

# Appendix C

## INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

**ROADLESS AREA NAME:** South Etolin (234)

**ACRES (NFS):** 28,679

**BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE:** Etolin Island and Vicinity

**ECOLOGICAL SECTION:** Inside Passage Fjordlands

**2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING:** 24 (23, 25)

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

(1) **Location and Access:** The area is located on the east side of south Etolin Island. It encompasses the east peninsula, as well as a more centrally located portion of the island. The area is bordered to the east by Zimovia Strait, by forest roads and associated harvest units to the north, and by the Mosman Roadless Area to the west. The South Etolin Wilderness and Menefee Inlet extend north into the area. The City of Wrangell, which lies 20 miles to the north, is served by the Alaska Marine Highway and jet service. There are no sites suitable for landing wheeled aircraft. A small road system and log transfer facility exist on the island immediately north of the roadless area. The island is accessible from saltwater by boat or floatplane and there are good moorage sites. Forest roads located north and west of the area provide road access to the edge of the area. Access into the interior is by foot or helicopter.

(2) **History:** South Etolin Island was inhabited by several clans of the Stikine Tlingit. Evidence of their use includes several village sites and numerous fort sites, temporary camps, fish weirs, petroglyphs, and bark-stripped trees. Historic use of south Etolin Island was considerable and is represented by the remains of the first salmon hatchery in Alaska, as well as salteries, canneries, fox farms, trapping cabins, and other temporary camps. Beach logging has occurred along the east shore of Menefee Inlet, on the north shore of Southwest Cove, and west of Olive Cove.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** The area is generally characterized by a series of rugged mountains, subalpine ridges, and glacial cirque lakes. Several of the mountains rise to over 3,000 feet. Alpine accounts for approximately 762 acres and rock covers 1,030 acres of the roadless area. There are no ice or snow features mapped in the area. Numerous short streams drain the area. There are a number of lakes in the area, which cover approximately 330 acres. Several small islands separated by narrow bodies of water lie immediately east of the peninsula, which total 227 acres, and are included in this roadless area. The area includes about 44 miles of saltwater shoreline.

(4) **Ecosystem:**

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. The area is in the Etolin Island and Vicinity Biogeographic Province. This province is generally subject to continental influence from the mainland and the Stikine River. Glacial flour is present in the marine environment in the northern part of this province nearly year round. All forest plant associations except those occurring only on outer coast areas are present.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The South Etolin Roadless Area is contained entirely within the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247E), represented by two ecological subsections (see table below). The Zimovia Strait Complex Ecological Subsection, the dominant subsection, is a landscape of stratified sedimentary rock and volcanic intrusions lying beneath broad glacial valleys and rounded hills. Roughly half of the Zimovia Strait Complex Ecological Subsection includes mineral soils supporting productive hemlock forests with occasional stands of cedar or Sitka spruce. The remainder of the South Etolin Roadless Area, approximately 30 percent, lies within the Etolin Granitics Ecological Subsection,

characterized by jagged granite spires with a thin layer of soil and extensive alpine vegetation. Productive forests are limited to colluvium at the base of slopes (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Inside Passage Fjordlands	Zimovia Strait Complex	70%
	Etolin Granitics	30%

**(b) Soils:** Soils in this area are formed in a wide variety of parent materials, including bedrock and glacial drift. In general, well- or moderately-well-drained soils are on moderate to steep mountain slopes with permeable parent materials. These soils are acidic, have cold soil temperatures, and are very high in organic matter. Rooting is largely limited to the surface organic layers and the top few inches of mineral soil. These soils are usually moist, sometimes wet, but are never dry. Poorly-drained soils developed on less-sloping areas and/or areas with impermeable soil materials. These soils have deep accumulations of organic matter and range from scrubby forested wetlands to open muskeg. Alpine soils, generally above 2,000 feet elevation, are mostly shallow, very wet organic soils or are extremely shallow and rocky.

**(c) Vegetation:** Alpine vegetation (mapped as 762 acres) dominates above 2,500 feet elevation. The valley floors and poorly-drained areas between hills are generally covered with muskeg and scrub lodgepole pine. Less than 100 acres of muskeg are mapped for the area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult. Steeper, more-well-drained hillsides support heavy stands of Sitka spruce, western hemlock, redcedar, and Alaska-cedar.

There are approximately 26,109 acres mapped as forest land of which 10,889 acres (42 percent) are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, approximately 3,090 acres (28 percent) are mapped as high-volume, old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 168 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are approximately 573 acres of second-growth forest that has resulted from beach logging activities along the east shore of Menefee Inlet, Southwest Cove, and west of Olive Cove.

**(d) Fish Resources:** Few streams containing fish populations exist in the area. A small portion of Olive Creek extends into the area. This creek has been identified as having high quality fish habitat and is popular for steelhead and rainbow trout fishing.

**(e) Wildlife Resources:** Important species include Sitka black-tailed deer, wolves, black bear, and elk. The elk were introduced to the area in 1986 in a cooperative project. Small populations of moose and brown bear also live in the area.

**(5) Management Direction and Current Uses:** This area was allocated to five land use designations (LUDs) in the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. These Modified Landscape, Scenic Viewshed, Timber Production, Old-growth Habitat, and Semi-remote Recreation.

LUD	Acres
Modified Landscape	12,457
Scenic Viewshed	10,499
Timber Production	25
Old-growth Habitat	5,517
Semi-remote Recreation	181

Most of this roadless area, approximately 80 percent, was allocated to a development LUD (Modified Landscape, Scenic Viewshed, Timber Production). Approximately 43 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Modified Landscape LUD. The Scenic Viewshed LUD was assigned to approximately 37 percent of the roadless area. Less than 1 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Timber Production LUD, located on the west border with the Mosman Roadless Area.

## Appendix C

Approximately 20 percent of the roadless area was allocated to a non-development LUD (Old-growth Habitat and Semi-remote Recreation). The Old-growth Habitat LUD was assigned to approximately 19 percent of the roadless area. Approximately 1 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Semi-remote Recreation LUD.

Beach logging has occurred along the east shore of Menefee Inlet, on the north shore of Southeast Cove, and west of Olive Cove. Present recreation use levels are low except at the mouths of some streams and at good anchorages. There is some subsistence use in the area.

**(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness):** Overall, the area has high scenic quality with a natural-appearing landscape. Zimovia Strait borders the area to the east. Portions of this roadless area are visible from boats traveling these waters. Beach logging has occurred along the east shore of Menefee Inlet, Southeast Cove, and west of Olive Cove. These modifications may be noticeable to some observers, especially those entering Menefee Inlet or Southeast Cove. However, a person in a boat approaching the roadless area would tend to see natural scenery. There is a mountain top electronic communication site located southwest of Olive Lake, between the South Etolin and Mosman Roadless Areas. This site includes equipment shelters, fuel tanks, diesel generators, and antenna towers that would be visible to people hiking near the site.

**(7) Surroundings (External Influences):** The area is part of the south portion of Etolin Island, which is unroaded. The Mosman Roadless Area and the South Etolin Wilderness border the area to the west and south, respectively. The area is bordered to the north by roads and associated harvest units. Thoms Place State Marine Park is located north across Zimovia Strait from the area. Boats traveling the adjacent waterways may be visible from within parts of the area, but are usually not intrusive. It is possible to see harvested areas and roads from some northern locations within this roadless area. However, the eastern portion is mostly natural appearing.

**(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest:** The landform variety, including subalpine peaks, stream drainages, and lakes, is an attraction. The bays provide sheltered moorages and a sense of remoteness. The presence of elk is unique to Southeast Alaska. The area contains 6 inventoried recreation places, which cover 2,674 acres (9 percent) of the roadless area.

**(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary:** The boundaries of this area have changed in three ways since 1989. First, the majority of the southern portion of the 1989 roadless area is now designated as the South Etolin Wilderness. Second, beach-logged areas that were excluded from the 1989 roadless area are included within the boundaries of the 2003 area. Third, logging and road building has extended along Anita Bay on the northern edge of the area. As a result, part of the northern area that was within the 1989 roadless area is excluded from the boundary of the 2003 area.

## II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

**(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness:** The majority of the area is unmodified. Approximately 98 percent of the area is natural appearing, where only ecological and geological change has occurred. However, beach logging has occurred along the east shore of Menefee Inlet, on the north shore of Southeast Cove, and west of Olive Cove. These are mostly natural appearing to the casual forest visitor because of the regrowth in the harvested areas. Although outside the roadless area, the lower portions of the watersheds in the western portion of the area are roaded and have been harvested. The presence of elk, which are a non-native species, affects the natural integrity of the area. There is an electronic communication site located on a mountaintop on the west edge of the area.

**(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation:** There is a high opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation within the area. The character of the area generally allows the visitor to feel remote from the sights and sounds of human activity. At times, low-flying aircraft may pass over, and the State ferry and boaters may pass next to the roadless area. All are generally non-intrusive. Present recreation use levels are low except at the mouths of some streams and at good anchorages. Generally, a person camped or traveling inland is unlikely to see others.

Travel within the area is challenging, requiring a high degree of woods skills and experience. As with all backcountry areas on the Tongass, the opportunity for challenge and risk in this area is high. The climate, the rugged terrain, the isolation and distance from population centers with medical facilities, the barriers to

communication, and the presence of large wild animals all contribute to the need for good preparation and knowledge of backcountry survival skills for anyone using this area. Hypothermia and bear encounters (especially around salmon streams in the fall) are just two examples of the many risks that must be considered before traveling in the backcountry of Southeast Alaska.

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

ROS Class	Acres	Percent of Total ROS
Primitive (P)	6,587	23%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	12,545	44%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	6,093	21%
Roaded Natural (RN)	2,005	7%
Roaded Modified (RM)	1,449	5%

The area contains 6 inventoried recreation places, which cover 2,674 acres (9 percent) of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places	Total Acres
P	0	0
SPNM	0	0
SPM	3	1,502
RN	2	1,005
RM	1	167

The area is accessible by boat from the community of Wrangell in 1 to 2 hours, and from Ketchikan in approximately 7 hours. Anchorages around the roadless area provide access to portions of the interior, as well as remove users from the open waters and traffic of Clarence Strait.

**(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 South Etolin Roadless Area was given a rating of 27 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 24. This rating reflects the developments adjacent to the area and the associated effects on the wilderness attributes of the area. When rated separately, the eastern portion of the roadless area received a score of 25 and the western portion of the roadless area received 23.

**(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values:** The majority of the area is forested. This area is part of a larger roadless area that includes the Mosman Roadless Area and the South Etolin Wilderness. The South Etolin Roadless Area accounts for approximately 28,678 acres of the larger area, which encompasses approximately 113,000 acres.

**(a) Fish Resources:** None of the VCUs were listed as primary salmon or sport fish producers (ADF&G, 1998).

Olive Creek, which extends into the South Etolin Roadless Area, has been identified as high quality habitat and is popular for steelhead and rainbow trout fishing. ADF&G has listed this creek as one of the 65 important watersheds for Southeast Alaska. The steelhead run in the creek is estimated to be 400 fish per year, and the pink salmon run averages 35,000 fish per year.

## Appendix C

**(b) Wildlife Resources:** Important species include Sitka black-tailed deer, wolves, black bear, and elk. The elk were introduced to the area in 1986 in a cooperative project. Other species that use the area include moose, brown bear, river otter, marten, beaver, bald eagle, marbled murrelets, Canada goose, and red squirrel.

**(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, eight sensitive plant species are known or suspected to occur in the Wrangell Ranger District.

**(d) Karst, Cave, and other Geologic Resources:** There are no known karst, cave, or other geologic resources in the area.

**(5) Scientific and Educational Values:** There are opportunities to observe a variety of ecological and landform settings. Elk have been introduced to only a few islands in Alaska, and are present on the island. The area is accessible by boat from the community of Wrangell in 1 to 2 hours and is, therefore, potentially accessible to school-age children.

**(6) Scenic Values:** Overall, the area has high scenic quality with a natural-appearing landscape. Zimovia Strait borders the area to the east. Portions of this roadless area are visible from boats traveling these waters. Beach logging has occurred along the east shore of Menefee Inlet, Southeast Cove, and west of Olive Cove. These modifications may be noticeable to some observers, especially those entering Menefee Inlet or Southeast Cove. However, a person in a boat approaching the roadless area would tend to see natural scenery.

Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan that are located in or adjacent to the area, include Zimovia Strait and Ernest Sound, which are marine travel routes. Whaletail Cove, located on the northwest side of the peninsula, was identified as a saltwater use area.

About 28 percent of this roadless area is inventoried as Variety Class A (possessing landscape diversity that is unique for the character type). Approximately 71 percent is inventoried as Variety Class B (possessing landscape diversity that is common for the character type).

The majority of this roadless area, 94 percent, has an Existing Visual Condition (EVC) Type I, where only ecological change has occurred to the landscape. Two percent of this roadless area is EVC Type III, where changes in the landscape seen by the average forest visitor, but a natural appearance remains dominant. Four percent is in EVC Type V, where changes in the landscape are obvious to the average person and appear to be major disturbances.

**(7) Social, Cultural, and Historic Values:** South Etolin Island was inhabited by several clans of the Stikine Tlingit. Evidence of their use includes several village sites and numerous fort sites, temporary camps, fish weirs, petroglyphs, and bark-stripped trees. Historic use of south Etolin Island was considerable and is represented by the remains of the first salmon hatchery in Alaska, as well as salteries, canneries, fox farms, trapping cabins, and other temporary camps.

The area is accessible by boat from the community of Wrangell in 1 to 2 hours, and from Ketchikan in approximately 7 hours. The area contains six inventoried recreation places. Present recreation use levels are low

except at the mouths of some streams and at good anchorages. One outfitter/guide reported using the area in 2000 for a total of 4 service days.

The Wildlife Analysis Area that includes this roadless area accounted for 5 to 10 percent of annual average Wrangell deer harvest during 1987 to 1994. The VCUs in this area were not included among the highest value community use areas nor were they listed among the VCUs with the highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence areas (ADF&G, 1998)

**(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundaries Conditions/Changes:** The area encompasses the east peninsula of south Etolin Island, as well as a more centrally located area. The east peninsula portion of the area is for the most part bounded by saltwater. Both portions of the area are bounded to the north by a corridor with roads and harvest units. The adjacent Roadless Area 233 has a mix of LUDs that is similar to the South Etolin Roadless Areas, including Scenic Viewshed, Modified Landscape, and Old-growth Habitat. Further east and west, there are also areas allocated to the Timber Production LUD. The South Etolin Wilderness, which borders the area to the south and southwest, was allocated to the Wilderness LUD.

The area is irregularly shaped partly because of existing natural boundaries, particularly the natural inlets that separate South Etolin Island into a series of peninsulas. The area is, however, nearly split into two separate sections by the boundaries established for the South Etolin Wilderness and the roads and harvest units that border the area to the north. Designating this area wilderness would contribute to the existing South Etolin Wilderness Area and represent a logical extension of this existing wilderness area, especially the eastern portion.

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

**(1) Recreation, Including Tourism Potential:** There is potential for additional outfitter and guide permits, developed trails, and cabins or shelters. The elk population offers a unique hunting experience for Southeast Alaska.

**(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 proposed. Three fish barriers are located on the east side of the peninsula.

**(4) Wildlife Resources:** Opportunities for deer habitat improvement projects occur in the area. Elk habitat improvement projects may occur in the future as well.

**(5) Timber Resources:** There are approximately 10,889 acres mapped as productive old growth in the roadless area. In addition, approximately 573 acres of second growth have resulted from logging activities along the east shore of Menefee Inlet, the north shore of Southeast Cove, and west of Olive Cove. Of these acres, 8,307 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), 3,204 acres (11 percent) of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 930 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 92 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The area is included in the potential Snake timber sale, which is identified in the current Tongass National Forest 10-year action plan for harvest in 2010. Some areas are highly prone to strong winds, which blow down standing timber left exposed when adjacent stands are cut.

**(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:** The roadless area generally has a low minerals rating and there are no known current claims. The area contains an estimated 15,335 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.

## Appendix C

(8) **Transportation and Utilities:** There are no proposed transportation or utility corridors within or adjacent to the area.

(9) **Water Availability and Use:** There are no developed recreation or other facilities located in this area. There are a number of cabins and home-sites located on private land near Olive Cove that may get domestic water from streams that originate within the roadless area.

(10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** The area does not contain any Research Natural Areas and has not been identified for any other scientific value.

(11) **Land Use Authorizations:** There is one special use authorization for the mountaintop electronic communication site.

(12) **Land Status:** All National Forest System lands are within the roadless area.

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

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

(a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and residents:** Most use of the area is for recreational purposes by the citizens of Wrangell. There has been support for maintaining this area in a roadless condition. The elk transplant program is generally supported.

(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 included the area south of the current South Etolin Roadless Area, which was part of this roadless area at that time. That area is now designated as the South Etolin Wilderness. In 2001, HR 2908 identified the current South Etolin Roadless Area as a proposed wilderness addition.

(c) **Public Input During Forest Plan Revision and Appeals:** South Etolin Island, Whale Tail Peninsula, and Menafee Inlet were specifically addressed in public input during the Forest Plan revision and appeal. Comments were concerned with timber harvest planned for the Whaletail Cove and Menafee Inlet areas, and in the viewshed of Thoms Place, which is located directly across Zimovia Strait from the area. Logging and roading these areas would affect the subsistence, recreation and scenic quality needs of Thom Place residents, as well as boaters and tourists in Zimovia Strait. In their comments on the 1991 Supplement, the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council included Whaletail/Menafee in their list of areas “meriting special management protection” for their outstanding wildlife, fisheries, hunting, fishing, subsistence, recreation and tourism values.

Representatives of the timber industry recommended that Management Area S23, which includes the South Etolin Roadless Area, be allocated to the Timber Production LUD. Another timber industry commenter recommended that, with the exception of some Scenic Viewshed or Modified Landscape along the ferry route, all of Management Area S23 should be allocated to the Timber Production LUD to keep timber harvest economic in these already-developed areas.

Olive Creek, which extends into the South Etolin Roadless Area, was identified in the September 25, 1997 appeal filed by the Narrows Conservation Coalition as an area of particular concern to the people in the Stikine area that was left unprotected by the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan.

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

(e) **Public Input Expressed for Project-level EISs and Other Input:** This area is not within the study area of any recently completed project-level EISs.

**(f) Public Input expressed During Supplemental EIS Process:** The U.S. Department of the Interior identified this roadless area as having important fish and wildlife habitat and populations; although not a top priority for protection, it ranked in their top third among all roadless areas. They indicated that protection of this area, in combination with the Mosman (#233) Roadless Area and South Etolin Wilderness Area, would conserve valuable remaining undisturbed forested habitats on the island.

The city of Petersburg said they were opposed to designation of this area as wilderness because of the potential long-term economic impacts on the city.

SEACC recommended the Mosman and South Etolin roadless areas for wilderness designation and to be added to the South Etolin Wilderness.

The Wrangell Resource Council recommended this area as an addition to the South Etolin Wilderness.

Some individuals recommended this area for permanent protection as wilderness.

**(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses:** The south end of Etolin Island is roadless. The South Etolin Wilderness extends into the South Etolin Roadless Area and forms part of the area’s south boundary. The Mosman Roadless Area forms part of the area’s west boundary. The south portion of the island is separated from the North Etolin Roadless Area by a corridor of roads and associated timber management.

**(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)	50	65
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	20	25
Petersburg (Pop. 3,224)	50	55
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	165	175

Wrangell is the nearest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway.

**(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System:** The South Etolin Roadless Area is located on the east side of south Etolin Island. It encompasses the east peninsula, as well as a more centrally located portion of the island. The area is bordered to the east by Zimovia Strait, by forest roads and associated harvest units to the north, and by the Mosman Roadless Area to the west. The South Etolin Wilderness and Menefee Inlet extend north into the area. The roadless area is generally characterized by a series of rugged mountains, subalpine ridges, and glacial cirque lakes. Several of the mountains rise to over 3,000 feet. Numerous short streams drain the area. There are a number of lakes in the area. Several small islands separated by narrow bodies of water lie immediately east of the peninsula and are included in this roadless area.

The area is mostly natural appearing; however, the northern boundary is formed by developed areas. The natural integrity and apparent naturalness is very high for the area. The eastern portion was rated separately and the apparent naturalness was increased to outstanding. The western portion was rated separately and had high natural integrity and very high apparent naturalness. The opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation is very high for the area.

Approximately 28 percent of the landscape is considered distinctive for the character type from a scenery standpoint. The landform variety, including subalpine peaks, stream drainages, and lakes, is an attraction. The presence of introduced elk is unique to Southeast Alaska, but is not a valuable attribute for wilderness.

The roadless area includes about 3,090 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, 168 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

## Appendix C

The South Etolin Roadless Area is classified as being in the Etolin Island and Vicinity Biogeographic Province and makes up about 6 percent of the province. It is one of 14 inventoried roadless areas found within the province that collectively make up about 54 percent of the province. The South Etolin Wilderness is located in this province and makes up about 16 percent of the province.

The South Etolin Roadless Area lies completely within the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section and represents 1 percent of the ecological section. Approximately 20 percent of the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section is in existing wilderness, 2 percent is in existing LUD II, and 30 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

The majority (70 percent) of the roadless area is in the Zimovia Strait Complex Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 9 percent of the entire ecological subsection, 5 percent of which is in existing wilderness and 26 percent is protected in other non-development LUDs. The remainder (30 percent) of the roadless area is in the Etolin Granitics Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 10 percent of the entire ecological subsection, 37 percent of which is protected in existing wilderness and 19 percent is protected in other non-development LUDs.

The South Etolin Roadless Area was rated 24 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 25th from the highest (along with four other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas. When rated separately, the eastern portion of the roadless area scored 25 and the western portion of the roadless area rated 23.

There is considerable local and national support for managing the area in an unroaded condition, and some support for designation of the area as wilderness. Designation would create a wilderness with relatively good scenic values and that could extend the South Etolin Wilderness to the east. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be high.

### **V. Environmental Consequences**

The South Etolin Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 is implemented. Approximately 20 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur in the remaining 80 percent. The land in the development LUDs provides an estimated 3,204 acres that are suitable for timber production (4 percent of the suitable acres on the Wrangell Ranger District). Approximately 92 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. The roadless area contains an estimated 15,335 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources; all of the acres are considered to have low potential for development. The timber sales, recreation, minerals, and special use programs would continue. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including some of the high scenic values, could be affected by ongoing developments allowed by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 6, 7, or 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. No timber harvest would be allowed and the ongoing recreation, minerals, and special uses programs 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 high scenic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness. Designation as wilderness would also extend the South Etolin Island Wilderness to the north and east.

## Appendix C

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 234 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness						28,658	28,658	28,678
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	5,517	5,517	5,517	5,517	5,517			
Semi-remote Recreation	181	181	181	181	181		20	
Recommended LUD II						20		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed	10,499	10,499	10,499	10,499	10,499			
Modified Landscape	12,457	12,457	12,457	12,457	12,457			
Timber Production	25	25	25	25	25			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28,679</b>	<b>28,679</b>	<b>28,679</b>	<b>28,679</b>	<b>28,679</b>	<b>28,679</b>	<b>28,679</b>	<b>28,679</b>
Suitable Timber Lands	3,204	3,204	3,204	3,204	3,204	0	0	0