

# Appendix C

## INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

**ROADLESS AREA NAME:** Spires (202)

**ACRES (NFS):** 542,829

**BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE:** Central Coast Range and Ice Fields

**ECOLOGICAL SECTION:** Boundary Ranges and Inside Passage Fjordlands

**2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING:** 26 (27)

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

(1) **Location and Access:** The Spires Roadless Area is located on the mainland, from the Port Houghton drainage and Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wilderness on the north to the Stikine-LeConte Wilderness on the south. It is adjacent to Frederick Sound on the southwest and to the Canadian border on the east. Two other inventoried roadless areas border the area to the west, Fanshaw (201) and Windham-Port Houghton (308). The roadless area is approximately 10 air miles northeast of Petersburg, which is on the Alaska Marine Highway and has air service. The area is accessed by boat on saltwater and by floatplane on saltwater and several freshwater lakes. Anchorages are available in Farragut and Thomas Bays. Accessible shorelines suitable for landing small craft and floatplanes are found in both bays. There are no sites suitable for landing wheeled aircraft. Commercial helicopter landings in support of tourism activities occur in the ice fields of the area. There is no ferry service or road access to the area from outside, but there is road access from the south end of Thomas Bay at Point Agassiz to the Muddy and Patterson Rivers. Vehicles are typically transported via landing craft from Petersburg. Interior access is by foot or helicopter. There are several trails leading from saltwater inland.

(2) **History:** The Farragut and Thomas Bay areas are in the traditional territory of the Stikine Tlingit. A variety of archaeological sites exist in the area, including prehistoric period villages, camps, petroglyphs, and culturally-modified trees. Historic period use is rather extensive, especially at Point Agassiz, where a homestead community was established during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Homesteads are also located at the mouth of the Farragut River. The Gardner Shrimp Company cannery was established on Ruth Island in Thomas Bay in 1916. In 1958, logging began in the Muddy and Patterson River drainages. Beach logging occurred in Farragut Bay, on Point Vandeput, and at Wood Point. Gravel was excavated near the mouth of the Muddy River on a commercial basis for several years. Mining activities have occurred in the Thomas Bay area.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** The area is generally characterized as highly complex terrain dominated by rugged mountains, many of which reach elevations of more than 5,000 feet. The tallest peak is over 9,000 feet. Between the mountains are deep valleys and numerous glaciers. About 237,931 acres are mapped as ice and snow, 132,583 acres are classified as rock, and another 2,905 acres as alpine. Near the shore, the landforms become gentler and include large outwash plains from the Farragut, Muddy, and Patterson Rivers. These rivers are rather short (4 to 12 miles) and of glacial origin. Dominant waterforms include two major saltwater bays and several high-elevation lakes totaling approximately 4,762 acres. Swan, Spurt, DeBoer, Scenery, Ruth, Farragut, and Glory Lakes are all in this roadless area. The area contains 84 miles of saltwater shoreline with approximately 1,537 acres of islands and islets.

(4) **Ecosystem:** The Patterson Glacier Geological and Botanical Area is a Special Interest Area with a glacial history that includes outstanding examples of plant succession and other interesting glacial-related features.

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. The Spires Roadless Area is in two biogeographic provinces (Central Coast Range and Ice Fields Biogeographic Provinces). The lower elevation (southwestern) portion of the Spires Roadless Area is classified as being in the Central Coast Range Biogeographic Province. The area is characterized by broad, low-lying valleys and several steeply rising peaks. Productive forest lands exist in river bottoms and on mountain slopes. Vegetation ranges from

sub-alpine to saltwater marshes. This province is warmer than the northern coast range province and the topography is less precipitous. The Stikine River system is located south of the Spires Roadless Area in the center of the province and has a major continental influence, providing a migration corridor for plant and animal species. The upper elevation (northeastern) portion of the Spires Roadless Area is classified as being in the Ice Fields Biogeographic Province. This province is dominated by ice fields, active glaciers, and nunataks (mountain peaks between the glaciers). The roadless area contains a large area of highly vulnerable karst. There are no unique plant or soil associations in the roadless area.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Spires Roadless Area is contained mostly within the Boundary Ranges Ecological Section (M246B) and also contains portions within the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247E). These areas are represented by five ecological subsections (see table below). The Boundary Ranges Icefields Ecological Subsection represents the majority, about 78 percent, of the Spires Roadless Area. A northwest-southeast trending batholith of resistant granite and granodiorite underlies this portion of the Coast Mountains. It consists of a discontinuous mix of icefields and glaciers separated by river valleys and pierced by nunataks and scree fields. Forests make up a minor part of the vegetation along coasts and rivers. Of the four lower elevation subsections that form the Inside Passage Fjordlands portion of the roadless area, the Holkham Bay Complex is the most prevalent at 12 percent of the roadless area. This subsection contains rounded, yet somewhat rugged glaciated mountains with forested slopes on mostly productive soils. Poorly drained soils dominate the lowlands and rolling hills and glacial till is generally absent (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Boundary Ranges	Boundary Ranges Icefields	78%
Inside Passage Fjordlands	Cape Fanshaw Complex	2%
	Holkham Bay Complex	12%
	Thomas Bay Outwash Plains	2%
	Eastern Passage Complex	5%

**(b) Soils:** Soils in this area are formed in a wide variety of parent material, including bedrock and glacial drift. In general, well-drained 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.

More poorly-drained soils developed on less sloping areas and/or areas with impermeable soil materials. These soils have deep accumulations of organic matter and range from scrubby forested wetlands to open muskeg. Alpine soils, generally above an elevation of 2,000 feet, are mostly shallow, very wet organic soils or are extremely shallow and rocky.

**(c) Vegetation:** Alpine vegetation (mapped as 2,905 acres) dominates above an elevation of 2,500 feet. Below that elevation, the mountains, hills, and well-drained outwash plains are dominated by heavy stands of western hemlock, Sitka spruce, and Alaska yellow-cedar. Some of the low-lying, poorly-drained land is covered with muskeg (mapped as 1,148 acres) supporting shore pine and cedar. Spruce trees are also typically found as stringers along the streams.

There are approximately 137,665 acres mapped as forest land of which 68,044 acres or 49 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 31,965 acres or 47 percent are mapped as high-volume, old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 3,489 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are about 895 acres of second-growth forest where beach harvest has occurred in the past.

**(d) Fish:** Thirteen Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) numbered salmon-producing streams are present within the area. The Farragut River, the Muddy River, and Dry Bay Creek are the best salmon producers. There are runs of pink, chum, coho, sockeye, and chinook salmon, as well as and

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steelhead, rainbow, and cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char in the Farragut River (ADF&G, 2000). Marine and intertidal waters support significant populations of Tanner crab, Dungeness crab, King crab, and various species of shrimp and clams.

(e) **Wildlife:** A population of mountain goats lives in the area. Black bears, wolves and Sitka black-tailed deer are found in the area, as well as an occasional brown bear and a moderate population of moose. The mountain lion is not known to be in this area, but is present in small numbers on the mainland. It is probably migrating into Southeast Alaska from Canada using the large rivers, such as the Stikine River, as corridors.

Furbearers and other small mammals include; mink, river otters, beaver, marten, ermine, lynx, red squirrel, northern flying squirrel, porcupine, mice, shrew, and voles. There are occasional sightings of fisher and wolverine but they are at the edge of their range and are considered an incidental species. Bats are present during the summer months and occasionally over winter in man-made structures.

Bald eagles, northern goshawks, merlin, red-tailed hawks, sharp-shinned hawks, great horned owls, western screech owls, saw-whet owls, and pigmy owls all are found in this area. Numerous ducks, geese, sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, marbled murrelets, and great blue herons all occur on the mainland both during migration and, in some cases, nesting. Spruce grouse, blue grouse, and ptarmigan are known to occur on the mainland.

Small forest-dwelling birds that are known to occur on the mainland include; the red-throated, Pacific and common loon, and several plover, yellowlegs, and sandpiper species. Two swift species, one hummingbird species, four woodpecker species, three flycatcher species, and five swallow species are also known on the mainland. Steller's jay, black-billed magpie, northwestern crow, and common raven all occur. Chestnut-backed chickadee, red-breasted nuthatch, brown creeper, winter wren, American dipper, golden-crowned kinglet, ruby-crowned kinglet, Swainson's thrush, and hermit thrush occur. The American robin, varied thrush, American pipit, cedar waxwing, northern shrike, warbling vireo, and five warbler species occur. Additionally, the northern water thrush, common yellow throat, western tanager, dark-eyed junco, Lapland longspur, snow bunting, red-winged blackbird, rusty blackbird, brown-headed cowbird, eight sparrow species, pine grosbeak, red crossbill, white-winged crossbill, common redpoll, and pine siskin are found.

Several amphibians are known to occur on the mainland. They are rough-skinned newts, western toad, and spotted frog. The rough-skinned newt is found primarily in lacustrine, palustrine, hemlock/spruce forests, and muskeg bog ecosystems. The western toad is also found primarily in lacustrine, palustrine, hemlock/spruce forests and in clearcuts. Spotted frogs are found primarily in lacustrine, palustrine ecosystems and normally found in large river systems like the Stikine River.

Sea mammals known to inhabit the waters surrounding the mainland are the Pacific white-sided dolphin, orca whale, harbor porpoise, Dall's porpoise, humpback whale, Steller sea lion, and harbor seal.

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

LUD	Acres
Scenic Viewshed	19,235
Timber Production	19,424
Modified Landscape	12,176
Semi-remote Recreation	456,924
Special Interest Area	13,760
Wild River	13,186
Old-growth Habitat	8,124

Approximately 9 percent of the roadless area, near Frederick Sound, was allocated to development LUDs (Scenic Viewshed, Timber Production, Modified Landscape). The Timber Production LUD was assigned to approximately 4 percent of the roadless area. One area of the Timber Production LUD is east of the Farragut River at Dry Bay and one is south of Thomas Bay. Approximately 4 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Scenic Viewshed LUD. These areas are located along Frederick Sound and in Upper Delta Creek. The Modified Landscape LUD was assigned to approximately 2 percent of the roadless area.

Most of the roadless area, approximately 91 percent, was allocated to non-development LUDs (Semi-remote Recreation, Special Interest Area, Wild River, and Old-growth Habitat). Approximately 84 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Semi-remote Recreation LUD. Approximately 3 percent of the roadless area, in the southern part of the area, was allocated to the Special Interest Area LUD. Land in the Special Interest LUD creates the Patterson Glacier Geological and Botanical Area. This Special Interest Area has unique geological and botanical features that are protected for public use, study, and enjoyment. The Farragut River, Farragut Lake, and Glory Lake are allocated to the Farragut River Wild River LUD, which accounts for approximately 2 percent of the roadless area. Approximately 1 percent of the roadless area was allocated to the Old-growth Habitat LUD.

Recreation uses include moose, deer, black bear, mountain goat, and waterfowl hunting; coho salmon, pink salmon, steelhead, and trout fishing; sea kayaking; boating; camping; hiking; beachcombing; helicopter skiing; cross-country skiing; snowmobiling; sightseeing; flightseeing; mountain climbing; tour boat use; and recreation cabin use. Thomas and Farragut Bays are frequently used by recreational boaters and commercial fishing boats. There are four public recreation cabins in this area, two on the shores of Thomas Bay, one cabin at Swan Lake, and one at DeBoer Lake. Trails in the area include the Cascade Creek Trail (4.5 miles) and the Spurt Lake Trail (1.1 miles). There are no commercial overnight facilities in the area. Moose hunting is popular during the fall. Current information indicates that some subsistence activities occur, primarily from residents of Petersburg.

The Crystal Creek Timber Sale is currently under contract, and will extend the existing road system into the roadless area and harvest timber in the Muddy and Patterson River drainages as well as the Crystal Creek drainage. The log transfer facility, most of the road construction, and the timber harvest units are currently under contract. Other timber sales are planned according to the Crystal Creek Timber Harvest FEIS (USDA Forest Service, 1998). Additional timber harvest projects in this area are on the 10-year timber sale schedule.

**(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness):** Most of the area appears unmodified. However, the timber management developments around Thomas Bay and in the Muddy and Patterson River valleys give the adjacent roadless area a modified appearance.

**(7) Surroundings (External Influences):** The roadless area is part of a very large unroaded area extending along the mainland from the Misty Fiords National Monument Wilderness in the south to Glacier Bay National Park in the north. This extensive roadless area borders unroaded areas to the north and east in Canada. The roadless area abuts the Fanshaw Roadless Area and the Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wilderness on the north and the Stikine-LeConte Wilderness on the south. Land across the Canadian border to the east is mostly rugged mountains and glaciers. Moderately heavy boat traffic passes along the southwest of the roadless area in Frederick Sound and in Thomas and Farragut Bays. Evidence of timber harvest in the Muddy and Patterson River valleys and along one slope of Farragut Bay is visible from some locations within the roadless area. Inhabited and abandoned buildings on the private land adjoining the area may be visible from some places in the roadless area. Jet aircraft approaching Petersburg occasionally pass over portions of the area at elevations of less than 10,000 feet. Small aircraft may land on lakes in parts of the roadless area. Small aircraft and helicopters fly over the area on flightseeing tours, and approximately 750 helicopter landings for tourism activities are permitted.

**(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest:** Thomas Bay and, to a slightly lesser degree, Farragut Bay, are destination attractions for residents of Petersburg. The public recreation cabins, the saltwater fishing, the outstanding scenery, opportunities to hunt waterfowl, mountain goats, and moose, opportunities to run small boats on the Farragut River, and the opportunity to walk the trails and logging roads are special features. This area also offers opportunities for mountain climbing and backcountry skiing. The glaciers are popular for flightseeing via helicopter or airplanes. Patterson Glacier Geological and Botanical Special Interest Area has outstanding examples of plant succession in its geologic history and other interesting glacial-related features. The public recreation cabins

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at DeBoer and Swan Lakes offer fly-in trips and freshwater fishing opportunities. The area contains 21 inventoried recreation places that cover 15,672 acres, or 3 percent of the roadless area. There are approximately 6 miles of improved trails in the area. The presence of good anchorage sites allows boaters to stay in the area overnight.

**(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary:** Some areas along the shore that have been beach logged but not roaded have been added to the roadless area. Small adjustments have been made to the boundary along the developed areas between the Draft and Final SEIS to improve manageability in those areas.

### II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

**(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness:** Nearly all of the roadless area is unmodified and natural appearing. The exceptions are the areas adjacent to the Thomas Bay/Muddy and lower Patterson River valleys. Because of its overwhelmingly natural state, this area is suitable for wilderness classification.

**(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation:** There is a high opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation within the area. At times, low-flying airplanes or helicopters may disrupt visitors for brief periods. Passing boats are generally far enough offshore so as not to cause any distraction. Present recreation use levels are low except in the immediate vicinity of the public recreation cabins, along the shoreline, or at flightseeing destinations. Generally, a person camped inland is unlikely to see others. The character of the landforms generally allows the visitor to feel remote from the sights and sounds of human activity.

Accessing the roadless area by boat from the community of Petersburg requires a 1- to 2-hour crossing on exposed waters. While there are trails accessing some portions of the roadless area, much of the area is extremely difficult to cross. 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 primitive and semi-primitive 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)	446,211	82%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	69,036	13%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	23,066	4%
Roaded Modified (RM)	4,415	1%

The area contains 21 inventoried recreation places that cover 15,168 acres, or 3 percent of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places	Total Acres
P	3	5,357
SPNM	4	1,392
SPM	12	5,851
RM	2	2,567

There are four public recreation cabins, two maintained trails, and two abandoned trails.

**(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 Spires Roadless Area was given a rating of 27 out of 28 possible points. The rating was re-evaluated for this updated version of the Analysis of the Management Situation. Based on this re-evaluation, the area was given a rating of 26, which reflects the use and developments associated with Thomas Bay/Muddy and Patterson Rivers and the public recreation cabins in the area. A rating of 27 was achieved when the Thomas Bay/Muddy and Patterson Rivers area developments were separated from the roadless area.

**(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values:** This roadless area is part of a region of several adjoining roadless areas and wilderness areas that extend along the mainland from the Misty Fiords National Monument Wilderness in the south to Glacier Bay National Park in the north. This extensive unroaded area borders other unroaded areas to the north and east in Canada. The Patterson Glacier Geological and Botanical Special Interest Area has an outstanding example of plant succession in its glacial history and has other interesting glacial-related features.

**(a) Fish Resources:** The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment rated VCUs 90, around Farragut Bay, and 489, at the entrance to Thomas Bay as primary salmon producers. VCUs 481, 486, and 488, mostly interior VCUs, are listed as non-producers of salmon. None of the VCUs are listed as primary producers of sportfish (ADF&G, 1998).

Thirteen ADF&G numbered salmon producing streams are present within the area. The Farragut River, Muddy River, and Dry Bay Creek are the best salmon producers. There are runs of pink, chum, coho, sockeye and chinook salmon, as well as steelhead, rainbow, and cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char in the Farragut (ADF&G, 2000). The Farragut River has high commercial and sport fish values, with an estimated annual peak escapement of 22,000 pink salmon, as well as high scenic and wildlife values. This river has a significant chinook salmon run and the lower ten miles is considered high quality fish habitat. The headwaters of the Muddy River are located in this roadless area. This river has an estimated annual peak escapement of 30,800 pink salmon and a significant run of chum salmon. Dry Bay Creek has an average annual peak escapement of 13,500 pink and 2,000 chum salmon. Coho salmon, Dolly Varden char, and steelhead are also present. A good number of rainbow trout are available in Swan Lake. The Anadromous Waters Catalogue and Atlas (ADF&G, 2000) also shows anadromous fish habitat in Scenery Creek, Patterson River, Ess Lake, and Brown Cove Lake. Scenery Creek has habitat for coho, chum, and pink salmon; steelhead; and Dolly Varden char. Ess Lake, and portions of the Patterson River that lie in this roadless area, provide habitat for coho salmon and Dolly Varden char. Brown Cove Lake provides habitat for Dolly Varden char and cutthroat trout. Marine and intertidal areas support high commercial, personal use, and recreational fisheries for Tanner, Dungeness, and King crab, and various species of shrimp and other shellfish.

**(b) Wildlife Resources:** A small population of mountain goats lives in the area. Black bears, Sitka black-tailed deer, and a relatively high density of wolves are found in the area, as well as an occasional brown bear and a moderate population of moose, marten, and beaver. Patterson River supports the highest density of moose in Southeast Alaska. Waterfowl use the extensive grassflats at the head of Farragut Bay and smaller areas around Thomas Bay, and nesting Canada geese are common near Thomas Bay. Moose and mountain goats are important species for sport hunting and subsistence. There are several northern goshawk nesting sites in the area. The humpback whale and the Steller sea lion use the marine waters adjacent to the roadless area, although there are no sea lion haulout sites or other concentrations of marine wildlife in the vicinity of this roadless area. Based on harvest data compiled from 1985 to 1995, one of the VCUs, 90, surrounding Farragut Bay, was ranked in the second 25 percent of brown bear harvest areas on the Tongass.

**(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:

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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. Ospreys have nested at Thomas Bay and have been seen at Swan Lake. 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. Several goshawk nests have been found in the area. In addition, 12 sensitive plant species are known or suspected to occur in the Petersburg Ranger District.

**(d) Karst, Cave, and Other Geologic Resources:** There is a relatively large area of high vulnerable karst east of Thomas Bay near Foote Peak and Cosmos Range, and two smaller areas near House Peak. There are 2,796 acres, or less than 1 percent of the roadless area, mapped as karst resources. There are numerous glaciers in this area, including Baird Glacier, Oasis Glacier, Witches Cauldron, Patterson Glacier, and portions of LeConte Glacier. Patterson Glacier Geological and Botanical Special Interest Area has a geological history that includes an outstanding example of plant succession and other interesting glacial-related features. There are a few small outcrops of metacarbonate rocks east of Thomas Bay. These outcrops are currently being mapped by the U.S. Geological Survey.

**(5) Scientific and Educational Values:** Besides outstanding scenery, there are opportunities to observe a wide spectrum of ecological progressions, from bare rock at the face of receding glaciers to climax stands of old-growth forest, all within a short geographic distance and relatively close to Petersburg. Near Patterson Glacier are the remains of a forest once buried during a glacial advance. The Patterson Glacier Geological and Botanical Special Interest Area provides an opportunity to study plant succession and other glacial-related features. The area near Ess Lake is also the setting for a popular local account of strange phenomena featured in the book "The Strangest Story Ever Told."

**(6) Scenic Values:** The area exists in an unmodified visual condition. Some of the foreground along Frederick Sound and the higher elevation areas are visible from present ferry and small cruise ship routes. At higher elevations, the landscape offers spectacular scenery.

Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan, that are within or adjacent to the area include: Frederick Sound, a part of the Alaska Marine Highway, a tour ship route and a saltwater use area; Farragut and Thomas Bays, saltwater use areas; Farragut River, a dispersed recreation area and a recommended Wild and Scenic River; Scenery Lake, Glory Lake, Swan Lake, DeBoer Lake, Spurt Lake, Scenery Creek to Scenery Lake area, and Dry Bay, which are dispersed recreation areas; Thomas Bay and Spurt Cove, used as boat anchorages; DeBoer and Swan Lake, Spurt Cove, and Cascade Creek, which have Public Recreation Cabins; Spurt Lake Hiking Trail #457; and Cascade Creek Hiking Trail/Falls Lake Shelter #458.

About 83 percent of this roadless area is inventoried Variety Class A (possessing landscape diversity that is unique for the character type). Fifteen percent is inventoried Variety Class B (possessing landscape diversity that is common for the character type), and the remaining 2 percent is Variety Class C (possessing a low degree of landscape diversity).

The majority of this roadless area, 98 percent, is in Existing Visual Condition (EVC) Type I, where only ecological change has occurred. The remaining 2 percent of the area is divided between EVC IV and EVC V, where changes in the landscape are obvious to the average person, and/or appear to be major disturbances.

**(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values:** The Farragut and Thomas Bay areas are in the traditional territory of the Stikine Tlingit. Archaeological sites in the area include villages, camps, petroglyphs, culturally-modified trees, cabins, and historic period trails. In 1958, logging began in the Muddy and Patterson River drainages and continued until recently. Beach logging occurred in Farragut Bay, on Point Vandeput, and at Wood Point. Gravel was excavated near the mouth of Muddy River on a commercial basis for several years. Several homesteads were located near the mouth of Farragut River and on the Point Agassiz Peninsula near Thomas Bay. The Point Agassiz settlement was established during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A schoolhouse was built there in 1920 and remains there today. Several private cabins and homes are still located on private land adjacent to

the roadless area. Thomas Bay and, to a slightly lesser degree, Farragut Bay, are destination attractions for residents of Petersburg. Three VCUs, 486, 487, and 489 that are on the southern shore of Thomas Bay, were among the VCUs listed as highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas. VCU 489, along Frederick Sound up to the entrance to Thomas Bay, was listed among the VCUs in the second most important group for community use values. No VCUs were listed in the most important group (ADF&G, 1998).

**(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundaries Conditions/Changes:** The area is well defined on the southwest by saltwater shoreline, except for the area around the Thomas Bay/Muddy and Patterson Rivers. The topographic divides are, for the most part, well defined. Feasibility of management in a roadless condition is high, except around the Thomas Bay/Muddy and Patterson Rivers. Dropping VCUs 487 and 489, which are mostly development LUDs with existing roads, would establish better-defined boundaries in the southwest. The Spires Roadless Area could be managed with Roadless Areas 201 and 308 to the west in several different logical topographical boundaries. This is especially the case if the portion of Roadless Area 308 that included the Sandborn Canal and Port Houghton watersheds, which contain significant scenic, recreation, fish, wildlife, and geologic resources. However, the relatively high recreation uses, including helicopter landing tours, in the Spires Roadless area and Port Houghton watershed make the areas less desirable for wilderness management.

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

**(1) Recreation, Including Tourism Potential:** The icefields have growth potential for floatplane flightseeing and helicopter tours. Tourism has been increasing in Southeast Alaska and is expected to continue to increase. Petersburg is a hub for this increase in tourism and is expected to continue to be a center of growth. The close proximity of the roadless area to Petersburg is likely to result in an increase in tourist interest in the roadless area. The roadless area currently provides over 1,000 recreation special use permitted service days per year. There is high potential for additional outfitter/guide permits and for additional trails, cabins, or shelters. A trail from Spurt Cove to the Spurt Lake Trail is being considered. The beauty, diversity and accessibility of Thomas Bay make it a promising area for increased sightseeing and excursion trip opportunities.

In 1996, the Alaska Visitor Association (AVA) proposed hut-to-hut rafting, canoeing, kayaking, and a leased proprietary camp with a capacity for 15 camp units on Farragut River. The AVA also proposed a recreation development for Thomas Bay, which included a leased proprietary camp with a capacity of 15 tent platforms. Finally, the AVA proposed a shoreline excursion in the Cascade Creek area for small cruise ship passengers.

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

**(3) Fish Resources:** There is upwelling springs at the mouth of the drainage for Brown's Lake on the Muddy River. There is also potential for a barrier modification project to enhance fish habitat on the Farragut River.

**(4) Wildlife Resources:** No wildlife enhancement projects are currently being considered in the roadless area.

**(5) Timber Resources:** There are approximately 68,044 acres of productive old-growth forest and 895 acres of second growth mapped in the roadless area. Approximately 37,004 acres of the area 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), 6,833 acres, or 1 percent of this roadless area, are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 2,811 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 325 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The potential for managing timber in this roadless area is closely linked to the existing road system near Thomas Bay, or development of additional log transfer facilities (LTF's) in Thomas and Farragut Bays. Any significant amounts of timber harvested from this area would have to be hauled to either of those bays to be placed in the water and towed to a mill. The Crystal Creek Timber Sale is presently under contract to extend the existing road system into the roadless area and harvest timber in the Muddy River, Patterson River, and Crystal Creek drainages. Other timber sales are planned under the Crystal Creek EIS (USDA Forest Service, 1998), and additional projects are planned in the 10-year timber sale schedule.

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- (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:** There has been some mineral exploration in the past. The area within and adjacent to the Patterson River corridor has been identified by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the USGS as having potential for mineral development, but there are no known mining claims. This roadless area contains an estimated 175,756 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.
- (8) **Transportation and Utilities:** There are no transportation corridors proposed in the roadless area. The Scenery Lake and Swan Lake drainages have been identified by the Federal Power Commission as potential hydropower generation sites and are withdrawn from other management considerations. Several proposals have been made over the years to develop the hydropower potential at Swan Lake, but to date no development has taken place and is not likely in the immediate future.
- (9) **Water Availability and Use:** The four existing recreation cabins and a fish camp create a surface water demand in this area. There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects in the Spires Roadless Area.
- (10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** The area contains no Research Natural Areas. There are karst resources in the area, encompassing about 2,796 acres or less than one percent of the roadless area. The Patterson Glacier Geological and Botanical Special Interest Area provides an opportunity to study plant succession and other glacial-related features. Management of the area as wilderness may restrict research activities.
- (11) **Land Use Authorizations:** Forest Service records show that 11 outfitter/guides used this area in 2000 for three service days for freshwater fishing, 313 service days for remote setting nature tours, 17 service days for black bear hunting, 31 service days for mountain goat hunting, and 727 service days for helicopter landing tours.

An isolated recreation residence cabin is authorized near Farragut Bay and a tent platform is authorized near Brown Cove Lake.

- (12) **Land Status:** The entire area is National Forest System land. There is state and private land adjacent to the roadless area, in Thomas Bay (Point Agassiz) and Farragut Bay, and along the lower part of the Farragut River.

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

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

- (a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** Local Petersburg residents have a high degree of interest in how this area is managed. There was a strong protest when the State of Alaska considered subdividing and selling land in Thomas Bay.
- (b) **Congressional Interest:** In 1989, U.S. House of Representatives Bills HR 987 proposed to designate 23 areas as wilderness on the Tongass National Forest. This bill did not include the Spires Roadless Area. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed that the northern portion of the roadless area be designated as part of the Port Houghton-Farragut Bay Wilderness and that the southern portion be designated as the Thomas Bay-Twin Peaks Wilderness.
- (c) **Public Input During Forest Plan Revision and Appeals:** The Southeast Alaska Conservation Council listed Farragut Bay as “meriting special management protection” for its outstanding wildlife, fisheries, hunting, subsistence, recreation, and tourism values. In 1996, the AVA proposed hut-to-hut rafting, canoeing, kayaking, and a leased proprietary camp with a capacity for 15 camp units on the Farragut River. The AVA also proposed a recreation development for Thomas Bay, which included a lease proprietary camp with a capacity of 15 tent platforms. Another suggestion by the AVA was a beach excursion on Cascade Creek for small cruise ship passengers. The Narrows Conservation Coalition and the Juneau Sierra Club mentioned the importance of the area for fishing, recreation, and subsistence. They also

commented on the importance of protecting recreation and commercial anchorage, whale watching, tourism, and crab habitat. Some commenters stressed that the area was visible from cruise ships and shouldn't have visible timber harvest. The Narrows Conservation Coalition recommended that no log transfer facilities be developed at Brown Cove. The timber industry wanted the area managed for timber production. The City of Petersburg supports the continued federal power site designation for Cascade Creek and Scenery Creek in Thomas Bay and urges the Forest Service maintain these designations.

**(d) Public Input During Roadless Area Conservation Rule and Road Management Policy**

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

**(e) Public Input Expressed for Project-level EISs and Other Input:** Comments were received on the Crystal Creek Timber Harvest Project DEIS (USDA Forest Service, 1997). Thirteen persons, agencies, and organizations commented. None of the comments dealt with wilderness or roadless area issues.

**(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.

The city of Kupreanof recommends the entire Port Houghton drainage, Cape Fanshaw, Farrugut Bay and the shoreline from Farrugut Bay to Thomas Bay for designation as wilderness.

The Organized Village of Kake passed a resolution requesting that "customary and traditional areas such as ... Cape Fanshaw/Farrugut Bay (VCUs 860-900), Port Houghton (VCUs 790-840)... be recommended for long-term protection.

The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) identified Roadless Areas 201, 202, 203, and 308 as a contiguous complex of roadless areas that should be considered one roadless area and recommended it for permanent protection as wilderness. SEACC identified the Spires roadless area as part of the Port Houghton/Cape Fanshaw complex (RAs 201, 202, and 308), which should be considered one contiguous roadless area and should be recommended for permanent protection as wilderness. They indicated that if this complex were designated, it would create a contiguous wilderness along the central mainland coast of nearly 2 million acres, making it the second largest Forest Service wilderness in the nation.

A number of cave/karst experts and other individuals stated that the Spires Roadless Area contains approximately 2,800 acres of karst in unforested, alpine or icefield locations, which is unique for the Tongass and should be protected.

Some individuals felt that Spires was deserving of long-term protection. Some recommended it because of world-class scenery, abundant wildlife and habitat, and almost unilateral support for wilderness protection. Some individuals recommended protection for the area from Cape Fanshaw to Thomas Bay.

**(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses:** The roadless area is part of a region of several adjoining roadless areas and wilderness areas that extend along the mainland from the Misty Fiords National Monument Wilderness in the south to Glacier Bay National Park in the north. This extensive unroaded area borders other unroaded areas to the north and east in Canada. The roadless area adjoins the Fanshaw Roadless Area and the Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wilderness on the north and the Stikine-LeConte Wilderness on the south. Land across the Canadian border to the east is mostly rugged mountains and glaciers. Use of the mainland areas can be very high, as is the case for the Juneau Icefield, where tourism accounts for a very high level of use. Other mainland areas receive light use inland with slightly higher use at lakes, or along saltwater shorelines.

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

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<b>Community</b>	<b>Air Miles</b>	<b>Water Miles</b>
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	85	115
Petersburg (Pop. 3,324)	10	20
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	25	50
Ketchikan (Pop. 14,070)	100	145

Petersburg is the nearest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway

**(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System:** The Spires Roadless Area is located on the mainland, from the Port Houghton drainage and Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wilderness on the north to the Stikine-LeConte Wilderness on the south. It is adjacent to Frederick Sound on the southwest and to the Canadian border on the east. The Fanshaw and Windham-Port Houghton Roadless Areas border the area to the west. The area is generally characterized as highly complex terrain dominated by rugged mountains, many of which reach elevations of over 5,000 feet. The tallest is over 9,000 feet. Between the mountains are deep valleys and numerous glaciers. Near the shore, the landforms become gentler and include large outwash plains from Farragut, Muddy, and Patterson Rivers. These rivers are rather short (4 to 12 miles) and of glacial origin.

The area is natural appearing and mostly unmodified, except for southern portion where developments on adjacent lands influence the area to some degree. The natural integrity of the roadless area is outstanding, and the apparent naturalness is very high. The apparent naturalness is rated as outstanding if the southern area is separated from the main part of the roadless area. The opportunity for solitude is very high and the opportunity for primitive recreation is outstanding in the area.

The area has outstanding scenic quality; approximately 83 percent of the landscape is considered distinctive for the character type from a scenery standpoint. Near Patterson Glacier are the remains of a forest once buried during a glacial advance. The Patterson Glacier Geological and Botanical Special Interest Area provide an opportunity to study plant succession and other glacial-related features. There are numerous glaciers in this area, including Baird Glacier, Oasis Glacier, Witches Cauldron, Patterson Glacier and portions of LeConte Glacier. The area also has some areas of karst development.

The roadless area includes about 31,965 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, 3,489 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The Spires Roadless Area lies within the Ice Fields and Central Coast Range Biogeographic Provinces. Approximately 72 percent of the roadless area is within the Ice Fields province and makes up about 13 percent of that province. It is one of nine inventoried roadless areas found in the province that collectively make up about 67 percent of the province. Portions of the Tracy Arm-Fords Terror, Stikine-LeConte, and Misty Fiords National Monument Wilderness also lie within the Ice Fields Province and make up about 33 percent of the province. The remaining 28 percent of the Spires Roadless Area is located within the Central Coast Range Biogeographic Province and makes up about 21 percent of the province. It is one of nine inventoried roadless areas found in the province that collectively make up about 59 percent of the province. Portions of the Stikine-LeConte Wilderness also lie within the Central Coast Range province and make up about 38 percent of the province.

The Spires Roadless Area lies within two ecological sections; it represents 10 percent of the Boundary Ranges Ecological Section and 4 percent of the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section. Both of these ecological sections are well represented by existing wilderness (33 and 20 percent, respectively) and by other existing non-development LUDs (62 and 32 percent, including 1 and 2 percent in LUD II, respectively).

The majority (78 percent) of this roadless area is within the Boundary Ranges Icefields Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 10 percent of the entire ecological subsection. Approximately 32 percent of this ecological subsection is in existing wilderness, 1 percent is in existing LUD II, and 62 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs. The Holkham Bay Complex Ecological Subsection represents 12 percent of the roadless area; this portion of the roadless area represents 13 percent of the entire ecological subsection, which is well represented in existing wilderness (32 percent) and by other existing non-development LUDs (28 percent). Approximately 5 percent of the roadless area is in the Eastern Passage Complex Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 12 percent of the entire ecological subsection, which is well represented in existing

wilderness (23 percent), existing LUD II (3 percent), and other existing non-development LUDs (29 percent). The remaining 5 percent of this roadless area is split between the Thomas Bay Outwash Plains and the Cape Fanshaw Complex Ecological Subsections. The portions of the roadless area represented are 43 and 16 percent of the ecological subsections, respectively. Approximately 0.1 percent of the Cape Fanshaw Complex and none of the Thomas Bay Outwash Plains is in existing wilderness; however, 29 and 25 percent of these ecological subsections are represented in existing non-development LUDs, respectively.

The Spires Roadless Area was rated 26 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> from the highest (along with six other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas. Another rating was done for the roadless area without Thomas Bay/Muddy and Paterson River in the southern portion of the area and it resulted in the higher rating of 27.

There is strong local and national support for managing the area in a roadless condition, and some support for designation of the area as wilderness. Designation would create a large wilderness that would connect the Chuck River, Tracy Arm-Fords Terror, and Stikine-LeConte Wilderness Areas. Designation of the area also would add Congressional protection to about 43 percent of the Thomas Bay Outwash Plains and 16 percent of the Cape Fanshaw Complex Ecological Subsections that have less than 1 percent in wilderness or LUD II. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be very high.

### **V. Environmental Consequences**

The Spires Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, or 5 is implemented. Approximately 91 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur in the remaining 9 percent, mostly within the immediate vicinity of where such activities are ongoing. The exception is east of Farragut Bay along the coastline where some suitable timber lands occur. The land in the development LUDs provides an estimated 6,833 acres that are suitable for timber production (4 percent of the suitable acres on the Petersburg Ranger District). Approximately 325 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. The roadless area contains an estimated 175,756 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources; all of these acres are considered to have low potential for development. The high level of helicopter landings for tourism would continue and likely increase. Timber sale, recreation, minerals, and special uses programs would continue. The large undeveloped area that connects the Stikine-LeConte and Tracy Arm Fords Terror Wildernesses will mostly remain undeveloped. The very high scenic quality associated with the glaciers and mountain peaks, and the Patterson Glacier Botanical and Special Interest Area are protected by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 3, a 500,076-acre portion of the roadless area in Special Interest Area, Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation, Wild/Scenic/Recreation River, Scenic Viewshed, Modified Landscape, and Timber Production LUDs would be converted to Recommended Wilderness LUD. Timber harvest would not be allowed and the potential for other uses and development, including recreation, minerals and some special uses, could be restricted within the Recommended Wilderness LUD area. Lands suitable for timber production in the roadless area would be reduced to approximately 4,784 acres. The high level of helicopter landings for tourism would likely be restricted or phased out, and not allowed if the area is designated wilderness. 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 also would add Congressional protection to a portion of the Thomas Bay Outwash Plains and the Cape Fanshaw Complex Ecological Subsections that have less than 1 percent in wilderness or LUD II. The values associated with the natural settings of the majority of the roadless area would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Under Alternative 4, a 482,864-acre portion of the area in Special Interest Area, Old-growth Habitat, Semi-remote Recreation, and Wild/Scenic/Recreation River LUDs would be converted to Recommended Wilderness LUD. This would not affect timber sale projects because this area is currently allocated to non-development LUDs. Lands suitable for timber production would not change from Alternative 1. The potential for other uses and development, including recreation, minerals and some special uses, could be restricted within the Recommended Wilderness LUD area. The high level of helicopter landings for tourism would likely be restricted or phased out, and not allowed if the area is designated wilderness. Mineral prospecting and development in the Recommended Wilderness LUD

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would be allowed up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. Designation of the area also would add Congressional protection to a portion of the Thomas Bay Outwash Plains and the Cape Fanshaw Complex Ecological Subsections that have less than 1 percent in wilderness or LUD II. The values associated with the natural settings of the majority of the roadless area would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Under Alternatives 6, 7, or 8, the entire area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness LUD. Timber harvest would not be allowed and the potential for other uses and development, including recreation, minerals and some special uses, could be restricted. The high level of helicopter landings for tourism would likely be restricted or phased out, and not allowed if the area is designated wilderness. 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 also would add Congressional protection to about 43 percent of the Thomas Bay Outwash Plains Subsection and 16 percent of the Cape Fanshaw Complex Ecological Subsection that have less than 1 percent in wilderness or LUD II. 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 202 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness			500,076	482,864		542,830	542,830	542,830
Wilderness								
Recommended Wilderness Nat. Mon.								
Wilderness National Monument								
Non-wilderness National Monument								
Research Natural Area								
Special Interest Area	13,760	13,760	1,490	1,490	13,760			
Remote Recreation								
Enacted Municipal Watershed								
Old-growth Habitat	8,124	8,124	7,702	7,640	8,124			
Semi-remote Recreation	456,925	456,925	47		456,925			
Recommended LUD II								
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River	13,186	13,186			13,186			
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed	19,235	19,235	11,484	19,235	19,235			
Modified Landscape	12,176	12,176	8,179	12,176	12,176			
Timber Production	19,424	19,424	13,851	19,424	19,424			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>542,830</b>	<b>542,830</b>	<b>542,830</b>	<b>542,830</b>	<b>542,830</b>	<b>542,830</b>	<b>542,830</b>	<b>542,830</b>
Suitable Timber Lands	6,833	6,833	4,784	6,833	6,833	0	0	0

## INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

**ROADLESS AREA NAME:** Thomas (203)

**ACRES (NFS):** 5,232

**BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE:** Central Coast Range

**ECOLOGICAL SECTION:** Inside Passage Fjordlands

**2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING:** 18

**I. Overview and Description:**

(1) **Location and Access:** The area is located between Thomas Bay and Frederick Sound on the Point Agassiz Peninsula. The area is part of the coastal mainland. The area is accessed by boat and floatplane on saltwater within Thomas Bay. Anchorage is available in Thomas Bay. The shoreline along Frederick Sound is exposed and often difficult to access. There are no sites suitable for landing wheeled aircraft. There is road access from the southern end of Thomas Bay to the southern end of the roadless area. There is no ferry service or road access to the area from outside. The roadless area is approximately 10 air miles northeast of Petersburg, which is on the Alaska Marine Highway and has air service.

(2) **History:** The Thomas Bay area is in the traditional territory of the Stikine Tlingit. A variety of archaeological sites exist in the area, including prehistoric period villages, camps, petroglyphs, and culturally-modified trees. Historic period use is rather extensive, especially at Point Agassiz, where a homestead community was established during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The Gardner Shrimp Company cannery was established on Ruth Island in Thomas Bay in 1916. In 1958, logging began in the Muddy and Patterson River drainages southeast of the area. Mining activities have occurred in the Thomas Bay area.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** The area is generally characterized by gently rolling terrain with little relief. This area is peninsular and separates Frederick Sound from Thomas Bay. Though the roadless area is part of the mainland, its size, location and shape display few characteristics typical of the mainland. The terrain rises gradually from shoreline, to a height of about 400 feet near the center. Several small streams drain the area, and several small lakes lie near the center of the area. The area contains 11 miles of shoreline on saltwater with 2 acres of island. There are no acres mapped as rock, icefield, or alpine in this roadless area.

(4) **Ecosystem:**

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. The area is classified as being in the Central Coast Range Biogeographic Province. The area is characterized by broad, low-lying valleys and several steeply rising peaks. Productive forest lands exist in river bottoms and on mountain slopes. Vegetation ranges from sub-alpine to saltwater marshes. This province is warmer than the northern coast range province and the topography is less precipitous. The Stikine River system is located south of the Thomas Roadless Area in the center of the province and has a major continental influence, providing a migration corridor for plant and animal species. There are no unique plant or soil associations in the roadless area.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Thomas Roadless Area is contained entirely within the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247E). This area is represented by the Thomas Bay Outwash Plains Ecological Subsection (see table below). This subsection is characterized by a relatively smooth landscape with occasional hills resulting from glacial erosion and deposition. The majority of the subsection is below 500 feet elevation and the predominantly mineral, productive soils support hemlock-spruce forests (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	Thomas Bay Outwash Plains	100%

**(b) Soils:** Soils in this area are formed in a wide variety of parent material, including bedrock and glacial drift. In general, well-drained 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.

More 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 consists of typical spruce-hemlock forests. Muskegs are interspersed among low elevation timber stands where drainage is restricted. Approximately 158 acres of muskeg are mapped for the area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult. Spruce trees are also typically found as stringers along the streams.

There are approximately 4,841 acres mapped as forest land of which 2,024 acres (42 percent) are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 406 acres (20 percent) are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 52 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There are about 102 acres of second growth along the shoreline from older beach logging.

**(d) Fish:** Important fish resources occur primarily outside the Thomas Roadless Area in and adjacent to the Spires Roadless Area. These include 13 Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) numbered salmon-producing streams present within the area. The Farragut River, the Muddy River and Dry Bay Creek are the best salmon producers. There are runs of pink, chum, coho, sockeye, and chinook salmon, as well as steelhead, rainbow, and cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char in the Farragut River (ADF&G, 2000). Marine and intertidal waters support significant populations of Tanner crab, Dungeness crab, king crab, and various species of shrimp and clams.

**(e) Wildlife:** Black bears, wolves, and Sitka black-tailed deer are found in the area, as well as an occasional brown bear and a moderate population of moose. The mountain lion is not known to be in this area, but is present in small numbers on the mainland. It is probably migrating into Southeast Alaska from Canada using the large rivers, such as the Stikine River, as corridors.

Furbearers and other small mammals include mink, river otters, beaver, marten, ermine, lynx, red squirrel, northern flying squirrel, porcupine, mice, shrew and voles. There are occasional sightings of fisher and wolverine, but they are at the edge of their range and are considered an incidental species. Bats are present during the summer months and occasionally overwinter in man-made structures.

Bald eagles, northern goshawks, merlin, red-tailed hawks, sharp-shinned hawks, great horned owls, western screech owls, saw-whet owls, and pigmy owls are found in this area. Numerous ducks, geese, sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, marbled murrelets, and great blue herons occur on the mainland both during migration and, in some cases, nesting. Spruce grouse, blue grouse and ptarmigan are known to occur on the mainland.

Small forest-dwelling birds that are known to occur on the mainland include the red-throated, Pacific and common loon, and several plover, yellowlegs, and sandpiper species. Two swift species, one hummingbird species, four woodpecker species, three flycatcher species and five swallow species are also known on the mainland. Steller's jay, black-billed magpie, northwestern crow, and common raven occur. Chestnut-backed chickadee, red-breasted nuthatch, brown creeper, winter wren, American dipper, golden-crowned kinglet, ruby-crowned kinglet, Swainson's thrush and hermit thrush occur. The American robin, varied thrush, American pipit, cedar waxwing, northern shrike, warbling vireo, and five warbler species occur.

Additionally, the northern water thrush, common yellow throat, western tanager, dark-eyed junco, Lapland longspur, snow bunting, red-winged blackbird, rusty blackbird, brown-headed cowbird, eight sparrow species, pine grosbeak, red crossbill, white-winged crossbill, common redpoll, and pine siskin are found.

Several amphibians are known to occur on the mainland. They are rough-skinned newts, western toad, and spotted frog. The rough-skinned newt is found primarily in lacustrine, palustrine, hemlock/spruce forests, and muskeg bog ecosystems. The western toad is also found primarily in lacustrine, palustrine, hemlock/spruce forests and in clearcuts. Spotted frogs are found primarily in lacustrine, palustrine ecosystems and normally found in large river systems like the Stikine River.

Sea mammals known to inhabit the waters surrounding the mainland are the Pacific white-sided dolphin, orca whale, harbor porpoise, Dall's porpoise, humpback whale, Steller sea lion, and harbor seal.

**(5) Management Direction and Current Uses:** The roadless area was allocated to two Land Use Designations (LUDs) under the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. These two LUDs are Scenic Viewshed and Old-growth Habitat.

LUD	Acres
Scenic Viewshed	3,854
Old-growth Habitat	1,378

The majority of the roadless area, approximately 74 percent, was allocated to one development LUD, Scenic Viewshed. The Scenic Viewshed LUD area is located along most of the peninsula and as viewed from Frederick Sound and in Thomas Bay.

The remaining 26 percent of the roadless area was allocated to a non-development LUD, Old-growth Habitat. This LUD is located along the western coast of the peninsula.

Recreation uses in the vicinity of the area include moose, deer, black bear, and waterfowl hunting; coho salmon, pink salmon, steelhead, and trout fishing; sea kayaking; boating; camping; hiking; beachcombing; sightseeing; flightseeing; tour boat use, and recreation cabin use. Thomas and Farragut Bays are frequently used by recreational boaters and commercial fishing boats. There are no commercial overnight facilities in the area. Current information indicates that some subsistence activities occur, primarily from residents of Petersburg.

The Crystal Creek Timber Sale, part of which is currently under contract, will extend the existing road system into the roadless area. The log transfer facility, most of the road construction, and the timber harvest units are currently under contract. Other timber sales are planned according to the Crystal Creek Timber Harvest FEIS (USDA Forest Service, 1998). Additional timber harvest projects in this area are on the 10-year timber sale schedule.

**(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness):** Most of the area appears unmodified. However, the timber management developments around Thomas Bay and in the Muddy and Patterson River valleys give the area a somewhat modified appearance.

**(7) Surroundings (External Influences):** The roadless area is located on a peninsula that has been separated from the mainland by developments on lands to the south and which forms the southern entrance to Thomas Bay. Thomas Bay is a popular recreation destination for residents of Petersburg. Relatively heavy boat traffic can occur at times. Frederick Sound is a major passage for commercial boat traffic, including Alaska State ferries. Evidence of beach logging, and adjacent and distant timber management developments is visible from parts of this roadless area. Inhabited and abandoned buildings on the private land nearby may be visible from some places in the roadless area. Jet aircraft approaching and leaving Petersburg may occasionally pass over portions of the area at elevations of less than 10,000 feet. Small aircraft frequently pass by the area.

**(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest:** Thomas Bay is a destination attraction for residents of Petersburg. This roadless area makes up a substantial portion of the southern entrance to the Bay. The area contains two inventoried recreation places that cover 158 acres, or 3 percent of the roadless area. There are no trails or public recreation cabins in the area. The presence of good anchorage sites allows boaters to stay near the area overnight.

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(9) **Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary:** The Thomas Roadless Area was included in the 1997 Forest Plan Revision in the less than 5,000-acre category. Updated mapping indicates that it is more than 5,000 acres, and since it is on a peninsula and could be managed as a separate entity, it has been included as an inventoried roadless area for the 2003 analysis. Some areas along the shore that have been beach logged but not roaded have also been added to the roadless area. Small adjustments have been made to the boundary along the developed areas between the Draft and Final SEIS to improve manageability in those areas.

### II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

(1) **Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness:** Nearly all of the roadless area is unmodified and natural appearing. The exceptions are the areas adjacent to the southern end of the roadless area where timber management-related developments have occurred and private lands are located. The area has high natural integrity and apparent naturalness. However, the relatively small size of the area coupled with the adjacent developments, make it marginally suitable for wilderness management.

(2) **Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation:** There is a low opportunity for solitude and a low opportunity for primitive recreation within the area. This is reflective of the relatively small size of the area and its ability to absorb nearby activities and associated effects. At times, low-flying airplanes or helicopters may disrupt visitors for brief periods. Passing boats going to Thomas Bay may also disrupt visitors for brief periods. Present recreation use levels are low within the area but higher in nearby areas. Generally, a person camped inland is unlikely to see others.

Accessing the roadless area by boat from the community of Petersburg requires a 1- to 2-hour crossing on exposed waters. The western coast of the area is more difficult to access while the area is much more easily accessed from Thomas Bay. The road system to the south allows relatively easy access to the area. The relatively small size with relatively easy access reduces this area's opportunity for self-reliance, adventure, and challenging experiences.

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 Non-Motorized (SPNM)	3,238	62%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	1,072	20%
Roaded Modified (RM)	922	18%

The area contains two inventoried recreation places that cover 158 acres, or 3 percent of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places	Total Acres
SPNM	0	0
SPM	1	156
RM	1	2

There are four public recreation cabins, two maintained trails, and two abandoned trails.

(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 Thomas

Roadless Area was not given a rating because of its relatively small size and marginal eligibility for wilderness. The Thomas Roadless Area was evaluated in 2003 and given a rating of 18.

#### (4) **Ecologic and Geologic Values:**

(a) **Fish Resources:** The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment rated VCU 489, at the entrance to Thomas Bay as primary salmon producers. The VCU was not listed as primary producers of sportfish (ADF&G, 1998).

Marine and intertidal areas support high commercial, personal use, and recreational fisheries for Tanner, Dungeness, and king crab, and various species of shrimp and other shellfish.

(b) **Wildlife Resources:** Black bears, Sitka black-tailed deer, and a relatively high density of wolves are found in the general area. Waterfowl use the extensive grassflats in smaller areas around Thomas Bay, and nesting Canada geese are common near Thomas Bay. There are several northern goshawk nesting sites in the general area. The humpback whale and the Steller sea lion use the marine waters adjacent to the roadless area, although there are no sea lion haulout sites or other concentrations of marine wildlife in the vicinity of this roadless area.

(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 or near 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. Ospreys have nested at Thomas Bay and have been seen at Swan Lake. 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. Several goshawk nests have been found in the general area. In addition, twelve sensitive plant species are known or suspected to occur in the Petersburg Ranger District.

(d) **Karst, Cave, and Other Geologic Resources:** There are no known significant or unique karst, cave or other geologic resources within the Thomas Roadless area.

(5) **Scientific and Educational Values:** The area has not been identified as a Research Natural Area, or as having high scientific or educational values.

(6) **Scenic Values:** The area exists in a mostly unmodified visual condition. Some of the foreground along Frederick Sound and as one enters Thomas Bay includes much of the roadless area, which is visible from current ferry and small cruise ship routes.

Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan, that are within or adjacent to the area include: Frederick Sound, a part of the Alaska Marine Highway, a tour ship route and a saltwater use area; Thomas Bay, saltwater use area; Thomas Bay, used as a boat anchorage.

About 23 percent of the area is inventoried in Variety Class B (possessing landscape diversity that is common for the character type), and the remaining 75 percent is inventoried as Class C (possessing a low degree of landscape diversity) and 2 percent is not inventoried.

The majority of this roadless area (52 percent) is in Existing Visual Condition (EVC) Type I, where only ecological change has occurred. EVC II makes up about 9 percent of the area, where changes to the landscape are not noticed by the average person unless pointed out. Another 5 percent of the area is in EVC IV in which changes to the landscape are easily noticed by the average person and may attract some attention. Another 32 percent of the area is

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in EVC Type V, where changes in the landscape are obvious to the average person, and appear to be major disturbances. Two percent of the area has not been inventoried.

(7) **Social, Cultural, and Historical Values:** The Thomas Bay area is in the traditional territory of the Stikine Tlingit. A variety of archaeological sites exist in the general area, including prehistoric period villages, camps, petroglyphs, and culturally-modified trees and historic period cabins and trails. Historic period use is rather extensive, especially at Point Agassiz, where a homestead community was established during the first quarter of the 20th century. The Gardner Shrimp Company cannery was established on Ruth Island in Thomas Bay in 1916. In 1958, logging began in the Muddy and Patterson River drainages southeast of the area. Mining activities have occurred in the Thomas Bay area. The Point Agassiz settlement was established during the first quarter of the 20th century. A schoolhouse was built in 1920 and remains there today. Several private cabins and homes are still located on private land adjacent to the roadless area. Thomas Bay is a destination attraction for residents of Petersburg. VCU 489, on the southern shore of Thomas Bay, is among the VCUs listed as highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas. VCU 489, along Frederick Sound up to the entrance to Thomas Bay, was also listed among the VCUs in the second most important group for community use values. VCU 489 was not listed in the most important group (ADF&G, 1998).

(8) **Manageability as Wilderness and Boundaries Conditions/Changes:** The majority of the boundary is defined by saltwater. Areas developed for timber management and private land generally define portions of the eastern and southern boundaries. Feasibility of management in a wilderness condition is low, primarily due to the relatively small size of the area in conjunction with adjacent uses and activities.

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

(1) **Recreation, Including Tourism Potential:** The icefields to the east of the area have growth potential for floatplane flightseeing and helicopter tours. Tourism has been increasing in Southeast Alaska and is expected to continue to increase. Petersburg is a hub for this increase in tourism and is expected to continue. The proximity of the roadless area to Petersburg is likely to result in an increase in tourist interest in or near the roadless area. There is high potential for additional outfitter/guide permits and for additional trails, cabins, or shelters. The beauty, diversity, and accessibility of Thomas Bay make it a promising area for increased sightseeing and excursion trip opportunities.

In 1996, the Alaska Visitor Association (AVA) proposed a recreation development for Thomas Bay, which included a leased proprietary camp with a capacity of 15 tent platforms.

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

(3) **Fish Resources:** No fish enhancement projects are currently being considered in the roadless area.

(4) **Wildlife Resources:** No wildlife enhancement projects are currently being considered in the roadless area.

(5) **Timber Resources:** There are approximately 2,024 acres inventoried as productive old-growth forest in the roadless area. Second growth associated with older beach logging is mapped as 102 acres. Of these acres, approximately 1,733 acres of the area 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), 480 acres (9 percent) of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 90 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, 14 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The potential for managing timber in this roadless area is closely linked to the existing road system immediately south and east of the area. The Crystal Creek Timber Sale is currently under contract to extend the existing road system into the roadless area.

(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:** There has been some mineral exploration in the past outside the area. There are no known mining claims within the area.
- (8) **Transportation and Utilities:** There are no transportation or utility corridors proposed in the roadless area.
- (9) **Water Availability and Use:** There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects in the Thomas Roadless Area.
- (10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** The area contains no Research Natural Areas.
- (11) **Land Use Authorizations:** No special use permits have been issued within the area. Nearby in the Spires Roadless Area, Forest Service records show that 11 outfitter/guides used this area in 2000 for 3 service days for freshwater fishing, 313 service days for remote setting nature tours, 17 service days for black bear hunting, 31 service days for mountain goat hunting, and 727 service days for helicopter landing tours.
- (12) **Land Status:** The entire area is National Forest System land. There is state and private land adjacent to the roadless area.

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

- (1) **Public and Congressional Interest:**
- (a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** Local Petersburg residents have a high degree of interest in how this area is managed. There was a strong protest when the State of Alaska considered subdividing and selling land in Thomas Bay.
- (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 Thomas Roadless Area. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed that the area be designated as part of the Thomas Bay-Twin Peaks Wilderness.
- (c) **Public Input During Forest Plan Revision and Appeals:** The AVA proposed a recreation development for Thomas Bay, which included a lease proprietary camp with a capacity of 15 tent platforms. The Narrows Conservation Coalition and the Juneau Sierra Club mentioned the importance of the area for fishing, recreation, and subsistence. They also commented on the importance of protecting recreation and commercial anchorage, whale watching, tourism, and crab habitat. Some commenters stressed that the area was visible from cruise ships and should not have visible timber harvest. The timber industry wanted the area managed for timber production.
- (d) **Public Input During Roadless Area Conservation Rule and Road Management Policy Review:** This area was not specifically identified in the comments received on the Roadless Area Conservation Rule or Road Management Policy Review. However, some commenters wanted all unroaded lands in the Tongass to be protected from development.
- (e) **Public Input Expressed for Project-level EISs and Other Input:** Comments were received on the Crystal Creek Timber Harvest Project DEIS (USDA Forest Service, 1997). Thirteen persons, agencies, and organizations commented. None of the comments dealt with wilderness or roadless area issues.
- (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.

The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) identified Roadless Areas 201, 202, 203, and 308 as a contiguous complex of roadless areas that should be considered

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one roadless area and recommended it for permanent protection as wilderness. SEACC included this area in their comments on the Cape Fanshaw/Port Houghton area.

**(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses:** The Thomas Roadless Area is located about 5 miles from the Spires Roadless Area and is separated from it by an area developed primarily for timber management. The Stikine-LeConte Wilderness is located about 15 miles to the southeast, the Tracy Arm-Fords Terror and Chuck River Wildernesses about 35 miles to the north, and the Petersburg Creek-Duncan Canal Wilderness about 20 miles to the southwest.

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

<b>Community</b>	<b>Air Miles</b>	<b>Water Miles</b>
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	105	115
Petersburg (Pop. 3,224)	10	15
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	40	50
Ketchikan (Pop. 14,070)	125	140

Petersburg is the nearest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway.

**(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System:** The Thomas Roadless Area is located on the mainland on a peninsula that includes Point Agassiz and forms the southern entrance into Thomas Bay from Frederick Sound. The area is generally characterized by gently rolling terrain with little relief and elevations up to 400 feet.

The area is mostly natural appearing, but it is influenced by developments and activities in adjacent lands. The area has very high natural integrity and apparent naturalness. The opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation is low.

The area has relatively high cultural and historic values. There are no other known significant or unique wilderness attributes for this area. None of the landscape in the area is considered distinctive for the character type from a scenery standpoint.

The roadless area includes about 406 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, 52 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The Thomas Roadless Area lies within the Central Coast Range Biogeographic Province and makes up approximately 1 percent of the province. It is one of nine inventoried roadless areas found in the province that collectively make up about 59 percent of the province. Portions of the Stikine-LeConte Wilderness lie within the Central Coast Range Province and make up about 38 percent of the province.

The Thomas Roadless Area lies completely within the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section and represents 0.3 percent of the ecological section. Approximately 20 percent of the Inside Passage Fjordlands Ecological Section is in existing wilderness, 2 percent is in existing LUD II, and an additional 30 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

The Thomas Roadless Area also lies completely within the Thomas Bay Outwash Plains Ecological Subsection and represents 17 percent of the entire ecological subsection. None of this ecological subsection is located in existing wilderness, but 25 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

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

There is some local and national support for managing the area in an unroaded condition, and some support for designating the area as wilderness. Designation would create a wilderness that is very small and heavily influenced

by developments and activities on adjacent lands. The area also includes portions of a timber sale under contract in the southeast portion of the roadless area. Designation of the area as wilderness would add Congressional protection to approximately 17 percent of the Thomas Bay Outwash Plains Ecological Subsection that is not currently represented in wilderness or LUD II. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution of this area to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be very low.

**V. Environmental Consequences**

The Thomas Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 is implemented. Approximately 26 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur in the remaining 74 percent. The land in the development LUDs provides an estimated 480 acres that are suitable for timber production (less than 1 percent of the suitable acres on the Petersburg Ranger District). Approximately 14 of the suitable acres are classified as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. The timber sales, recreation, and special use programs would continue. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area could be affected by ongoing development allowed by the Forest Plan. The cultural and historic values of the area are protected under the Forest Plan under all alternatives.

Under Alternative 6, 7, or 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. Timber harvest would not be allowed and the ongoing recreation, and special uses programs could be restricted. Mineral prospecting would be allowed up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. Designation of the area as wilderness would add Congressional protection to approximately 17 percent of the Thomas Bay Outwash Plains Ecological Subsection that is not currently represented in wilderness or LUD II. 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 203 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness						5,232	5,232	5,232
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	1,378	1,378	1,378	1,378	1,378			
Semi-remote Recreation								
Recommended LUD II								
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed	3,854	3,854	3,854	3,854	3,854			
Modified Landscape								
Timber Production								
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,232</b>	<b>5,232</b>	<b>5,232</b>	<b>5,232</b>	<b>5,232</b>	<b>5,232</b>	<b>5,232</b>	<b>5,232</b>
Suitable Timber Lands	480	480	480	480	480	0	0	0