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# South Etolin Wilderness

In 1990, the United States Congress designated 83,619 acres as the South Etolin Wilderness. Located midway between Wrangell and Ketchikan on the south end of Etolin Island, this wilderness also encompasses many other smaller barrier islands that surround Etolin Island. It is strategically managed to continue the preservation of this undeveloped, enduring ecosystem for the enjoyment of present and future generations.



## Wilderness Laws

The Wilderness Act, ANILCA, and the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan of 2008 (TLMP) give direction to designated wilderness areas in the Tongass National Forest. The Wilderness Act, ANILCA and/or TLMP **prohibit** the following:

- ◆ Commercial enterprise (except for outfitters and guides)
- ◆ Permanent and temporary roads
- ◆ Use of motor vehicles and motorized equipment (except snowmobiles, motorboats, and fixed wing airplanes)
- ◆ Mechanized form of transport (i.e. bicycles, wheelbarrows)
- ◆ Damaging of live trees
- ◆ Construction of structures and installations
- ◆ Landing of helicopters

Under ANILCA and TLMP temporary structures are allowed but are limited to a 14-day stay at any one location. TLMP also mandates a group size limit of no more than 12 persons for commercial or general public use within this wilderness. These regulations are established for the wilderness character to remain undeveloped, and natural for future use.

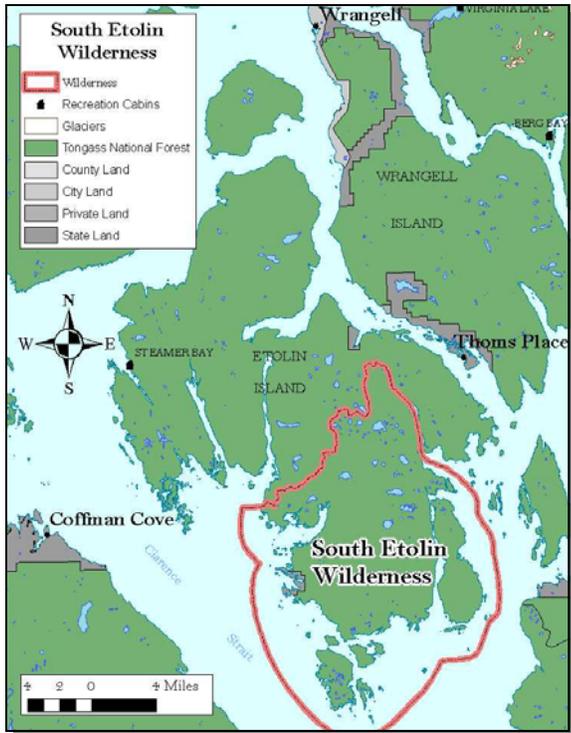
## Wilderness Character

From afar South Etolin Wilderness looks like any other southeast Alaskan island with cedars, hemlocks and spruce trees towering the landscape. But there is something different within. Creatures, whom by some are considered only ghosts, were transplanted here 20 years ago and now inhabit much of this wilderness area. Their scat, tracks and browsing dominate areas where Sitka black-tailed deer are normally seen. Many hunters who arrive by boat at saltwater, or by floatplane in the high elevation lakes, try for a glimpse of these creatures but only a few are successful every fall. It is easier to see a brown or black bear feeding at many salmon spawning streams on the island than to see these mysterious creatures. Be watchful when traveling in the South Etolin Wilderness because a twig snapping or leaves rustling might not be a black bear, but indeed an illusive Roosevelt or Rocky Mountain elk.

## Facilities

There are no established hiking trails or public recreation facilities in South Etolin Wilderness.





## Wilderness Challenges

People are lured into Alaska for its beauty and excitement but remember it is also very unforgiving. The South Etolin Wilderness is within a temperate rainforest where the average summer temperatures are between 45-65°F. Be prepared with the appropriate clothing, safety equipment, shelter supplies, and water purifying devices for a cool and frequently overcast climate. This wilderness also contains brown and black bears so store food and trash properly. During the summer months, be especially careful around salmon spawning streams. If traveling by boat, be aware of submerged rocks around the southern end of Etolin Island.

## Leave No Trace

Tongass National Forest is the largest, intact coastal rainforest in America. The South Etolin Wilderness is a piece of this treasure and is set aside for all visitors – now and in the future. To insure that this area is left unimpaired for future use, practice the following Leave No Trace principles.

- ◆ Plan ahead and be prepared for extreme weather conditions, and emergencies.
- ◆ Travel and camp on durable surfaces. South Etolin is managed as a pristine area. Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails and avoid places where impacts are just beginning.
- ◆ Dispose of waste properly. **Pack out** all trash, leftover food, and toilet paper. During appropriate conditions dispose of human waste in the intertidal zone. If camping in upland forests dispose of solid waste by digging a cathole 6 to 8 inches deep located at least 200 feet from water or campsite.
- ◆ Leave what you find. There are a few historical sites and artifacts within this wilderness. Examine but do not touch cultural or historical structures and artifacts. Do not build structures or furniture with live trees.
- ◆ Minimize campfire impacts. Use a lightweight stove when possible. When a campfire is necessary, keep fires small. Build a fire below mean high tide, or when in a forested area, build a mound fire or use a fire pan to avoid damaging the ground vegetation. Stay away from boulders or tree bases to avoid long lasting black scars.
- ◆ Respect wildlife and other visitors in the surrounding area.

## Threats and Benefits

While designated wilderness areas have the most protections of any other public lands, there are still threats that degrade the wilderness resource. Trash pollution from visitors, illegal motorized use, illegal outfitting and guiding, and resource damage by littering, campfire scars, invasive species, timber theft, trespass structures and damaged flora are the major human threats to this wilderness. Building awareness and a better understanding of designated wilderness areas is the key foundation to ensure that these areas stay wild.

Along with providing excellent recreational opportunities, designated wilderness areas protect natural ecosystems from being manipulated or developed. They provide us with clean air and clean water, and allow the natural processes to continue without the permanent presence of humans. As the current laws continue to give management direction, no wilderness on the Tongass will have a commercial timber harvest or construction of permanent roads. Due to the action of Congress in 1990, South Etolin Wilderness will remain protected for future generations.

This flyer was printed with the help of recreation fee money. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

