

INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

ROADLESS AREA NAME: Neka Mountain (342)

ACRES (NFS): 53,019

BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: East Chichagof Island

ECOLOGICAL SECTION: Northeast Chichagof Fjordlands

2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING: 21

I. Overview and Description

(1) **Location and Access:** The area is located on north Chichagof Island. Non-National Forest System lands border the area to the east. The Land Use Designation (LUD) II portion of the Chichagof Roadless Area (#311) partially borders the area to the west and north. The remainder of the west border is formed by an area of forest roads and timber harvest units that extends along the Neka River. Icy Strait forms the remainder of the north border. Neka Bay borders the area to the south. The city of Hoonah is located about 8 miles to the east. The city of Juneau, the closest larger community, is located approximately 45 air miles east of the area.

The area may be directly accessed by boat or floatplane on the saltwater along its north and south shores. There are no places suitable for landing wheeled airplanes. The forest roads that border the area to the west provide access to the edge of the area. Roads located in the area of non-National Forest System lands that border the area to the east also provide access to the edge of the area. Access into the interior is by foot or helicopter.

(2) **History:** At the time of Euroamerican contact, the Hoonah and Angoon Tlingit used this area of Chichagof Island. Villages and sites for seasonal hunting, fishing, and collecting activities were located throughout Chichagof Island. Goldschmidt and Haas (1946) indicated that the Neka Mountain Roadless Area was located within Hoonah Territory. They noted that berrying and salmon fishing occurred along the north shore of Neka Bay within this roadless area. They also identified a smokehouse or cabin in the area.

The general area was surveyed by Captain Vancouver in 1794, who found a native burial box just south of Point Adolphus, just north of this roadless area. He also explored and named Port Frederick located east of the area.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** Most of this area is mountainous with flatter areas primarily around the estuaries and tidal flats. This roadless area is typical of recently glaciated terrain with rugged mountains dissected by steep-sided, U-shaped valleys and stream courses. Major streams flowing through the area include Chicken, Humpback, and Gallagher Creeks. Saltwater bays and estuaries border the area to the north and south. Elevations range from sea level to 2,972 feet at the highest point, which is Neka Mountain located in the southeast corner of the area. Peaks exceeding 2,000 feet in elevation are scattered throughout the area.

The area includes 13 miles of shoreline on saltwater. This includes five small islands totaling 10 acres. The area also includes 4,374 acres of alpine tundra and 594 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.

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Ecological Section/Subsection. The Neka Mountain Roadless Area is contained entirely within the Northeast Chichagof Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247C). This area is represented by one ecological subsection (see table below). The Point Adolphus Carbonates Ecological Subsection contains bedrock consisting mostly of sedimentary rocks, particularly marble and limestone, with smaller portions of volcanic rocks. The northern side of this ecological subsection continues to uplift due to recent glacial retreat and local tectonics. As a result, the coastal area is lined with beachfront forests and extensive estuary tidal meadows – a rare feature in Southeast Alaska. This area has less than 10 percent alpine land cover and is dominated by productive hemlock and hemlock-spruce forests. In addition, wetlands are common and comprise almost one third of the landscape (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Northeast Chichagof Fjordlands	Point Adolphus Carbonates	100%

(b) Soils: Soil development in the Neka Mountain Roadless Area is influenced by high levels of rainfall, cool summer temperatures, a short growing season, and moderately-low soil temperatures. Under such conditions, organic matter decomposes slowly and tends to accumulate in areas where it is being produced or deposited. Because of the high rainfall, the available nutrients can be leached rapidly and exposed mineral soils are subject to erosion.

In general, due to the rapid loss of material by erosion and efficient rainwater runoff, shallow soils with good drainage tend to develop on steeper slopes. Deep, well-drained soils commonly occur on gentler slopes where transported soil materials have collected.

Deep organic soils (muskegs) tend to develop where drainage is poor. This situation occurs where the soil material fails to provide sufficient internal drainage or where topography prevents external drainage. These areas are generally not well suited for road construction because the soil materials tend to be wet and have low bearing strengths. Drainage improves with increased slope gradient. However, as slopes become oversteepened, soil depths become much shallower. Riparian area soils tend to contain flood-deposited sands and gravels.

(c) Vegetation: Dense western hemlock/Sitka spruce forests dominate the overstory of the Neka Mountain Roadless Area. The understory is composed of shrubs such as red huckleberry, rusty menziesia, and devil's club. The forest floor 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 are dominated by sphagnum mosses, sedges, and shrubs of the heath family, and 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 2,186 acres of muskeg are mapped for the area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult.

Common marine plants in the near-shore waters include brown, red, and green algae, and eelgrass. Tideflats are found at the heads of many of the bays in this general vicinity and are usually associated with stream estuaries. The tideflats generally support sea milkwort, glasswort, and algae. Beach meadows occur between the shore and the forest. Lower beach meadows are composed of beach ryegrass, reed bent grass, hairgrass, fescue grass, beach lovage, goose tongue, and sedges. Upper beach meadow plants include yarrow, bedstraw, starwort, ferns, western columbine, and cow parsnip. Oregon crabapple, alder, devil's club, and blueberry occur along the border of the beach meadow and the forest.

At elevations above 2,000 feet, the plant communities (mapped as 4,374 acres) are generally 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 37,407 acres of forested land in the area, of which approximately 23,090 acres (62 percent) are mapped as productive old growth. Of the productive old growth, 13,003 acres (56 percent) are

mapped as high-volume, old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 5,286 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are 201 acres of second-growth forest where beach harvest has occurred in the past.

(d) Fish Resources: This general area is highly valued for fish production. The Anadromous Waters Catalogue (ADF&G, 2000) listed Humpback and Homestead Creeks as Class I streams in this roadless area. These streams provide spawning and rearing habitat for pink, coho, and chum salmon. Humpback Creek is known for a large odd-year run of pink salmon and a moderate run of chum salmon. Chum, pink, and coho salmon occur in the area lakes and streams.

(e) Wildlife Resources: Wildlife species in this area include brown bears, Sitka black-tailed deer, and furbearers such as mink, marten, and river otter. Bird and waterfowl rearing and nesting areas are abundant. Some of the most noted nesting areas on Chichagof Island are in the Neka Bay area. Bald eagle habitat, including nesting and roosting trees, is found along the shorelines. Moose are reported to inhabit Chichagof Island, however, black bears, wolves, and mountain goats are not (MacDonald and Cook, 1999).

(5) Management Direction and Current Uses: This area was allocated to two Land Use Designations (LUDs) in the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. These two LUDs are Old-growth Habitat and Timber Production.

LUD	Acres
Timber Production	23,542
Old-growth Habitat	29,477

Approximately 44 percent of this roadless area was allocated to the Timber Production LUD, which is a development LUD. Most of this roadless area, approximately 56 percent, was allocated to the Old-growth Habitat LUD, which is a non-development LUD.

Recreation use in the area includes hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, picnicking, and viewing scenery and wildlife. There are no developed recreation facilities or trails in this area. Outfitter/guide use was reported at Chicken Creek and Neka Bay in 1999. Twenty-one groups and a total of 100 clients visited one of these two locations, with the majority (94 clients) visiting Chicken Creek. Outfitter/guide use included brown bear hunting, sightseeing, fishing, camping, and picnicking. Subsistence use occurs in the area. The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) identified all of the VCUs that comprise this area as subsistence use areas with a high sensitivity to disturbance.

The Humpback/Gallagher Timber Sale, which is identified as a 21.3 million board feet (MMBF) timber sale, is located on the eastern edge and within the roadless area, and is under contract. The 1996 Record of Decision (ROD) for the Eight Fathom Timber Sale(s) (USDA Forest Service, 1996) proposed additional developments in support of timber management within this roadless area. Some of the areas identified for development in this ROD are, however, located within an area assigned to the Old-growth Habitat LUD in the 1997 Forest Plan and are not planned for implementation. Potential developments cleared in the Eight Fathom ROD located within the Timber Production LUD in this roadless area are currently undergoing additional National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) with the Otter Lake Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Draft EIS was distributed for review and comment in January 2002. The 10-year Action Plan for the Tongass National Forest identifies four future timber sales. These proposed sales are expected to take place between the present and 2006, and range in size from 2.3 to 9.2 MMBF.

(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness): The area appears unmodified and in a natural condition except for isolated areas, including three areas where older beach logging has occurred near the shore of Neka Bay. Developments have significantly altered the landscape in the adjacent areas to the east and west. These adjacent areas may detract from the perceived scenic value of the roadless area when it is viewed from some locations within and outside the area.

(7) Surroundings (External Influences): Sealaska and Huna Totem Corporation lands border this area to the east. These private lands have been developed for timber management. A privately-owned log transfer facility is

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located at Westport, at the southern end of these private lands. The area is partially bordered to the west by an area of development that extends along the Neka River. This road system extends from the former Eight Fathom Bight logging camp on Port Frederick, ten miles through the Neka River valley to Otter Lake, and then 2 miles along Mud Bay River. The effects of these developments are apparent from locations within the Neka Mountain Roadless Area.

The sights and sounds of motorized boats are also evident from some locations within this area. Icy Strait, which forms part of the area's north border, is part of the Alaska Marine Highway System. Small aircraft overflights for recreation access and service to the various communities and camps are also apparent on occasion. There are several daily, commercial, high-altitude overflights, primarily to the north over Icy Straits.

(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest: Attractions in this area include the Class I streams and associated fishing opportunities. The area is also considered an important subsistence use area. The VCUs that comprise this area either accounted for 10 to 15 percent or greater than 15 percent of annual average deer harvest by Hoonah residents from 1987 to 1994. A few areas of mostly high vulnerability karst resources have been identified in the vicinity of Neka Mountain and the mountain south of Humpback Creek, as well as in the Chicken Creek drainage. The area contains seven inventoried recreation places, which cover 10,342 acres (19 percent) of the roadless area.

(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary: This area was part of the much larger Chichagof Roadless Area (#311) in 1989. The area is partially bordered to the north by the LUD II portion of the current Chichagof Roadless Area. The area between #311 and #342 in the 1997 Forest Plan Roadless Inventory assumed developments associated with the Eight Fathom ROD would be implemented. These in fact were not developed and additional NEPA is being conducted on that area (Otter Lake EIS). Subsequently, this area has been added back into the roadless inventory. Roadless Area 342 was expanded to the LUD II boundary in #311 as this was a more defined boundary and would better facilitate roadless area analysis.

II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness: The area appears unmodified and in a natural condition except for isolated areas, including three areas where beach logging has occurred near the shore of Neka Bay. Timber related developments have altered the landscape in the adjacent areas to the east and west. These adjacent areas may affect the roadless area's apparent naturalness and suitability for wilderness when viewed from some locations within and outside the area. However, the overall natural integrity and apparent naturalness is high.

(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation: The opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation in the Neka Mountain Roadless Area is high. There are limited human impacts within the area itself. While the visual effects of harvest activities to the east and west of this area may be readily apparent, they are unlikely to affect the opportunity for solitude in the area. They may, however, affect some visitor's perceptions of serenity.

The sights and sounds of motorized boats are also evident from some locations within this area. Icy Strait, which forms part of the area's north border, is part of the Alaska Marine Highway System. Small aircraft overflights for recreation access and service to the various communities and camps are also apparent on occasion. There are several daily, commercial, high-altitude overflights, primarily to the north over Icy Straits. All of these activities provide interruption to solitude. They are, however, transitory and short term in nature.

Recreation use in the area includes hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, picnicking, and viewing scenery and wildlife. There are no developed recreation facilities or trails in the area. Outfitter/guide use was reported at Chicken Creek and Neka Bay in 1999. Twenty-one groups and a total of 100 clients visited one of these two locations. The majority (94 clients) visited Chicken Creek. Outfitter/guide use included brown bear hunting, sightseeing, fishing, camping, and sightseeing.

The area provides primarily semi-primitive and 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
Primitive (P)	19,218	36%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	26,820	51%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	1,097	2%
Roaded Modified (RM)	5,865	11%

The area contains seven inventoried recreation places, which cover 10,342 acres (19 percent) of the roadless area.

ROS Class	Number of Recreation	
	Places*	Total Acres
P	0	0
SPNM	3	7,046
SPM	3	1,097
RM	2	2,199

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

(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 Neka Mountain Roadless Area was part of a much larger roadless area (#311 – Chichagof) in 1989 and was not rated separately. This area was rated for the first time for this updated version of the AMS. Based on this evaluation, the area was given a rating of 21.

(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values: This area, located on north Chichagof Island, is part of a larger unroaded land area that includes the Chichagof Roadless Area #311 and beyond.

(a) Fish Resources: The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment listed two VCUs partially located in this area (Neka Bay [201] and Mud Bay [193]) as primary sportfish producers. None of the VCUs were listed as primary salmon producers but all were listed as secondary salmon producers (ADF&G 1998).

The Anadromous Waters Catalogue (ADF&G, 2000) listed Humpback Creek and Homestead Creek as Class I streams in this roadless area. These streams provide spawning and rearing habitat for pink, coho, and chum salmon. Humpback Creek is known for a large odd-year run of pink salmon and a moderate run of chum salmon. Chum, pink, and coho salmon occur in the area lakes and streams (ADF&G, 2000).

(b) Wildlife Resources: Wildlife species in this area include brown bears, Sitka black-tailed deer, and furbearers such as mink, marten, and river otter. Bird and waterfowl rearing and nesting areas are abundant. Some of the most noted nesting areas on Chichagof Island are in the Neka Bay area. Bald eagle habitat, including nesting and roosting trees, is found along the shorelines.

Based on harvest data compiled from 1985 to 1995, Neka Bay VCU (201) and Mud Bay VCU (193) were ranked in the first and second 25 percent, respectively, of brown bear harvest areas on the Tongass (ADF&G 1998).

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(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, nine sensitive plant species are known or suspected to occur in the Hoonah Ranger District.

(d) Karst, Cave, and Other Geologic Resources: There are areas of mostly high vulnerability karst in this roadless area. These areas are located in the vicinity of Neka Mountain and the mountain south of Humpback Creek and the lower reaches of Chicken Creek. They are underlain by limestone or marble and karst and cave resources are known to have developed there. Only limited inventory has occurred in this area so the extent of karst and cave development is not fully understood. The limestones and marbles found here are commonly the ridge-forming rock types. Extensive karst systems are known from the intensity and numbers of features found described from the limited inventory and air photo interpretations. Paleontological discoveries are likely as well as archaeological finds. Because of the thickness of the limestone and marble in this area, vertical pits and cave systems of record depth are possible. Extensive areas of limestone and marble are exposed from sea level to the ridge tops in these glaciated valleys. The karst systems found here extend from the alpine or higher elevations to the sea, providing increased productivity for the plant, animal, and aquatic communities found on the karst lands. Karst represents about 8,956 acres (17 percent) of the roadless area. Approximately half of the karst is classified as high vulnerability karst. There are no known glaciers or unique geologic features in this area.

(5) Scientific and Educational Values: There are no Research Natural Areas (RNAs) in this roadless area. The city of Juneau, the closest larger community, is located approximately 45 air miles east of the area. Therefore, this area is relatively inaccessible to large numbers of school-age children. The area is more accessible to school-age children residing in the city of Hoonah and other small communities nearby.

(6) Scenic Values: The area appears unmodified and in a natural condition except for isolated areas, including three areas where older beach logging has occurred near the shore of Neka Bay. However, developments have altered the landscape in the adjacent areas to the east and west. These adjacent areas may detract from the perceived scenic value of the roadless area when it is viewed from some locations within and outside the area.

Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan that are within or adjacent to the area include: Icy Strait and Port Frederick (Alaska Marine Highway, Tour Ship Routes and Small Boat Routes); Neka Bay (Small Boat Route, Saltwater Use Area, and Boat Anchorage); and Chicken Creek, Humpback Creek, and Neka River (Dispersed Recreation Areas).

This roadless area is inventoried as approximately 18 percent Variety Class A (possessing landscape diversity that is unique for the character type), 66 percent Variety Class B (possessing landscape diversity that is common for the character type) and 16 percent Variety Class C (possessing a low degree of landscape diversity).

The majority of the area (approximately 91 percent) is inventoried as an Existing Visual Condition (EVC) I, which appears untouched by human activity. Approximately 8 percent is inventoried as EVC III, areas in which changes in the landscape are not noticeable to the average visitor unless pointed out. Approximately 1 percent was classified EVC V, where changes in the landscape are obvious to the average person and appear to be major disturbances.

(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values: At the time of Euroamerican contact, the Hoonah and Angoon Tlingit used this area of Chichagof Island. Villages and sites for seasonal hunting, fishing, and collecting activities were located throughout Chichagof Island. Goldschmidt and Haas (1946) indicated that the Neka Mountain Roadless Area was located within Hoonah Territory. They noted that berrying and salmon fishing occurred along the north shore of Neka Bay within this roadless area. They also identified a smokehouse or cabin in the area. The general area was surveyed by Captain Vancouver in 1794, who found a native burial box just south of Point

Adolphus, just north of this roadless area. He also explored and named Port Frederick located east of the area. The city of Juneau, the closest larger community, is located approximately 42 air miles east of the area. The city of Hoonah is located about 8 miles to the east.

This area is an important deer subsistence area for Hoonah residents. The VCUs that comprise this area accounted for 10 to 15 percent or more of annual average deer harvest by Hoonah residents from 1987 to 1994. The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) identified all of the VCUs that comprise this area as subsistence use areas with a high sensitivity to disturbance. One VCU partially located in this area, (Neka Bay [201]), was included among the highest value community use areas and Chicken Creek VCU (196) was included among the second tier of highest value community use areas identified by ADF&G). All the VCUs in this roadless area were listed among those VCUs with the highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas (ADF&G, 1998).

(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes: The south and part of the north borders of the area are naturally defined by saltwater. The LUD II portion of the Chichagof Roadless Area (#311) partially borders the area to the west and north. The remainder of the west border is formed by an area of development that extends along the Neka River. Developed Native Corporation-owned lands border the area to the east. Forest roads and timber harvest units extend along Gallagher and Humpback Creeks into the east side of the roadless areas. Timber harvest activities have altered the landscape in the adjacent areas to the east and west. The boundary between the area and the Native Corporation lands to the east is a straight line. This line is visible in aerial photographs of the area as a result of the timber harvesting that has occurred on the Native Corporation lands. The visual effects of these adjacent areas somewhat affect the Neka Mountain Roadless Area's suitability for wilderness. The Chicken Creek watershed is adjacent to the LUD II lands on the northwest of the area and could be managed with the LUD II lands.

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

- (1) Recreation, including Tourism Potential:** There is potential for future recreation use in this area. Outfitter and guide use could increase, especially around Neka Bay.
- (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 identified fishery enhancement projects in this area.
- (4) Wildlife Resources:** There are no wildlife habitat enhancement projects in this area.
- (5) Timber Resources:** There are 23,090 acres mapped as productive old growth in this roadless area. Of these acres, 14,256 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), 2,066 acres (4 percent) of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 1,050 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 253 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The Humpback/Gallagher Timber Sale, which is identified as a 21.3 million board feet (MMBF) timber sale, is located on the eastern edge and within the roadless area, and is under contract. The 1996 ROD for the Eight Fathom Timber Sale(s) (USDA Forest Service, 1996) proposed additional developments in support of timber management within this roadless area. Some of the areas identified for development in this ROD are, however, located within an area assigned to the Old-growth Habitat LUD in the 1997 Forest Plan and are not planned for implementation. Potential developments cleared in the Eight Fathom ROD located within the Timber Production LUD in this roadless area are currently undergoing additional NEPA with the Otter Lake EIS. The Draft EIS was distributed for review and comment in January 2002. The 10-year Action Plan for the Tongass National Forest identifies four future timber sales. The four proposed sales are expected to take place between the present and 2006. These four areas range in size from 2.3 to 9.2 MMBF.

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- (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:** In 1984, the area extending from Idaho Inlet east to the private lands of the Huna Totem and Sealaska Corporations was identified as having a high potential for development of locatable minerals. This broadly defined area encompasses at least part of the Neka Mountain Roadless Area. The USGS Mineral Resource Data website (2001) shows no mineral prospects in this area.
- (8) **Transportation and Utilities:** There are no transportation or utility projects proposed in this area.
- (9) **Water Availability and Use:** There are no developed recreation cabins or other facilities to create a demand for water in this area. There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects within this roadless area.
- (10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** A few areas of mostly high vulnerability karst resources have been identified in the vicinity of Neka Mountain and the mountain south of Humpback Creek, as well as in the lower reaches of Chicken Creek. The mapped karst resources encompass approximately 8,956 acres or 17 percent of the roadless area.
- (11) **Land Use Authorizations:** There are no land use authorizations within the roadless area except those associated with outfitters and guides.
- (12) **Land Status:** The area consists entirely of National Forest System lands; however, a part of the roadless area in the south has encumbrances.

IV. Wilderness Evaluation (Need for Wilderness)

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

(a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** The people using this roadless area include those from nearby towns and logging camps. Use from outfitter/guides occurs in the area. Subsistence uses also take place in the area and include hunting, fishing, and gathering.

(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 what is now the Neka Mountain Roadless Area but did identify a nearby area as the Point Adolphus-Mud Bay Wilderness. Point Adolphus is located in the LUD II area immediately north of the Neka Mountain Roadless Area. Mud Bay is located west of the area. In 2001, HR 2908 identified the area as a proposed LUD II addition.

(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. The scenic qualities of Chichagof Island in general were mentioned as very important to the tourism, tour boat, and guide service industries. Commenters requested that the coastal areas in the vicinity of Point Adolphus that are not allocated to LUD II should be in non-timber LUDs. These areas were identified as important for fishing and subsistence. Another commenter requested that the portion of the area on Icy Strait be protected from logging because of heavy use by the tourism industry for wildlife viewing, kayaking, camping, and fishing. Timber industry comments stated that the semi-primitive recreation portion of Management Area (MA) C28, which includes the Neka Mountain Roadless Area, was not warranted. The Sierra Club Juneau Group identified MA C28 as an area that should have “far less logging than planned.”

Northeast Chichagof Island was identified in the Forest Plan appeal filed on behalf of the Hoonah Indian Association, et al. The appeal identified Northeast Chichagof Island, which may include all or part of the Neka Mountain Roadless Area, as an important customary and traditional Hoonah hunting and fishing area. This appeal stated that this area has already suffered substantial deer habitat loss from past logging and deserves protection.

(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 within the study area of the Eight Fathom Timber Sale(s) EIS (USDA Forest Service, 1996) and a portion of the area is included in the Otter Lake Timber Sale EIS.

(f) Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process: The Alaska Department of Fish and Game rated the Neka Mountain roadless area as the eighth 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.

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 Gustavus Community Association recommended increased protection for Roadless Area 342 because the current Forest Plan failed to adequately protect areas of particular concern to the community of Gustavus, particularly Chicken Creek.

The Hoonah Indian Association emphasized the need for “additional, long-term, protective measures that would prevent any further road building or clear-cut logging above and around Neka Bay including measures that would prevent the proposed Otter Lake Timber Sale”.

SEACC recommended the Neka Bay and Neka Mountain areas be designated as LUD II and added to the existing Mud Bay/Point Adolphus LUD II area. The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) recommended Roadless Area 342 for permanent protection as LUD II

A number of cave/karst experts and other individuals stated that this area contains unexplored karstlands that are almost completely intact and are unique among the larger blocks of karst in Southeast Alaska. They noted that this area should be combined with Roadless Area 343 and protected.

Some individuals supported wilderness protection for this area including Chicken Creek and Gallagher Creek. Some individuals requested protection for Neka Bay and Mountain.

(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses: The Neka Mountain Roadless Area adjoins the Chichagof Roadless Area (311) to the north and west. The Pleasant-Lemesurier-Inian Islands Wilderness is located in Icy Strait north of the Neka Mountain Roadless Area. Glacier Bay National Park is located north across Icy Strait from the area. The West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness is located approximately 20 miles west of the area. The Admiralty Island National Monument – Kootznoowoo Wilderness is located approximately 30 miles to the east.

The area is partially bordered to the north and east by the Chichagof Roadless Area (#311). The remainder of the east border of the area is separated from the Chichagof Roadless Area by an area of roads and associated timber harvest that extends along the Neka River. The Neka Bay Roadless Area (#343) is located south across Neka Bay from the area.

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

Appendix C

Community	Air Miles	Water Miles
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	45	70
Sitka (Pop. 8,835)	130	140
Hoonah (Pop. 860)	8	10
Angoon (Pop. 572)	55	70

The nearest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway is Hoonah.

(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System: The Neka Mountain Roadless Area is located on the northern coast of Chichagof Island. The northeastern and southern borders follow the shore, the northwestern border follows the LUD II boundary, while the remaining borders follow roaded areas. The roadless area is mountainous with flatter areas primarily around the estuaries and tidal flats. The area includes 13 miles of shoreline on saltwater. This includes 5 small islands totaling 10 acres. The elevation ranges from sea level to nearly 3,000 feet.

Overall, the Neka Mountain Roadless Area is unmodified except for isolated areas, including three areas where beach logging has occurred near the shore of Neka Bay. The roadless area has very high natural integrity and apparent naturalness. Development on adjacent lands, especially on private land to the east, disrupts the natural appearance of the landscape from some viewpoints. The northwestern portion of the area exhibits a higher apparent naturalness. There is a moderate opportunity for solitude and a relatively high opportunity for primitive recreation within the roadless area.

Approximately 18 percent of the area was inventoried as distinctive for the character type from a visual perspective. A few areas of mostly high vulnerability karst has been identified in the vicinity of Neka Mountain and the mountain south of Humpback Creek, as well as in the Chicken Creek drainage.

The roadless area includes about 13,003 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, approximately 5,286 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The roadless area is classified as being in the East Chichagof Island Biogeographic Province and makes up about 5 percent of the province. It is one of 12 inventoried roadless areas that are found in the province and 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 Neka Mountain Roadless Area lies completely within the Northeast Chichagof Fjordlands Ecological Section. The roadless area represents 11 percent of the entire ecological section, which is well represented in non-development LUDs (26 percent) plus a small portion (7 percent) in LUD II.

This roadless area is entirely within the Point Adolphus Carbonates Ecological Subsection. The roadless area represents 45 percent of the entire ecological subsection and is well represented in non-development LUDs (48 percent, including 16 percent LUD II).

The Neka Mountain Roadless Area was rated at 21 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, it is ranked 47th from the highest (along with five other roadless areas) out of the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas. If the area adjacent to the LUD II area, which is in the northwest of the roadless area and includes Chicken Creek, is considered separately, the WARS score would remain 21.

There is national and some local support for managing the area in a roadless condition, but there is little support for designating the area as a wilderness. The WARS score for the area is not high relative to other areas of Southeast Alaska, and the Pleasant-Lemesurier-Inian Islands Wilderness and a portion of the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness are in the biogeographic province. The roadless area is relatively small and it is adjacent to developed, private land. These factors indicate that the relative contribution to the National Wilderness System would be low. If the northern portion, including the Chicken Creek drainage that includes high karst and old growth values, were added to the LUD II area it would create a more manageable boundary, based on topographic features. The

northeastern boundary of the LUD II area lacks a well-defined boundary. If this portion of the Neka Mountain Roadless Area and the LUD II area were designated as wilderness their relative contribution to the National Wilderness System would be moderate.

V. Environmental Consequences

The Neka Mountain Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, or 4 were implemented. Approximately 56 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur in the remaining 44 percent of the roadless area. The land in the development LUDs provides an estimated 2,066 acres that are suitable for timber production (10 percent of the suitable acres on the Hoonah Ranger District). Approximately 253 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. Except in the Chicken Creek area, the values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area could be affected by ongoing developments allowed by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternatives 5 or 7, a 20,814-acre portion of the roadless area currently allocated Old-growth Habitat would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. This area is adjacent to a Congressional designated LUD II area. 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 hydroelectric, would be restricted in the Recommended Wilderness LUD. 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 Chicken Creek portion of the roadless area, including the scenic, karst, and old-growth forest values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Under Alternative 6, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended LUD II. Mineral prospecting and development 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 scenic, karst, and old-growth forest values, would be provided long-term protection if designated LUD II.

With Alternative 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. Timber harvest would not be allowed, and the potential for other development, including recreation, mineral, and hydroelectric, would be 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 the scenic, karst, and old-growth forest values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Appendix C

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 342 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness					20,814		20,814	53,019
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	29,477	29,477	29,477	29,477	8,663		8,663	
Semi-remote Recreation								
Recommended LUD II						53,019		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed								
Modified Landscape								
Timber production	23,542	23,542	23,542	23,542	23,542		23,542	
TOTAL	53,019	53,019	53,019	53,019	53,019	53,019	53,019	53,019
Suitable Timber Lands	2,066	2,066	2,066	2,066	2,066	0	2,066	0