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INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

ROADLESS AREA NAME: Sukkwan (504)

ACRES (NFS): 49,759

BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: North Central Prince of Wales Island

ECOLOGICAL SECTION: Outer Islands Fjordlands, Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands

2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING: 23

I. Overview and Description

(1) **Location and Access:** The Sukkwan Roadless Area is approximately 50 air miles west of Ketchikan and is 1 mile across the Sukkwan Straight from Hydaburg, an Alaska Native community on the west side of Prince of Wales Island. Hollis, the closest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway, is approximately 30 miles by road from Hydaburg. The roadless area includes Sukkwan Island, Goat Island, Blanket Island, Jackson Island, the McFarland Islands, and many smaller islands in general vicinity. Sukkwan Straight and Hetta Inlet lie to the east. Tlevak Straight lies to the west and south. North Pass is north of Goat Island and South Pass is between Goat and Sukkwan Islands. Access is by floatplane or boat. There are no places suitable for landing wheeled aircraft. Access to upland areas is by foot or helicopter. There are no developed trails in the roadless area.

(2) **History:** The Tlingit inhabited South Prince of Wales Island and the islands to the southwest until the Haida, who migrated north from the Queen Charlotte Islands, displaced them in the early 1700s. Since then, the islands that make up the roadless area, have been within the principal traditional-use area of the Haida. Because of this historic connection to the area, the Haida Native Corporation selected land in this area, including all of Goat Island and portions of Sukkwan Island. Subsequently, Goat Island and adjacent small islands were obtained by the federal government as part of the Haida Land Exchange. The Haida village of Sukkwan was located on Sukkwan Island until 1916 when it and three other villages were left behind to create the modern community of Hydaburg. Sukkwan Island contains many sites of fish camps and seasonal use dating back hundreds of years and continuing in use today.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** For the most part, the islands that make up the roadless area have flat to rolling topography, although Sukkwan Island reaches an elevation of 2,160 feet. The larger islands have very irregular coastlines and there are many unnamed small islands. The area includes 504 smaller islands and islets (51 of these are greater than 10 acres) totaling 9,210 acres. There are 240 miles of saltwater shoreline, 297 acres of lakes, 881 acres of rock, and 57 acres of alpine.

(4) **Ecosystem:**

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. The area is in the North Central Prince of Wales Island Biogeographic Province. This province is characterized by rolling, gentle landforms but with localized rugged topography. Limestone is common and overall forest productivity is high. Karst topography and caves are often present, though there is little karst mapped in this roadless area.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Sukkwan Roadless Area is contained within the Outer Islands Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247H) and the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247F). These areas are represented by two ecological subsections (see table below). The Soda Bay Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection, which covers 99 percent of the roadless area, is composed of a rolling landscape of rounded hills and broad valleys underlain by sedimentary and volcanic bedrock. Forested wetlands, bogs, and fens are common on poorly drained soils, while productive hemlock or hemlock-spruce forests are found on colluvium or well-drained till of the hillslopes (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands	Soda Bay Till Lowlands	99%
Outer Islands Fjordlands	Dall-Outside Complex	1%

(b) Soils: These highly organic, low clay content soils are generally formed over bedrock, and are typically about 40 inches deep. Generally, steeper areas have better-drained soils and flat areas are poorly drained.

(c) Vegetation: This area is typical Southeast Alaska coastal temperate rain forest. The forest is primarily western hemlock and Sitka spruce, with a large cedar component. Muskeg/low-productivity forested wetlands cover extensive areas in south and central Sukkwan. Approximately 323 acres of muskeg are mapped for the area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult.

There are approximately 47,610 acres mapped as forest land of which 19,801 acres or 42 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 6,380 acres or 32 percent are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 1,852 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are also 76 acres of second growth resulting from beach logging in 1960.

(d) Fish Resources: The streams and lakes in this area provide habitat for coho, pink, and chum salmon and steelhead trout. There are several unnamed Class I streams on Sukkwan Island, draining into Dunbar Inlet, Kasook Inlet, and Hetta Inlet (ADF&G, 2000). Eek Lake on Goat Island supports runs of coho and pink salmon (ADF&G, 2000).

(e) Wildlife Resources: This area has high populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, wolves, river otter, marten, mink, loon, and common waterfowl. Marine mammals are common on the small islands. Brown bear, moose, and mountain goats are not found on these islands (MacDonald and Cook, 1999).

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

LUD	Acres
Timber Production	18,034
Old-growth Habitat	13,735
Semi-remote Recreation	16,806
Remote Recreation	1,184

The roadless area contains only one LUD that allows development. Approximately 36 percent of the roadless area was allocated to Timber Production LUD.

Approximately 64 percent of the roadless area was allocated to non-development LUDs (Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation, Remote Recreation). Approximately 13,735 acres, or 28 percent of the roadless area, was selected for Old-growth Habitat LUD. Approximately 34 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Semi-remote Recreation LUD. All of Goat Island and parts of Sukkwan Island were allocated to the Semi-remote Recreation LUD, as well as small islands associated with the roadless area. Approximately 2 percent of the roadless area, primarily around Kasook Inlet, was allocated to the Remote Recreation LUD.

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The area receives dispersed recreation use. No outfitter/guide permits were issued for the area in 2000. Hydaburg area residents participate in subsistence activities within the roadless area. A timber sale project is currently on the 10-year sale plan to occur within this roadless area.

(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness): This area is unmodified by human activity and appears to be in a natural condition.

(7) Surroundings (External Influences): There are large blocks of non-National Forest System land in the area. These include most of the east half of Dall Island, which is several miles to the west across Tlevak Straight, most of Long Island, several miles to the south, and a small area northeast of Goat Island and a large area near Hydaburg, both on Prince of Wales Island. Large areas of Native land have been harvested. Native Corporation selections within the roadless area are located in Kasook Inlet and Lake as well as the northern tip of Sukkwan Island. There are also Native Corporation subsurface rights on all of Goat Island as well as the small adjacent islands and the northern reaches of Sukkwan Island. There are two additional parcels of land on Sukkwan Island owned by Haida Village Corporation.

(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest: The natural features of the area, the scenery (particularly the island clusters and the saltwater bays and inlets), and the opportunity to see wildlife and to study the processes, which formed this country are all attractions. The area contains seven inventoried recreation places, which cover 13,215 acres (27 percent) of the roadless area.

(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary: The north part of Sukkwan Island was non-National Forest System land in 1989. Most of this area has been acquired by the National Forest and is now part of the roadless area. Those areas are split estate where the subsurface rights are non-National Forest System.

II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness: The roadless area is unmodified. Its natural integrity and apparent naturalness is outstanding. The roadless area is suitable for wilderness classification based on its apparent naturalness.

(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation: The area has moderate opportunity for solitude and high opportunity for primitive recreation. Persons visiting the roadless area are unlikely to encounter others during their entire stay. Visitors may occasionally be disturbed by floatplane and boat traffic into and out of Hydaburg and in the surrounding waterways.

The roadless area contains some steep, rugged terrain, rising to over 2,000 feet in elevation. The steep nature of portions of the area, its size, the lack of developed trails, and the presence of black bears presents a degree of challenge and the need for woods skills and experience. However, most of the roadless area has relatively gentle topography, is close to the community of Hydaburg, and is less challenging to cross. Overall, the roadless area is less challenging than many other, more remote roadless areas.

The area has good opportunity for primitive recreation, particularly on the outside shores of Sukkwan Island in the Dunbar Inlet area. 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)	25,022	50%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	10,890	22%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	13,739	28%
Roaded Modified (RM)	7	0%

The area contains seven inventoried recreation places, which cover 13,215 acres (27 percent) of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places	Total Acres
P	3	8,240
SPNM	1	2,673
SPM	3	2,302
RM	0	0

There are no developed recreation facilities in the roadless area.

(3) Wilderness Attribute Rating System: In 1977, the Forest Service, along with public interest groups, developed the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS), which was used to inventory the wilderness characteristics of roadless areas during the second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation 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 Sukkwan Roadless Area was 23 out of 28 possible points. The 1989 rating was re-evaluated for this updated version of the AMS. Based on this re-evaluation, the area was also given a rating of 23.

(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values: The ecological conditions on in the roadless area are nearly pristine. There are no known unique geologic features.

(a) Fish Resources: The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) listed VCUs 632, 671, and 672 (Goat Island and northern two-thirds of Sukkwan Islands) as primary salmon producers. VCU 672 (northeastern quarter of Sukkwan Island) was also listed as a primary sportfish producer.

The streams and lakes in this area provide habitat for coho, pink, and chum salmon and steelhead trout. There are several unnamed Class I streams on Sukkwan Island, draining into Dunbar Inlet, Kasook Inlet, and Hetta Inlet (ADF&G, 2000). West Dunbar Inlet has an estimated annual peak escapement of 26,700 pink salmon and good coho production (ADF&G, 1998). Streams on Goat Island are inhabited by coho, pink, and chum salmon. Eek Lake has runs of coho and pink salmon (ADF&G, 2000).

(b) Wildlife Resources: This area has high populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, wolves, river otter, marten, mink, loon, and common waterfowl. Marine mammals are common on the small islands. Brown bear, moose and mountain goats are not found on these islands (MacDonald and Cook, 1999).

(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. Three Forest Service Region 10 Sensitive Species are suspected or known to occur within the area: the trumpeter swan, Peale's peregrine falcon, and the Queen Charlotte goshawk. Trumpeter swans nest in the lowlands on small lakes and along large rivers and winter in ice-free areas throughout the Tongass. Peale's peregrine falcons nest on cliff faces and islands and feed primarily on seabirds. Inhabitants of late seral forests, Queen Charlotte goshawks are closely associated with productive old growth. In addition, nine sensitive plant species are known or suspected to occur in the Craig Ranger District.

(d) Karst, Cave, and Other Geologic Resources: The mapped low vulnerability karst resources encompass approximately 112 acres or less than one percent of the roadless area. There are no known glaciers or unique geologic features.

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(5) Scientific and Educational Values: There are no known special features within this roadless area. Its close proximity to a population center offers a convenient opportunity to study unaltered ecological processes.

(6) Scenic Values: The area is part of the Coastal Hills character type, which is characterized by moderately-steep landforms, predominantly rounded summits, elevations up to 4,500 feet, and flat-floored, U-shaped valleys. The Sukkwan Roadless Area exhibits more moderate topography than is common in the character type. The highest point is 2,160 feet. It also possesses a wide variety of island clusters and prominent bays. This area possesses more than what is common for this character type.

The roadless area appears natural when viewed from major and minor water travel routes and from inside the area. Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan that are within or adjacent to the area, include: Hydaburg Road #13, the small boat route from Ulloa Channel to Hydaburg, the saltwater use area around Hydaburg and south through Sukkwan Strait, and the community of Hydaburg.

The majority of the roadless area, approximately 91 percent, was inventoried as Variety Class B, which possesses landscape diversity common to the character type. The notable scenic features are the diverse clusters of islands and coves, particularly in the Dunbar Inlet area. Approximately 9 percent of the area was not inventoried for Variety Class type.

Most of this area, approximately 90 percent, was inventoried as Existing Visual Condition Type I, where the natural landscape has remained unaltered by human activity. Approximately 9 percent was not inventoried for EVC.

(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values: South Prince of Wales Island and the islands to the southwest were inhabited by the Tlingit until the Haida, who migrated north from the Queen Charlotte Islands, displaced them in the early 1700s. Since then, the islands that make up the roadless area have been within the principal traditional-use area of the Haida. Because of this history, the Haida Native Corporation made extensive land selections in this area including all of Goat Island and portions of Sukkwan Island. Subsequently, Goat Island and adjacent small islands were obtained by the federal government as part of the Haida Land Exchange. The area receives dispersed recreation use, primarily in the saltwater use areas. No outfitter/guide permits were issued for the area in 2000. Hydaburg area residents participate in some subsistence activities in the roadless area. Only VCU 632 (northern third of Goat Island) is listed among the VCUs with the highest community fish and wildlife values and none are listed among the second or third most important groups of VCUs. All VCUs were listed among those VCUs with the highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas (ADF&G, 1998).

(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes: The boundaries of this roadless area consist primarily of saltwater shorelines. The exceptions are the lands around Kasook Lake and Kasook Inlet and the northern tip of Sukkwan Island. These are non-National Forest System lands. The boundaries with these inholdings are not well defined by topographic features. These are relatively small areas and would not prevent the roadless area being managed as a wilderness within its current boundaries. Subsurface rights on Goat Island, as well as adjacent small islands and the northern portion of Sukkwan Island, create encumbrances on those National Forest System lands.

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. The roadless area is close to Hydaburg, which is approximately 30 miles by road from Hollis (a stop on the Alaska Marine Highway). There is the potential for some of the tourists visiting Prince of Wales Island to be drawn to fish, hunt, and camp in the roadless area. This general area is identified as the southern end of a potential kayak route along the west coast of Prince of Wales Island. There are several identified dispersed campsites and potential public recreation cabin sites in the bays and inlets or islands on the west side of Sukkwan Island. The area has a few good anchorages for large boats. The roadless area has three lakes in the southern portion of Sukkwan Island that may be attractive as recreation sites if trails were developed linking the lakes to the Kasook Inlet.

In 1996, the Alaska Visitors Association proposed a backcountry recreation lodge to accommodate 480 people in Kasook Inlet.

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

(3) **Fish Resources:** There are no fish habitat improvement projects planned in the roadless area.

(4) **Wildlife Resources:** There are no wildlife habitat improvement projects planned in the roadless area.

(5) **Timber Resources:** There are 19,801 acres inventoried as productive old-growth forest and 76 acres of second-growth forest are mapped in the roadless area. Of this, approximately 17,346 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), 1,829 acres (4 percent) of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 429 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 74 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

Managing timber in most of the roadless area would require developing a road system and LTFs. Timber management has not occurred to date because of its lack of good access and uncertainty of long-term ownership.

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

(7) **Minerals:** Mineral development potential is very low. There are two explored prospects for copper on southern Sukkwan Island (USGS Mineral Resources Data website, 2001). This area contains an estimated 48,429 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources (Brew et al., 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991); 7,556 of these acres are considered to have moderate potential for development. Recently acquired lands in the north part of Sukkwan Island are split estate, where the subsurface rights are not owned by the National Forest System.

(8) **Transportation and Utilities:** There are no proposed transportation or utility corridors in the roadless area. An existing transportation corridor and potential utility corridor is located across Sukkwan Strait along the Prince of Wales coastline.

(9) **Water Availability and Use:** There are no developed 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:** The mapped karst resources encompass approximately 112 acres or less than one percent of the roadless area. There are no other known areas of scientific interest in the roadless area.

(11) **Land Use Authorizations:** There are no special use permits or other land use authorizations in the roadless area.

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(12) **Land Status:** Native Corporation selections within the roadless area are located in Kasook Inlet and Lake, as well as the northern tip of Sukkwon Island. There are also Native Corporation subsurface rights on all of Goat Island as well as the small adjacent islands and the northern reaches of Sukkwon Island. The State of Alaska has three inholdings in the southern part of the Island. There are two additional parcels of land on Sukkwon Island that are owned by Haida Village Corporation.

IV. Wilderness Evaluation (Need for Wilderness)

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

(a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** Both the Haida Native people and the Haida Native Corporation have a strong interest in the future of this area because of its historic occupancy by the Haida and because of adjacent corporation land selections.

(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 Sukkwon Roadless Area. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed managing the roadless area as LUD II in an unroaded condition.

(c) **Public Input During Forest Plan Revision and Appeals:** The City of Hydaburg recommended that the South Pass area should be managed for scenic quality, recreation, and not for intensive timber management. They recommended that Sukkwon Island be managed for primitive recreation or old-growth habitat. The Alaska Forest Association, the Alaska Miners Association, and the Alaska Visitors Association recommended that no new wilderness be designated on the 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 were available for the roadless area.

(f) **Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process:** SEACC recommended the Sukkwon Island complex for long-term protection. The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) recommended Roadless Area 504 for permanent protection as LUD II.

The city of Pelican passed a resolution stating that the important watersheds identified as areas of special interest in the 1999 ROD and HR 987 should given long-term protection.

The President of the Hydaburg Cooperative Association spoke “against the wilderness plans for the south end of Prince of Wales Island” during the Craig Hearing.

A number of individual commenters identified Sukkwon Island as an area in need of protection. Some individuals recommended this area for permanent protection as wilderness.

(2) **Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses:** The area is separated from other roadless areas by saltwater. The Dall Roadless Area (501) is several miles to the west and south, across Tlevak Strait. The Soda Bay Roadless area (505) is just north of Goat Island, across North Pass on Prince of Wales Island. The Hydaburg Roadless Area (533) is about 2 miles to the east, across Sukkwon Strait on Prince of Wales Island. The Nutkwa Roadless Area (531) is about 4 miles to the southeast, also on Prince of Wales Island. The South Prince of Wales Wilderness is adjacent to (and southeast of) the Nutkwa Roadless Area. Recreation and subsistence are the main uses in these areas. Use levels are generally low.

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

Community	Air Miles	Water Miles
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	220	250
Ketchikan (Pop. 14,070)	50	90
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	90	150
Petersburg (Pop. 3,324)	110	150

Hollis, the closest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway, is approximately 30 miles by road from Hydaburg.

(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System: The Sukkwan Roadless Area is located approximately 1 mile across the Sukkwan Strait from Hydaburg, which is on Prince of Wales Island. The area consists of Sukkwan Island, Goat Island, Blanket Island, Jackson Island, the McFarland Islands, and numerous small islands. The area is characterized by low elevation, gently rolling topography; however, there are also steep, rugged areas. The highest point is 2,160 feet.

The roadless area is unmodified. Its natural integrity and apparent naturalness is outstanding. The area has moderate opportunity for solitude and high opportunity for primitive recreation. Persons visiting the roadless area are unlikely to encounter others during their entire stay. Visitors may occasionally be disturbed by floatplane and boat traffic into and out of Hydaburg and in the surrounding waterways.

None of the area is rated as distinctive for the character type from a visual perspective, but it has a wide variety of island clusters and prominent bays, which is more than is typical for this character type.

The roadless area includes about 6,380 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, approximately 1,852 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The roadless area is in the North Central Prince of Wales Island Biogeographic Province and makes up about 3 percent of the province. It is one of 15 inventoried roadless areas found in the province and that make up about 44 percent of the province. Unlike much of the province, the area has very little karst and no other outstanding or unique features. The Sukkwan Roadless Area forms the southern-most tip of the province and does not include any of Prince of Wales Island. The Karta River Wilderness represents about 3 percent of the province. This province also contains the Mt. Calder-Mt. Holbrook, Pt. Baker-Pt. Protection, and the Salmon Bay Congressionally-designated LUD II areas, which make up about 5 percent of the province, and are managed to remain roadless.

The Sukkwan Roadless Area lies within two ecological sections; it represents 5 percent of the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands Ecological Section and 0.1 percent of the Outer Islands Fjordlands Ecological Section. Both of these ecological sections include moderately sized areas in existing wilderness (13 and 10 percent, respectively) and existing LUD II (8 and 17 percent, respectively), and are well represented by other existing non-development LUDs (33 and 36 percent, respectively).

The vast majority (99 percent) of the roadless area is in the Soda Bay Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 33 percent of the entire ecological subsection, none of which is in existing wilderness or LUD II, but 44 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs. The remainder (1 percent) of the roadless area is in the Dall-Outside Complex Ecological Subsection; this portion represents only 0.1 percent of the entire ecological subsection, 19 percent of which is protected in existing LUD II and 40 percent in other existing non-development LUDs.

The Sukkwan Roadless Area is rated at 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 some local and national support for managing the roadless area in an unroaded condition, but there is little support for designating the area as a wilderness. The WARS score is high, relative to other areas of Southeast Alaska and the biogeographic province, but the area has no outstanding or unique features, such as significant karst

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features or outstanding scenery, which are not well represented elsewhere in the province. However, designation of the area would add long-term Congressional protection to about 33 percent of the Soda Bay Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection, which currently contains no areas with long-term Congressional protection. The WARS score is more related to the undeveloped nature and relative size of the area. This portion of the province is made up of smaller islands and not as representative of the larger Prince of Wales Island, which makes up most of the province. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be moderate.

V. Environmental Consequences

The Sukkwan Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, or 4 is implemented. Approximately 64 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur in the remaining 36 percent; however, the potential for developing timber is relatively good. The land in the development LUD provides an estimated 1,829 acres that are suitable for timber production (3 percent of the suitable acres on the Craig Ranger District). Approximately 74 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. Mineral development potential is very low. There are two explored prospects for copper on southern Sukkwan Island. This area contains an estimated 48,429 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources; 7,556 of these acres are considered to have moderate potential for development. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area could be affected by timber management activities allowed on Sukkwan Island by the Forest Plan.

Alternatives 5 or 7 would convert about one-third of the area to Recommended Wilderness, which would also reduce the area in the development LUD by about 44 percent. Timber harvest would not be allowed in the Recommended Wilderness LUD and the area suitable for timber production would be reduced to 1,091 acres. The potential for other development, including recreation, mineral, and hydroelectric, could be restricted. Mineral prospecting and development could continue until areas are designated as wilderness by Congress. Designation of the area would add long-term Congressional protection to a portion of the Soda Bay Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection, which currently contains no areas with long-term Congressional protection. The values associated with the natural settings of the southern part of Sukkwan Island portion of the roadless area would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Under Alternative 6, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended LUD II. Mineral prospecting and development and recreation developments could continue, but no timber harvest would be allowed. Designation of the area would add long-term Congressional protection to about 33 percent of the Soda Bay Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection, which currently contains no areas with long-term Congressional protection. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area would be provided long-term protection if designated LUD II.

With Alternative 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. Timber harvest would not be allowed, and the potential for other development, including recreation, mineral, and hydroelectric, would be significantly restricted. Mineral prospecting and development would be allowed up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. Designation of the area would add long-term Congressional protection to about 33 percent of the Soda Bay Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection, which currently contains no areas with long-term Congressional protection. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 504 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness					16,142		16,142	49,759
Wilderness								
Recommended Wilderness Nat. Mon.								
Wilderness National Monument								
Non-wilderness National Monument								
Research Natural Area								
Special Interest Area								
Remote Recreation	1,184	1,184	1,184	1,184				
Enacted Municipal Watershed								
Old-growth Habitat	13,735	13,735	13,735	13,735	7,864		7,864	
Semi-remote Recreation	16,806	16,806	16,806	16,806	15,740		15,740	
Recommended LUD II						49,759		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed								
Modified Landscape								
Timber production	18,034	18,034	18,034	18,034	10,013		10,013	
TOTAL	49,759	49,759	49,759	49,759	49,759	49,759	49,759	49,759
Suitable Timber Lands	1,829	1,829	1,829	1,829	1,091	0	1,091	0