

## INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

**ROADLESS AREA NAME:** Kashevarof (238)

**ACRES (NFS):** 5,743

**BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE:** Etolin Island and Vicinity

**ECOLOGICAL SECTION:** Inside Passage Fjordlands and Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands

**2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING:** 23

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

**(1) Location and Access:** This roadless area consists of the Kashevarof Islands (a series of small islands located in Clarence Strait) between Zarembo Island and Prince of Wales Island. Sumner Strait is to the north. The islands are located less than 10 miles north of Coffman Cove (on Prince of Wales Island) and almost 30 miles southwest of Wrangell is served by the Alaska Marine Highway and jet service. The two northern-most larger islands in the Kashevarof Island group, Bushy and Shrubby, are not included in this roadless area because they have been logged. Access is by way of boat or floatplane. There are no sites suitable for landing wheeled aircraft. Access into the interior is by foot or helicopter.

**(2) History:** The Tihitan clan of the Stikine Tlingit claimed this area, which was used chiefly for hunting seals and gathering seaweed. Their use is evidenced by the remains of temporary camps, fish weirs, and petroglyphs. Historic use is indicated by the remains of numerous fox farms, trapping cabins, and temporary camps. Goldschmidt and Haas (1946) identified a commercial fish trap on the east side of East Island.

**(3) Geography and Topography:** The islands in this roadless area have little relief and are flat to slightly rolling with a high point of 482 feet above mean sea level (msl) on one of the Blashke Islands. The area primarily consists of two island groups, Middle Islands and Blashke Islands, that are aligned north-south with Clarence Strait. West and East Islands and several other smaller islands are located on either side of the Middle Islands group. There are 95 miles of saltwater shoreline. The majority of the area is covered by forest. There are no ice and snow, alpine or rock features mapped in the area.

**(4) Ecosystem:**

**(a) Classification:** Biogeographic Province. This roadless area is in the Etolin Island and Vicinity Biogeographic Province. The Etolin Island and Vicinity province is generally subject to continental influence from the mainland and the Stikine River. All forest plant associations except those occurring only on outer coast areas are present. There are no known areas of unique or uncommon plant/soils associations or geologic formations in the area.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Kashevarof Islands Roadless Area is contained mostly within the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247E) and also contains a small portion within the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247F). These areas are represented by two ecological subsections (see table below). The Clarence Strait Volcanics Ecological Subsection is the dominant subsection and includes volcanic peaks bordering the east side of Clarence Strait in a southwesterly or northeasterly direction. Glaciers have smoothed the topography and left a legacy of broad valleys, steep slopes, alpine lakes, hanging valleys, and coastal lowlands. Plant cover is dependent on soil permeability and much of the Clarence Strait Volcanics Ecological Subsection is not forested. Productive hemlock or hemlock-spruce forests are limited to well-drained slopes. A small portion of the Kashevarof Islands Roadless Area, approximately 3 percent, lies within the North Prince of Wales-Kuiu Carbonates Ecological Subsection, composed of limestone and marble karstlands (Nowacki et al., 2001).

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<b>Ecological Section</b>	<b>Ecological Subsection</b>	<b>Percent of Roadless Area</b>
Inside Passage Fjordlands	Clarence Strait Volcanics	97%
Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands	North Prince of Wales- Kuiu Carbonates	3%

**(b) Soils:** Soils in this area are formed in a wide variety of parent material, 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.

**(c) Vegetation:** Vegetation of this roadless area primarily consists of typical spruce/ hemlock forests. Low-lying, poorly-drained portions of the area are muskeg.

There are approximately 5,486 acres mapped as forest land, of which 4,197 acres (76 percent) are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, approximately 858 acres (20 percent) are mapped as high-volume, old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 24 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. The area also includes approximately 3 acres of second growth on the northernmost of the Middle Islands where logging has occurred.

**(d) Fish Resources:** Fish resources were rated by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) in its Forest Habitat Integrity Program (1983), which described the value of VCUs for sport fish, commercial fish and estuaries. VCU 460, which encompasses this area, was not rated high for any of these values. The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) did not list this VCU as a primary salmon or sportfish producer. There are two Class II streams located on one of the Blashke Islands.

**(e) Wildlife Resources:** A small population of Sitka black-tailed deer and black bear range over the roadless area. MacDonald and Cook (1999) list wolves, deer, mink and river otter as inhabitants of the Kashevarof islands.

**(5) Management Direction and Current Uses:** The area was allocated to two Land Use Designations (LUDs) under the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. These two LUDs are Timber Production and Semi-remote Recreation.

<b>LUD</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Timber Production	16
Semi-remote Recreation	5,728

Less than 1 percent of the roadless area was allocated to one development LUD, Timber Production. This LUD is located on one island just southwest of Shrubby Island.

Almost 100 percent of the roadless area was allocated to one non-development LUD. The Semi-remote Recreation LUD was assigned to almost all of the islands in this roadless area.

Present recreation use levels are low. Subsistence use occurs in the area.

**(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness):** Overall the area has moderately high scenic quality with a mostly natural appearing landscape. A small area has been logged on the northernmost of the Middle Islands. The area is bound on all sides by saltwater and a person approaching the area in a boat would generally see natural scenery. There is an abandoned fox farm cabin and an operating oyster farm with three cabins located in the Blashke Islands. The area is visible from boats traveling Clarence Strait, Kashevarof Passage, and Stikine Strait.

**(7) Surroundings (External Influences):** The area is located in Clarence Strait between Zarembo Island and Prince of Wales Island. Evidence of management activities on these islands, mainly timber harvesting and road building, is visible from the Kashevarof Islands Roadless Area. Harvested areas on Shrubby Island, which is located immediately north of the Middle Islands, are also visible. The sights and sounds of any future harvesting activities in these nearby areas may also affect the Kashevarof Islands Roadless Area. Clarence Strait is a major passage for cruise ships, barges, ferries, and pleasure craft. Boats that travel this area may be visible from parts of the roadless area. The Alaska Marine Highway passes approximately 5 miles east of the Middle Islands. Low-flying aircraft may temporarily distract visitors in the area at times.

The 1999 Southeast Alaska Transportation plan identified a new ferry terminal that would be constructed at Coffman Cove. Ferries would travel daily between Coffman Cove and Wrangell passing within 1 or 2 miles of the Blashke Islands.

**(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest:** The numerous small islands and sheltered bays provide opportunities for discovery, day use activities, and anchorage. The area contains two inventoried recreation places, which cover 5,743 acres (100 percent) of the roadless area.

**(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary:** The boundaries of this area are the same as they were in 1989 with one exception. A very small beach logged area on one of the Middle Islands that was excluded from the 1989 roadless area is included within the boundaries of the 2003 area.

**II. Capability for Management as Wilderness**

**(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness:** The natural integrity of this roadless area is mostly unmodified. A very small area on one of the Middle Islands has been logged. The area appears to be natural and appropriate for wilderness classification. There is an abandoned fox farm cabin and an oyster farm with three cabins located in the Blashke Islands.

**(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation:** There is moderate opportunity for solitude and a relatively high opportunity for primitive recreation within the area. Low-flying airplanes and frequent marine traffic pass nearby and may be observed by people in this roadless area. Present recreation use levels are low. The operators of the oyster farm live on Blashke Island and their facilities are apparent to anyone exploring the islands. Aside from this, a person camping or traveling inland is generally unlikely to see others. Timber harvest or other periodic activities in the adjacent areas would have a significant impact on the opportunity for solitude when they are occurring.

Travel on the islands would require low to moderate backcountry skills because of their flatter topography. The presence of black bears presents a degree of challenge and a need for caution

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
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	5,661	99%
Roaded Modified (RM)	82	1%

The area contains 2 inventoried recreation places, which cover 5,743 acres (100 percent) of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places	Total Acres
SPM	1	5661
RM	1	82

There are no developed recreation opportunities in the area. The character of the landforms generally allows the visitor to feel remote from the sights and sounds of human activity. The area is accessible by boat from the

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community of Petersburg in about 4 hours, from Wrangell in approximately 2 hours, and from Coffman Cove in less than 1 hour.

**(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 Kashevarof Islands Roadless Area was given a rating of 22 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 23. This rating reflects the high natural integrity and apparent naturalness of the area.

**(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values:** The majority of the area is forested.

**(a) Fish Resources:** The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) did not list this VCU as a primary salmon or sportfish producer. There are two Class II streams located on one of the Blashke Islands.

**(b) Wildlife Resources:** A small population of Sitka black-tailed deer and black bear range over the roadless area. MacDonald and Cook (1999) list wolves, deer, mink and river otter as inhabitants of the Kashevarof islands.

**(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 534 acres of karst resources mapped in this area, or approximately 9 percent of the roadless area. There are no glaciers or unique geologic features.

**(5) Scientific and Educational Values:** There are no special features in this roadless area. The location and array of islands make them attractive for recreational pursuits. Coffman Cove is located less than 10 miles south of the area, which suggests that this area is accessible to school-age children.

**(6) Scenic Values:** Overall the area has moderately high scenic quality with a mostly natural appearing landscape. The visual character type of this area is Kupreanof Lowland, characterized by islands of rolling terrain exhibiting gradual relief separated by an intricate network of waterways. Numerous small, rocky islands, shorelines, and rock reefs are evident. The character type is largely covered with spruce/hemlock forest except at infrequent higher elevations where scattered muskeg and alpine deciduous species occur. There are also significant areas of muskeg/lodgepole pine association. A small area has been logged on the northernmost of the Middle Islands. The area is visible from boats traveling Clarence Strait, Kashevarof Passage, and Stikine Strait.

Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan, that are within or adjacent to the area include: Clarence Strait and Stikine Strait (Alaska Marine Highway and Tour Ship Routes); Kashevarof Passage (Other Travel Route); and the Kashevarof Island Group (Saltwater Use Area and Boat Anchorage).

Approximately 56 percent of this area was inventoried in the Variety Class A (possessing landscape diversity that is unique for the character type). Approximately 26 percent was inventoried in Variety Class B (possessing landscape diversity that is common for the character type). One percent of the area is inventoried in Variety Class C (possessing a low degree of landscape diversity). Approximately 17 percent was not inventoried.

The majority of the roadless area, 83 percent, has an Existing Visual Condition (EVC) Type I, where the landscape appears to be untouched by human activity. Approximately 17 percent of the area was not inventoried.

**(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values:** The Tihitan clan of the Stikine Tlingit claimed this area, which was used chiefly for hunting seals and gathering seaweed. Their use is evidenced by the remains of temporary camps, fish weirs, and petroglyphs. Historic use is indicated by the remains of numerous fox farms, trapping cabins, and temporary camps. Goldschmidt and Haas (1946) identified a commercial fish trap on the east side of East Island. Wrangell, the closest of the larger Southeast Alaskan communities, is located approximately 35 water miles east of the area. There is an active mariculture site in the Blashke Islands where oysters are cultivated.

Present recreation use levels are low. Subsistence use occurs in the area. A number of surrounding communities harvest deer on these islands for subsistence. VCU 460, which encompasses this roadless area, was not listed among the VCUs with highest community use value or among the VCUs with the highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence areas (ADF&G, 1998).

**(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes:** The area is bounded on all sides by saltwater. The island clusters lend support for all or part of this roadless area to be managed either as wilderness or in an unroaded condition. Manageability in a wilderness condition may be less feasible due to the amount of marine traffic in the area and activities in the nearby adjacent areas. Overall manageability is considered moderate.

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

**(1) Recreation, Including Tourism Potential:** There is potential for outfitter and guide permits and for developed trails, cabins, or shelters.

**(2) Subsistence Uses:** The existing patterns of subsistence activities in the area would not be affected by wilderness designation or management in an unroaded condition.

**(3) Fish Resources:** No fish habitat enhancement projects are identified in the Tongass Land Management Plan, amended Winter 1985-86.

**(4) Wildlife Resources:** As identified in the Tongass Land Management Plan, amended Winter 1985-86, wildlife enhancement projects are not planned in the roadless area.

**(5) Timber Resources:** There are approximately 4,197 acres mapped as productive old growth and 3 acres mapped as second growth due to timber harvest in the roadless area. Of these acres, 3,941 acres are categorized as tentatively suitable for timber production. Based on the Forest Plan LUDs in this area, none of the acres are classified as 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:** The area has low minerals potential.

**(8) Transportation and Utilities:** There are no known transportation or utility plans for this area.

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(9) **Water Availability and Use:** There are no existing or planned hydroelectric projects. The oyster farmers have a domestic water system for their cabins in the Blashke Island group.

(10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** The mapped karst resources encompass approximately 534 acres or 9 percent of the roadless area. The area does not contain any Research Natural Areas and has not been identified for any scientific purpose.

(11) **Land Use Authorizations:** The oyster farm in the Blashke Island group is authorized under a special use permit. There is also a Coast Guard reservation in the area.

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

### 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 recreational, and marine oriented.

(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 Kashevarof Islands Roadless Area. In 2001, HR 2908 did not propose the area for wilderness, but did propose that the majority of the area be classified as a Congressionally Designated LUD II area and managed in an unroaded condition.

(c) **Public Input During Forest Plan Revision and Appeals:** There were no public comments or appeals that directly pertained to this area.

(d) **Public Input During Roadless Area Conservation Rule and Road Management Policy Review:** This area was not specifically identified in the comments received on the Roadless Area Conservation Rule or Road Management Policy Review. However, some commenters wanted all unroaded lands in the Tongass National Forest 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 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 these islands be designated LUD II

Some individuals called for permanent protection of this area.

(2) **Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses:** Other roadless areas are separated from the Kashevarof Islands Roadless Area by extensive bodies of water. The Mosman Roadless Area is located east across Clarence Strait from the area. The Sarkar Roadless Area is located west across Kashevarof Passage. The closest wilderness area is the South Etolin Wilderness located approximately 20 miles southeast of the area.

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

Community	Air Miles	Water Miles
Ketchikan (Pop. 14,070)	70	75
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	30	25
Petersburg (Pop. 3,224)	45	45
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	155	165

Hollis and Coffman Cove, on Prince of Wales Island, and Wrangell are the nearest stops on the Alaska Marine Highway.

**(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Reservation System:** The Kashevarof Roadless Area consists of the Kashevarof Islands (a series of small islands located in Clarence Strait) between Zarembo Island and Prince of Wales Island. Sumner Strait is to the north. The islands in the Kashevarof Islands Roadless Area have little relief and are flat to slightly rolling with a high point of 482 feet above mean sea level (msl) on one of the Blashke Islands. Two island groups, Middle Islands and Bashke Islands, are basically aligned north-south with Clarence Strait. West and East Islands and several other smaller islands are located either side of the Middle Islands group.

The islands are mostly natural appearing. The natural integrity and apparent naturalness are rated as outstanding. The opportunity for solitude is moderate and the opportunity for primitive recreation is high.

Approximately 56 percent of the roadless area was rated as distinctive for the character type from a scenery perspective.

The islands have important cultural and historic values. There is some karst in the area.

The roadless area includes about 858 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, 24 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The Kashevarof Roadless Area is classified as being in the Etohin Island and Vicinity Biogeographic Province and makes about 1 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 Etohin Wilderness is located in this province and makes up about 16 percent of the province.

The Kashevarof Islands Roadless Area lies within two ecological sections; it represents 0.3 percent of the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section and 0.1 percent of the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands 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. Approximately 13 percent of the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands Ecological Section is in existing wilderness, 8 percent is in existing LUD II, and an additional 33 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

The vast majority (97 percent) of the roadless area is in the Clarence Strait Volcanics Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 2 percent of the entire ecological subsection, 15 percent of which is in existing wilderness and 34 percent is in other existing non-development LUDs. The remaining 3 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 protected in existing LUD II and 25 percent in other existing non-development LUDs.

The Kashevarof 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 30th 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 area in an unroaded condition, but very little support for designating the area as wilderness. Designation would create a wilderness made up of a small group of islands with

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relatively high cultural and historic values. 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 Kashevarof Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 7 is implemented. Nearly all of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. There are no acres suitable for timber production in this roadless area. The recreation and special use programs would continue. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including the high cultural, historic, and karst values are protected under the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 6, the entire area would be converted to Recommended LUD II. The ongoing recreation and special use programs would continue similar to current conditions. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including the high cultural, historic, and karst values, would be provided long-term protection if designated LUD II.

Under Alternative 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. The ongoing recreation and special uses programs may 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 cultural, historic, and karst values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 238 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness								5,743
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								
Semi-remote Recreation	5,728	5,728	5,728	5,728	5,728		5,728	
Recommended LUD II						5,743		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed								
Modified Landscape								
Timber Production	16	16	16	16	16		16	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,743</b>	<b>5,743</b>	<b>5,743</b>	<b>5,743</b>	<b>5,743</b>	<b>5,743</b>	<b>5,743</b>	<b>5,743</b>
Suitable Timber Lands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0