphibians. There are relatively few resident bird species; however, the area is used by many migratory species, including waterfowl. Eagles are common in the coastal zone. Goshawks and harlequin ducks have been observed in the area. Moose have not been reported here.

**(5) Management Direction and Current Uses:** This area was allocated to six different Land Use Designations (LUDs) in the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. These six LUDs are Timber Production, Scenic Viewshed, Modified Landscape, LUD II, Old-growth Habitat, and Semi-Remote Recreation.

LUD	Acres
Timber Production	32,729
Scenic Viewshed	3,191
Modified Landscape	1,197
LUD II	53,667
Old-growth Habitat	6,430
Semi-Remote Recreation	115

Approximately 38 percent of this area was allocated to LUDs that allow timber harvest and associated road construction (Timber Production, Scenic Viewshed, and Modified Landscape). The Timber Production LUD was assigned to approximately 34 percent of the roadless area. Around Poison Cove and Ushk Point, approximately 3 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Scenic Viewshed LUD. The Modified Landscape LUD was assigned to approximately one percent of the roadless area, located primarily around Ushk Bay.

Over half of this roadless area, 62 percent, was allocated to a non-development LUD (LUD II, Old-growth Habitat, Semi-Remote Recreation). Over half the roadless area, approximately 55 percent, was allocated to the LUD II designation. This LUD II area, located around the South Arm of Hoonah Sound, includes Patterson Bay, Fick Cove, Moser Island, and Emmons Island. Areas around Ushk Bay, Rapids Point, and Deep Bay were allocated to the Old-growth Habitat LUD, which account for approximately 7 percent of the roadless area. The smaller islands associated with the roadless area that are not in LUD II, were allocated to the Semi-Remote Recreation LUD, which accounts for less than one percent of the roadless area.

There are no ongoing management activities within this area beyond some fish habitat improvement. Timber harvest and road construction along Patterson and Ushk Bays and Fick Cove are excluded from the boundaries of the roadless area. There are, however, areas of beach logging along the shoreline that are included in the area. There are no special use permits for upland structures. There is one public recreation cabin and anchor buoy located on the north end of Moser Island on the South Arm side. There are three or more unauthorized (trespass) cabins.

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Recreational use of the area is primarily for hunting and fishing, and enjoying the scenery. This use is scattered through the area with the usual concentrations near lakes, streams, and shorelines. Outfitter/guides use this area. Subsistence use also occurs in the area. The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) identified three VCUs partially located within the area as subsistence use areas with a high sensitivity to disturbance.

**(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness):** Although the areas adjacent to developed areas (a small portion of the total area) appear highly modified and older beach logging has occurred in a number of locations along the shoreline, the area generally appears natural and unmodified. Some minor development has occurred along the coastline, such as tent frames, but these are unobtrusive and do not generally detract from the area's naturalness. No other readily apparent signs of human activities can be seen from the surrounding bays, Sergius Narrows, or Peril Strait.

**(7) Surroundings (External Influences):** There are two small privately owned tracts within, but excluded from, the roadless area. These are located at Deep Bay and Poison Cove. Peril Strait is the Alaska Marine Highway route connecting Sitka with the rest of Southeast Alaska. There are approximately 10 weekly ferry passages during the summer months. In addition, there is some cruise ship and tour boat use. Peril Strait is the major connecting corridor between the west side of Baranof and Chichagof Islands and the inland waterways. Therefore, it is commonly used by sport and commercial fishing boats, as well as barge traffic. Hoonah Sound gets heavy pleasure and commercial fishing craft use. Because the roadless area is bordered by water on the east and south and the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness to the north and west, with the exception of boat traffic, there is little activity in the adjoining surroundings that would adversely affect the wilderness character of the area. High altitude overflights by commercial airliners (approximately six per day) and occasional small aircraft flights may provide some distraction.

**(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest:** Although the wildlife and natural beauty of the area are attractions, there is little to distinguish this from many other areas. Basic attractions are the opportunity to "get away from it all" (solitude), sportfishing, and hunting. The area contains 19 inventoried recreation places, which cover 15,415 acres, or 16 percent of the roadless area. There is one public recreation cabin located in the area. A special interest may be the diverse cultural and historic value of the general area. However, there are no interpretative or information programs at present.

**(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary:** There was one relatively minor change in the boundaries of this roadless area between 1989 and 2003. The beach logged areas along the shoreline of the area were specifically excluded from the boundaries of the 1989 area. These areas are included as part of the 2003 roadless area.

## II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

**(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness:** The area is unmodified except for minor activities (including the trespass cabins) and for early cabin and camp sites, including Alaska Native activity sites. The early sites are deteriorated and grown over, making them apparent only with close examination. The existing cabins are unobtrusive and infrequent, and do not detract from the very high natural integrity or high apparent naturalness of the total area. There are also a number of beach logged areas along the shoreline. The area's appearance is generally suitable for wilderness classification.

**(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation:** The opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation is outstanding. The area's terrain is such that activities in coastal waters have little influence on areas away from the coastline. The large size of this area, coupled with the lack of activities and low visitation, contribute to the feeling of solitude. High altitude overflights by commercial airliners (approximately six per day) and occasional small aircraft flights may provide some distraction. This area is bordered to the north and west by the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness area.

Outfitter/guide use was reported at eight locations in and around this area in 1999. Seventy-four groups with a total of 348 clients were reported visiting the area. Reported uses included brown bear hunting, deer hunting, fishing, sightseeing, and hiking. Patterson and Ushk Bays were the most frequently visited locations. As with all backcountry areas on the Tongass, the opportunity for challenge and risk in this area is high. The climate, the rugged terrain, the isolation and distance from population centers with medical facilities, the barriers to

communication, and the presence of large wild animals all contribute to the need for good preparation and knowledge of backcountry survival skills for anyone using this area. Hypothermia and bear encounters are just two examples of the many risks that must be considered before traveling in the backcountry of southeast Alaska.

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

ROS Class	Acres	Percent of Total ROS
Primitive (P)	59,473	61%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	22,252	23%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	2,779	3%
Roaded Modified (RM)	12,801	13%

The area contains 19 inventoried recreation places, which cover 15,415 acres, or 16 percent of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places*	Total Acres
P	10	6,134
SPNM	5	4,650
SPM	2	1,961
RM	9	2,671

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

There is one public recreation cabin and anchor buoy located on the north end of Moser Island on the South Arm side.

**(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 Hoonah Sound Roadless Area was 19 out of 28 possible points. A smaller portion of the area was rated separately in 1989 and received a score of 25. 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 25.

**(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values:** This area, located on south Chichagof Island, is bordered to the west by the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness.

**(a) Fish Resources:** The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment identified three of the seven VCUs, Ushk Bay (281), Fick Cove (282), and Patterson Bay (283), as primary salmon producers. None of the VCUs were identified as primary sport fish producers (ADF&G, 1998).

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 and valuable sportfishing species. Other species include Dolly Varden char, stickleback, and smelt. Small populations of chinook salmon reportedly inhabit bays and estuaries of the area.

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Deep Bay Creek produces the largest runs of pink salmon in the area, with peak escapement counts of more than 100,000 fish (USDA Forest Service, 1994). The estimated annual peak escapement of pink salmon is 38,200, 37,200, and 57,800 for Ushk Bay, Fick Cove, and Patterson Bay, respectively. These drainages also have very good coho smolt capability (ADF&G, 1998).

**(b) Wildlife Resources:** Wildlife species present in this roadless area include brown bear, Sitka black-tailed deer, pine marten, river otter, mink, and beaver, as well as smaller mammals and several amphibians. There are relatively few resident bird species; however, the area is used by many migratory species, including waterfowl. The area may also receive some migratory use by Peale's peregrine falcon. Eagles are common in the coastal zone, and a total of 40 nest sites have been identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in the Ushk Bay area. Goshawks are known to occur in the area. The area may also provide suitable nesting habitat for harlequin ducks.

Moose have not been reported here. Sport and subsistence deer hunting is important in this area. This is a popular brown bear hunting area. The Ushk Bay VCU (VCU 281) was identified in the top 25 percent of brown bear harvest areas by VCU based on data from 1985 to 1994 (ADF&G, 1998). The Patterson Bay VCU (VCU 283) was identified in the third 25 percent. In addition, there is pine marten and mink trapping. Moderate and high quality deer habitat areas are located along the north shorelines of Ushk Bay, Poison Cove, and Deep Bay; and along portions of the Peril Strait coastline and the main drainages. High quality brown bear habitat can be found along the major drainages, such as Ushk Creek, Bear Creek, Poison Creek, and Deep Creek.

**(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. 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 is a small area of high vulnerability karst resources in this roadless area near Pinnacle Peak. This represents 118 acres, or less than 1 percent, of the roadless area. There are no known glaciers or other unique geologic features.

**(5) Scientific and Educational Values:** There is a high probability for numerous cultural resource sites in this area. However, little study has been done in the area. There are 13 known or suspected (unconfirmed) sites, dating back to about 3,000 years before present. 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 this roadless area. Sitka, the closest larger community, is located approximately 25 miles south of the area.

**(6) Scenic Values:** The visual character type of this area is classified as Admiralty-Chichagof. Landforms are generally rounded, but range to steep, rugged mountains on the west of the Hoonah Sound Roadless Area. These mountains are snowcapped most of the year. Rocky shorelines, interspersed with gravel beaches are found along Hoonah Sound and Peril Strait. Streams are often short and swift, flowing directly to saltwater. Bays and estuaries are common and show a wide 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.

Although the parts of the roadless area that are adjacent to areas managed for timber (a small portion of the total area) appear highly modified and older beach logging has occurred in a number of locations along the shoreline, the

area mostly appears natural and unmodified. Some minor development has occurred along the coastline, such as tent frames, but these are unobtrusive and do not generally detract from the area's naturalness. No other readily apparent signs of human activities can be seen from the surrounding bays, Sergius Narrows, or Peril Strait.

Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan, that are within or adjacent to the area, include: Peril Strait (Alaska Marine Highway and tour ship route); Ushk Bay, Hoonah Sound (North and South Arm), Peril Strait, Deep Bay, and Patterson Bay (small boat routes); Peril Strait and Deadman Reach (saltwater use areas); and Deep Bay, Suloia Bay, Ushk Bay, and Moser Island (boat anchorages).

The area is inventoried as approximately 13 percent Variety Class A (possessing landscape diversity unique for the character type), 54 percent Variety Class B (possessing landscape characteristics common for the character type), and 33 percent Variety Class C (possessing a low degree of landscape diversity).

The majority of the area, approximately 87 percent, was inventoried as Existing Visual Condition (EVC) I. These areas appear untouched by human activity. Approximately 10 percent of the area was inventoried as an EVC IV, where changes in the landscape are easily noticed by the average visitor and may attract some attention. About 3 percent of the area is inventoried as EVC V, where changes to the landscape are obvious to the average visitor and appear to be major disturbances.

**(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values:** Southeast Alaska is believed to have been settled about 10,000 to 11,000 years ago. There are human occupancy sites in the general vicinity of the Hoonah Sound Roadless Area that date to 9,000+ years before present (BP). The oldest known site within the roadless area dates to approximately 3,000 BP. Tlingit oral history indicates that the upper areas of Hoonah Sound were not used except for seasonal hunting, fishing, and gathering. The northernmost known permanent village site in the Hoonah Sound area is located in this roadless area. Seasonal villages have been located along Hoonah Sound to Patterson Bay. The area was apparently used by Alaska Native peoples from the Sitka, Hoonah, and Angoon areas. Early European entries were for trade, 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, which provide protected north-south water travel, as well as access to the inland islands. Primary activities in the area have remained fishing, hunting, and fur gathering. The city of Sitka is located approximately 30 miles south of the area. The community of Hoonah is located about 25 miles to the north.

Subsistence use also occurs in the area. The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) identified three VCUs partially located within the area (VCUs 278, 279, and 281 along Peril Strait) as subsistence use areas with a high sensitivity to disturbance. VCU 279 was included among the VCUs with highest community use value and VCUs 280 and 281, partially located in the area, were included in the second tier for community use value (ADF&G, 1998).

**(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes:** Manageability of this area as wilderness is high. The boundaries are defined by the coastline or are not critical because of the adjoining wilderness. Effects of adjoining activities are minimal because these activities are transitory in nature (i.e., saltwater-based or wilderness-related). Developments at the head of Ushk and Patterson Bays and Fick Cove may detract from the natural appearance of relatively small portions of the roadless area; however, they may also provide better access, via the existing road system, into the interior of the area. Were the Hoonah Sound Roadless Area left in an unroaded state, it would complement the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness.

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

**(1) Recreation, Including Tourism Potential:** The potential exists to enhance primitive and/or semi-primitive recreation opportunities. Potential opportunities include construction of trails and recreation cabins, particularly along the coast in the several protected bays. The potential also exists to provide interpretative information for cultural resource sites along the coast. In 1996, the Alaska Visitors Association (AVA) proposed the following developments for the Ushk Bay area: a backcountry recreation lodging for 100 persons, hut-to-hut hiking/kayaking/canoeing for 25 persons, day-use recreation with a 150 person capacity, and day boat docks for 50 persons.

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- (2) **Subsistence Uses:** The existing patterns of subsistence activities in the area would not be affected by wilderness designation.
- (3) **Fish Resource:** No fish enhancement projects are planned for this roadless area.
- (4) **Wildlife Resources:** No wildlife habitat improvement projects are planned for this roadless area.
- (5) **Timber Resources:** There are 34,805 acres mapped as productive old growth in the roadless area. There are also 769 acres of second growth where beach harvest has occurred in the past. Of these acres, 9,556 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), 2,226 acres or 2 percent of this roadless area is estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 548 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 39 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The potential for managing timber in this roadless area is high in those areas of operable timber stands. The large areas of non-commercial timber and areas with marginal operability due to accessibility, limit management potential. However, there are large areas of mature-overmature timber that are operable and accessible. These stands would be viable for timber harvest. Most of these stands exhibit old-growth habitat characteristics.

The Ushk Bay Timber Sale(s) project area is located within the Hoonah Sound Roadless Area. The Record of Decision for this project (USDA Forest Service, 1994) proposed that timber harvest and road building occur in the vicinity of Ushk Bay and Poison Cove. These potential activities are under evaluation for implementation.

- (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 USGS Mineral Resource Data website (2001) indicates that there are a number of prospects for gold and copper, particularly in the Ushk Bay area (VCU 281).

This area contains 2,972 acres of land identified as a mineral activity tract having a low potential for experiencing mineral exploration and development of locatable minerals (Coldwell 1990, USDA Forest Service 1991). In addition, this area contains 10,735 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources (Brew et al., 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991); all of these acres are considered to have low potential for development.

- (8) **Transportation and Utilities:** There are no proposed transportation or utility corridors within or adjacent to this area. Access to areas that allow development under the Forest Plan would need to expand the current road system.
- (9) **Water Availability and Use:** There are three or more unauthorized (trespass) cabins and one public recreation cabin located in the area. No other facilities exist to create water demand. There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects in the area.
- (10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** There is a small area of high vulnerability karst resources in this roadless area near Pinnacle Peak. This represents 118 acres, or less than one percent of the roadless area.
- (11) **Land Use Authorizations:** No special use permits have been issued for specific use of this area. However, the area is used by several outfitter/guides. Possible future permits would likely be for subsistence or recreational facilities or for outfitter/guide services. The potential is low for a significant increase in most types of permits, other than for incidental use.
- (12) **Land Status:** There are no patented private lands within the roadless area. There are two parcels of private land within the boundaries, but excluded from the roadless area. There are no other non-Federal lands or withdrawals.

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

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

**(a) Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** The primary zone of use in the area is along Hoonah Sound and inland within one-half mile of the coastline. Heaviest use is indicated to be from Angoon and Sitka. Activities are subsistence hunting and fishing, sport hunting and fishing (particularly for salmon), and commercial fishing. These activities do not necessarily take place within the roadless area.

Concerns expressed by residents of the general area (Tenakee Springs, Angoon, Sitka, and Hoonah) relate primarily to subsistence uses and commercial fishing as affected by timber harvest or to timber harvest that may be eliminated by the creation of a wilderness, therefore, affecting jobs.

**(b) Congressional Interest:** In 1989, U.S. House of Representatives Bill HR 987 proposed to designate 23 areas as wilderness on the Tongass National Forest. The Hoonah Sound Roadless Area was part of the Chichagof Wilderness Area proposed in HR 987. The north part of the area was designated permanent LUD II status under the 1990 Tongass Timber Reform Act. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed that this area remain in permanent LUD II status. The south portion of the area was identified as a proposed wilderness addition. The drainage flowing into Deep Bay was identified for protection as a Wild and Scenic River.

**(c) Public Input During Forest Plan Revisions and Appeals:** This area was specifically addressed in public input received during the Forest Plan revision and appeal. Commenters identified Deep Bay, Poison Cove, and Ushk Bay as areas meriting special protection that should receive LUD II or similar protection. Commenters also identified Management Area (MA) C39, which is wholly located within this roadless area, and MA C40, partially located within this area, as areas where there should be no further logging until future tourism resources are assessed. Timber industry representatives, in contrast, identified MAs 39 and 40 as areas that should be in timber production, except for a Modified Landscape buffer along Peril Strait. In 1996, the AVA proposed the following developments for the Ushk Bay area: a backcountry recreation lodging for 100 persons, hut-to-hut hiking/kayaking/canoeing for 25 persons, day-use recreation with a 150 person capacity, and day boat docks for 50 persons.

Parts of the area were also specifically identified in four separate appeals. The appeal filed by the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC) expressed concern about the LUD designations applied to Poison Cove, Deep Bay, and Ushk Bay, which they identify as part of the Chichagof Wilderness designated in the 1989 house-passed version of HR 987. They noted that only shoreline patches and a narrow band around Deep Bay were protected under the revised Tongass Plan.

The appeal filed by the Sitka Conservation Society (SCS) objected to the inclusion of Ushk Bay and Poison Cove in the “timber base.” They identified these places as areas with high value for wildlife habitat, community recreation and subsistence, tourism, and traditional culture and requested that these areas be removed from the timber base and designated as old-growth habitat. This appeal also noted that the entire Ushk Bay/Poison Cove area should be designated as old-growth habitat due to the larger patch sizes of contiguous old-growth forest, as well as its location adjacent to an extensively traveled waterway. They also noted that Deep Bay Creek should be given Wild and Scenic River designation.

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. 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.

**(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

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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:** The proposed Ushk Bay Timber Sale(s) project is located within the Hoonah Sound Roadless Area. The FEIS for this project was published in 1994 (USDA Forest Service, 1994). A number of people commenting on this project noted that the Ushk Bay Project Area should have been designated as wilderness or a LUD II area. Commenters noted that Ushk Bay and Deep Bay were nominated for selected lands under the ANSCA Act. Commenters also noted that the wilderness setting of the Ushk Bay Project Area should be maintained. Concerns were also expressed about the potential impact of the proposed timber sale(s) on subsistence resources and use, wildlife, water quality/fisheries, marine resources, visual resources, and recreation. Commenters were also concerned about the effect that closure of the Sitka Pulp Mill would have on the proposed timber sale.

**(f) Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process:** The U.S. Department of the Interior identified this roadless area as one of the 13 roadless areas they considered to have outstanding fish and wildlife values. They supported the designation of Deep Bay Creek as a Wild and Scenic River. They recommended including the Pt. Adolphus/Mud Bay LUD II area within this conservation unit. They indicated that the important wildlife values provided by this area warrant management that ensures the long-term integrity of its habitats, ecosystem processes, and ecological functions.

In comments relative to the 1997 Forest Plan, the Governor of Alaska recommended that logging and construction of logging roads be avoided in important public interest areas such as Poison Cove/Ushk Bay (the southern portion of RA# 328). This comment was reiterated by the Governor in scoping comments regarding the SEIS and in comments by the Division of Governmental Coordination on the Draft SEIS.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game recommended permanent roadless status for the Poison Cove/Ushk Bay area. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game rated the Hoonah Sound roadless area as the second highest priority for protection in northern Southeast Alaska. This rating is based on the VCUs with the highest value fish and wildlife resources needing additional protection. VCUs are prioritized for their very high productivity, essential role in connectivity, and/or very high value as community use areas.

The city of Pelican passed a resolution stating that the important watersheds identified as areas of special interest in the 1999 ROD and HR 987 should given long-term protection.

SEACC recommended this area for permanent protection as a combination of wilderness and LUD II as outlined in Alternative 6. The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) identified Roadless Area 328 as adjacent to the West Chichagof Wilderness and recommended it for permanent protection in a combination of wilderness and LUD II, as described in Alternative 6. Audubon Alaska recommended that Poison Cove/Ushk Bay should be protected from logging and road building

Some members of the Southeast Alaska Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council identified the need for further protection of this area because of its importance for subsistence

The Sitka Tribe of Alaska supported Alternative 3 Wilderness Land Use Designation for the Ushk Bay, Poison Cove, and Deep Bay area.

Many commenters recommended protection for the Poison Cove, Ushk Bay, and Deep Bay areas or for the entire area. One wanted progressive logging to take place in the area because of the planning investment.

**(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses:** The area is bordered to the north and west by the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness. The Admiralty Island National Monument-Kootznoowoo Wilderness is located approximately 32 miles east of the area. The South Baranof Wilderness is located 35 miles south.

Adjacent roadless areas are the North Kruzof (#326) (located southwest across Peril Strait), North Baranof (#330) (east across Peril Strait), and Chichagof (#311) (north across Hoonah Sound) Roadless Areas. These roadless areas were generally assigned to similar LUDs as the Hoonah Sound Roadless Area. The north portion of the North Kruzof Roadless Area was assigned to Old-growth Habitat. The shoreline of the North Baranof Roadless Area directly across Peril Strait from the Hoonah Roadless Area was assigned to the Scenic Viewshed and Old-growth Habitat LUDs. The shoreline of the Chichagof Roadless Area, directly across Hoonah Sound from the Hoonah Sound Roadless Area, was allocated to the LUD II, Scenic Viewshed, and Old-growth Habitat LUDs

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

<b>Community</b>	<b>Air Miles</b>	<b>Water Miles</b>
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	65	117
Sitka (Pop. 8,835)	25	30
Hoonah (Pop. 860)	30	95
Angoon (Pop. 572)	35	40

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

**(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System:** The Hoonah Sound Roadless Area is located mostly on Chichagof Island. The West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness borders the area to the north and west. Hoonah Sound and Peril Strait border the area to the east and south, respectively. The area also includes Moser and Emmons Islands, which are separated from the Chichagof Island portion of the area by the South Arm of Hoonah Sound. A small peninsula just north of Moser Island, adjacent to the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness is also part of this area. The topography is characterized by flat river valleys surrounded by mountains. Terrain relief ranges from sea level to more than 2,500 feet in elevation at Pinnacle Peak. There are numerous small lakes, mostly above 1,000 feet in elevation, scattered about the area.

The area is unmodified except for some older beach logging areas along the shoreline. The natural integrity and apparent naturalness is rated as very high and high. The opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation are outstanding for the area.

The Hoonah Sound Roadless Area has moderate scenic quality; approximately 13 percent of the landscape is considered distinctive from a scenery standpoint. There is a small area of karst development near Pinnacle Peak and the area has known cultural resources. There are no other known outstanding or unique values or features in the area.

The roadless area includes about 11,310 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, approximately 1,542 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The Hoonah Sound Roadless Area is classified as being in the East Chichagof Island Province and makes up about 9 percent of the province. It is one of 12 inventoried roadless areas that are found in the province that collectively make up about 72 percent of the province. Approximately 79 percent of the province is unroaded. The province contains the Pleasant-Lemesurier-Inian Islands Wilderness and a portion of the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness, which make up 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 Hoonah Sound Roadless Area lies completely within the Baranof-Chichagof Fjordlands Ecological Section. This portion represents 5 percent of the entire ecological section, which is well represented in existing wilderness (28 percent) and other non-development LUDs (35 percent) with an additional 13 percent in LUD II.

The majority of this roadless area (92 percent) is located within the Ushk-Patterson Bay Granitics Ecological Subsection. This portion of the roadless area represents 78 percent of the entire ecological subsection within the Tongass National Forest boundary, and is well represented in LUD II (43 percent) with an additional 19 percent in existing wilderness and 6 percent in other non-development LUDs. The West Chichagof Complex Ecological

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Subsection represents 8 percent of the Hoonah Sound Roadless Area. This portion of the roadless area represents 6 percent of the entire ecological subsection within the Tongass National Forest boundary, and is well represented in existing wilderness (94 percent) with an additional 6 percent in LUD II. Less than 1 percent of this roadless area is located within the North Baranof Complex Ecological Subsection. This portion represents less than 0.1 percent of the entire ecological subsection, which is well represented in other non-development LUDs (36 percent).

The Hoonah Sound Roadless Area was rated 25 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 12<sup>th</sup> from the highest (along with 12 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas.

There is both local and national support for designating the area as wilderness. Designation would make a large addition to the nearby West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness. The small area of karst and the cultural resource sites would be included in the wilderness. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be high.

### **V. Environmental Consequences**

The Hoonah Sound Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternatives 1 or 4 are implemented. Approximately 62 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur in the remaining 38 percent of the roadless area. The land in the development LUDs provides an estimated 2,226 acres that are suitable for timber production (5 percent of the suitable acres on the Sitka Ranger District). Approximately 39 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. This area contains 2,972 acres of land identified as a mineral activity tract having a low potential for experiencing mineral exploration and development of locatable minerals. In addition, this area contains 10,735 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources; all of these acres are considered to have low potential for development. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area could be affected by developments in the non-LUD II area allowed by the Forest Plan. The high cultural, karst and most scenic values are protected by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 2, a 53,667-acre portion of the roadless area currently in existing LUD II would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. This would not affect timber sale projects because this area is currently allocated to a non-development LUD. The area suitable for timber production would not change from Alternative 1. The potential for other development, including recreation, mineral, and special uses, could be restricted in the area converted to Recommended Wilderness. Mineral prospecting and development 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 inside the existing LUD II area would continue to receive long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Under Alternatives 3 and 6, all lands not currently in existing LUD II would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. Timber sale projects would not be allowed, and the potential for other development, including recreation, special uses and mineral, would be significantly restricted. Mineral prospecting and development 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 outside of existing LUD II areas, including cultural, karst, and scenic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness. The values associated with the natural settings inside the existing LUD II area would continue to receive long-term protection.

With Alternatives 5, 7 and 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. Timber sale projects would not be allowed, and the potential for other development, including recreation, special uses, and mineral, could be significantly restricted. Mineral prospecting and development would be allowed up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including cultural, karst, and scenic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

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<b>Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 328 (in acres)</b>								
<b>Land Use Designation</b>	<b>Alt 1</b>	<b>Alt 2</b>	<b>Alt 3</b>	<b>Alt 4</b>	<b>Alt 5</b>	<b>Alt 6</b>	<b>Alt 7</b>	<b>Alt 8</b>
<b>Recommended Wilderness</b>		53,667	43,662		97,329	43,662	97,329	97,329
<b>Wilderness</b>								
<b>Recommended Wilderness Nat. Mon.</b>								
<b>Wilderness National Monument</b>								
<b>Non-wilderness National Monument</b>								
<b>Research Natural Area</b>								
<b>Special Interest Area</b>								
<b>Remote Recreation</b>								
<b>Enacted Municipal Watershed</b>								
<b>Old-growth Habitat</b>	6,430	6,430		6,430				
<b>Semi-remote Recreation</b>	115	115		115				
<b>Recommended LUD II</b>								
<b>LUD II</b>	53,667		53,667	53,667		53,667		
<b>Wild, Scenic, Recreational River</b>								
<b>Experimental Forest</b>								
<b>Scenic Viewshed</b>	3,191	3,191		3,191				
<b>Modified Landscape</b>	1,197	1,197		1,197				
<b>Timber production</b>	32,729	32,729		32,729				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>97,329</b>	<b>97,329</b>	<b>97,329</b>	<b>97,329</b>	<b>97,329</b>	<b>97,329</b>	<b>97,329</b>	<b>97,329</b>
<b>Suitable Timber Lands</b>	2,226	2,226	0	2,226	0	0	0	0