

Appendix C

INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

ROADLESS AREA NAME: Upper Situk (341)

ACRES (NFS): 18,411

BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: Yakutat Forelands

ECOLOGICAL SECTION: Northern Gulf Forelands

2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING: 19

I. Overview and Description

(1) **Location and Access:** The Upper Situk Roadless Area is located on the mainland, east of Yakutat. The area adjoins State and private lands to the southwest, Forest Highway 10 on National Forest Systems lands to the south, and the Russell Fiord Wilderness to the west. The northwestern boundary is Yakutat Bay. The roadless area is approximately 6 miles east of Yakutat and 190 miles northeast of Juneau.

There are several small anchorages suitable for small boats along the coastline of Yakutat Bay. There is floatplane access along the Bay, as well in several lakes in the northwestern portion of the roadless area. Forest Highway 10 goes from Yakutat to the Dangerous River, providing vehicle access to the entire southern boundary of the roadless area. Connecting road systems and serving timber harvest area provide access to large portions of the roadless area. Access away from water and from roads is by foot or helicopter. There are no hiking trails in the roadless area.

(2) **History:** Human settlement in the area is believed to have begun about 1,000 years ago, with people coming from the north (probably Eyak from the Copper River). Tlingit occupation from the south began approximately 300 years before the present. European ventures into the area started in the late 18th century with Russian and English traders. A Russian farming settlement was established in the approximate location of Yakutat in 1796. Hostilities between the Russians and the Alaska Native population ended when the Tlingits removed the settlement in 1805. Little contact between whites and the Yakutat Tlingits occurred from 1805 to about 1874. Activities within or adjacent to the roadless area since 1874 have included mining, fish canneries, fur farms, manufactured native goods, and tourism. Tourism was first developed in the 1880s to view Mount Saint Elias and the various glaciers. Salmon processing became a major industry after the construction of the first cannery in 1902. Others followed over the next 20 or so years.

There was a large military presence, with attending activities, during World War II. More recent activities, within or adjacent to the roadless area, have included commercial logging operations, commercial fishing, and outfitter/guide services for sports fishing and hunting.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** Approximately half the roadless area is relatively flat. Elevations in this area generally range from sea level to approximately 200 feet. The highest point is about 1,000 foot above sea level. The terrain is characteristic of formerly glaciated topography, glacial outwash plains with lateral and terminal moraines, separated by low, flat areas with numerous streams and rivers, as well as large marshes and muskegs. There are some areas, such as around Pike Lakes, that were unglaciated in the last glacial period. These remnant areas show the characteristics of an old-aged landform with highly developed soil profiles. The rivers and streams are low gradient and follow wandering channels with wide floodplains. The roadless area includes several islands in Yakutat Bay.

Relief is such that a major runoff episode may completely change the location of stream courses and may combine two or more totally divergent streams into one system. If the Hubbard Glacier, which is located to the northwest, closes off Russell Fiord, the resulting lake could reach overflow in a short period of time. The headwaters of the Situk River would be the overflow channel, thereby drastically changing the landscape in this area.

The roadless area contains many lakes, including the Pike Lakes in the headwaters of the Ahrnklin River and Lake Redfield, which is over 950 acres. The Yakutat Bay beach area is subject to change due to open-water wave activity and ocean storms. There are 7 miles of shoreline on saltwater. Freshwater lakes total 973 acres. There are 53 acres of small islands. There is no alpine tundra, snow, ice, or rock features mapped in the area.

(4) Ecosystem:

(a) Classification: Biogeographic Province. The area is in the Yakutat Forelands Biogeographic Province. The province includes Glacier Bay north to Yakutat Bay. The area is very young, with nearly flat landscape and active isostatic rebound (uplifting of the ground after the glaciers have receded). Most surfaces vary from 200 to 1,500 years old. Dune formation and succession are an on-going processes due to glacial rebound and active wave action. The climate is typical of the coastal maritime zone. The total annual precipitation at Yakutat is 135 inches. Yakutat has a 33-year snowfall average of 219 inches.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Upper Situk Roadless Area is contained entirely within the Northern Gulf Forelands Ecological Section (M245B). This area is represented by one ecological subsection (see table below). The Yakutat Lituya Forelands Ecological Subsection is a vast coastal plain that was formed by the seaward deposition of sediments from the mountains. The soils of the gently sloped area include unconsolidated glacial, alluvial, and marine deposits. The coast is spotted with parabolic dunes formed from outwash sand. The low gradient terrain prevents rapid drainage, and the majority of land cover is wetland. The flat land also allows complex braided stream systems with vast floodplains. Where slight elevations exist, Sitka spruce, hemlock, or cottonwood trees are present (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Northern Gulf Forelands	Yakutat Lituya Forelands	100%

(b) Soils: The majority of the soils for the Upper Situk lowlands are youthful soils of glacio-fluvial and fluvial origin. The base material is variable and consists of igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary rocks. Terrain is generally gently sloping. Other features, such as mature soils (unglaciated remnants) occur but only to a limited extent. Recent glaciation and on-going uplift has, and does, affect soil development. Groundwater over most of the area is at or near the surface. Large portions of the roadless area are poorly drained organic soils.

(c) Vegetation: Much of the vegetation, even in the forested areas, is marsh and muskeg species, with willows, cottonwoods, and alders on the drier sites. The wetland species are primarily sphagnum moss, sedges, and heathers. The drier, non-forest sites contain low-growing species such as devil's club, salmonberry, blueberry, copper bush, hellebore, ferns, skunk cabbage, and huckleberry, over a carpet of mosses and liverworts. Forested areas contain primarily Sitka spruce and/or western hemlock. Approximately 752 acres of muskeg are mapped for the area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult.

Lodgepole pine is found in the Pike Lakes area and is at the western edge of its range. Other unique Pike Lakes area plant species are Oregon crabapple, deer cabbage, Labrador tea, and mountain hemlock.

There are approximately 16,217 acres mapped as forest land of which 6,885 acres (42 percent) are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 2,267 acres (33 percent) are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 1,070 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are no acres of second growth forest where timber harvest has occurred in the past.

(d) Fish Resources: Five species of Pacific salmon spawn and rear in the area. Steelhead and cutthroat trout, stickleback, Dolly Varden char, and smelt are found in the many lowland rivers and streams. The Anadromous Waters Catalogue (ADF&G, 2000) identifies Humpback Creek, Upper Situk

Appendix C

River, and Lake Redfield as fish-bearing waters in this area. The headwaters of two major stream systems (the Situk and Arhnklin Rivers) are in the area. These stream systems were identified by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) as important for producing salmon. The only population of northern pike in Southeast Alaska occurs in five lakes in the roadless area known as the Pike Lakes.

(e) **Wildlife Resources:** The Yakutat Forelands area (which includes the Upper Situk roadless area) supports a rich wildlife population, both in numbers and species diversity. Larger mammal species include brown and black bears, moose, wolverines, wolves, and mountain goats. There is a Sitka black-tailed deer population that is a result of transplant efforts in the 1940s. Smaller animals include mink, marten, beaver, and snowshoe hare, as well as several amphibian species.

There are few resident bird species; however, the area is heavily used by migratory species, including waterfowl (trumpeter swan) and raptors (bald eagle and northern goshawk).

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

LUD	Acres
Timber Production	3,279
Scenic Viewshed	214
Modified Landscape	57
Semi-remote Recreation	4,328
Old-growth Habitat	10,534

Approximately 19 percent of the roadless area was allocated to a development LUD (Timber Production, Modified Landscape, and Scenic Viewshed). The Timber Production LUD was assigned to approximately 18 percent of the roadless area. Approximately 1 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Scenic Viewshed LUD.

Most of the roadless area, 81 percent, was allocated to a non-development LUD (Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation). Approximately 57 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Old-growth Habitat LUD. The Semi-remote Recreation LUD was assigned to approximately 24 percent of the roadless area. Land allocated to this LUD includes the small islands in Yakutat Bay associated with the roadless area.

Uses include sport fishing and hunting, subsistence fishing, hunting and trapping, and commercial fishing. Outfitting and guide service is a major business in the area. There are 10 special use permits for fish and subsistence camps and outfitter/guide activities. There are no public recreation cabins in the roadless area.

There is one trail, located along the Situk River, north from Forest Highway 10. Although oil and gas exploration has been done in the recent past, no exploration or development activities are occurring at present. Other than fisheries habitat enhancement, few Forest Service management activities have occurred within the roadless area.

(6) **Appearance (Apparent Naturalness):** The Upper Situk area generally appears unmodified. The appearance of areas adjacent to roads and timber harvest has been effected by these developments.

(7) **Surroundings (External Influences):** The Russell Fiord Wilderness Area is located adjacent to the Upper Situk Roadless Area on the north, and the Yakutat Forelands (#339) Roadless Evaluation Area is located to the south of Forest Highway 10. The area to the west of the roadless area, which includes the city of Yakutat, has been highly modified by developments. The timber management related developed areas that cross, or nearly cross, the roadless area in three places are primarily associated with a blowdown episode in 1981. Forest Highway 10 runs along the entire southwestern boundary. The Yakutat airport is about 7 miles from the roadless area and people using the roadless area may be disturbed by noise from airplanes. There are commercial flights over the coast to the south. Most of the activities outside the roadless area are not visually apparent to users because of the terrain and vegetation features; however, traffic noise on Forest Highway 10 is audible for some distance into the roadless area. There is some water-borne activity in the coastal waters; however, disturbance from these activities is minimal.

(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest: Attractions include wildlife viewing, sports hunting and fishing, camping, canoeing, and kayaking. The numerous small lakes and streams provide a variety of fishing sites. There are small boat anchorages at several places along the coast. There are five lakes with northern pike, the only northern pike in Southeast Alaska.

(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary: A portion of the 1989 roadless area near the western boundary is no longer National Forest System land. Other boundary changes resulted from more accurately mapping the adjacent developed areas.

II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness: Most of the area is unmodified. Modifications include cabins and camps, which are widely scattered and are fairly unobtrusive, and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails. The western portion of the area has received off-road vehicle use, particularly in the muskegs. Signs of OHV use are apparent from the air, but are less so from ground level. The western and southwestern boundaries are defined by adjacent developments. Past modification within the area has been minor and included fur farms. These modifications have a minor effect on the area’s suitability for wilderness classification based on natural integrity. Overall, the area has high natural integrity and apparent naturalness.

(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation: The area has moderate opportunity for solitude and relatively high opportunity for primitive recreation, especially when the adjacent roadless lands are factored in. The area is relatively easy to access, has a moderate degree of visitor use, and is relatively close to various activities, including timber harvest on private and adjacent National Forest System lands and traffic on Forest Highway 10. There are minor disruptions by small aircraft flying overhead, commercial aircraft landing and taking off at the airport in Yakutat, and powerboat use along the coast. However, Lake Redfield, Pike Lakes and other locations away from the concentrated use areas are relatively isolated and provide a greater opportunity for solitude.

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 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)	1,940	11%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	11,692	64%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	872	5%
Roaded Modified (RM)	3,898	21%

The area contains seven inventoried recreation places, which cover 15,319 acres (83 percent) of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places*	Total Acres
P	3	1,896
SPNM	2	9,318
SPM	1	824
RM	6	3,281

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

There are no public recreation cabins in the roadless area. There is one trail located along the Situk River north from Forest Highway 10.

Appendix C

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

In 1979, during the RARE II process, the Tongass National Forest applied WARS for the first time and rated each unroaded VCU on the Tongass. In 1989, the inventoried roadless areas (which generally include more than one VCU) were rated according to this system for the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) developed in support of the Forest Plan Revision. This original version of the AMS included both the individual VCU ratings done in 1979 and the composite rating that was done for each roadless area in 1989. The 1989 rating for the Upper Situk Roadless Area Roadless Area was 22 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 given a rating of 19.

(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values: The roadless area is home to the only naturally occurring populations of northern pike in Southeast Alaska. The population is genetically unique and considered a unique race.

(a) Fish Resources: The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) listed VCU 366 as a primary salmon and sportfish producer. VCU 373 was listed as a primary salmon producer.

Five species of Pacific salmon, valuable for commercial, subsistence and sport use, spawn and rear in the area. Steelhead and cutthroat trout, stickleback, Dolly Varden char, and smelt are found in the many lowland rivers and streams. The Anadromous Waters Catalogue (ADF&G, 2000) identifies Humpback Creek, Upper Situk River, and Lake Redfield as fish-bearing waters in this area. The headwaters of two major stream systems (the Situk and Arhnklin Rivers) are within the roadless area. These rivers were identified by the ADF&G as important salmon spawning areas. There is no estimate for fish production just for the headwater areas, but total annual production for the two rivers is estimated at more than 80,000 salmon. A unique species, the northern pike, is found in Pike Lakes. This is the only known population of this species in Southeast Alaska.

(b) Wildlife Resources: The Yakutat Forelands area (which includes the Upper Situk roadless area) supports a rich wildlife population, both in numbers and species diversity. Larger mammal species include brown and black bears, moose, wolverines, wolves, and mountain goats. There is a Sitka black-tailed deer population that is a result of transplant efforts in the 1940s. The smaller animals include mink, marten, beaver, and snowshoe hare, as well as several amphibian species including wood frogs and boreal toads.

There are few resident bird species; however, the area is heavily used by migratory species, including waterfowl (trumpeter swan) and raptors (bald eagle and northern goshawk).

(c) Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species: The only federally listed threatened or 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, Peale's peregrine falcon, Queen Charlotte goshawk, and northern pike. Trumpeter swans nest in the lowlands on small lakes and along large rivers and winter in ice-free areas throughout the Tongass. Nesting trumpeter swans have been found within the Upper Situk Roadless Area. 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. Northern pike occur in five lakes in the roadless area. In addition, nine sensitive plant species, and two species proposed as sensitive, are known or suspected to occur in the Yakutat 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 in this area. The Pike Lakes area is of geological interest because of the unique residual soils/geologic features.

(5) Scientific and Educational Values: The Pike Lakes area is of ecological and geological interest because of the unique plant associations, fish species, and residual soils/geologic features. The area ranges from a young, developing ecosystem on immature or undeveloped soils to a remnant area untouched by the last glacial period. The presence of wildlife species such as eagles, brown bears, black bears (including the glacier bear color phase), moose, and the many different migratory bird species provides opportunities for wildlife observation. The coastline provides for beachcombing opportunities.

(6) Scenic Values: The visual character type for the evaluation area is the Cordova-Yakutat, consisting of a coastal plain marked by longitudinal beach and dune ridges, crossed by outwash plains and moraines and backed by marine ridges, which are several hundred feet in height. The area is characterized by a great variety of water forms, including glacial streams, meandering lowland streams, and small lakes. The ocean surf is a key water form. The area immediately north of the roadless area lies in the Coast Range visual character type, forming a strongly contrasting landform. The view distance within much of the area is relatively short because of the flat, rolling terrain combined with dense vegetation.

Developed areas are visible along the western and southwestern boundaries. In addition, some of these developments cross, or nearly cross, the roadless area in three places. These areas are also visible from some points within the roadless area. However, because of terrain, these timber management areas are not visible from a distance, and does not affect the majority of the roadless area. Most of the vegetation consists of groundcover or low-growing shrubs and short trees. Approximately 15 percent of the area supports forests. The heavily forested areas are primarily in the middle half of the roadless area. The coastal sites are more visible. Sites used in the past have mostly been reclaimed by vegetation. Most of the activity was, and is, located along the coast.

ATV use is evident in the muskegs. This activity does affect the apparent naturalness from close range. The overall impact is low in this area.

Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan that are within or adjacent to the area include: Highway 10 public use road, the Situk River to Situk Lake, and Gilbert Spit to Eleanor Cove small boat routes, the dispersed recreation area on the Highway 10 corridor, Situk Lake hiking trail, and the Eleanor Cove boat anchorage.

Approximately 61 percent of this area is inventoried in Variety Class A, which has landscape diversity unique for the character type. Six percent of the area is rated as Variety Class B, which possesses landscape characteristics common for the character type. Approximately 32 percent of the area possesses a low degree of landscape diversity (Variety Class C).

The majority of the area, approximately 91 percent, is inventoried with an Existing Visual Condition (EVC) Type I, which is a landscape that appears untouched by human activity. One percent is inventoried in EVC III, where changes in the landscape may be seen by the average person, but appear natural. About six percent of the area was inventoried as an EVC IV, where changes in the landscape are easily noticed by the average visitor, and may attract some attention. About one percent of the area has an EVC V, where changes to the landscape are obvious to the average visitor and appear to be major disturbances.

(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values: Human settlement in the area is believed to have begun about 1,000 years ago, with the people coming from the north (probably Eyak from the Copper River). Tlingit occupation from the south began approximately 300 years before the present. European ventures into the area started in the late 18th century with Russian and English traders. A Russian farming settlement was established in the approximate location of Yakutat in 1796. Hostilities between the Russians and the Alaska Native population ended when the Yakutat Tlingits removed the Russians in 1805. Little contact between whites and the Tlingits occurred from 1805 to about 1874. Activities within or adjacent to the evaluation area since 1874 have included mining, fish canneries, fur farms, manufactured native goods and tourism. Tourism was first developed in the 1880s to view Mount Saint Elias and the various glaciers. Salmon processing became a major industry, with the first cannery constructed in 1902. Others followed over the next 20 or so years. There was a large military presence, with attending activities, during World War II.

Appendix C

Uses include sport fishing and hunting, subsistence fishing, hunting and trapping, and commercial fishing. Outfitting and guide service is a major business in the area. There are ten special use permits for fish and subsistence camps and outfitter/guide activities. There are no public recreation cabins in the roadless area.

No VCUs are listed among the VCUs with highest community use value or with highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas (ADF&G, 1998).

There is one developed trail going north from Forest Highway 10 along the Situk River. Other than recreation and fisheries habitat enhancement, few Forest Service management activities have occurred within the roadless area.

(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes: The roadless area is a long, very narrow strip, approximately 25 miles long and averaging less than 2 miles in width (ranging from a few hundred feet to more than 5 miles). However, the entire northern boundary is common with the Russell Fiord Wilderness. The southwestern and northwestern boundaries are defined by a physical boundary (Forest Highway 10 and Yakutat Bay). Roads and associated developments cross, or nearly cross, the roadless area in three places, dividing the mainland portion of the roadless area into four smaller segments. The northeastern boundary is the Russell Fiord Wilderness boundary, which is legally described, but not tied to topographic features. The western boundary abuts private lands and the southwestern boundary abuts Highway 10. The presence of roads and/or private lands to the west and other developments, which cross, or nearly cross, the roadless area could affect the manageability of the area as wilderness. While the wilderness character of some portions of the roadless area may be questionable, other portions, if left unroaded, would compliment the Russell Fiord Wilderness Area.

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

(1) Recreation, Including Tourism Potential: Tourism has been increasing in Southeast Alaska and is expected to continue to increase. Cruise ships travel to Glacier Bay National Park. There are daily scheduled commercial flights into Yakutat. Recreation potential includes the opportunity for trails accessing several lakes. Trailheads could easily be accessed from the coast or from the road system to the southwest. Sport fishing and hunting are popular in the area; moose hunting and steelhead fishing are major activities.

(2) Subsistence Uses: Management as a wilderness would not conflict with current subsistence uses.

(3) Fish Resource: No fish habitat enhancement projects are currently planned.

(4) Wildlife Resources: No wildlife habitat improvement projects are planned.

(5) Timber Resources: There are 6,885 acres inventoried as productive old-growth forest in the roadless area and there are no acres mapped as second growth. Of this, approximately 5,205 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), 1,236 acres (7 percent) of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 453 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 333 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The potential for larger scale commercial timber management is low, even for high quality, very high volume stands. Smaller scale local operations may have more potential. The existing road system combined with the flat terrain makes access relatively simple; however, marsh areas restrict road construction options, although not to an excessive degree. Most of the operable timber stands are located in VCUs 364C, 366C, 373C, and 375C. These stands are generally mature/overmature and have high volumes per acre.

(6) Fire, Insects, and Disease: The area has no significant fire history. There are no epidemic insect or disease conditions.

(7) **Minerals:** The opportunity for mineral development appears low. This area contains an estimated 7,627 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.

Oil and gas exploration has been conducted in the past in the vicinity of the roadless area and the potential for development appears to be high. The entire Forelands have been identified by the USDI, Geologic Survey as a “Most Favorable Petroleum Reserves Area.” However, development activities have not been initiated.

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

(9) **Water Availability and Use:** There are no public recreation cabins or other facilities to create a water demand. There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects within the roadless area.

(10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** There are opportunities to study fish, including the only northern pike populations in Southeast Alaska, wildlife, and geologic processes.

(11) **Land Use Authorizations:** There are 10 special use permits for fish and subsistence camps and outfitter/guide activities. The potential for increase in permit applications is moderate.

(12) **Land Status:** There are no non-National Forest System lands within the roadless area; however, most of the roadless area is encumbered.

IV. Wilderness Evaluation (Need for Wilderness)

(1) Public and Congressional Interest:

(a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** Local residents appear to favor a primitive or semi-primitive designation for the area. They prefer that it not become a wilderness in order to avoid restrictions and the loss of future management options associated with wilderness designation.

(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. Upper Situk Roadless Area was not one of these areas. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed managing the northern part of the roadless area as LUD II in an unroaded condition and designating the area south of Russell Fiord as wilderness.

(c) **Public Input During Forest Plan Revision and Appeals:** The City of Yakutat recommended that the fisheries values and fish habitat protection be of paramount importance in managing the Yakutat Forelands (the Upper Situk Roadless Area is part of the Forelands). The Forelands should be managed for fish, wildlife, subsistence, and visual resources. Small scale and personal use timber harvest should be permitted. The Southeast Alaska Conservation Council and others recommended against road building and logging because of the effects of logging on the educational and recreational values of the area. They stated that the area merited special protection for its outstanding wildlife, fisheries, hunting, subsistence, recreation, and tourism values. The National Audubon Society recommended that the area be managed for primitive recreation. 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 areas not designated as wilderness for timber.

(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 area are available.

Appendix C

(f) Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process: The Alaska Department of Fish and Game rated the Upper Situk roadless area as the ninth highest priority for protection in northern Southeast Alaska. This rating is based on the VCUs with the highest value fish and wildlife resources needing additional protection. VCUs are prioritized for their very high productivity, essential role in connectivity, and/or very high value as community use areas.

SEACC recommended the remaining unlogged portions of the Yakutat area, including Roadless Areas 338, 339, and 341, should be protected through a combination of LUD II and wilderness designations as in Alternative 6.

The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe supported "...the present land management scheme." and stated that it did not want to see "...changes in the Wilderness designation...."

The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities said that the depiction of land status along the south shore of Yakutat Bay shows land as developed and as two or more small roadless areas that are no longer part of the Tongass National Forest.

(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses: The Russell Fiord Wilderness forms the northeastern boundary of the Upper Situk Roadless Area. The Yakutat Forelands Roadless Area (#339) lies to the south, across Forest Highway 10. The Brabazon Addition (#338), another roadless area, is located 5 miles to the east of the Russell Fiord Wilderness. These unroaded areas are connected to other unroaded areas in Canada and Alaska, including the Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park and other roadless areas on the Tongass National Forest. These areas are used primarily for recreation (including tourism) and subsistence.

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

Community	Air Miles	Water Miles
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	190	260
Sitka (Pop. 8,835)	225	275
Cordova (Pop. 2,454)	215	250
Anchorage (Pop. 260,283)	340	615

Yakutat has twice-daily commercial air service, both north- and southbound. There is no ferry service to Yakutat. The closest Alaska Marine Highway terminals are Hoonah to the southeast and Cordova to the west.

(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System: The Upper Situk Roadless Area is located on the mainland, east of Yakutat. The area adjoins State and private lands to the southwest, Forest Highway 10 on National Forest System lands to the south, and the Russell Fiord Wilderness to the west. The northwestern boundary is Yakutat Bay. Approximately half the roadless area is relatively flat. Elevations in this area generally range from sea level to approximately 200 feet. The highest point is about 1,000 foot above sea level. The terrain is characteristic of formerly glaciated topography, glacial outwash plains with lateral and terminal moraines, separated by low, flat areas with numerous streams and rivers, as well as large marshes and muskegs. There are some areas, such as around Pike Lakes, that were unglaciated in the last glacial period. These remnant areas show the characteristics of an old-aged landform with highly developed soil profiles. The roadless area includes several islands in Yakutat Bay.

Most of the area appears unmodified. Modifications include cabins and camps (which are widely scattered and are fairly unobtrusive) and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails. The area has high natural integrity and apparent naturalness. The opportunity for solitude is high and moderate for primitive recreation within the roadless area.

The Upper Situk Roadless Area has unique scenic qualities; approximately 61 percent of the area is considered distinctive from a scenery standpoint. The Pike Lake area is considered distinctive because of its older geologic age in an area of recent glaciation. The lakes also include a unique strain of pike.

The roadless area includes about 2,267 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, approximately 1,070 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

Approximately 73 percent of the Upper Situk Roadless Area is classified as being in the Yakutat Forelands Biogeographic Province and makes up about 4 percent of the province. It is one of two roadless areas that make up about 82 percent of the province. About 2 percent of the Yakutat Forelands Province is in designated wilderness, and about 39 percent is in designated LUD II. The remaining 27 percent of the Upper Situk Roadless Area is located in the Yakutat/Glacier Bay Uplands Biogeographic Province and makes up about 1 percent of that province. It is one of three roadless areas that collectively make up about 62 percent of the province. About 37 percent of the Yakutat/Glacier Bay Uplands Province is in designated wilderness.

The Upper Situk Roadless Area lies completely within the Northern Gulf Forelands Ecological Section. This roadless area represents 5 percent of the entire ecological section, which is well represented by non-development LUDs (72 percent, including 33 percent in LUD II) and an additional 9 percent in wilderness.

The Upper Situk Roadless Area lies completely within the Yakutat-Lituya Forelands Ecological Subsection. This roadless area represents 5 percent of the entire ecological subsection, which is well represented by LUD II and other non-development LUDs (33 and 39 percent, respectively) and an additional 9 percent in wilderness.

The Upper Situk Roadless Area was rated 19 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 70th from the highest (along with 13 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas.

There is strong local support for managing the roadless area in an unroaded condition. There is some national support for designating the southern portion of the roadless area as wilderness and for managing the remainder in an unroaded condition. Designation as wilderness would create an addition to the Russell Fiord Wilderness that would abut developed areas and include areas of ongoing high recreation and special uses. The Pikes Lake area would be included in wilderness. 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 Upper Situk Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 is implemented. Approximately 81 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur within the remaining 19 percent of the roadless area. The land in the development LUDs includes an estimated 1,236 acres that are suitable for timber production (12 percent of the suitable acres on the Yakutat Ranger District). Approximately 333 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. This area contains 7,627 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources. All of these acres are considered to have low potential for development. The very heavy recreation and special use program would continue. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including the scenic, geologic, commercial recreational, and ecologic values, are protected by the Forest Plan. The natural setting values associated with the timber production lands could be affected by related activities.

Under Alternative 6, all of the Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation, Scenic Viewshed, Modified Landscape, and Timber Production LUDs would be converted to Recommended LUD II and Recommended Wilderness LUD. No timber harvest would be allowed in the roadless area. Some ongoing recreational use, special uses, and mineral management could continue in the Recommended LUD II area and could be restricted in the Recommended Wilderness area. Mineral prospecting would be allowed in the Recommended Wilderness LUD up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including the scenic, geologic, commercial recreational, and ecologic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated LUD II or wilderness.

Under Alternatives 7, a 2,543-acre portion of the roadless area in Timber Production LUDs would be converted to Recommended Wilderness LUD. The ongoing recreational use, special uses, and mineral management could be restricted and no timber harvest allowed in the Recommended Wilderness LUD. The total area suitable for timber production would be reduced to 313 acres. Mineral prospecting would be allowed in the Recommended Wilderness

Appendix C

LUD up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. The values associated with the natural settings of the timber production LUD portion of the roadless area would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Under Alternative 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness LUD. Timber harvest would not be allowed. The ongoing recreational use, special uses, and mineral management could be restricted. Mineral prospecting would be allowed up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including the scenic, geologic, commercial recreational, and ecologic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 341 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness						2,543	2,543	18,411
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	10,534	10,534	10,534	10,534	10,534		10,534	
Semi-remote Recreation	4,328	4,328	4,328	4,328	4,328		4,328	
Recommended LUD II						15,868		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed	214	214	214	214	214		214	
Modified Landscape	57	57	57	57	57		57	
Timber production	3,279	3,279	3,279	3,279	3,279		735	
TOTAL	18,411	18,411	18,411	18,411	18,411	18,411	18,411	18,411
Suitable Timber Lands	1,236	1,236	1,236	1,236	1,236	0	313	0