

# Appendix C

## INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

**ROADLESS AREA NAME:** Sarkar (514)

**ACRES (NFS):** 62,170

**BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE:** North Central Prince of Wales Island

**ECOLOGICAL SECTION:** Kupreanof Lowlands, Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands

**2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING:** 23

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

(1) **Location and Access:** The Sarkar Roadless Area is located on north central Prince of Wales Island, west of Kashevarof Passage and Clarence Strait. It is separated from El Capitan Passage on the west by Forest Road 20. The roadless area is bounded on all but the northeast side by areas developed for timber management. The east side is adjacent to salt water along Barnes Lake and Whale Passage. The roadless area is approximately 40 air miles southeast of Wrangell. The roadless area is accessed by boats and floatplanes via Whale Passage, Barnes Lake, Sarkar Lake, Upper Sarkar Lake, Finger Lake or Raven Lake, and saltwater on the eastern coast. Additional access is provided by the network of roads around the exterior, or by helicopter and foot travel. There are no places suitable for landing wheeled airplanes. There are two Forest Service recreation public use cabins; one located along the shore of Sarkar Lake (Sarkar Lake Cabin) and one at Barnes Lake, the Barnes Lake Cabin. There is a developed canoe trail, Sarkar Canoe Route that interconnects seven lakes within the area. Boardwalk trails have been constructed for portaging between lakes. Tent platforms have also been constructed for camping along the Sarkar Canoe Route. This area also contains Tunga and Tammy Lake. The Sarkar Roadless Area is part of a relatively undeveloped old-growth corridor that runs from the Karta Wilderness to the Calder Holbrook LUD II area on the northwest tip of Prince of Wales Island.

(2) **History:** The roadless area was used by Alaska Native peoples in prehistoric and historic times. It contains what may be one of the larger Native summer camps known. Two traditional-use Native sites near the roadless area have been conveyed to Native Corporations in accordance with the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). In the early 1900s, salteries were located on the west coast of this roadless area. Areas along Whale Passage, Barnes Lake, and Kashevarof Passage have been beach logged. The Sarkar Lake chain has a long history of subsistence and recreation use. This same area is known for past and present use as a trappers route.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** The roadless area is characterized by low elevation, subdued topography, and low-lying muskeg systems. The maximum elevation is 2,000 feet. There are 90 miles of saltwater shoreline and numerous freshwater lakes totaling 2,489 acres. This area also contains 44 acres of rock. There are about 11,192 acres of acres of islands, the largest of which are Thorne Island and Stevenson Island. There are no alpine features, icefields, or glaciers mapped in the roadless area.

(4) **Ecosystem:**

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. The area is in the North Central Prince of Wales Island Province. This province is characterized by gentle relief in the landscape. All of the forest plant associations found in Southeast Alaska except those found only on the mainland occur in this province. The roadless area typically has high precipitation. This province contains limited karst topography and few caves.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Sarkar Roadless Area is contained within the Kupreanof Lowlands Ecological Section (M247G) and the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247F). These

areas are represented by two ecological subsections (see table below). The Central Prince of Wales Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection, which covers 99 percent 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
Kupreanof Lowlands	Central Prince of Wales Till Lowlands	99%
Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands	North Prince of Wales-Kuiu Carbonates	1%

**(b) Soils:** Soils are highly organic, of low clay content, and generally formed over bedrock. They are typically about 40 inches deep. Generally, steeper areas have better-drained soils and flat areas are poorly drained. Some of the soils in the area are derived from limestone.

**(c) Vegetation:** Vegetation is typical Southeast Alaska coastal temperate rain forest. The forest is primarily western hemlock and Sitka spruce with a large cedar component. There are numerous interspersed areas of muskeg vegetation with 1,601 acres that are mapped. Due to their small size and association with forested areas, accurate estimates are difficult.

There are approximately 57,232 acres mapped as forest land of which 30,407 acres or 53 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 10,365 acres or 34 percent are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 2,006 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are 1,377 acres of second growth resulting from older beach logging along the coast, including on the associated islands.

**(d) Fish Resources:** The lakes and streams in this area provide habitat for sockeye, coho, pink, and chum salmon, cutthroat and steelhead trout, and Dolly Varden char. The Anadromous Waters Catalogue (ADF&G, 2000) indicates the primary fish-bearing waters in this roadless area include Indian Creek, Barnes Lake, Galligan Creek, Mabel Creek, and Sarkar River and Lakes.

**(e) Wildlife Resources:** The roadless area has populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, wolves, otter, marten, mink, loon, and waterfowl. Sarkar Lake is a wintering area for trumpeter swan. Moose inhabit Prince of Wales Island, but brown bear and mountain goats do not (MacDonald and Cook, 1999).

**(5) Management Direction and Current Uses:** This roadless area was allocated to eight different Land Use Designations (LUDs) under the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. These eight LUDs are Modified Landscape, Timber Production, Recreation River, Transportation and Utility Systems (TUS), Old-growth Habitat, Remote Recreation, Wild River, and Semi-remote Recreation. The TUS LUD is a secondary LUD that overlays the other land uses.

LUD	Acres
Modified Landscape	10,056
Timber Production	3,218
Transportation and Utility Systems	NA
Old-growth Habitat	19,997
Remote Recreation	15,834
Wild River	9,621
Recreational River	3,193
Semi-remote Recreation	252

Approximately 21 percent of the roadless area (not including the TUS LUD overlay) was allocated to a LUD that allows timber harvest or road construction (Modified Landscape, Timber Production). The Modified Landscape

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LUD was assigned to approximately 16 percent of the roadless area. Approximately 5 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Timber Production LUD. Also, a proposed state road corridor in the eastern part of the roadless area was assigned to the Transportation and Utility Systems LUD overlay.

Approximately 79 percent of this roadless area was allocated to non-development LUDs (Old-growth Habitat, Remote Recreation, Wild River, Recreation River, Semi-remote Recreation). The Old-growth Habitat LUD was assigned to approximately 32 percent of the roadless area. Approximately 25 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Remote Recreation LUD. Near the Sarkar Lakes, approximately 16 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Sarkar Lakes Wild River LUD. Near the Barnes Lake/Gold and Galligan Lagoon, approximately 5 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Recreational River LUD. Mabel Island and other small islands adjacent to the shoreline were allocated to the Semi-remote Recreation LUD, which account for less than 1 percent of the roadless area.

There are two public recreation cabins one at Barnes Lake and the other at Sarkar Lake. There is one 15-mile developed canoe route providing outstanding canoeing opportunities with a constructed boardwalk trail for portaging canoe between seven lakes and tent platforms for camping. The trailhead for the Canoe Route is located just off FDR 20 at Sarkar Lake. The trailhead contains a parking area, vault toilet, boat ramp and a small dock. Sarkar Lake is also used for skiffing, fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, and subsistence gathering. In 2000, four outfitter/guides were operating in this area; activities included freshwater fishing (34 service days) and canoeing (6 service days). VCUs 554, 571, 573, and 577 were rated among the VCUs having the highest community fish and wildlife values. Sarkar Lake (VCU 554) is an especially important subsistence use area.

**(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness):** The area is unmodified except for the two public recreation cabins, portages along the canoe route, and beach logged areas. Generally, most of the area is in a natural, unmodified environment containing stands of old-growth forest intermixed with muskeg and other wetlands. Trees in the beach logged units have regrown and these areas no longer appear modified.

**(7) Surroundings (External Influences):** The Sarkar Roadless Area is bounded on the north, west, south, and most of the east by extensive timber harvest areas. A segment of the eastern boundary is saltwater. Non-National Forest System land forms part of the boundary near Whales Pass and Lake Bay.

**(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest:** The natural features of the area, the scenery, the saltwater bays and inlets, abundant lakes, and the opportunity to see wildlife and to study the processes, which formed this country may all be attractions. The area has a rich cultural history that provides education and interpretive opportunities. The cabins and canoe trail are special features, which attract tourists and locals. The fishing, ease of access to this area, and solitude of the area are attractions. The area contains 14 inventoried recreation places, which cover 24,398 acres, or 39 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. The area between Sweetwater Lake and Clarence Strait and along Whale Pass are no longer National Forest System lands and are no longer part of the roadless area. Lands along the north and south border of the 1989 boundary are no longer roadless because of ongoing development. Areas that were beach logged several decades ago along Whale Passage, Barnes Lake, and Kashevarof Passage but were not roaded have been added to the roadless area. Trees in these beach logged units have regrown and these areas no longer appear modified. Several smaller areas along developed boundaries have been 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 area appears natural except for the two public recreation cabins and the canoe portages. The natural integrity and apparent naturalness of this area is high. The roadless area is characterized by low elevation, subdued topography, and low-lying muskeg systems, which limit the visibility and sounds of traffic and activities within the Sarkar Roadless Area.

**(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation:** There is high opportunity for solitude and very high opportunity for primitive recreation within the roadless area. Floatplanes and boats are used to transport people to the lakes and the public recreation cabins within the area. Skiffs are also used to fish the Gold & Galligan Lagoon. Visitors using these areas may be disturbed by these activities, which are generally seasonal. Persons using the Sarkar Lakes during the summer may encounter other recreation or subsistence users.

The Gold & Galligan waterway, including Indian Creek Rapids and Lake Bay, are extremely challenging. This area is subject to extreme tidal fluctuations. Tidal races and rapids form that are influenced by as much as 24-foot tide changes. Other challenges include navigating around Thorne and Stevenson Islands, which are known to be rocky and shallow with extreme riptides. Due to the type of landscape within the heart of the roadless area, few visually outstanding landmarks and multiple waterways, lakes, and wetlands, navigation can be extremely challenging. Additionally, the relatively large size of the area, and the presence of black bears present a degree of challenge to people hiking or camping in the roadless area.

There are excellent primitive recreation opportunities, particularly in the northern end of the Sarkar Lakes chain due to the remoteness and solitude of the area and to its outstanding canoeing, trail, fishing and camping opportunities. Public recreation cabins are located at Sarkar Lake and Barnes Lake. In 2000, four outfitter/guides were guiding freshwater fishing and canoeing trips.

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)	11,560	19%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	33,664	54%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	12,139	20%
Roaded Natural (RN)	184	0%
Roaded Modified (RM)	4,561	7%

The area contains 14 inventoried recreation places, which cover 24,398 acres, or 39 percent of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places*	Total Acres
P	1	11,560
SPNM	3	5,322
SPM	7	6,371
RN	1	22
RM	8	1,124

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

There is a public recreation cabin at Barnes Lake and another at Sarkar Lake. There is a canoe route with boardwalk trail portages that accesses the interior linking seven lakes from a trailhead along Road 20 near the southwest corner of the roadless area.

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

In 1979, during the RARE II process, the Tongass National Forest applied WARS for the first time and rated each unroaded VCU on the Tongass. In 1989, the inventoried roadless areas (which generally include more than one VCU) were rated according to this system for the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) developed in

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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 Sarkar Roadless Area was 23 out of 28 possible points. The 1989 rating was re-evaluated for this updated version of the AMS. Based on this re-evaluation, the area was also given a rating of 23.

**(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values:** The roadless area contains several karst features and high-quality habitat for fish and wildlife.

**(a) Fish Resources:** The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) listed VCUs 554.1 and 573 as primary salmon producers. VCUs 552, 554.1, 554.2, and 5730 were listed as primary sportfish producers.

The lakes and streams in this area provide habitat for sockeye, coho, pink, and chum salmon, cutthroat and steelhead trout, and Dolly Varden char. The Anadromous Waters Catalogue (ADF&G, 2000) indicates the primary fish-bearing waters in this area include Indian Creek, Barnes Lake, Galligan Creek, Mabel Creek, and Sarkar River and Lakes. Indian Creek and Barnes Lake, in the northeast portion of the roadless area, contain sockeye, coho, and pink salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char. Mabel and Galligan Creeks provide habitat primarily for coho, pink, and chum salmon. Mabel Creek also provides habitat for steelhead and Dolly Varden. Sarkar Lakes include five major lakes. The system has populations of sockeye, pink, coho, and chum salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char (ADF&G, 2000). The Sarkar River receives an estimated 24,200 pink salmon and has excellent coho production in VCU 5541 (ADF&G, 1998). The ADF&G lists this system among the 19 “high quality” watersheds in Southeast Alaska for fisheries values (TLMP, 1997).

The Tunga Inlet fish pass, (a combination steppass and weir/pool system), completed in 1986, lies outside the boundaries of the roadless area, but provides passage to fish spawning within the roadless area.

**(b) Wildlife Resources:** This area has populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, wolves, otter, marten, mink, loon, and common waterfowl. Sarkar Lake is a wintering area for trumpeter swan. Moose inhabit Prince of Wales Island, but brown bear and mountain goats do not (MacDonald and Cook, 1999). There are no large mammals on Stevenson Island (MacDonald and Cook, 1999). The Central Prince of Wales EIS (USFS, 1993) indicates that there is a major wildlife corridor at Neck Lake. Based on harvest data compiled from 1985 to 1995, VCU 551, Thorne Island, was ranked in the second 25 percent of black bear harvest areas on the Tongass (ADF&G 1998).

**(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. Trumpeter swans winter at Sarkar 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. Inhabitants of late seral forests, Queen Charlotte goshawks are closely associated with productive old growth. Goshawks and goshawk nests have been sighted on Thorne Island. 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 small areas of karst in this roadless in the northwestern corner and along the western edge. The karst found in the northwestern corner is extremely well developed and at one time was evaluated as a potential Research Natural Area. This is one of the few low elevation karst watersheds on Prince of Wales Island in which there is not timber harvest. This represents 622 acres, or 1 percent of the roadless area. All of the karst is mapped as low vulnerability karst. There are no glaciers or unique geologic features in this area.

**(5) Scientific and Educational Values:** There are no known special features within the roadless area but there are opportunities to study forests, fish, wildlife, and karst. Sarkar Lakes support a significant run of sockeye salmon. This area is an over-wintering place for the trumpeter swan. This area receives relatively high recreation use. The low elevation karst without previous timber harvest may be of scientific interest.

**(6) Scenic Values:** The entire roadless area is part of the Kupreanof Lowlands character type which is characterized by predominantly low, rolling relief, and elevations seldom greater than 1,500 feet. Numerous island groups and intricate waterways are also common in this character type. This roadless area exhibits very gently rolling to almost flat landscapes. Though the landforms of the area are relatively featureless, the Sarkar Lakes area possesses a highly intricate and diverse network of freshwater channels, ponds, larger lakes, and islands. Sarkar lakes is a unique system of freshwater lakes that are easily navigable by canoe. This system provides excellent opportunities to view scenery and wildlife in a pristine setting. The intricate waterways reveal a diversity of foreground, middleground, and background views. The canoe portages enable the visitor to experience remote temperate rainforest and muskeg scenery from an easily traversable boardwalk. Overnight visits are easily made, by reserving the USDA Forest Service cabin on Sarkar Lake, or the tent platform on Upper Sarkar Lake (no reservation required).

The landscape appears natural when viewed from surrounding waterways and from within the roadless area. The major scenic feature is the intricate network of water bodies. Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan that are within or adjacent to the area include: Clarence Strait, a part of the Alaska Marine Highway; Barnes Lake (recommended for Recreation River) and Sarkar Lakes (recommended for Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River); the Whale Pass saltwater use area; the Sarkar Cove, Honker Canoe Route, and Gold and Galligan Lagoon dispersed recreation use areas; Sarkar Lake and Barnes Lake public recreation cabins; the Neck Lake Boat Launch; and the Whale Pass private Resort.

About 20 percent of the roadless area is inventoried as Variety Class A, possessing a high degree of landscape diversity relative to the character type. These landscapes include primarily the Sarkar Lakes and Gold and Galligan Lagoon areas. Half of the area, 48 percent, was inventoried as Variety Class B, possessing landscape diversity common in the character type. Due to the large areas of low, featureless terrain, the remaining 31 percent was rated as Variety Class C, possessing a low degree of landscape diversity.

About 81 percent of the area is in a Type I Existing Visual Condition where the natural landscape has remained unaltered by human activity. About 7 percent of the area has an EVC III, where the average person notices changes in the landscape, but it does not dominate the landscape. Land with an EVC IV is found in about 8 percent of this roadless area, in which alterations to the landscape are obvious but tend to blend with natural landscape features. Approximately 2 percent of the area was inventoried as EVC V, where changes to the landscape are obvious to the average visitor and appear to be major disturbances. About 1 percent of the area was not inventoried.

**(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values:** This roadless area was used by Native peoples in prehistoric and historic times. This area is important to the Kwaan Tlingit of Wrangell and the Heenya Kwaan Tlingit of Klawock. It contains what may be one of the larger Native summer camps known. Two traditional-use Alaska Native sites near the roadless area have been conveyed to Native Corporations in accordance with ANILCA. In the early 1900s, salteries were located on the west coast of this roadless area. Areas along Whale Passage, Barnes Lake, and Kashevarof Passage have been beach logged. The Sarkar Lake chain has a long history of subsistence and recreation use. Very old corduroy trail segments are in evidence. This same area is known for past and present use as a trappers route. In year 2000, four outfitter/guides were operating in this area; activities include freshwater fishing (34 service days) and canoeing (6 service days). VCUs 554.2, and 573 were rated among the VCUs having the highest community fish and wildlife values. All VCUs except 553 and 554 to the west, were listed among the VCUs with highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas (ADF&G 1998). Sarkar Lake (VCU 554) is an especially important subsistence use area.

**(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes:** The existing boundaries are not based on topographic features, except for the shoreline in the northeast. There are opportunities to create better-defined boundaries by moving the boundary inward in some places. For example, the roadless area includes portions of the north shore of Sweetwater Lake but this area is nearly cutoff from the rest of the roadless area by roads and harvest. Moving the boundary to the Gold and Galligan Lagoon might create a more easily-managed

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boundary. 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 recreation and tourism potential of this area is high. Wildlife viewing, camping, hiking, canoeing, sea kayaking, fishing, hunting and exploring have the potential to increase as tourism and recreation increase throughout Alaska. Tourism 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). Tourism has been increasing in Southeast Alaska and is expected to continue to increase.

The roadless area is linked by road to Hollis, a stop on the Alaska Marine Highway. Funding has been made available for a Inter-Island Ferry Authority (IFA) that will provide service between Coffman Cove and Wrangell in 2003, providing for potentially more visitors to this roadless area. It is near a private resort in Whale Pass. Good road access may encourage many of the tourists visiting the island to recreate in the roadless area. The area has good potential for low density, primitive recreation experiences. There is potential for additional trail construction or boardwalk portages to link Tunga and Tammy Lake to the Sarkar Canoe Route and with additional tent platforms for camping. The Alaska Visitors Association in 1996 proposed a hut-to-hut canoe system for 25 people and a back country resort for 100 people at Sarkar Lake.

**(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 currently planned within the roadless area.

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

**(5) Timber Resources:** There are 30,407 acres mapped as productive old-growth forest and 1,377 acres mapped as second-growth forest due to beach harvesting in the roadless area. Of this, approximately 23,691 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), 2,177 acres or 4 percent of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 492 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 68 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. Portions of the roadless area would be difficult to road due to extensive lakes and wetlands. The Lab Bay project approved group selection timber harvest using helicopter yarding on Thorne Island; no roads would be built as part of this action.

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

**(7) Minerals:** Currently, no mining or known prospecting is occurring within this roadless area. The area on the south side of Sarkar Cove has potential for minerals development (TLMP, 1997). The USGS Mineral Resources Data website (2001) indicates that there are several prospects in the area for molybdenum, copper, and zinc. This area contains an estimated 54,046 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:** A proposed state road corridor passes through the eastern part of the roadless area that was assigned to the Transportation and Utility System LUD in the 1997 Tongass Land and

Resource Management Plan. This would connect Whale Pass with Coffman Cove. FSR 20 is being realigned, widened, and paved under contract. Construction is expected to start in 2003 and finish by 2007. A State transportation corridor, Road 20, follows the western boundary of the roadless area and another corridor lies to the south, connecting Road 20 with Coffman Cove. Funding has been approved for an Inter-Island Ferry Authority (IFA) that will provide service between Coffman Cove and Wrangell.

**(9) Water Availability and Use:** Water demand is created by the public recreation cabins within the area. There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects within the roadless area.

**(10) Areas of Scientific Interest:** Fish, wildlife, and karst resources within the roadless area may be of scientific interest. The mapped karst resources encompass approximately 622 acres or one percent of the roadless area.

**(11) Land Use Authorizations:** Outfitter and guide permitting is ongoing.

**(12) Land Status:** All of the roadless area is National Forest System land.

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

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

**(a) Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** Local residents are primarily concerned with maintaining the area for recreation and subsistence use.

**(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 roadless area was not one of these areas. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed managing the entire roadless area as LUD II in an unroaded condition.

**(c) Public Input During Forest Plan Revision and Appeals:** The Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SACC) stated that the area should be managed to preserve its integrity. They felt it merited special protection for its outstanding wildlife, fisheries, hunting, subsistence, recreation, and tourism values. The Juneau Convention and Visitors Bureau recommended protecting the high-quality sport fishing experience. The SACC, the Alaska Rainforest Campaign, the Narrows Conservation Coalition, and others recommended LUD II protection. Other commenters suggested that the area be preserved for recreation or as old growth, or that the Sarkar Lake area be designated as Wild and Scenic River. 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. Timber industry representatives recommended managing all of North Prince of Wales not designated as wilderness for timber. The Alaska Visitors Association in 1996 proposed a hut-to-hut canoe system for 25 people and a back country resort for 100 people at Sarkar Lake.

**(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:** No project-level comments on this roadless are available.

**(f) Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process:** The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities noted that the discussion should cover the proposed road connecting Whale Pass and Coffman Cove.

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 Sarkar roadless area (VCUs 554.1, 553, 551, 552, and 573) as the second highest priority for protection on Prince of Wales Island and Adjacent Islands. This

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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.

The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) recommended Roadless Area 514 for permanent protection as LUD II. SEACC recommended this area be designated as LUD II.

A number of cave/karst experts and other individuals stated that the Sarkar Roadless Area contains a relatively small, but mostly intact karst basin, once considered for a Research Natural Area. They indicated that inclusion of this area would be a small but useful addition to karst protection on the Tongass.

Other individuals recommended Sarkar for long-term protection.

**(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses:** This roadless area is approximately 8 miles south of the Salmon Bay Roadless Area (518), 2 miles southeast of the Kosciusko Roadless Area (515), 2 miles north of the Sweetwater Roadless Area (513), and 6 miles north of the Thorne River Roadless Area (511). It is separated from these roadless areas by areas that have been developed. The closest wilderness is the Karta Wilderness, approximately 24 miles to the south. Recreation and subsistence are the major uses for these areas. Use levels are generally low.

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

<b>Community</b>	<b>Air Miles</b>	<b>Water Miles</b>
Ketchikan (Pop. 14,070)	65	70
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	40	45
Petersburg (Pop. 3,324)	50	55
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	160	175

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

**(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System:** The Sarkar Roadless Area is located on north-central Prince of Wales Island, west of Kashevarof Passage and Clarence Strait. It is separated from El Capitan Passage on the west by Forest Road 20. The roadless area is bounded on all but the northeast side by areas developed for timber management. The east side is adjacent to salt water along Barnes Lake and Whale Passage. The area is characterized by low elevation, subdued topography, and low-lying muskeg systems. The maximum elevation is 2,000 feet. There are 21 miles of saltwater shoreline and numerous freshwater lakes totaling 5,316 acres.

The Sarkar Roadless Area is natural appearing and mostly unmodified. The area has very high natural integrity and apparent naturalness. The opportunity for solitude is high and the opportunity for primitive recreation is very high.

The area has moderate to high scenic quality; approximately 20 percent of the landscape is classified as distinctive for the character type from a scenery standpoint. The area has several small parcels of karst and a system of larger lakes linked together with very high fisheries and recreational values.

The roadless area includes about 10,365 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, approximately 2,006 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The Sarkar 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 Sarkar Roadless Area lies within two ecological sections; it represents 6 percent of the Kupreanof Lowlands Ecological Section and 0.1 percent of the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands Ecological Section. Both of these ecological sections contain relatively small areas in existing wilderness (1 and 13 percent, respectively) and existing LUD II (1 and 8 percent, respectively), but are well represented by other existing non-development LUDs (33 percent, each).

The vast majority (99 percent) of the roadless area is in the Central Prince of Wales Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 25 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 remaining 1 percent of the roadless area is in the North Prince of Wales-Kuiu Carbonates Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 0.3 percent of the entire ecological subsection, 2 percent of which is in existing LUD II and 25 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

The Sarkar Roadless Area was rated 23 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 30<sup>th</sup> from the highest (along with 7 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, and some support for designating the area as a wilderness. Designation would create a wilderness with a large system of inter-linked lakes with very high fisheries and recreation values. The degree of timber harvest in adjacent lands 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 to high.

### **V. Environmental Consequences**

The Sarkar Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, or 4 is implemented. Approximately 79 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur within the remaining 21 percent of the roadless area. The land in the development LUDs includes an estimated 2,177 acres that are suitable for timber production (2 percent of the suitable acres on the Thorne Bay Ranger District). Approximately 68 acres of those suitable lands are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. This area contains an estimated 54,046 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 are mostly protected by the Forest Plan. The values could be affected in those areas that allow timber management activities. The karst, fisheries, recreation and most old growth and scenic values are protected by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 5 or 7, a 24,765-acre portion of the Remote Recreation and Wild/Scenic/Recreational River LUDs would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. This would not affect timber management because this area is currently allocated to a non-development LUD. The area suitable for timber production would not change from Alternative 1. The ongoing recreational use, special uses, and mineral management could be restricted within the Recommended Wilderness LUD. Mineral prospecting would be allowed in Recommended Wilderness up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. The values associated with the natural settings of the Sarkar Lakes portion of the roadless area, including the scenic, karst, fisheries, old growth, and recreation values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

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

## Appendix C

Under Alternative 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. 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 the scenic, karst, fisheries, old growth, and recreation values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 514 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness					24,765		24,765	62,170
Wilderness								
Recommended Wilderness Nat. Mon.								
Wilderness National Monument								
Non-wilderness National Monument								
Research Natural Area								
Special Interest Area								
Remote Recreation	15,834	15,834	15,834	15,834	41		41	
Enacted Municipal Watershed								
Old-growth Habitat	19,997	19,997	19,997	19,997	19,991		19,991	
Semi-remote Recreation	252	252	252	252	252		252	
Recommended LUD II						62,170		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River	12,814	12,814	12,814	12,814	3,848		3,848	
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed								
Modified Landscape	10,056	10,056	10,056	10,056	10,056		10,056	
Timber production	3,218	3,218	3,218	3,218	3,217		3,217	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>62,170</b>	<b>62,170</b>	<b>62,170</b>	<b>62,170</b>	<b>62,170</b>	<b>62,170</b>	<b>62,170</b>	<b>62,170</b>
Suitable Timber Lands	2,177	2,177	2,177	2,177	2,177	0	2,177	0