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INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

ROADLESS AREA NAME: Karta (510)

ACRES (NFS): 55,527

BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: North Central Prince of Wales Island

ECOLOGICAL SECTION: Prince of Wales Mountains, Kupreanof Lowlands

2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING: 19

I. Overview and Description

(1) **Location and Access:** The Karta Roadless Area is located in the center of Prince of Wales Island and at the west end of Kasaan Bay. It consists of several unconnected roadless sections surrounding the Karta River Wilderness. These sections are separated by roads and harvested areas or by the wilderness. The roadless area includes the Rio Roberts watershed, which is part of a mostly undeveloped, old-growth connection from Karta Wilderness to the Calder Holbrook LUD II on the northwest tip of Prince of Wales. The roadless area begins less than a mile north of Hollis, a stop on the Alaska Marine Highway. Ketchikan, the closest larger town, is approximately 40 miles southeast. Access to the roadless area is by boat or floatplane along Twelvemile Arm and Karta Bay, by floatplane to Control Lake and Black Bear Lake, and by roads to the north, west, and south boundaries. There are no places suitable for landing wheeled airplanes. Access away from roads and water is by foot or helicopter. There are two trails near the boundaries but these do not access the interior. There are Forest Service public use cabins located on Control Lake (near the edge of the roadless area) and Black Bear Lake.

(2) **History:** The roadless area drainage has a rich aboriginal cultural history. There are prehistoric village sites, rock art, and other physical indications of aboriginal occupancy of sites within the area. In more recent times, the roadless area has seen considerable mineral exploration and active mining. The Flagstaff Mine produced silver and gold during the 1920s. Trapping was a common activity from the late 1800's to the 1950's. Areas along the shore were beach logged, generally in the 1950s and 1960s. The center of the roadless area was designated a wilderness in 1990.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** The roadless area includes steep, rugged mountains, rising to over 3,000 feet in the south and west, and relatively flat areas near the western end of Kasaan Bay and in the north. The highest point is the 3,806-foot-high Pin Peak on the wilderness boundary. There are approximately 582 acres of lakes in this area, the largest of which is Black Bear Lake. There are 2,490 acres of alpine and 4,481 acres of rock. Shoreline on saltwater totals 27 miles, and small islands make up 480 acres of the roadless area.

(4) **Ecosystem:**

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. The area is in the North Central Prince of Wales Island Province. All of the forest plant associations in Southeast Alaska except those that are found only on the mainland occur in this province. This area typically has high precipitation. This roadless area has more rugged topography than is typical for the province.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Karta Roadless Area is contained within the Prince of Wales Mountains Ecological Section (M247I) and Kupreanof Lowlands Ecological Section (M247G). These areas are represented by two ecological subsections (see table below). The Central Prince of Wales Volcanics Ecological Subsection (92% of the roadless area) is mostly comprised of volcanic bedrock, though outcrops of dioritic and conglomerate rocks exist. The shallow, unproductive, and organic soils of the higher elevations support wetlands and forests of mixed-conifers and logdepole pines. The well-drained till soils of the lower elevations support moderate to highly-productive hemlock and hemlock-spruce forests which

comprise more than half the landcover in this ecological subsection. The Central Prince of Wales Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection (8 % of the roadless area) is characterized by gentle undulating terrain comprised of deep organic till that supports vast wetland complexes. Low productive forested wetlands cover almost half of the landscape and hemlock forests exist in the smaller portion of well-drained mineral soils on hillslopes (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Prince of Wales Mountains	Central Prince of Wales Volcanics	92%
Kupreanof Lowlands	Central Prince of Wales Till Lowlands	8%

(b) Soils: Soils are generally highly organic with low clay content and are formed over bedrock. Soil depth is typically about 40 inches. Generally, steeper areas have better-drained soils, and flat areas are poorly drained.

(c) Vegetation: Vegetation is typical Southeast Alaska coastal temperate rain forest. The forest is primarily western hemlock and Sitka spruce with large components of cedar. Approximately 402 acres of muskeg have been mapped for the area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult.

There are approximately 44,794 acres mapped as forest land of which 19,863 acres or 44 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 10,521 acres or 53 percent are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 3,426 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are 973 acres of second growth associated with older beach logging primarily along the eastern coastline.

(d) Fish Resources: The primary fish-bearing waters in this area are Control Lake and Streams, Steelhead Creek, Rio Roberts Creek, Paul Young Creek, and Maybeso Creek. These waters provide habitat for coho, pink, chum, and sockeye salmon as well as for steelhead and cutthroat trout.

(e) Wildlife Resources: This area has large populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, wolves, otter, marten, mink, loon, and common waterfowl. Moose are known to inhabit Prince of Wales Island. Brown bear and mountain goats do not inhabit this area (MacDonald and Cook, 1999). Bald eagle, marbled murrelet, Queen Charlotte goshawk, harlequin duck, Peale's peregrine falcon, osprey, and trumpeter swan may occur in the area.

(5) Management Direction and Current Uses: This roadless area was allocated to seven Land Use Designations (LUDs) under the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. These seven LUDs are Timber Production, Modified Landscape, Experimental Forest, Scenic Viewshed, Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation, and Municipal Watershed.

LUD	Acres
Timber Production	28,260
Modified Landscape	6,538
Experimental Forest	6,202
Scenic Viewshed	2,685
Old-growth Habitat	11,077
Semi-remote Recreation	391
Municipal Watershed	373

Most of this roadless area, approximately 79 percent, was allocated to a development LUD, which allows timber harvest and the associated road construction (Timber Production, Modified Landscape, Experimental Forest, and Scenic Viewshed). Approximately 51 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Timber Production LUD. The Modified Landscape LUD was assigned to approximately 12 percent of the roadless area. Approximately 11

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percent of the roadless area makes up the Maybeso Experimental Forest south of the Karta River Wilderness Area, which was allocated to the Experimental Forest LUD. The Scenic Viewshed LUD was assigned to approximately 5 percent of the roadless area.

Approximately 21 percent of the roadless area was allocated to a non-development LUD (Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation, and Municipal Watershed). The Old-growth Habitat LUD was assigned to approximately 20 percent of the roadless area. Islands in Karta Bay were allocated to the Semi-remote Recreation LUD, which accounts for less than 1 percent of the roadless area. Less than 1 percent of the roadless area around Three Mile Creek was allocated to the Municipal Watershed LUD to service the Klawock community.

There are two hiking trails near the boundaries of the roadless area. There is a public recreation cabin at Black Bear Lake and another near the boundary of the roadless area at Control Lake. The Karta Roadless Area surrounds the Karta River Wilderness Area, which contains four public recreation cabins and hiking trails (approximately 5 miles). The roadless area is important for subsistence hunting and gathering to the communities of Hydaburg, Klawock, Thorne Bay, and Craig. Ketchikan residents use the area primarily for deer hunting. A small portion of VCU 576 is included in the roadless area. This VCU is rated among the VCUs with the highest community fish and wildlife values. None of the other VCUs in the roadless area are rated among the highest VCUs. No outfitter/guide permits were issued for the roadless area in 2,000. There are a trail and a fish ladder on Rio Roberts Creek just outside the roadless area. There are hydroelectric facilities at Black Bear Lake on the edge of the roadless area, and a new hydroelectric facility has been proposed for Wolf Lake within the southeastern portion of the area.

(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness): The roadless area is unmodified; however, the boundaries of the outer roadless area are dictated by timber harvest activities. The area is not contiguous. It consists of several unconnected roadless sections surrounding the Karta River Wilderness. These sections are separated by roads and harvested areas or by the wilderness. Adjacent harvest units have the potential to affect the apparent naturalness of portions of the roadless area, especially areas that are seen from the roadless area. The interior of the roadless area would take on naturalness the closer it comes to the exterior boundaries of the wilderness area.

(7) Surroundings (External Influences): Extensive private lands managed primarily for timber production to the west of the roadless area have been developed. National Forest System land to the north and south have also been developed. Major mountain ridges physically isolate some of the developed areas from portions of the roadless area. To the east is Kasaan Bay, the main ferry and water access route to Prince of Wales Island. It is this easy access route to the Karta River, along with the excellent fishing, that results in heavy public use of the Karta River Wilderness. One of the main reasons it gets a lot of use is that it is close to Ketchikan. Many people, especially out of state visitors, arrive by float plane. Ketchikan and Prince of Wales visitors get there by boat, skiff, or foot. This area has received lots of fishing/hunting use over the years and consequently has been developed with trails and cabins to support this use.

(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest: The natural features of the area include the reflective qualities of the lakes with the backdrop of alpine reflections. The interconnected alpine/forest/stream/lake/river/estuary/saltwater nature of Karta Wilderness is a draw. The historic cabin on Salmon Lake is a one-of-a-kind structure on the National Historic Register. The trail system is of interest for the following three reasons: 1) it is a cross-island route (Kasaan Bay to Big Salt); 2) it led to an Alaska Native fish camp; and 3) it was an old mining road that turned into the current trail. The burn area along the Karta river (now not noticeable) may be the largest on Prince of Wales Island. The scenery, opportunity to fish and hunt wildlife, and the Karta Wilderness are all attractions. The roadless area includes a portion of the Maybeso Experimental Forest, one of only two Experimental Forests on the Tongass National Forest. The area contains 17 inventoried recreation places, which cover 10,134 acres, or 18 percent of the roadless area.

(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary: The boundaries of the roadless area changed in several ways between 1989 and 2003. First, 39,889 acres were designated as Karta River Wilderness Area in 1990 in the Tongass Timber Reform Act and are no longer included in the roadless area. This change fragmented the roadless area. Second, the 2003 roadless area boundary does not include land just northwest of Karta River Wilderness area because of ongoing development. Third, areas along the shore that were beach-logged decades ago but not roaded have been added to the roadless area. Trees have regrown in these areas, and they no longer appear modified. Also, more accurate mapping has resulted in changes to the boundary. Several smaller

areas along the developed boundaries have been excluded between the Draft and Final SEIS to improve the potential manageability of the roadless area as wilderness.

II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness: Lands within the roadless area appear natural and include a scenic backdrop of high mountain peaks. The evidence of early day mining is no longer a significant influence on the area's apparent naturalness. However, the extensive timber harvest activities and roading that nearly surround most of the roadless area potentially influence the outer portions of the area's natural integrity (especially activities that are viewed from the roadless area) and apparent naturalness. This surrounding activity makes this area, as a whole, less suitable for wilderness designation except as potential additions to the Karta River Wilderness.

(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation: The alpine ridges that rim the Karta River basin generally provide relatively high opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation; however, during the peak season there is daily floatplane traffic transporting visitors in and out of the wilderness area, and this affects solitude in the Karta Roadless Area. Visitor use may spillover into the roadless area between June and September, due to the popularity of the adjacent Karta River Wilderness area. Also, traffic near the outer boundaries and ongoing management activities may disturb visitors at times. Primitive recreation opportunities that present challenging and adventurous experiences are abundant, especially along the steep, mountainous ridges that surround the Karta River Wilderness and Black Bear Lake.

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

ROS Class	Acres	Percent of Total ROS
Primitive (P)	1,178	2%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	32,411	58%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	2,426	4%
Roaded Natural (RN)	424	1%
Roaded Modified (RM)	19,022	34%

The area contains 17 inventoried recreation places, which cover 10,134 acres, or 18 percent of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places*	Total Acres
P	1	1,130
SPNM	4	5,069
SPM	2	1,883
RN	3	362
RM	11	1,689

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

There are two hiking trails near the boundaries of the roadless area. There is a public recreation cabin at Black Bear Lake and another near the boundary of the roadless area at Control Lake.

(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

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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 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 Karta Roadless Area was 21 out of 28 possible points. The 1989 rating was re-evaluated for this updated version of the AMS. Based on this reevaluation, the area was given a rating of 19. The difference in rating reflects designation of the core of this earlier roadless area to the Karta River Wilderness and the influences of developments on remaining areas in the current roadless area.

(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values: The roadless area provides excellent fish and wildlife habitat. The roadless area nearly surrounds the Karta River Wilderness, making it a part of a larger unroaded area. Developed private and National Forest System lands separate the Karta Roadless Area and Karta River Wilderness from other inventoried roadless areas.

(a) Fish Resources: The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) listed four of the eight VCUs (595, 596, 597.2, and 622) as primary salmon and sportfish producers. In addition, VCUs 609 and 610 were listed as primary sportfish producers (ADF&G 1998).

The primary fish-bearing waters in the roadless area are Control Lake and Streams, Steelhead Creek, Rio Roberts Creek, Paul Young Creek, upper Maybeso Creek, and upper Harris River. These waters provide habitat for coho, pink, chum, and sockeye salmon as well as steelhead and cutthroat trout. Control Lake has a resident population of cutthroat and Dolly Varden (Recreation Cabin Website, 2001). Control Lake and Black Bear Creek contain steelhead trout and sockeye salmon. Resident rainbow trout have been introduced into Black Bear Lake (USFS, 1998). Steelhead Creek has an estimated peak escapement of 91,200 pink salmon and very good coho salmon production. Maybeso Creek receives an estimated 30,600 pink salmon, while also providing habitat for coho and chum salmon as well as steelhead trout (ADF&G 1998, 2000). Portions of Harris River within this roadless area have very good coho salmon production (ADF&G, 1998).

A fishpass was completed on Rio Roberts Creek in 1989. Large woody debris structures have been installed in Control Lake (USDA Forest Service, 1998).

(b) Wildlife Resources: This area has large populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, wolves, otter, marten, mink, loon, and common waterfowl. Alpine areas are excellent ptarmigan habitat. Moose are known to inhabit Prince of Wales Island. Brown bear and mountain goats do not inhabit this area (MacDonald and Cook, 1999). Based on data compiled from 1985 to 1994, VCUs 609 and 622 in the center of the area are listed among the top 25 percent of VCUs for black bear harvest (ADF&G 1998).

Bald eagle nest sites have been located along the coastline and inland along Rio Roberts Creek. Marbled murrelet, Queen Charlotte goshawk, and harlequin duck may occur in the area. Peale's peregrine falcon, osprey, and trumpeter swans also occur on the island. A goshawk nest was found in the lower Rio Roberts drainage in 1995. An active Peale's peregrine falcon nest was recently discovered in the Steelhead Creek drainage (USDA Forest Service, 1998). Major concentrations of wintering trumpeter swans can be found at Control Lake.

(c) Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species: The only federally listed threatened and 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. Four Forest Service Region 10 Sensitive Species are suspected or known to occur within the area: the trumpeter swan, osprey, Peale's peregrine falcon, and the Queen Charlotte goshawk. Trumpeter swans nest in the lowlands on small lakes and along major rivers and winter in ice-free areas throughout the

Tongass. Major concentrations of wintering trumpeter swans can be found at Control Lake. Present from April through September, ospreys are rare in Southeast Alaska where they reach the northern extent of their nesting range. Feeding almost exclusively on fish, ospreys typically nest in large snags near lakes or the coast where fish are abundant. Peale's peregrine falcons nest on cliff faces and islands and feed primarily on seabirds. An active Peale's peregrine falcon nest was recently discovered in the Steelhead Creek drainage (USFS, 1998). Inhabitants of late seral forests, Queen Charlotte goshawks are closely associated with productive old growth. A goshawk nest was found in the lower Rio Roberts drainage in 1995. In addition, nine sensitive plant species are known or suspected to occur in the Thorne Bay Ranger District.

(d) Karst, Cave, and Other Geologic Resources: There are no known karst or cave resources in this roadless area. There are no glaciers or unique geologic features known in this area.

(5) Scientific and Educational Values: There are opportunities to study fish, wildlife, forests, and geologic processes within the roadless area. The roadless area includes the Maybeso Experimental Forest, one of only two experimental forests on the Tongass National Forest. The experimental forest contains permanent research plots designed to study hillslope erosion, movement of large woody debris in and through streams, forest regeneration, and response to thinning. The community of Hollis is 1 mile southeast of this area and is the closest town with school-age children. The closest larger city is Ketchikan, 40 miles east on the Alaska Marine Highway route.

(6) Scenic Values: This roadless area is part of the Coastal Hills character type which is characterized by moderately steep landforms, predominantly rounded summits, elevations ranging up to 4,500 feet, and flat-floored U-shaped valleys. Numerous island groups are also common in this character type. This area is, for the most part, quite representative of the Coastal Hills character type except for the very rugged and scenic terrain near the south and west boundaries that make up part of the Klawock Mountains. The reflective quality of the lakes is astounding with the backdrop of alpine reflections. The water on the lakes can be mirror-like at times and has been a destination for landscape photographers. The interconnected alpine/forest/stream/lake/river/estuary/saltwater nature of Karta Wilderness is a draw. Snow-capped peaks are often visible until July.

When viewing the roadless area from the priority routes listed in the Forest Plan, an unmodified landscape dominates. Once in the roadless area, visitors may see a landscape dominated by timber harvest and roads or an untouched scenic landscape, depending on the visitor's location. Significant landforms in this area include the Klawock Mountains and Pin Peak.

Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan that are within or adjacent to the roadless area include the Klawock-Control Lake and Control Lake to Thorne Bay highways; the Control Lake and Black Bear public recreation cabins; Karta Bay and Warm Chuck Inlet saltwater use areas; Kasaan Bay to Hollis, a part of the Alaska Marine Highway; and the community of Hollis.

About 7 percent of the area is inventoried as Variety Class A, which has a level of landscape diversity and scenic quality that is distinctive relative to the character type in which it is located. The very rugged rock forms of the Klawock Mountains are an example of the outstanding scenic features that make up the Variety Class A landscapes. There are also prominent waterforms including the variety of lakes and river and stream features. Approximately 93 percent is rated as Variety Class B, which possesses landscape characteristics common for the character type.

About 73 percent of the area has a Type I Existing Visual Condition (EVC); the natural landscape has remained unaltered by human activity. About 4 percent of the area has a Type III EVC; changes do not divert attention when noticed. The rest of the area has been moderately to heavily modified due to the logging and roading activity along the northern and southern boundaries. Approximately sixteen percent of the area has a Type IV EVC, indicating changes in the landscape are easily noticed by the average visitor, and may attract some attention. Places where changes to the landscape are obvious to the average visitor and appear to be major disturbances (EVC V) are present in 6 percent of this area.

(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values: The roadless area has a rich aboriginal cultural history. There are prehistoric village sites, rock art, and other physical indications of aboriginal occupancy of sites within the area. In more recent times, the roadless area has seen considerable mineral exploration and active mining. The Flagstaff Mine produced silver and gold during the 1920's. Trapping was a common activity from the late 1800's to the

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1950's. Areas along the coast have been beached logged. There are two hiking trails near the boundaries of the roadless area. There is a public recreation cabin at Black Bear Lake and another near the boundary of the roadless area at Control Lake. The Karta Roadless Area surrounds the Karta River Wilderness Area, which contains four public recreation cabins and extensive hiking trails.

The roadless area is important for subsistence hunting and gathering to Alaska Native communities in Hydaburg, Klawock, and Craig. Other residents use the area primarily for deer hunting, fishing and winter sports (snow machining, snow boarding, and cross country skiing in the Klawock Mountains). Two VCUs in the western part of the area (VCUs 595 and 596) were listed in the third most important group of VCUs for high community use values. Most of the VCUs in this area (six of eight: VCUs 595, 598, 609, 610, 611, and 622) were listed among the VCUs with the highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas (ADF&G 1998). No outfitter/guide permits were issued for the roadless area in 2000. There is a fish ladder on Rio Roberts Creek. There are hydroelectric facilities at Black Bear Lake Hydro, and a new hydroelectric facility has been proposed for Wolf Lake.

(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes: The boundary with the wilderness and the area along the eastern shore are based on topographic features. Other areas are based on private land boundaries or associated with developments rather than on topographic features. When Congress designated the Karta River watershed as wilderness in 1990, it selected the portion of the roadless area with boundaries based on well-defined topographic features. This is the area most easily managed as a wilderness. Adding the remaining roadless area to the wilderness would create more poorly defined boundaries. The relatively undeveloped old-growth corridor between the Karta Wilderness and the Calder Holbrook LUD II area on the northwest tip of Prince of Wales Island includes the Rio Roberts watershed, the Honker Divide area (Thorne River/Sweetwater Creek), and much of the Sarkar Roadless Area. It is relatively easy to manage in an unroaded condition, but marginal to manage as wilderness.

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

(1) Recreation, including Tourism Potential: Tourism has been increasing in Southeast Alaska and is expected to continue to increase. Wildlife viewing, camping, hiking, sea kayaking, fishing, hunting, and exploring have the potential to increase as tourism and recreation increase throughout Alaska. Tourism potential is a major part of Alaska's economy. The industry attracts over 1.1 million visitors annually. There has been a growing recognition that tourism depends on scenic quality, wildlife, and wilderness (Behnke, 1999). The roadless area is linked by road to Hollis, a stop on the Alaska Marine Highway. Easy access and the popularity of the nearby Karta River Wilderness is likely to draw tourists to the roadless area. There is a potential to construct an additional trail along Karta River Trail to Anderson Creek and beyond as well as trails from Rush Peak Road, Control Lake, Black Bear Lake and Rio Roberts Trail. There are also opportunities for alpine trails along the ridges within the Klawock Mountains and along Harris Ridge from the Hollis-Klawock Highway.

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

(3) Fish Resources: No fish habitat enhancement projects are planned within the roadless area.

(4) Wildlife Resources: No wildlife habitat enhancement projects are planned within the roadless area.

(5) Timber Resources: There are 19,863 acres inventoried as productive old-growth forest and 973 acres as second-growth forest due to harvest in the roadless area. Of this, approximately 15,050 acres are categorized as tentatively suitable for timber harvest. Based on the Forest Plan LUDs assigned to this area (and estimated falldown and scheduling reduction factors), 6,121 acres, or 11 percent of this roadless area, are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 3,074 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 695 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

Managing timber in most of the roadless area would require extending the existing road system into the roadless area. There are several harvest units and road segments in the north half of the roadless area that were approved by the Control Lake Timber Sales ROD.

(6) Fire, Insects, and Disease: The area has no significant fire history. Endemic tree diseases common to Southeast Alaska are present.

(7) Minerals: This area contains 3,742 acres of land identified as a mineral activity tract having a high potential for experiencing mineral exploration and development of locatable minerals (Coldwell, 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991). In addition, this area contains 51,293 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources (Brew et al., 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991); 16,801 of these acres are considered to have moderate to high potential for development.

The Salt Chuck and Brown and Rush Mines were active operations until the 1940s. Prince of Wales Island produced copper, gold, silver, and marble in economic quantities. It is not unrealistic that, with an improvement in mining economics, the Flagstaff Mine would reopen or other old claims would become viable mines. The USGS Mineral Resources Data website indicates that there are several prospects in the area for gold, copper, silver, lead, and zinc.

(8) Transportation and Utilities: There are no transportation corridors proposed in this roadless area. An existing State road corridor is located to the north, west, and south of this area. A new hydroelectric facility has been proposed for Wolf Lake near Hollis. Designation as a wilderness could conflict with plans to develop and manage hydroelectric projects.

(9) Water Availability and Use: There are two public recreation cabins that create a water demand from the roadless area. About 373 acres of this roadless area are dedicated to Municipal Watershed LUD. This LUD is managed to preserve the water quality for the community of Klawock. There is a hydroelectric plant at Black Bear Lake, and one is in the planning and permitting stages for Wolf Lake.

(10) Areas of Scientific Interest: There are opportunities to study fish, wildlife, forests, and geologic processes within the roadless area. The roadless area includes the Maybeso Experimental Forest, one of only two experimental forests on the Tongass National Forest. The experimental forest contains permanent research plots designed to study hillslope erosion, movement of large woody debris in and through streams, forest regeneration, and response to thinning. Designation of the experimental forest as a wilderness may not be compatible with some types of research, such as thinning or anti-erosion measures.

(11) Land Use Authorizations: There is a hydroelectric plant at Black Bear Lake, and one is in the planning and permitting stages for Wolf Lake.

(12) Land Status: The roadless area is all National Forest System lands. Two areas with encumbrances are within this roadless area; one is a large tract situated between land owned by the Sealaska Corporation and the Klawock-Heenga Village Corporation.

IV. Wilderness Evaluation (Need for Wilderness)

(1) Public and Congressional Interest:

(a) Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents: There is substantial local interest in protecting subsistence and recreation resources.

(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 Karta River portion of the roadless area was one of these areas. It was designated wilderness in 1991. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed managing all the portions of the roadless area as LUD II in an unroaded condition.

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(c) Public Input During Forest Plan Revision and Appeals: Many commenters recommended against additional roading and harvesting to protect watersheds, domestic water quality, subsistence, recreation, fish and wildlife habitat values, deer population, and/or scenic quality. Many other commenters recommended managing the area for timber. They were concerned about the local economy. Some commenters wanted the roads to remain open. The Alaska Forest Association, the Alaska Miners Association, and the Alaska Visitors Association recommended that no new wilderness be designated on the Tongass National Forest. Others stated that all unroaded areas should be designated wilderness.

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

(e) Public Input Expressed for Project-level EISs and Other Input: The Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, the Control Lake Citizen's Coalition, Prince of Wales Conservation League, the Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, Southeast Alaska Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, and others stated that the area should be managed to protect its outstanding wildlife, fisheries, hunting, subsistence, recreation, and tourism values. They recommended less roading and harvest but did not oppose all harvest. Others, including residents working in the timber industry, recommended more intensive harvest to support the local economy.

(f) Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process: SEACC recommended this area for permanent protection through LUD II designation. The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) recommended Roadless Area 510 for permanent protection as LUD II.

At the June 26 hearing in Thorne Bay, the President of the Organized Village of Kasaan stated that "...Alternative 1 is going to be the best right now." Later, in an August 15 Tribal Resolution, Kasaan requested that "...all customary and traditional use areas within the Tongass National Forest be recommended for long-term protection."

(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses: This roadless area is approximately 1 to 2 miles northwest of the Soda Bay Roadless Area (505), 2 miles north of the Twelvemile Roadless Area (534), and 1 mile south of the Thorne River Roadless Area (511). It is separated from these roadless areas by developed areas. The closest wilderness is the Karta Wilderness, which is nearly surrounded by the roadless area. Recreation and subsistence are the major uses for these areas. Use levels for the Karta River Wilderness are high in the summer. Use levels for other roadless areas are generally low.

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

Community	Air Miles	Water Miles
Ketchikan (Pop. 14,070)	40	45
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	60	110
Petersburg (Pop. 3,324)	75	130
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	190	250

Hollis, located on the Prince of Wales Island, is the nearest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway.

(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System: The Karta Roadless Area is located in the center of Prince of Wales Island and at the west end of Kasaan Bay. It consists of several unconnected roadless sections surrounding the Karta River Wilderness. These sections are separated by roads and harvested areas or by the wilderness. The roadless area ranges from steep, rugged mountains, rising to over 3,000 feet in the south and west, to relatively flat areas near the western end of Kasaan Bay and in the north. There are several small lakes, the largest of which is Black Bear Lake.

The Karta Roadless Area appears natural and unmodified, especially near the wilderness, but is often influenced by developments adjacent to most of the other boundaries. The area has moderate natural integrity and apparent naturalness. The opportunity for solitude is high, and the opportunity for primitive recreation is very high.

Approximately 7 percent of the landscape is considered distinctive for the character type from a scenery standpoint. The roadless area has sites with high cultural and historic values. The water from Black Bear Lake is used for hydroelectric generation for communities on Prince of Wales Island. A new hydroelectric facility is proposed for Wolf Lake near Hollis. A portion of the Maybeso Experimental Forest is located in the roadless area.

The roadless area includes about 10,521 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, approximately 3,426 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The Karta Roadless Area is classified as being in the North Central Prince of Wales Island Biogeographic Province and makes up about 4 percent of the province. It is one of 15 inventoried roadless areas found within the province, which make up about 44 percent of the province. The Karta River Wilderness makes up about 3 percent of the province, and three designated LUD II areas (Mt. Calder-Mt. Holbrook, Pt. Baker-Port Protection, and Salmon Bay) make up about 5 percent of the province.

The Karta Roadless Area lies within two ecological sections; it represents 6 percent of the Prince of Wales Mountains Ecological Section and 0.4 percent of Kupreanof Lowlands Ecological Section. Both of these ecological sections contain relatively small areas in existing wilderness (8 and 1 percent, respectively) and existing LUD II (3 and 1 percent, respectively), but are well represented by other existing non-development LUDs (22 and 33 percent, respectively).

The majority (92 percent) of the roadless area is in the Central Prince of Wales Volcanics Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 10 percent of the entire ecological subsection, 8 percent of which is located in existing wilderness and another 23 percent is protected by existing non-development LUDs. The remaining 8 percent of the roadless area is in the Central Prince of Wales Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 2 percent of the entire ecological subsection. None of this ecological subsection is in existing wilderness, but 3 percent is in LUD II, and an additional 42 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

The Karta Roadless Area was rated 19 out of a possible 28 points under WARS. As such, its WARS rating is ranked 70th from the highest (along with 13 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas.

There is both local and national support for managing the roadless area in an unroaded condition, but there is little support for designating the area as a wilderness. Designation would create a wilderness that adds area to the various boundaries of the Karta River Wilderness. The Karta River Wilderness was designed to have logical and relatively easy boundaries to manage, and the Karta Roadless Area includes the unroaded portions around the core that were not included in the wilderness. The wilderness additions would include areas heavily influenced by ongoing management and related activities including hydroelectric generation, experimental forest projects, and various sites with cultural and historic importance. The degree of timber harvest in adjacent lands adds importance to the old growth within the roadless area. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be low to moderate.

V. Environmental Consequences

The Karta Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 7 is implemented. Approximately 21 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur within the remaining 79 percent of the roadless area. The land in the development LUDs includes an estimated 6,121 acres that are suitable for timber production (5 percent of the suitable acres on the Craig and Thorne Bay Ranger Districts). Approximately 695 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. Ongoing timber sales authorized by the Control Lake FEIS would continue. This area contains 3,742 acres of land identified as a mineral activity tract having a high potential for experiencing mineral exploration and development of locatable minerals. In addition, this area contains an estimated 51,293 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources; 16,801 of these acres are considered to have

Appendix C

moderate to high potential for development. The hydroelectric, experimental forest projects, timber sale projects, recreation, minerals, and special uses would continue. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area could be affected by ongoing activities allowed by the Forest Plan. The high cultural, historic, and most scenic and old growth values are protected by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 6, the entire roadless area would be converted to the Recommended LUD II. Timber harvest would not be allowed. The ongoing hydroelectric projects, experimental forest projects, recreational use, special uses, and mineral management that occur within the Recommended LUD II area could be restricted. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including cultural, historic, old growth, and scenic 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 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, historic, old growth, and scenic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 510 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness								55,527
Wilderness								
Recommended Wilderness Nat. Mon.								
Wilderness National Monument								
Non-wilderness National Monument								
Research Natural Area								
Special Interest Area								
Remote Recreation								
Enacted Municipal Watershed	373	373	373	373	373		373	
Old-growth Habitat	11,077	11,077	11,077	11,077	11,077		11,077	
Semi-remote Recreation	391	391	391	391	391		391	
Recommended LUD II						55,527		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest	6,202	6,202	6,202	6,202	6,202		6,202	
Scenic Viewshed	2,685	2,685	2,685	2,685	2,685		2,685	
Modified Landscape	6,538	6,538	6,538	6,538	6,538		6,538	
Timber production	28,260	28,260	28,260	28,260	28,260		28,260	
TOTAL	55,527	55,527	55,527	55,527	55,527	55,527	55,527	55,527
Suitable Timber Lands	6,121	6,121	6,121	6,121	6,121	0	6,121	0