

INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

ROADLESS AREA NAME: Kasaan (520)

ACRES (NFS): 7,605

BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: North Central Prince of Wales Island

ECOLOGICAL SECTION: Kupreanof Lowlands

2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING: 18

I. Overview and Description

(1) **Location and Access:** This roadless area is located on the southern tip of Kasaan Peninsula on Prince of Wales Island. The area is bordered to the south and west by non-National Forest System lands. Clarence Strait borders the area to the north and east. Kasaan Bay borders the area to the southwest.

Access is by boat or floatplane. Ketchikan, located approximately 25 air miles southeast of the area, is the closest large community. Access into the interior is by foot or helicopter. There are no places suitable for landing wheeled airplanes.

(2) **History:** Goldschmidt and Haas (1946) indicated that this area was historically Kasaan territory. They identified a number of uses in the immediate vicinity of the area including hunting/trapping and fishing for shellfish, as well as a number of commercial fish traps located along the northeast shore of the roadless area.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** This roadless area is characterized by rugged mountains and coastline. The area consists of a long, rounded ridge with very steep slopes close to 2,000 feet in elevation. The area includes 15 miles of shoreline on saltwater, 16 acres of rock, and 7 acres of small islands. No alpine features, icefields, or glaciers are mapped in the area.

(4) **Ecosystem:**

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. The area is in the North Central Prince of Wales Island Biogeographic Province. This province is characterized by rolling, gentle landforms with localized rugged topography. Limestone is common and overall forest productivity is high. Karst topography and caves are present. Precipitation is relatively low due to interception by lands to the south and southwest.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Kasaan Roadless Area is contained entirely within the Kupreanof Lowlands Ecological Section (M247G). This area is represented by one ecological subsection (see table below). The Kasaan Peninsula Volcanics Ecological Subsection is a southeast-northwest peninsula that consists of rounded volcanics dissected by small U-shaped valleys. Most of this area has been harvested and over half the area is in early stages of second-growth reforestation. Organic soils upon broad ridgetops support shrub and forested wetlands that comprise one fourth the landcover. Well-drained soils of the mountain toeslopes and valleys support productive hemlock and hemlock-spruce forests. The soils along the coastline are shallow and exposed bedrock is common (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Kupreanof Lowlands	Kasaan Peninsula Volcanics	100%

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(b) Soils: The highly organic, low clay content soils found in this area are generally formed over bedrock and are typically about 40 inches deep.

(c) Vegetation: The vegetation in this area is typical Southeast Alaska coastal temperate rain forest. The forest is primarily western hemlock and Sitka spruce with large components of cedar.

There are approximately 7,545 acres mapped as forest land, of which 3,082 acres (41 percent) are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 1,314 acres (43 percent) are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 293 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There is no second growth in this area.

(d) Fish Resources: There are six unnamed fish-bearing streams in this area. These streams provide habitat for coho and pink salmon.

(e) Wildlife Resources: This area has high populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, wolves, otter, marten, mink, loon, and common waterfowl. Alpine areas are excellent ptarmigan habitat. Moose inhabit Prince of Wales Island, but brown bear and mountain goat do not (MacDonald and Cook, 1999).

(5) Management Direction and Current Uses: This roadless area was allocated three Land Use Designations (LUD) in the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. These three LUDs are Transportation and Utility System (TUS), Old-growth Habitat, and Semi-remote Recreation. The TUS LUD is a secondary LUD that overlays the other land uses.

<u>LUD</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Transportation and Utility System	NA
Old-growth Habitat	7,601
Semi-remote Recreation	3

A part of this roadless area was allocated to a development LUD overlay, Transportation and Utility System. A potential State road corridor running the length of the area to the southern tip of the peninsula was assigned to the Transportation and Utility System LUD overlay. A potential power transmission corridor running along the northeast shore was also assigned to the Transportation and Utility System LUD overlay. No roads or transmission facilities currently exist, but this LUD allows planning for their development in this area.

All of the roadless area was allocated to a non-development LUD (Old-growth Habitat and Semi-remote Recreation). Approximately 100 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Old-growth Habitat LUD. Less than 1 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Semi-remote Recreation LUD, located on a couple small islands off the coast.

This roadless area receives little use. The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (Alaska Department of Fish and Game [ADF&G], 1998) indicated that the VCUs that comprise this area are subsistence use areas with a moderate sensitivity to disturbance.

(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness): The Kasaan Roadless Area is unmodified and in a natural condition, and appears that way when viewed from nearby Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas.

(7) Surroundings (External Influences): The area is bordered by Native Corporation and State-owned land to the west and south, respectively. Clarence Strait and Kasaan Bay make up the rest of the roadless area boundary. The adjoining private lands have been developed for timber production. The entire area is in close proximity to, or overlooks, the shipping and marine channels of Clarence Strait and Kasaan Bay. The near constant noise of boats can be heard over most of the area. Low-flying aircraft may frequently be noticed by visitors to the area.

(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest: The natural features of the area, the scenery, the opportunity to see wildlife, and the opportunity to study the processes that formed this country may all be

attractions. The area contains one inventoried recreation place, which covers 630 acres (1 percent) of the roadless area.

(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary: The 1989 Kasaan Roadless Area included Grindall Point and Grindall Island. These areas have been conveyed to the State and are no longer National Forest System lands or part of the Kasaan Roadless Area.

II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness: This roadless area has high natural integrity and apparent naturalness when viewed from nearby locations and from within the area itself. The area is, however, physically separated from other parts of the National Forest System by the private lands that border the area to the west. Grindall Point and Grindall Island formerly the key features of this area are now owned by the State of Alaska.

(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation: The area provides low opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation because the entire area is in close proximity to, or overlooks, the shipping and marine channels of Clarence Strait and Kasaan Bay. The near constant noise of boats can be heard over most of the area. Low-flying aircraft may occasionally be noticed by visitors to the area. Activities on adjacent private lands can distract visitors as well.

The area provides primarily 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)	5,765	76%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	1,836	24%

The area contains one inventoried recreation place, which covers 630 acres (8 percent) of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places	Total Acres
P	1	630
SPM	0	0

(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).

The inventoried roadless areas of the Tongass National Forest were rated according to this system in 1989 for the Analysis of the Management Situation developed in support of the Forest Plan Revision. At that time, the Kasaan Roadless Area was given a rating of 15 out of 28 possible points. The rating was re-evaluated for this updated version of the Analysis of the Management Situation. Based on this re-evaluation, the area was given a rating of 18. This rating reflects the relatively high natural integrity and apparent naturalness of the area.

(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values: The Kasaan Roadless Area is not part of a larger unroaded area. It is physically separated from other National Forest System lands by the private Native Corporation lands that border the area to the west.

(a) Fish Resources: The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) did not identify these VCUs as primary salmon or sport fish producers.

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There are six unnamed fish-bearing streams in this area. These streams provide habitat for coho and pink salmon.

(b) Wildlife Resources: This area has high populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, wolves, otter, marten, mink, loon, and common waterfowl. Alpine areas are excellent ptarmigan habitat. Moose inhabit Prince of Wales Island, but brown bear and mountain goat do not (MacDonald and Cook, 1999).

(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. 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. 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 in the area.

(5) Scientific and Educational Values: There are no known unique scientific or educational values identified in this roadless area.

(6) Scenic Values: The Kasaan Roadless Area is part of the Coastal Hill character type, which is characterized by moderately steep landforms, predominantly rounded summits, elevations up to 4,500 feet, and flat-floored, U-shaped valleys. A variety of island groups are also common. The landscape of the Kasaan Roadless Area is very representative of this character type.

The area displays natural characteristics when viewed from major and minor water travel routes and from inside the area itself. Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan within or adjacent to the area include Clarence Strait (Alaska Marine Highway) and Grindall Island (State Marine Park).

Almost all of the area, approximately 99 percent, is inventoried as Variety Class B (possessing landscape diversity and features that are common to the character type). The Existing Visual Condition (EVC) for approximately 99 percent of the area is Type I, where the natural landscape has remained unaltered by human activity.

(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values: Goldschmidt and Haas (1946) indicated that this area was historically Kasaan territory. They identified a number of uses in the immediate vicinity of the area including hunting/trapping and fishing for shellfish, as well as a number of commercial fish traps located along the northeast shore of the roadless area.

This roadless area receives little use. The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment does not list any of the VCUs in this area among the VCUs with the highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas. These VCUs were not listed among the highest community use value areas (ADF&G, 1998).

(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes: The boundaries of this area are for the most part easily identified and would not be difficult to manage if the area were designated wilderness.

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

- (1) **Recreation, including Tourism Potential:** The recreation potential of this area is very low because access to the area is difficult due to the rugged terrain and limited coastal access. The State land selections, which included Grindall Point and Grindall Island, included all land areas most suitable for some type of recreation purpose.
- (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 for this roadless area.
- (4) **Wildlife Resources:** No wildlife habitat enhancement projects are currently planned for this roadless area.
- (5) **Timber Resources:** There are 3,082 acres mapped as productive old growth in the roadless area and no acres mapped as second growth. Of these acres, 2,528 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), no acres of this roadless area is estimated to be suitable for timber production.
- (6) **Fire, Insects, and Disease:** The area has no significant fire history. Endemic tree diseases common to Southeast Alaska are present. There are no known epidemic disease occurrences.
- (7) **Minerals:** This area contains an estimated 5,748 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources (Brew et al., 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991). All of these acres are considered to have high potential for development. The USGS Mineral Resources Data website indicates that there are two prospects in this area for copper, gold, and silver.
- (8) **Transportation and Utilities:** A potential State road corridor running the length of the area to the southern tip of the peninsula was assigned to the Transportation and Utility System LUD. A potential power transmission corridor running along the northeast shore was also assigned to the Transportation and Utility System LUD. No roads or transmission facilities currently exist, but this LUD allows planning for their development in this area. Until a specific project is initiated, the lands affected by these potential corridors are managed in accordance with the underlying LUD.
- (9) **Water Availability and Use:** There are no developed recreation sites or other facilities located in this roadless area that would create a demand for domestic water use. There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects.
- (10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** The area has not been identified as a candidate Research Natural Areas or for any other scientific purpose.
- (11) **Land Use Authorizations:** There are no land use authorizations in the area.
- (12) **Land Status:** The area consists entirely of National Forest System lands.

IV. Wilderness Evaluation (Need for Wilderness)

- (1) **Public and Congressional Interest:**
 - (a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** This roadless area receives little 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. This bill did not include the Kasaan Roadless Area. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed that this roadless area be managed as LUD II in an unroaded condition.

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(c) Public Input During Forest Plan Revision and Appeals: This area was not specifically identified in public input during the Forest Plan revision and appeals. The majority of people and organizations commenting on Prince of Wales Island mentioned specific areas other than the Kasaan Roadless Area. In general, some commenters wanted logging to continue on Prince of Wales Island at present levels, while others felt that too much logging had already occurred.

(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 Kasaan Roadless Area is not within the project area of any recently completed project-level EISs.

(f) Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process: In an August 15 Tribal Resolution, the Organized Village of Kasaan requested that "...all customary and traditional use areas within the Tongass National Forest be recommended for long term protection".

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 520 for permanent protection as LUD II.

(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses: There are no roadless areas adjacent to the Kasaan Roadless Area. Relatively nearby roadless areas include Kasaan Bay (536) and McKenzie (519) located west and southwest across Kasaan Bay, respectively. The Cleveland Roadless Area (528) is located east across Clarence Strait from the area.

The Karta River Wilderness, located approximately 10 miles west of the area, is the closest wilderness.

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

Community	Air Miles	Water Miles
Ketchikan (Pop. 14,070)	25	25
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	65	80
Petersburg (Pop. 3,324)	95	105
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	210	225

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 Kasaan Roadless Area is located on the southern tip of Kasaan Peninsula on Prince of Wales Island. The area is bordered to the south and west by non-National Forest System lands. Clarence Strait borders the area to the north and east. Kasaan Bay borders the area to the southwest. The Kasaan Roadless Area is characterized by rugged mountains and coastline. The area consists of a long, rounded ridge with very steep slopes close to 2,000 feet in elevation.

The area is unmodified and in a natural condition. The area has very high natural integrity and apparent naturalness. The opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation is low.

The Kasaan Roadless Area has moderate scenic quality; none of the landscape is classified as distinctive from a scenery standpoint. There are no known features of ecologic, geologic, scientific, or cultural significance in this area.

The roadless area includes about 1,314 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, approximately 293 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The Kasaan Roadless Area is classified as being in the North Central Prince of Wales Island Biogeographic Province and makes up about 1 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 Kasaan Roadless Area lies completely within the Kupreanof Lowlands Ecological Section and represents 1 percent of the ecological section. Approximately 1 percent of the Kupreanof Lowlands Ecological Section is in existing wilderness, 1 percent is in existing LUD II, and an additional 33 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

The entire (100 percent) roadless area is in the Kasaan Peninsula Volcanics Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 21 percent of the ecological subsection. None of this ecological subsection is in existing wilderness or LUD II, but 21 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

The Kasaan Roadless Area was rated 18 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 84th from the highest (along with 8 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas.

There is some local and national support for managing the roadless area in an unroaded condition, but there is very little support for designating the area wilderness. Designation would create a small wilderness with no known features of ecologic, geologic, scientific, or cultural significance in this area. Designation of the area also would add Congressional protection to about 7,600 acres, or 21 percent, of the Kasaan Peninsula Volcanics Ecological Subsection, which does not have any other lands under long-term Congressional protection. 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 Kasaan Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 7 is implemented. All of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. This area contains an estimated 5,748 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources; all of these acres are considered to have high potential for development. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area protected by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 6, the entire area would be converted to Recommended LUD II. Because the area is already allocated to non-development LUDs, this conversion would have little effect on existing or future uses. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area would be provided long-term protection if designated LUD II. Designation of the area also would add Congressional protection to about 7,600 acres, or 21 percent, of the Kasaan Peninsula Volcanics Ecological Subsection, which does not have any other lands under long-term Congressional protection.

Under Alternative 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. The potential for development, including recreation, special uses, and mineral, would be restricted. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness. Designation of the area also would add Congressional protection to about 7,600 acres, or 21 percent, of the Kasaan Peninsula Volcanics Ecological Subsection, which does not have any other lands under long-term Congressional protection.

Appendix C

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 520 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness								7,605
Wilderness								
Recommended Wilderness Nat. Mon.								
Wilderness National Monument								
Non-wilderness National Monument								
Research Natural Area								
Special Interest Area								
Remote Recreation								
Enacted Municipal Watershed								
Old-growth Habitat	7,602	7,602	7,602	7,602	7,602		7,602	
Semi-remote Recreation	3	3	3	3	3		3	
Recommended LUD II						7,605		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed								
Modified Landscape								
Timber production								
TOTAL	7,605	7,605	7,605	7,605	7,605	7,605	7,605	7,605
Suitable Timber Lands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0