

INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

ROADLESS AREA NAME: Thorne River (511)

ACRES (NFS): 74,362

BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: North Central Prince of Wales Island

ECOLOGICAL SECTION: Prince of Wales Mountains and Kupreanof Lowlands

2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING: 21 (22)

I. Overview and Description

(1) **Location and Access:** The Thorne River Roadless Area occurs in the center and east-central portion of Prince of Wales Island, approximately 5 miles northwest of Thorne Bay, and includes most of the Thorne River drainage. Ketchikan, with regular air and Alaska Marine Highway Service, is approximately 50 miles to the southeast. Most of the southern boundary is formed by State Highway 929 and Forest Road 30, connecting the communities of Thorne Bay and Craig, and much of the west side is bordered by Forest Road 20, the main road leading to the northern portion of Prince of Wales Island. These roads and other forest roads provide land access to all sides of the roadless area. The primary access to the interior of the roadless area is by floatplane. Two closed road systems, one north of the Thorne River and the other near Cutthroat Lakes south of the Thorne River, allow non-motorized access to the interior of the roadless area. An increasing means of access to the interior of the area is by canoe. The area includes the area commonly referred to as Honker Divide, which is also part of a relatively undeveloped old-growth corridor that extends from the Karta Wilderness through the Rio Roberts watershed, through Honker Divide, across the Sarkar Roadless Area, and into the Calder Holbrook LUD II area and the northwest tip of Prince of Wales Island. There are no places suitable for landing wheeled airplanes.

(2) **History:** There is evidence that this area has received prehistoric and historic use, particularly along the Thorne River. The Tlingit people, who settled in Klawock and Craig, probably used the area over time. At least one cultural site along the Thorne River, a prehistoric campsite, has been determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (USDA Forest Service, 1998). Because of the high-value fish resources of the Thorne River, the prehistoric and historical use of this area was probably relatively high. Aboriginal cultures probably used the lower reaches of the Thorne River for subsistence use. In recent history, trapping has occurred in the Thorne River drainage. In the last 30 years there has been increasing interest in the freshwater fishing and canoeing throughout the water system. The Thorne River and Hatchery Creek combine to form a free-flowing river corridor running from north to south across the roadless area. The divide area along the headwaters of these streams is known as Honker Divide (the entire river corridor is referred to as Honker Divide at times).

The roadless area was within the primary sale area for the Ketchikan Pulp Company long-term timber sale contract for many years, and much of the area surrounding the roadless area has been under intensive timber management. Two proposed harvest units and approximately 1 mile of proposed road have been NEPA-approved (under the Control Lake Project), along with other units and roads outside the roadless area, as part of the Wolf Pup Timber Sale. This sale has been sold, but these units have not yet been harvested. In addition, three proposed helicopter harvest units in the southwest part of the area have been NEPA-approved (under the Control Lake Project), but have not yet been sold.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** There are three distinct topographic types within this roadless area. The larger is the broad, relatively flat area around the Honker Divide (the headwaters of Thorne River and Hatchery Creek) and the area further east around Logjam Creek. The second is the low relief, drumlin field along the lower Thorne River, where the vegetation, hydrology, and topography are controlled by drumlins. The third is the mountainous and very rugged terrain of the eastern half and the southwestern portion of the area.

Appendix C

The Thorne River and Hatchery Creek are the largest watersheds in the area and, together with several large lakes, form a river/lake corridor running north to south across the area. The large lakes include Lake Galea (also known as Honker Lake), Thorne Lake, and others. Elevations range from sea level to over 3,000 feet. There are 1,595 acres of alpine, 549 acres of rock, and 1,404 acres of fresh water lakes within this roadless area. The area has no saltwater shoreline, although the eastern boundary comes within 1 mile of saltwater.

(4) Ecosystem:

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. The area is classified as being in the North Central Prince of Wales Island Biogeographic Province. This province is characterized by relatively gentle topography; limestone soils are fairly common, and precipitation is relatively low in much of the area due to interception by lands to the south and southwest. Karst topography and caves are often present.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Thorne River Roadless Area is covered by two ecological sections: the Prince of Wales Mountains (M247I) and Kupreanof Lowlands (M247G) Ecological Sections. Each of these is represented by just one ecological subsection within the roadless area (see table below). The Central Prince of Wales Volcanics Ecological Subsection (57% of the roadless area) occupies most of the mountainous portions of the roadless area. At high elevations, soils are shallow over bedrock, often organic, and less productive. Well-drained, moderately to highly productive, glacial till soils predominate at lower elevations. Hemlock and hemlock-spruce forests occur on well-drained sites. The Central Prince of Wales Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection (43% of the roadless area) lies along the Thorne River and Hatchery Creek and in the northwest lowlands of the roadless area. It is represented by gently undulating terrain where continental ice lobes overrode Prince of Wales Island from the northeast. Organic soils formed over deep deposits of glacial till support vast wetland complexes. Shallow lakes and ponds pockmark an intermixture of forested and nonforested bogs and fens. Low productive forests are common on these poorly drained sites. A unique drumlin field occurs within the lower Thorne River drainage (a rare feature in the Alexander Archipelago) (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Prince of Wales Mountains	Central Prince of Wales Volcanics	57%
Kupreanof Lowlands	Central Prince of Wales Till Lowlands	43%

(b) **Soils:** These highly organic and low clay content soils are generally formed over bedrock and are about 40 inches deep. Some of the soils in the area are derived from limestone and marble.

(c) **Vegetation:** Vegetation in this area is typical Southeast Alaska coastal temperate rain forest. The forest is primarily western hemlock and Sitka spruce with a large cedar component. Approximately 1,829 acres of muskeg are mapped for the area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult.

There are approximately 66,890 acres mapped as forest land, of which 38,611 acres or 58 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 19,575 acres or 51 percent are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 7,715 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are extensive areas of second growth surrounding the area, but no acres within it.

(d) **Fish Resources:** The lakes and streams in this area provide good habitat for sockeye, coho, pink, and chum salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char. The major fish-bearing waters in this area are the Thorne River and Lake, Hatchery Creek and Lake Galea, and Logjam Creek.

(e) **Wildlife Resources:** This area has large populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, in addition to black bear, wolves, otter, marten, mink, bald eagles, loon, great blue heron, and trumpeter swan. Osprey

have been sighted in the area. Marbled murrelets and goshawks are reported to nest here. Moose sign has been reported on Prince of Wales Island, but brown bear and mountain goats do not inhabit the island.

(5) Management Direction and Current Uses: This roadless area was allocated to six different Land Use Designations (LUDs) under the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. These six LUDs are Timber Production, Modified Landscape, Scenic Viewshed, Old-growth Habitat, Scenic River, and Research Natural Area.

LUD	Acres
Timber Production	8,318
Modified Landscape	7,145
Scenic Viewshed	3,937
Old-growth Habitat	41,381
Scenic River	11,960
Research Natural Area	1,621

Approximately 26 percent of the roadless area was allocated to a development LUD, which allows timber harvest and the associated road construction (Timber Production, Modified Landscape, and Scenic Viewshed). The Timber Production LUD was assigned to approximately 11 percent of the roadless area. Approximately 10 percent of this area was allocated to the Modified Landscape LUD. The Scenic Viewshed LUD was assigned to approximately 5 percent of the roadless area.

Approximately 74 percent of this area was allocated to a non-development LUD (Old-growth Habitat, Scenic River, and Research Natural Area). Much of this area, approximately 56 percent, was allocated to the Old-growth Habitat LUD. Along Thorne River and Lake, Lake Galea, and Hatchery Creek, approximately 16 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Thorne River-Hatchery Creek Scenic River LUD. The Research Natural Area LUD was assigned to approximately 2 percent of the roadless area. This LUD is located in the Thorne River drainage and referred to as the Rio Roberts Research Natural Area.

The roadless area was within the primary sale area for the Ketchikan Pulp Company long-term timber sale contract for many years, and much of the area surrounding the roadless area has been under intensive timber management. Two proposed harvest units and approximately 1 mile of proposed road have been NEPA-approved (under the Control Lake Project), along with other units and roads outside the roadless area, as part of the Wolf Pup timber sale. This sale has been sold, but these units have not yet been harvested. In addition, three proposed helicopter units in the southwest part of the area have been NEPA-approved (under the Control Lake Project), but have not yet been sold. A small area of private land borders the area near Control Lake.

One public recreation use cabin is located at Lake Galea (Honker Lake). Another public recreation cabin at Control Lake and the 12-site Eagle’s Nest Campground occur just outside the southern border of the roadless area. The Thorne River and Hatchery Creek combine to form a free-flowing river corridor running from north to south across the roadless area. The divide area along the headwaters of these streams is known as Honker Divide (the entire river corridor is referred to as Honker Divide at times). The trail/canoe system that follows the corridor, referred to as the Honker Divide Canoe Route, is frequently used and is considered unique in Southeast Alaska. Outfitting and guiding are becoming significant activities on the Thorne River system. In 2000, there were a total of seven freshwater fishing guides/outfitters (212 and 378 service days) and one black bear hunting guide (6 service days).

(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness): The area is unmodified except for one public recreation use cabin and a small trail system. Areas developed for timber management are adjacent to much of the area and penetrate into the area in several places. The Thorne River corridor (a.k.a. Honker Divide) is relatively free from human development and has a high scenic quality.

(7) Surroundings (External Influences): The Thorne River Roadless Area is bounded on the north, west, south, and east by developments. Several of these roads penetrate into the roadless area. The southern boundary is formed by a Forest Highway, which is one of the principal roads on Prince of Wales Island; and parts of the western boundary follow the major road leading to northern Prince of Wales Island.

Appendix C

(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest: The natural features and attractions of the area include fisheries, wildlife, recreation, and high scenic value, especially along the Honker Divide Canoe Route. Wildlife is abundant throughout the area. The extensive opportunity to canoe within the area, particularly following the Honker Divide Canoe Route, is an outstanding attraction. The fishing and solitude, particularly along various segments of the Thorne River, are also major attractions. The area contains 19 inventoried recreation places, which cover 40,237 acres, or 54 percent of the roadless area.

(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary: The 2003 roadless area boundaries have been substantially modified relative to the 1989 boundaries. The changes are primarily due to the additional developments around and within the roadless area. Some of these developed areas penetrate into the area. As a result, the area of the roadless site has been substantially reduced relative to the 1989 version. Several smaller areas along developed boundaries were excluded between the Draft and Final SEIS to improve the potential manageability of the area as wilderness.

II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness: The natural integrity of this area is intact. It is unmodified except for one recreation use cabin (Honker Lake Cabin) and a small trail system. The Honker Divide Canoe Route is a natural tread track, resembling an animal trail. Developments surround much of the area and penetrate into it mostly from the south and southeast, affecting the natural integrity and apparent naturalness to some degree. The eastern lobes of the roadless area are relatively narrow, with a closer proximity to developed areas.

(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation: Primitive recreation opportunities are abundant. Opportunities for solitude and serenity are high, especially along the Thorne River corridor and adjacent upland areas. The sights and sounds of management activities and vehicle traffic may be evident along the edges of the area. Opportunities for solitude are lower in the eastern lobes of the roadless area, but can be found a short distance from developed areas. Floatplanes are occasionally used to transport people to Honker Lake. People using this roadless area during the summer may encounter other recreation or subsistence users.

Due to the many lake- and stream-oriented recreation attractions and the remoteness of the area, the interior of the Thorne River Roadless Area offers good opportunities for primitive recreation including camping, fishing, canoeing, hiking, and exploring. This roadless area contains the Control Mountain, Cutthroat, Manty Mountain, and Ratz Mountain alpine areas, as well as areas of subalpine in the upper reaches of the Sale Creek and No Name Creek drainages. The Honker Divide is a particularly challenging route due to the difficulty of the two lengthy overland portages. The remoteness of inland portions of the area presents a challenging experience with the need for self-reliance.

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)	22,418	30%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	40,911	55%
Roaded Natural (RN)	727	1%
Roaded Modified (RM)	10,306	14%

The area contains 19 inventoried recreation places, which cover 40,237 acres, or 54 percent of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places*	Total Acres
P	5	11,097
SPNM	8	23,768
RN	3	462
RM	13	4,909

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

The roadless area has many lake- and stream-oriented recreation attractions, particularly associated with the trail/canoe system, referred to as the Honker Divide Canoe Route. Because of its length and values, including fisheries, wildlife, recreation, and scenery, and because it is possible to canoe and portage approximately 30 miles from one road system to another, the trail/canoe system is considered unique in Southeast Alaska. There is a public recreation cabin on Lake Galea (Honker Lake). Another public recreation cabin at Control Lake and the 12-site Eagle's Nest Campground occur just outside the southern border of the roadless area. Fishing is becoming increasingly popular in the Thorne River, and outfitting and guiding are becoming significant activities on the Thorne River system. In 2000, there were seven freshwater fishing guides/outfitters (212 and 378 service days) and one black bear hunting guide (6 service days).

(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 process (referred to as RARE II). 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 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 Thorne River Roadless Area Roadless Area was 22 out of 28 possible points. The 1989 rating was reevaluated for this updated version of the AMS. Based on this reevaluation, the area was given a rating of 21. The difference in ratings is due to additional developments into the area including the Cutthroat Lakes and Honker road systems. A separate rating was done for the area without the eastern portion, which produced a score of 22.

(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values:

(a) Fish Resources: The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) lists VCUs 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 580, 581, and 596 (most of the area) as primary sportfish producers. VCUs 575, 576, 578, 580, 596 and 597.1 are identified as primary salmon producers.

The lakes and streams in this area provide habitat for sockeye, coho, pink, and chum salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char. The major fish-bearing waters in this area are Thorne River and Lake, Hatchery Creek and Lake Galea, and Logjam Creek. The headwaters for Logjam Creek provide habitat for coho salmon. Sockeye and coho salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden inhabit Hatchery Creek and Lake Galea. Thorne River provides habitat for sockeye, coho, pink, and chum salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char (ADF&G, 2000). Thorne River receives an estimated peak escapement of 60,000 pink salmon annually (ADF&G, 1998). This river also has very good coho production and the largest steelhead run on Prince of Wales Island, averaging 650 fish annually (ADF&G, 1998; TLMP, 1997). ADF&G lists this system among the 19 "high quality" watersheds in Southeast Alaska for fisheries values.

(b) Wildlife Resources: This area has large populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, wolves, otter, marten, mink, and bald eagles. The only known inland-nesting bald eagles in Southeast Alaska are located in the Thorne-Hatchery area (USDA Forest Service, 1997). ADF&G has reported

Appendix C

sightings of osprey in the area. There is an extensive wetland area, providing habitat for waterfowl, loons, great blue heron, and trumpeter swan. The Thorne River and lakes in the area are known resting places for migrating trumpeter swans. The Control Lake area is heavily used by nesting marbled murrelets. A marbled murrelet nest was located near Hatchery Creek in 1993. A goshawk nest and one fledged juvenile were found on Logjam Creek in 1993 and a nest was found in the Rio Roberts drainage, just south of the area (USDA Forest Service, 1998). A peregrine falcon nest was discovered in the Steelhead Creek drainage, also to the south of the area (USDA Forest Service, 1998). Moose sign has been reported on Prince of Wales Island, but brown bear and mountain goats do not inhabit this area (USDA Forest Service, 1993, 1997). Based on harvest data compiled from 1985 to 1995, one of the VCUs partially located in this area, VCU 581, was ranked in the second 25 percent of black bear harvest areas on the Tongass.

(c) Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species: The only federally listed threatened and endangered species in the Tongass are the humpback whale (endangered) and the Steller sea lion (threatened), both marine species. There is no marine habitat available in the Thorne River Roadless Area. 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. 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. Goshawk nests were located in the area in the Logjam Creek drainage and within the Rio Roberts drainage, just south of the area, and a peregrine falcon nest was discovered in the Steelhead Creek drainage, also to the south of the area (USDA Forest Service, 1998). 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 Thorne Bay Ranger District.

(d) Karst, Cave, and Other Geologic Resources: There are three small areas of karst developed in the hills southwest of Cutthroat Lake. Several small caves have been mapped in this area. The karst resources represent 592 acres, or less than 1 percent, of the roadless area. Approximately 20 percent of the karst is mapped as high vulnerability karst. The topography of the lower Thorne River is dominated by drumlins, which control the vegetation and hydrology of the area. There are no glaciers in the area.

(5) Scientific and Educational Values: The Rio Roberts Research Natural Area is located within the roadless area. The area contains riparian flood plain spruce stands, upland old growth, natural second-growth stands, and upland hemlock on drumlin fields (glacial features). Research Natural Areas provide opportunities for baseline monitoring of ecological processes and non-manipulative observation.

(6) Scenic Values: The northern half of this roadless area is part of the Kupreanof Lowlands character type, which is characterized by low, rolling relief with elevations seldom greater than 1,500 feet. The southern half is part of the Coastal Hills character type, which generally possesses steeper slopes and more massive landforms. The area exhibits the landscape characteristics of both character types, though not in a manner that corresponds to the character type boundaries. The western half along the Hatchery Creek and Thorne River is characterized by low, rolling relief, and the eastern half is made up of large blocky landforms with rounded to flat ridges. A scenic natural landscape dominates when viewing the Thorne River Roadless Area from waterways and land within or surrounding the area.

Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan that are within or adjacent to the area include Thorne Bay to Sandy Beach Road (#30) and Control Lake to Thorne Bay Road (FH #9); the Thorne River/Hatchery Creek/Barnes Lake area, recommended as a Wild and Scenic River status; The Honker Canoe Route (Gold and Galligan Lagoon to Thorne Bay) dispersed recreation area; the community of Thorne Bay; the Honker Lake public recreation cabin; the Thorne River Bridge developed recreation site; and the Honker Divide canoe trail.

About 10 percent of the area is rated as Variety Class A and possesses a high degree of landscape diversity for the character type. Most of the area, 90 percent, is inventoried as Variety Class B and possesses a level of landscape diversity that is common to the character type. These more scenic Variety Class A areas are primarily around the Snakey Lakes, an intricate complex of narrow, winding freshwater bodies north of the main Thorne Lake drainage.

Other notable scenic areas include portions of the Thorne River and its many areas of grassy meadows and large stands of spruce.

About 83 percent of this roadless area is in a Type I Existing Visual Condition (EVC) where the natural landscape has remained unaltered by human activity. About 2 percent of the area is in EVC III, where changes in the landscape are noticed by the average person, but do not attract attention. EVC IV was inventoried for about 1 percent of the area, where alterations to the landscape are obvious but tend to blend with natural landscape features. Approximately 14 percent of the area is in a Type V EVC, where changes to the landscape are obvious to the average visitor due to the developed areas around its edge.

(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values: There is evidence that this large and varied roadless area has received prehistoric and historic use, particularly along the Thorne River. The Tlingit people, who settled in Klawock and Craig, probably used the area over time. At least one cultural site along the Thorne River, a prehistoric campsite, has been determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (USDA Forest Service, 1998). Because of the high-value fish resources of the Thorne River, the prehistoric and historical use of this area was probably relatively high. Aboriginal cultures probably used the lower reaches of the Thorne River for subsistence use. In recent history, trapping has occurred in the Thorne River drainage. In the last 30 years, there has been increasing interest in the freshwater fishing and canoeing throughout the water system.

Available information indicates that substantial subsistence activities occur in the area. The area is important to residents of Thorne Bay, Klawock, and Craig, as well as other Prince of Wales Island communities. Almost all VCUs were listed among the VCUs in the three groups of highest community use value. VCUs 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 588, and 597 were listed among the VCUs with the highest values, VCU 583 is in the second most important group, and VCUs 574, 581, and 596 are in the third most important group. In addition, most of the VCUs covering the area (not including the central VCUs 575, 576, 596 and 597.1) 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 boundaries of the area are mostly directed by adjacent developed areas. Natural boundaries, such as ridge-lines, could be identified along portions of the area, but this would result in a substantially smaller area. All portions of the eastern lobes of the roadless area are within a mile or two of developments. The core of the area around the Thorne River-Hatchery Creek system could be more manageable as wilderness if the road to and beyond Cutthroat Lake and the road into the area immediately east of Thorne Lake were closed and rehabilitated, and these areas were incorporated into the wilderness, as well as not including the eastern portion of the roadless area. 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: The current management emphasis for the Thorne River, Honker Divide, and Snakey Lakes area is for primitive recreation. Future recreation planning for facility and trail development in this area has been minimal. The primary emphasis has been to manage the area for primitive recreation opportunities with no additional trail or facility development. The Thorne River Roadless Area has good potential for dispersed primitive recreation. The recreation potential of the area is focused on primitive, non-developed recreation opportunities. In 1996, the Alaska Visitor Association proposed a hut-to-hut canoe system for 25 people and a backcountry lodge/resort for 30 people in the Honker Divide area in their comments on the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan.

The recreation and tourism potential of this area is high. Wildlife viewing, camping, hiking, canoeing, 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).

Appendix C

- (2) **Subsistence Uses:** The major existing patterns of subsistence activities in the area would not be affected by wilderness designation; however, floatplane landings in the lakes, motorboat use of the lakes and lower Thorne River, and ATV use of portions of the roadless area could be restricted by wilderness designation.
- (3) **Fish Resources:** Inventories show that there are numerous opportunities for fish habitat improvement on several of the streams within the area. Almost all of this potential is in constructing fish passes around or over natural barriers so salmon can reach high-quality spawning habitat that is currently unavailable. The Forest Service currently has plans to install log drop structures in the North Thorne River for habitat improvement (USDA Forest Service, 1997).
- (4) **Wildlife Resources:** There are no long-range plans to accomplish wildlife habitat improvement project work within this roadless area.
- (5) **Timber Resources:** There are 38,611 acres mapped as productive old growth and no acres mapped as second growth due to harvest in the roadless area. Of these acres, 25,942 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), 2,816 acres, or 4 percent, of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 1,607 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 381 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.
- The roadless area was within the primary sale area for the Ketchikan Pulp Company long-term timber sale contract for many years, and much of the area surrounding the roadless area has been under intensive timber management. Two proposed harvest units and approximately 1 mile of proposed road have been NEPA-approved (under the Control Lake Project), along with other units and roads outside the roadless area, as part of the Wolf Pup Timber Sale. This sale has been sold, but these units have not yet been harvested. In addition, three proposed helicopter units in the southwest part of the area have been NEPA-approved (under the Control Lake Project), but have not yet been sold.
- (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 an estimated 9,140 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:** No transportation or utility corridors are planned for this area other than for the harvest of local timber. There are existing roads adjacent to the area on all sides, which tie into the island road system. A proposed state road corridor is located along Clarence Strait, just east of the roadless area.
- (9) **Water Availability and Use:** The one public recreation cabin on Honker Lake creates the only water demand in the entire area. There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects within the roadless area.
- (10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** The Rio Roberts Research Natural Area is located within the roadless area. Study within this area could be restricted by wilderness designation. The mapped karst resources encompass approximately 592 acres or less than one percent of the roadless area.
- (11) **Land Use Authorizations:** Special Use Permits for outfitter and guide operations are ongoing.
- (12) **Land Status:** All of the area is National Forest System land. A small area of private land borders the roadless area near Control Lake.

IV. Wilderness Evaluation (Need for Wilderness)

(1) Public and Congressional Interest:

(a) Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents: The area receives significant local use for subsistence and recreation activities.

(b) Congressional Interest: Two bills from the U.S. House of Representatives included wilderness proposals for Southeast Alaska. In 1989, House of Representatives Bill HR 987 did not include this area. In 2001, HR 2908 did not propose the area for wilderness, but did propose it to be classified as a Congressionally Designated LUD II area and managed in an unroaded condition.

(c) Public Input During Forest Plan Revision and Appeals: Many comments were received requesting the protection of the area's roadless recreation values and opportunities (including the popular canoe route), old-growth habitat, and fisheries. Many asked that the area have full ridge-to-ridge protection from further logging or roading along the entire canoe route. Some felt that the "outstandingly remarkable" recreation and scenic values were not being adequately recognized; others see Honker Divide as the last large uncut area on North Prince of Wales, with important wildlife habitat values. A few commenters felt that logging should continue in the area, most favoring some protection for the canoe route itself. The Alaska Visitor Association proposed a hut-to-hut canoe system for 25 people and a backcountry lodge/resort for 30 people in the Honker Divide area.

(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: Many comments on the Control Lake EIS centered on protecting the Honker Divide area from road building and logging. Some indicated it is one of the most significant issues on the Tongass. This issue was identified as important for scenic beauty, recreation, subsistence, wildlife, and fishery resources. A citizen's group consisting of environmental organization representatives, independent timber operators, Alaska Natives, educators, business owners, and fishermen, most of whom were residents of Prince of Wales Island, recommended no harvest or roads in this area.

(f) Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process: 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 Honker Divide (most of RA# 511). 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 Honker Divide area in their comments on the Draft SEIS. ADF&G rated the Thorne River roadless area (VCUs 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, and 597.1) as the highest priority for protection on Prince of Wales Island and Adjacent Islands. 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 LUD II designation. The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) recommended Roadless Area 511 for permanent protection as LUD II. Audubon Alaska recommended that Honker Divide should be protected from logging and road building. The Tongass Conservation Society indicated that protection of Honker and other areas on Prince of Wales Island was important to the survival of recreation and tourism on the island.

Appendix C

Many individuals commented that Honker Divide was a special place and needed to be protected because of its importance as a biological corridor, its recreation opportunities, and other values.

(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses: This roadless area is immediately north of the Karta Roadless Area, but developed areas separate it from the Karta Roadless Area, which surrounds the Karta Wilderness (approximately 5 miles south of the Thorne River Roadless Area). The Thorne River Roadless Area is also adjacent to, but separated by developed areas from the Kogish, Sweetwater, and Ratz Roadless Areas. Recreation and subsistence are the major uses for these adjacent areas. Use levels are not well documented.

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

Community	Air Miles	Water Miles
Ketchikan (Pop. 14,070)	50	60
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	40	50
Petersburg (Pop. 3,324)	65	80
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	180	200

Hollis, located on Prince of Wales Island, currently is the nearest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway and is about 40 road miles away from the roadless area.

(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System: The Thorne River Roadless Area occurs in the center and east-central portion of Prince of Wales Island, approximately 5 miles northwest of Thorne Bay, and includes most of the Thorne River drainage. Most of the southern boundary is formed by State Highway 929 and Forest Road 30, and much of the west side is bordered by Forest Road 20. The Thorne River Roadless Area has three distinct topographic types: the larger is the broad, relatively flat area around the Honker Divide (the headwaters of Thorne River and Hatchery Creek) and the area further east around Logjam Creek; the second is the low relief, drumlin field along the lower Thorne River; and the third is the mountainous and rugged terrain of the eastern half and the southwestern portion of the area.

The Thorne River Roadless Area is mostly unmodified and appears natural. Roaded areas form all the boundaries and influence the area to some degree, especially in the eastern portion. The area has high natural integrity and apparent naturalness. Separating the eastern lobe out of the area would increase the natural integrity rating to very high. The opportunity for solitude is high, and the opportunity for primitive recreation is very high within the area.

Approximately 10 percent of the landscape is considered distinctive from a scenery standpoint. There are three small areas of karst developed in the hills southwest of Cutthroat Lake. The topography of the lower Thorne River is dominated by drumlins, which control the vegetation and hydrology of the area. The Thorne River connects a series of large lakes that are a special feature of the roadless area. The area is also important as a large block of old-growth habitat as part of the Forest-wide conservation strategy. The Rio Roberts Research Natural Area is included in the roadless area.

The roadless area includes about 19,575 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, approximately 7,715 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The Thorne River Roadless Area is classified as being in the North Central Prince of Wales Island Biogeographic Province and makes up about 5 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 Thorne River Roadless Area lies within two ecological sections; it represents 5 percent of the Prince of Wales Mountains Ecological Section and 3 percent of the Kupreanof Lowlands Ecological Section. These ecological sections contain relatively low representation in existing wilderness (8 and 1 percent, respectively), but they are also

represented in LUD II (3 and 1 percent, respectively), and are well represented in other existing non-development LUDs (22 and 33 percent, respectively).

Approximately 57 percent of the roadless area is in the Central Prince of Wales Volcanics Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 9 percent of the entire ecological subsection. Approximately 8 percent of this ecological subsection is located in existing wilderness and another 23 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs. The remaining 43 percent of the roadless area is in the Central Prince of Wales Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 13 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 Thorne River Roadless Area was rated 21 out of a possible 28 points under WARS. As such, its WARS rating is ranked 47th from the highest (along with five other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas. A separate rating was done for the area without the eastern lobe which resulted in a score of 22.

There is much local and national support for managing the Thorne River Roadless Area in an unroaded condition. There is national support for designating the area as wilderness. Designation would create a wilderness that is relatively large and centrally located within the province, but easier to manage as unroaded than as wilderness. The degree of timber harvest in adjacent lands and on northern Prince of Wales Island 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 moderate.

V. Environmental Consequences

The Thorne River Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, or 4 is implemented. Approximately 74 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur within the remaining 26 percent of the roadless area. The land in the development LUDs includes an estimated 2,816 acres that are suitable for timber production (2 percent of the suitable acres on the Thorne Bay Ranger District). Approximately 381 if the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. The timber sales authorized by the Control Lake FEIS would continue. This area contains an estimated 9,140 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources. All of these acres are considered to have low potential for development. The relatively heavy recreation and special use programs would continue. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including old growth values, are mostly protected by the Forest Plan. The exception is for the northeastern portion of the roadless area where ongoing developments are allowed by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternatives 5 or 7, a 61,027-acre portion of the Research Natural Area, Old-growth Habitat, and Wild/Scenic/Recreation River, Scenic Viewshed, Modified Landscape, and Timber Production LUDs would be converted to Recommended Wilderness LUD. Timber harvest would not be allowed in the Recommended Wilderness LUD and identified suitable acres in the roadless area would be reduced to 996 acres. The ongoing recreational use, special uses, and mineral management that occur within the Recommended Wilderness LUD area could be restricted. Mineral prospecting would be allowed in the Recommended Wilderness LUD up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. The values associated with the natural settings of the Honker Divide portion of the roadless area, including scenic, karst, old-growth forest, and ecologic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Under Alternative 6, the entire area would be converted to Recommended LUD II LUD. Timber harvest would not be allowed. The ongoing recreational use, special uses, and mineral management could continue. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including scenic, karst, old-growth forest, and ecologic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated LUD II.

Under Alternative 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness LUD. Timber harvest would not be allowed. The ongoing recreational use, special uses, and mineral management could be restricted. Mineral prospecting would be allowed up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including scenic, karst, old-growth forest, and ecologic 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 511 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness					61,027		61,027	74,362
Wilderness								
Recommended Wilderness Nat. Mon.								
Wilderness National Monument								
Non-wilderness National Monument								
Research Natural Area	1,621	1,621	1,621	1,621				
Special Interest Area								
Remote Recreation								
Enacted Municipal Watershed								
Old-growth Habitat	41,381	41,381	41,381	41,381	4,625		4,625	
Semi-remote Recreation								
Recommended LUD II						74,362		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River	11,960	11,960	11,960	11,960				
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed	3,937	3,937	3,937	3,937				
Modified Landscape	7,145	7,145	7,145	7,145	2,719		2,719	
Timber production	8,318	8,318	8,318	8,318	5,990		5,990	
TOTAL	74,362	74,362	74,362	74,362	74,362	74,362	74,362	74,362
Suitable Timber Lands	2,816	2,816	2,816	2,816	996	0	996	0