

INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

ROADLESS AREA NAME: Sitka Sound (332)

ACRES (NFS): 20,878

BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: West Baranof Island

ECOLOGICAL SECTION: Baranof-Chichagof Fjordlands

2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING: 20

I. Overview and Description

(1) Location and Access: This area, generally located between Sitka Sound and Salisbury Sound, and between Kruzof Island and Baranof Island, is comprised of Krestof Island, Halleck Island, the Siginaka Islands, and a number of small offshore islands and rocks. The area also includes a peninsula on Baranof Island that is separated from the remainder of the island by a road system and timber harvest units. This unnamed peninsula has been named Whitestone Peninsula for the purposes of this roadless area description after Whitestone Cove located at the southern end of the peninsula.

The islands located in this area are surrounded by saltwater on all sides. Olga Strait separates Krestof and Halleck Islands, the two major islands in the area. Whitestone Peninsula, located directly across Nakwasina Passage from Krestof and Halleck Islands, is partially bordered by St. John Baptist Bay to the north. Areas developed for timber management form the remaining part of the area's north border, as well as bordering the area to the east. Neva Strait borders the area to the west. The city of Sitka is located immediately south of the area.

The closest large community on the Alaska Marine Highway and with air Service is Sitka, approximately 10 miles south. The primary form of access to the area is via boat and floatplane on saltwater along all of the coastlines. The numerous bays and channels within and surrounding this area provide travel corridors and sheltered anchorage for boats. Access into the interior is by foot or helicopter. There are no places suitable for landing wheeled airplanes.

(2) History: This area has a long and varied history of use dating from Tlingit use in prehistoric and historic times to the present use by a variety of Alaska residents and visitors. Use of the area has been primarily for hunting, fishing, recreation, and temporary occupancy. Remains of structures and other human cultural activity can still be found in varying degrees of deterioration. Goldschmidt and Haas (1946) identified a former village and indicated that hunting or trapping historically occurred on the islands.

(3) Geography and Topography: The area is comprised of Whitestone Peninsula, two moderate size islands (Halleck and Krestof Islands), and numerous small islands, island groups, and offshore rocks. Whitestone Peninsula is a roughly triangular shaped piece of land of gentle slope with a maximum elevation of just over 1,400 feet. It contains no streams or lakes of significant size. Halleck and Krestof Islands are both irregularly shaped, with a mix of gentle and steep sloped terrain. Krestof Island is further defined by Promisla and De Groff Bays. Maximum elevations on Krestof and Halleck Islands are over 1,600 feet and 1,900 feet, respectively. There are no lakes or named streams on either island. The small islands in the Sitka Sound Roadless Area are mostly less than 100 feet in elevation and are scattered throughout the area. They are all irregular in shape and size.

There are 88 miles of shoreline along saltwater, 228 acres of alpine tundra, 5 acres of ice and snow, and 109 acres of rock. The majority of the area is on islands including many small islands located along the coastline for a total of 16,098 acres.

Appendix C

(4) Ecosystem:

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. The area is classified as being in the West Baranof Island Biogeographic Province. Topographically, Baranof Island is the most rugged of all the islands in Southeast Alaska. The outer coast of this province is dotted with hundreds of small islands. All forest plant associations except those in the Western redcedar series and those found around large mainland rivers occur in this province.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Sitka Urban Roadless Area is contained entirely within the Baranof-Chichagof Fjordlands Ecological Section (M247B). This area is represented by one ecological subsection (see table below). The Sitka Sound Ecological Subsection is mostly covered in a blanket of ancient volcanic ash approximately 2 to 6 feet deep. Where the ash has been washed away, Sitka graywacke, granite, and low-grade metamorphic rocks are exposed. The Sitka Sound Complex Ecological Subsection is considerably lower in elevation relative to the surrounding subsections and there are no glaciers, although there are some permanent snowfields. Mixed conifer and hemlock-spruce forests dominate the lower elevations and shorelines, and forested wetlands of lodgepole pine and mixed conifer are abundant (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Baranof-Chichagof Fjordlands	Sitka Sound Complex	100%

(b) **Soils:** Shallow mineral soils with good drainage can be found on steeper slopes due to rapid loss of material by erosion and efficient rainwater runoff. Deep, well-drained soils commonly occur below the shallow soils on the gentler slopes where transported soil materials have collected. Poorly drained soils are found associated with low relief and impermeable subsurface layers. In locations with poor drainage, deep organic soils (muskegs) tend to form. In riparian areas, soil zones tend to contain sand and gravels as a result of flood deposition. Soils are influenced by layers of ash deposits resulting from eruptions of Mount Edgecumbe located to the southwest.

(c) **Vegetation:** The vegetation of this roadless area consists primarily of typical spruce-hemlock forests. Western hemlock-Sitka spruce dominate the overstory while the understory is composed of shrubs such as red huckleberry, rusty menziesia, and devil's club. The forest floor is covered with a mat of mosses, liverworts, and plants such as deerheart, bunchberry dogwood, single delight, and skunk cabbage. Streamside riparian vegetation is characterized by salmonberry, devil's club, alder, grasses, ferns, and currants.

Muskegs are abundant within this area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult. Approximately 393 acres of muskeg are mapped for the area. These areas, dominated by sphagnum mosses, sedges, and shrubs of the heath family, are interspersed among low elevation timber stands where drainage is restricted. Trees within the muskegs are sparse and consist mainly of stunted hemlock, lodgepole pine, and Alaska-cedar.

There are approximately 20,018 acres mapped as forest land, of which 10,260 acres or 51 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 2,298 acres or 22 percent are mapped as high-volume old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 6 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. The area also includes 679 acres of second growth where beach harvest has occurred in the past.

(d) **Fish Resources:** The Anadromous Waters Catalogue and Atlas (ADF&G, 2000) identifies 10 unnamed Class I streams in this area. These streams provide habitat for coho, pink, and chum salmon, cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char.

(e) **Wildlife Resources:** There are many varied wildlife resources in this roadless area. Generally, the area provides good habitat for Sitka black-tailed deer and brown bear. Furbearers such as mink,

marten, and river otter are also present on Baranof Island. Mountain goats inhabit Baranof Island, however they have not been reported in this roadless area. Moose, wolves, and black bear are not present on Baranof Island. Bird and waterfowl rearing and nesting areas are abundant in this area. Bald eagle habitat, including nesting and roosting trees, can be found along the shorelines of this roadless area.

(5) Management Direction and Current Uses: This roadless area was allocated to three Land Use Designations (LUDs) in the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. These are Timber Production, Scenic Viewshed, and Semi-Remote Recreation.

LUD	Acres
Timber Production	2,666
Scenic Viewshed	190
Semi-Remote Recreation	18,021

Approximately 14 percent of the roadless area was allocated to a development LUD (Timber Production, Scenic Viewshed). The Timber Production LUD was assigned to approximately 13 percent of the roadless area. The majority of the Whitestone Peninsula portion of this roadless area was allocated to the Timber Production LUD. A small adjacent area along the south shore of St. John Baptist Bay was allocated to the Scenic Viewshed LUD, accounting for approximately one percent of the roadless area.

Most of the roadless area, 86 percent, was allocated to one non-development LUD, Semi-Remote Recreation. Smaller islands associated with this roadless area are allocated to the Semi-Remote Recreation LUD as well.

Recreational use of the area is primarily for hunting and fishing, and enjoying the scenery. This use is scattered across the area, with the usual concentrations near lakes, streams, and shorelines. Subsistence use occurs in the area. The Allen Point Cabin and Trail are located on Halleck Island.

(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness): The majority of the area is considered unmodified. Exceptions include those areas primarily located near the shoreline with evidence of current or historic use. Historic use includes beach logging that has occurred on Krestof Island on either side of De Groff Bay, as well as along the west shoreline. Beach logging has also occurred along the north and east shore of Halleck Island. In addition, beach logging has occurred in two small areas on the Whitestone Peninsula. The northeastern boundary of the roadless area on Whitestone Peninsula is defined by developed areas. The area generally appears natural when viewed from major travel routes or use areas.

(7) Surroundings (External Influences): The area is composed of islands in Sitka Sound and the Whitestone Peninsula (which is bordered by salt water on three sides). As a result, external influences on those sides are primarily limited to the sights and sounds of motorized boats. The Alaska Marine Highway passes through Neva Strait and Olga Strait in this roadless area. The northeastern boundary of Whitestone Peninsula adjoins a developed area. However, this development has had only local impact on this roadless area. The Magoun Islands State Marine Park is located immediately west of Krestof Island. Air traffic passing overhead to and from the Sitka Airport is another external influence.

(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest: The major attraction of the Sitka Sound Roadless Area is the islands themselves. Sitka is known for the numerous islands lying off shore in Sitka Sound. Ferries traveling the Alaska Marine Highway pass through Neva Strait and Olga Strait on their way to and from Sitka. As a result, Whitestone Peninsula and the islands that comprise this area are seen by many visitors to Sitka.

The area contains nine inventoried recreation places, which cover 10,113 acres, or 48 percent of the roadless area. The natural features of the area, the scenery, and the opportunity to see wildlife are all considered attractions. High quality fishing opportunities in the streams and lakes also provide attractions. There is one National Forest System Trail and recreation cabin at Allen Point on Halleck Island.

(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary: The boundaries of this roadless area changed in two main ways between 1989 and 2003. First, the Magoun Islands, which were included within the boundary of the 1989 area, are now part of the state-owned Magoun Islands State Marine Park. Second, the beach

Appendix C

logged areas on Krestof and Halleck Islands and Whitestone Peninsula, described in Section I.(5) above and excluded from the area in 1989, are included within the boundaries of the 2003 area.

II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness: The area is unmodified except for the evidence of current and historic use. This evidence, which includes beach logging, although locally noticeable, has a very low overall effect on the natural integrity of the area. Both the relative size of the developments and their location along the shoreline contribute to this low impact. Natural ecological processes and conditions continue to exist in the area. Overall, the area's natural integrity and apparent naturalness is very high and is suitable for wilderness classification.

(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation: There is a moderate opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation within the area. Recreational use of the area is relatively limited and dispersed, so that encounters with other visitors are unlikely. The sight or sound of airplanes overhead and boats along the coastlines can occasionally intrude on a visitor's solitude. Along Neva Strait and Olga Strait, ferries of the Alaska Marine Highway system and other commercial and private traffic can be observed or heard.

The area provides a moderate opportunity for primitive recreation as a result of its dense vegetative screening, and physical challenges. This area has a unique topography and diverse vegetation that combine to offer a setting capable of providing a variety of primitive recreation opportunities. There are ponds, streams, bays, mountains, and a varied coastline that contribute to these opportunities.

Outfitter/guide use was reported at five locations in and around this area in 1999. Sixteen groups with a total of 136 clients were reported visiting the area. Reported uses included camping, brown bear hunting, and hiking. Camping was the most popular activity accounting for 14 of the 16 groups in 1999. Popular locations included Allan Point on Halleck Island and De Groff Bay on Krestof Island.

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)	11,886	57%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	3,656	18%
Roaded Natural (RN)	2,901	14%
Roaded Modified (RM)	2,391	11%

The area contains nine inventoried recreation places, which cover 10,113 acres, or 48 percent of the roadless area.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places*	Total Acres
SPNM	1	2,842
SPM	3	2,404
RN	3	2,716
RM	3	2,142

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

There is one National Forest System trail in the area associated with the Allen Point Recreation Cabin on Halleck Island, which further enhances the opportunity for recreation.

(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 (RARE II) process. 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 (dated 1990) 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 Sitka Sound Roadless Area was 18 out of 28 possible points. A smaller portion of the area was rated separately and received a score of 20. The 1989 rating was re-evaluated for this updated version of the AMS. Based on this re-evaluation, the area was given a rating of 20. The higher rating reflects the minimal effects of the older beach logging that was considered developed in the earlier rating. These areas have little effect on the natural integrity of the area, especially as they have continued to mature.

(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values: This area consists of the Whitestone Peninsula, Krestof Island, Halleck Island, the Siginaka Islands, and a number of small offshore islands and rocks. It is not part of a larger roadless area.

(a) Fish Resources: The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) did not list any of the VCUs in this area as primary salmon or sportfish producers.

The Anadromous Waters Catalogue and Atlas (ADF&G, 2000) identifies 10 unnamed Class I streams in this area. These streams provide habitat for coho, pink, and chum salmon, cutthroat trout and Dolly Varden char.

(b) Wildlife Resources: There are many varied wildlife resources in this roadless area. Generally, the area provides good habitat for Sitka black-tailed deer and brown bear. Based on harvest data compiled from 1985 to 1995, one VCU in the area, Neva Strait (302), was ranked in the third 25 percent of brown bear harvest areas on the Tongass (ADF&G, 1998). Furbearers such as mink, marten and river otter are also present on Baranof Island. Mountain goats reportedly inhabit Baranof Island, but they have not been reported in this roadless area. Moose, wolves, and black bear are not present on Baranof Island. Bird and waterfowl rearing and nesting areas are abundant in this area. Bald eagle habitat, including nesting and roosting trees, can be found along the shorelines of this roadless area.

(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, 12 sensitive plant species are known or suspected to occur in the Sitka Ranger District.

(d) Karst, Cave, and Other Geologic Resources: There are no known karst or cave resources in this roadless area. There are no glaciers or unique geologic features.

(5) Scientific and Educational Values: There are no known features of ecologic, geologic, scientific, or cultural significance. There are no Research Natural Areas located in this area. The area is adjacent to the city of Sitka and, therefore, readily accessible to school-age children.

(6) Scenic Values: The visual character type of this roadless area is classified as Baranof Highland. Terrain in this type consists of an irregular, rugged asymmetrical chain of landforms having a steep eastern slope and a gentler western slope deeply indented with fjords. Generally, landforms are visually massive, bulky and stark throughout the character type. Shoreline forms are very rugged with steep-sided fjord country on both east and west coasts.

Appendix C

Rugged, headwalls, cliffs and escarpments are common on the west side of the Baranof Highland character type, as a result of exposure to the sea wind and waves. Rock faces are sometimes visible on steep-sided fjords near saltwater throughout the unit. The Sitka Sound Roadless Area is a poor example of this visual character class as it has few of the described features, or the features are limited or poorly representative.

Evidence of historic use in the area includes old cabins and other historic occupancies. Historic use also includes beach logging that has occurred on Krestof Island on either side of De Groff Bay, as well as along the west shoreline. Older beach logging has also occurred along the north and east shore of Halleck Island. In addition, logging has occurred in two small areas on the Whitestone Peninsula. The northeastern boundary of the roadless area on Whitestone Peninsula is defined by developed areas. Current use includes various short term occupancies and other uses of the area and surrounding waters. Although locally noticeable, this evidence has a very low overall effect on the natural integrity of the area. Both the relative size of the developments and their location along the shoreline contribute to this low impact. The area generally appears natural when viewed from major travel routes or use areas. A number of Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan are within or adjacent to this area. Visual Priority Routes include Neva Strait, Olga Strait, and Sitka Sound (Alaska Marine Highway), and Sitka Sound, St. John Baptist Bay, Sitka Ferry terminal to Katlian Bay, Nakwasina Strait/Passage, Olga Strait, Hayward Strait to Peril Strait, and Neva Strait to Salisbury Sound (small boat routes). Use Areas include Magoun Islands (State Marine Park and Dispersed Recreation Area), Nakwasina Sound and Inlet, Krestof Island, south shore from Brady Island to Eastern Point, and Olga Strait (Saltwater Use Areas), and De Groff Bay and Whitestone Cove (boat anchorages).

About 4 percent of the area is inventoried in Variety Class A (possessing landscape diversity unique for the character type). About 11 percent of the area is in Variety Class B (possessing landscape characteristics common for the character type). Approximately 83 percent of this roadless area was inventoried in Visual Variety Class C (possessing a low degree of landscape diversity). Approximately 3 percent of the area was not inventoried for Variety Class type.

Over half of this roadless area, approximately 58 percent, was inventoried as having an Existing Visual Condition (EVC) I, where areas appear to be untouched by human activity. About one percent of the area is in EVC III, where the average person notices changes in the landscape, but they do not dominate the landscape. Twenty-five percent of the roadless area was inventoried as EVC IV, where changes in the landscape are easily noticed by the average person, but it resembles natural patterns. Approximately 13 percent of the area is in EVC V, where changes in the landscape are obvious to the average person and appear to be major disturbances. Approximately 3 percent of the area was not inventoried for EVC.

(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values: This area has a long and varied history of use dating from Tlingit use in prehistoric and historic times to the present use by a variety of Alaska residents and visitors. Use of the area has been primarily for hunting, fishing, recreation, and temporary occupancy. Remains of structures and other human cultural activity can still be found in varying degrees of deterioration. Goldschmidt and Haas (1946) identified a former village and indicated that hunting or trapping historically occurred on the islands. The city of Sitka is located directly south of the Sitka Sound Roadless Area.

Based on harvest data compiled from 1985 to 1995, VCU 302-Neva Strait was ranked in the third 25 percent of brown bear harvest areas on the Tongass (ADF&G, 1998). Subsistence use occurs in the area. The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment identified all the VCUs in this area as subsistence use areas with a high sensitivity to disturbance. All four of the VCUs in this area were also listed among the VCUs with highest community use value (ADF&G, 1998).

(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes: The Sitka Sound Roadless Area is generally well defined by topographic features. All areas, but one, are islands that have their boundaries determined by their shorelines. The one exception is the Whitestone Peninsula, which is bordered to the northeast by developed areas. The feasibility of management of this area as wilderness or in an unroaded condition is good as there is no significant motorized access or other current nonconforming uses.

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

- (1) **Recreation, Including Tourism Potential:** The varied terrain, diverse vegetation, and attractive scenery of this area provide unlimited recreation potential for dispersed recreation. Additional trails and cabins or shelters are possible. The Alaska Visitors Association (AVA) proposed recreation developments in the general vicinity of Neva Strait and St. John Baptist Bay.
- (2) **Subsistence Uses:** The existing patterns of subsistence activities in the area would not be affected by wilderness designation.
- (3) **Fish Resources:** No fish enhancement projects are planned for this roadless area.
- (4) **Wildlife Resources:** Some of the older beach logged areas have tree regrowth that is becoming very dense and shading out understory vegetation. There are some limited opportunities in this area to thin some of these regrowth areas to improve existing and future wildlife habitat values. Beach fringe areas with southern aspects can be especially important wintering areas for Sitka black-tailed deer and other wildlife.
- (5) **Timber Resources:** There are 10,260 acres mapped as productive old growth in the roadless area. There are also 679 acres of second growth where timber harvest has occurred in the past. Of these acres, 8,434 acres are categorized as tentatively suitable for timber production. Based on the Forest Plan LUDs assigned to this area (and estimated falldown and scheduling reduction factors), 486 acres or 2 percent of this roadless area are estimated to be suitable for timber production. Approximately 77 of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume old growth; of these acres, none are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. This portion of the area is located on the Whitestone Peninsula, near the existing road system and harvest units that border the area to the north (partially) and east.
- The potential for managing timber in this roadless area is dependent on higher market values. Designating this area wilderness would not affect potential timber harvest in adjacent areas.
- (6) **Fire, Insects, and Disease:** The area has no significant fire history. Endemic tree diseases common to Southeast Alaska are present in the area. There are no known epidemic disease occurrences.
- (7) **Minerals:** The area does not have a high mineral development potential and there are no known claims. The USGS Mineral Resource Data website (2001) indicates that there is one explored prospect for gold on Halleck Island. This area contains 10,054 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 or utility projects proposed for this area. Roads would be needed to access timber in those areas that allow timber management in the Forest Plan.
- (9) **Water Availability and Use:** There are no existing or planned hydroelectric or domestic water projects within the roadless area.
- (10) **Areas of Scientific Interest:** There are no known areas of scientific interest in the roadless area.
- (11) **Land Use Authorizations:** There are special use permits for shore ties on Krestof Island.
- (12) **Land Status:** The area consists entirely of National Forest System lands.

IV. Wilderness Evaluation (Need for Wilderness)

- (1) **Public and Congressional Interest:**
- (a) **Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** Most use of the area is associated with recreational boating, hunting and fishing, and viewing the wildlife and the scenery of the area.

Appendix C

(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 Sitka Sound Roadless Area. In 2001, HR 2908 identified the area as a proposed LUD II addition. It also proposed that the shoreline of the Whitestone Peninsula portion of the area be protected under Wild and Scenic River designation. The areas where timber harvest has occurred on Halleck and Krestof Islands were identified for protection as Restoration Areas.

(c) Public Input During Forest Plan Revisions and Appeals: Parts of this area were specifically addressed in public input received during the Forest Plan revision and appeal. Nakwasina Sound, which borders Halleck Island to the east, was included in a list of areas that are considered strategically important to Sitka for subsistence uses (and most also for recreation) and deserve protection. The Sitka Conservation Society (SCS) requested that all VCUs on the ferry route, Hoonah Sound to Sitka, should be in the Semi-Remote Recreation LUD, except Halleck and Krestof Islands, which should be managed under the Remote Recreation LUD. The SCS considers these islands along with other nearby areas to be “at the heart of Sitka’s economy and lifestyle”. The Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC) identified Nakwasina and Halleck Island as an area “meriting special management protection” for their outstanding wildlife, fisheries, hunting, fishing, subsistence, recreation, and tourism values.

Angoon requested that roads, logging, and mining not be permitted on the Whitestone Peninsula because of their potential effect on subsistence use. The Sierra Club Juneau Group stated that Management Areas (MAs) C40, C44, and C46, which include the Sitka Sound Roadless Area, should have no further logging until its impact on “our resource of the future, tourism” is fully assessed. Timber industry commenters requested that these MAs be managed under the Timber Production LUD, with the exception of a Modified Landscape LUD buffer along Neva and Olga Straits. Another commenter recommended that Nakwasina Sound and Passage be managed for a local wood products industry. One commenter identified the VCUs that comprise the area as areas that should be managed for timber production. The AVA proposed recreation developments in the general vicinity of Neva Strait and St. John Baptist Bay.

Parts of the area were also specifically identified in the Forest Plan appeal filed by the SCS, which, among other things, objected to inclusion of a number of places in the Sitka area in the “timber base.” These places included an area they identified as Nakwasina, which likely includes part of the Sitka Sound Roadless Area. The SCS also requested that the Baranof coastal tidal river system, which also likely includes part of the Sitka Sound Roadless Area, be given wild and scenic river designation because it is a rare resource that would be more valuable over time than logging the same area would be. The Forest Plan appeal filed by SEACC identified three of the VCUs that comprise the area as part of the Sitka Local Use Area, a “SEACC Special Area,” where clearcutting should not be permitted. The appeal filed by the Hoonah Indian Association et al. expressed the concern that logging should not be permitted along the stretch of lands and islands on both sides of the various narrows that span from Sitka Sound to Hoonah Sound because the subsistence harvest of deer in this area “already exceeds the sustainable hunting level by a wide margin” and logging would exacerbate this situation.

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

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

(f) Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process: SEACC included this area in a contiguous complex of roadless areas consisting of Roadless Areas 330, 331, 332, and 333. They recommended this complex for permanent protection as LUD II. The combined area represents just over 500,000 acres. The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) identified Roadless Areas 330, 331, 332, and 333 as a contiguous complex of roadless areas that should be considered one roadless area and recommended it for permanent protection as LUD II.

Some members of the Southeast Alaska Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council identified the need for further protection of this area because of its importance for subsistence

A number of individuals recommended permanent protection for this area.

(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses: The nearest wilderness is the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness, which lies north of Salisbury Sound. Two other nearby wildernesses are the Admiralty National Monument Wilderness, which lies east of Chatham Strait, and the South Baranof Wilderness south of Sitka.

Nearby roadless areas include North Kruzof (#326), Middle Kruzof (#327), and South Kruzof (#329), all located on Kruzof Island, immediately west of the area. North Baranof (#330) and Sitka Urban (#331) lie on Baranof Island, east across Neva Strait and Sitka Sound from the area.

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

Community	Air Miles	Water Miles
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	85	150
Sitka (Pop. 8,835)	10	10
Hoonah (Pop. 860)	60	125
Angoon (Pop. 572)	35	70

The nearest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway is Sitka.

(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System: The Sitka Sound Roadless Area, generally located between Sitka Sound and Salisbury Sound, and between Kruzof Island and Baranof Island, is comprised of Krestof Island, Halleck Island, the Siginaka Islands, and a number of small offshore islands and rocks. The area also includes a peninsula on Baranof Island that is separated from the remainder of the island by a road system and timber harvest units. The peninsula is a roughly triangular shaped piece of land of gentle slope with a maximum elevation of just over 1,400 feet. Halleck and Krestof Islands are both irregularly shaped, with a mix of gentle and steep sloped terrain. Krestof Island is further defined by Promisla and De Groff Bays. Maximum elevations on Krestof and Halleck Islands are over 1,600 feet and 1,900 feet, respectively. The small islands in the Sitka Sound Roadless Area are mostly less than 100 feet in elevation and are scattered throughout the area.

The area is unmodified and natural appearing except where older beach logging has occurred. The area has very high natural integrity and apparent naturalness. The opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation is moderate.

Approximately 4 percent of the landscape is considered distinctive from a scenery standpoint. The area has no other outstanding or unique features.

The roadless area includes about 2,298 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, about 6 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The Sitka Sound Roadless Area is classified as being in the West Baranof Island Biogeographic Province and makes up about 3 percent of the province. It is one of eight inventoried roadless areas found within the province that make up about 62 percent of the province. The majority of the South Baranof Wilderness is also within this province and makes up approximately 29 percent of the province.

The Sitka Sound Roadless Area lies completely within the Baranof-Chichagof Fjordlands Ecological Section. This portion represents 1 percent of the entire ecological section, which is well represented in existing wilderness (28 percent) and other non-development LUDs (35 percent) with an additional 13 percent in LUD II.

Appendix C

This roadless area is located completely within the Sitka Sound Complex Ecological Subsection. This portion represents 11 percent of the entire ecological subsection, which is well represented by non-development LUDs (67 percent), but is not protected in wilderness or LUD II.

The Sitka Sound Roadless Area was rated 20 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 53rd from the highest (along with 16 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas.

There is both local and national support for managing the Sitka Sound Roadless Area as unroaded, but very little support for designating it as wilderness. Designation would create a wilderness heavily influenced by its proximity to Sitka and with few outstanding or unique values or features. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System would be low to moderate.

V. Environmental Consequences

The Sitka Sound Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 7 is implemented. Approximately 86 percent of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. Timber harvest and road development could occur within the remaining 14 percent of the roadless area. The land in the development LUDs includes an estimated 486 acres that are suitable for timber production (1 percent of the suitable acres on the Sitka Ranger District). None of the suitable acres are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. This area contains 10,054 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources; all of which are considered to have low potential for development. The relatively high recreation use and special use permits would continue. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area could be affected in the northern peninsula area by ongoing developments allowed by the Forest Plan. These values, including scenic values, are protected by the Forest Plan for most of the roadless area.

Under Alternative 6, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended LUD II. Mineral prospecting and recreation use and developments could continue, but no timber harvest would be allowed. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including the scenic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated LUD II. Designation of the area would add Congressional protection to 11 percent of the Sitka Sound Complex Ecological Subsection, which does not contain any areas under long-term Congressional protection.

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 and mineral, could be significantly restricted. Mineral prospecting would be allowed up to the time that the area is actually designated as wilderness by Congress. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area, including the scenic values, would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness. Designation of the area would add Congressional protection to 11 percent of the Sitka Sound Complex Ecological Subsection, which does not contain any areas under long-term Congressional protection.

Appendix C

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 332 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness								20,878
Wilderness								
Recommended Wilderness Nat. Mon.								
Wilderness National Monument								
Non-wilderness National Monument								
Research Natural Area								
Special Interest Area								
Remote Recreation								
Enacted Municipal Watershed								
Old-growth Habitat								
Semi-remote Recreation	18,021	18,021	18,021	18,021	18,021		18,021	
Recommended LUD II						20,878		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed	190	190	190	190	190		190	
Modified Landscape								
Timber production	2,666	2,666	2,666	2,666	2,666		2,666	
TOTAL	20,878	20,878	20,878	20,878	20,878	20,878	20,878	20,878
Suitable Timber Lands	486	486	486	486	486	0	486	0