



United States Department of Agriculture

Draft Designated Areas Assessment

Tongass National Forest Plan Revision



Forest
Service

Alaska
Region

Tongass
National Forest

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Draft Designated Areas Assessment Tongass National Forest Plan Revision

Forest Service, Alaska Region

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Types of Designated Areas

The Tongass National Forest has nine different types of designated areas that have been established to protect unique and special features ranging from Congressionally designated wilderness areas to recreational areas, areas for scientific study, scenic areas, geologic areas, intact botanical and zoological areas and cultural areas. There are specific allowable uses and management implemented in these areas to protect and maintain the characteristics for which they were established. Some of these areas have been congressionally designated while others have been designated locally by the Forest and/or Region, referred to as an administrative designation. These designated areas allow the persistence of these sometimes rare and distinct habitats that are treasured both locally and nationally.



Figure 1. South Baranof Wilderness.

Current Management Direction

Designated Wilderness

Establishment

The establishment of the National Wilderness Preservation System, as detailed in Section 2(a) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 describes Congress' intent and purpose which is as follows: "In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States....leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness."

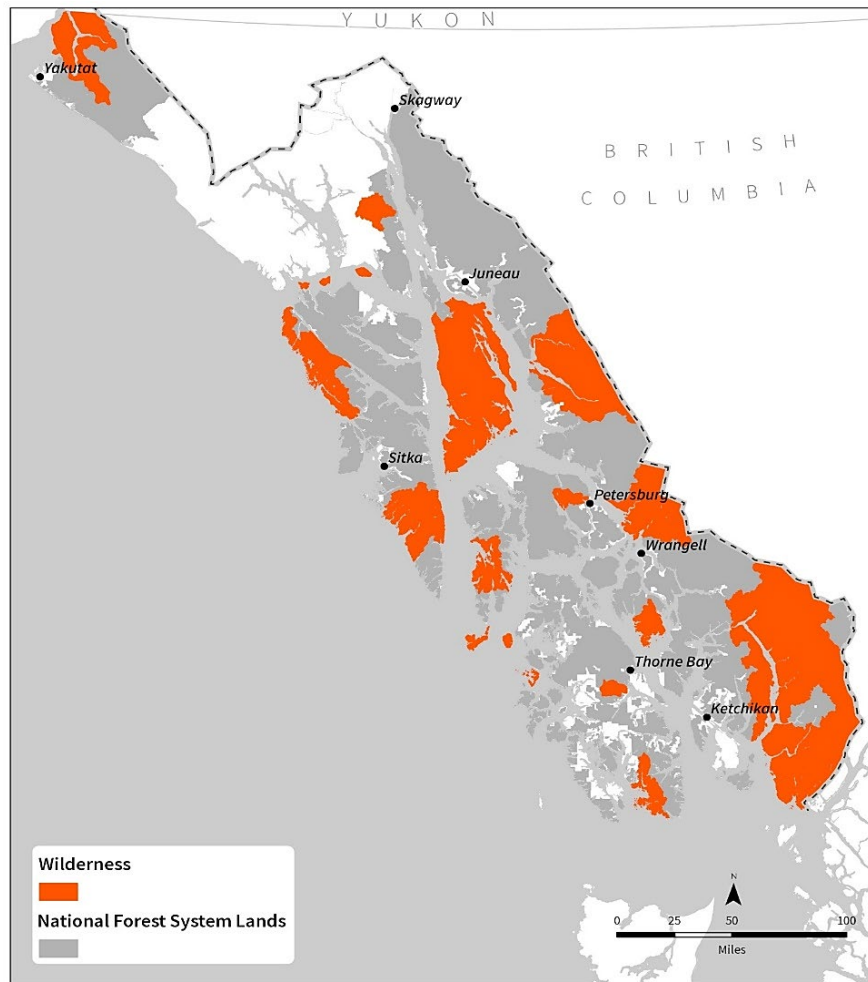


Figure 2. Wilderness Areas on the Tongass National Forest

Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act defines wilderness: “A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man....”. The Act further defines wilderness as “an area of undeveloped Federal land without permanent improvements which is managed to preserve its natural conditions” and which “generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature” with “outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.” Wilderness “may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.”

There are 19 wilderness areas (Table 1) on the Tongass, which encompass approximately six million acres, or about one-third of the forest (Figure 2). Fourteen of these wilderness areas were designated by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980, Sec 703, and an additional five wilderness areas were designated by the Tongass Timber Reform Act (TTRA), ANILCA Amendment, Section 202 of 1990. The TTRA also added lands to one of the ANILCA-designated areas (Young Lake Addition to Kootznoowoo Wilderness). TTRA amended ANILCA and directed that those areas designated by TTRA be managed in the same manner as those designated by ANILCA.

Table 1. Congressionally designated Wilderness Areas (National Forest System acres from the 2024 Land Acres of the National Forest System, National Wilderness Areas by State report: Land Areas of the National Forest System (LAR)).

Wilderness Area	Acres	Year Designated	Legislation
Chuck River	75,031	1990	TTRA
Coronation Island	19,118	1980	ANILCA
Endicott River	98,396	1980	ANILCA
Karta River	39,916	1990	TTRA
Kootznoowoo	989,944	1980, 1990	ANILCA, TTRA, P.L. 101-378*
Kuiu	60,183	1990	TTRA
Maurelle Islands	4,814	1980	ANILCA
Misty Fjords National Monument	2,144,010	1980	ANILCA
Petersburg Creek-Duncan Salt Chuck	46,756	1980	ANILCA
Pleasant-Lemesurier-Inian Islands	23,081	1990	TTRA
South Baranof (Figure 1)	315,820	1980	ANILCA
Russell Fjord (Figure 3)	348,131	1980	ANILCA
South Etolin	82,593	1990	TTRA
South Prince of Wales	86,771	1980	ANILCA
Stikine-LeConte	436,084	1980	ANILCA
Tebenkof Bay (Figure 5)	66,994	1980	ANILCA
Tracy Arm-Fords Terror	648,883	1980	ANILCA
Warren Island	11,559	1980	ANILCA
West Chichagof-Yakobi	271,214	1980	ANILCA

* Public Law 101-378 is the Admiralty Island National Monument Land Management Act of 1990. It changed the name of the wilderness area from Admiralty Island National Monument Wilderness to Kootznoowoo Wilderness. No wilderness acres were added with this law.

Range of Uses and Management

The management of wilderness areas follows Section 707 of ANILCA which states that wilderness areas designated by ANILCA will be managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964 “except as otherwise expressly provided for in [ANILCA].” Therefore, wilderness management on the Tongass National Forest must consider and fully comply with both the Wilderness Act and ANILCA. Managers must preserve wilderness character while also allowing for the traditional uses, motorized access provisions, and other such special provisions in ANILCA. The plan components from the 2016 Tongass Land Management Plan Amendment reflect the combined direction of the Wilderness Act and ANILCA.

Wilderness Character Monitoring

Section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act directs: “Except as otherwise provided in this Act, each agency administering any area designated as wilderness shall be responsible for preserving the wilderness character of the area and shall so administer such area for such other purposes for which it may have been established as also to preserve its wilderness character.” “Preserve wilderness character” is the primary management mandate for lands in the National Wilderness Preservation System. There are five different

qualities that make up wilderness character including 1. They are natural, 2. They provide for solitude or primitive and unconfined type of recreation, 3. They are undeveloped, 4. They are untrammeled, and 5. They have other features that are unique to that specific wilderness area.

In 2018, the Forest Service established a protocol by which the agency will determine if we are meeting our primary wilderness management mandate. The protocol calls for the agency to determine the baseline wilderness character for every wilderness area managed by agency. A series of 15 or more elements are selected for each wilderness area. Current and historical data are compiled for the baseline report (e.g., number and location of buildings; acres of non-native plants; approvals to use motor vehicles, motorized equipment, and mechanical transport; etc.) and key data gaps are also identified. The 15 or more elements are then monitored every five years to determine wilderness character trends (stable, improving, or degrading). No conclusions about wilderness character can be drawn from the baseline assessment reports themselves. Comparison of scores can only be made after a trend is established through additional monitoring cycles.

The Tongass completed their 19 wilderness character baselines in 2023 and embarked on the first of three wilderness character trend reports in 2024. Two to six trend reports will be completed every year until trends have been completed for all 19 wilderness areas in 2028. The 5-year cycle will then begin again.

Wilderness Stewardship Performance is the performance measure we use to track “Wildernesses meeting baseline performance for preserving wilderness character,” which is reported annually. Both wilderness character monitoring and stewardship performance place heightened emphasis on the interdisciplinary responsibilities of wilderness stewardship and the potential linkages with other program areas. They seek to foster improved integration and communication between program areas, to accurately reflect the collaboration required to steward our wilderness resource.



Figure 3. Russel Fjord Wilderness.

Wilderness Visits

Visits to designated wilderness areas are summarized in the 2010, 2015, and 2020 Alaska Region Master Reports from the National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) survey (Table 2). Due to its size, visitor use on the Tongass is sampled over a period of four years in four distinct geographic areas: 1) Juneau and Admiralty National Monument; 2) Ketchikan Misty, Craig, and Thorne Bay; 3) Sitka and Hoonah; and 4) Yakutat, Petersburg, and Wrangell. Since 2010, each of these units was sampled once every five years.

However, from 2005-2009, the forest was divided into three geographic areas (Stikine, Chatham, and Ketchikan), and each of these areas were sampled over 2-3 years.

NVUM data are not summarized for the Tongass until all units have been sampled. The 2010 report includes data from 2005-2009, the 2015 report includes data from 2010-2014, and the 2020 report includes data from 2015-2019. While data was collected for 3 of the 4 units in 2020, 2021, and 2022, the summarized data is not yet available (at the time of this report being compiled). The last unit will not complete their sampling until October 2024. We anticipate the next forest-wide summary to be available in 2025.

The 2010 report estimates 22,000 visits to designated wilderness areas on the Tongass. The 2015 estimate is for 73,000 wilderness visits, and the 2020 estimate is for 43,000 visits. The 2010 data were based on 97 wilderness interviews; the 2015 and 2020 data were based on 35 and 117 interviews, respectively. It should be noted that the 90% confidence intervals for wilderness visits are quite broad, indicating high variability in the visitation estimates (see Table 2 below). The data are not precise enough to identify a trend in wilderness visitation on the Tongass. However, even as the amount of total visitation to the Tongass National Forest has been increasing since 2010, the proportion of wilderness visits compared to other types of forest visits is consistently less than 5% (1.5-4%), which suggests that most forest visits are not to designated wilderness.

Table 2. Estimated annual visits to Designated Wilderness on the Tongass National Forest from 2010, 2015, and 2020 National Visitor Use Monitoring Master Reports for the Alaska Region.

Year	Sample Area	Annual Visits (1000s)	90% Confidence Interval
2005, 2008, 2009	Chatham	12	30.5
2005, 2008, 2009	Stikine	5	24.8
2005, 2009	Ketchikan	5	33.4
2010 Total	Forest-wide	22	--
2010	Juneau and Admiralty National Monument	3	67.4
2011	Sitka and Hoonah	54	44.8
2012	Yakutat, Petersburg, Wrangell	1	64.8
2014	Ketchikan, Misty, Craig, Thorne Bay	15	42.7
2015 Total	Forest-wide	73	--
2015	Juneau and Admiralty National Monument	6	42.4
2016	Sitka and Hoonah	6	4.7
2017	Yakutat, Petersburg, Wrangell	11	57.1
2019	Ketchikan, Misty, Craig, Thorne Bay	20	39.8
2020 Total	Forest-wide	43	--

An important element of outdoor recreation program delivery is understanding people's satisfaction with the recreation setting, facilities, and services provided. This allows managers to understand where to focus resources and staff efforts to ensure that recreation opportunities are meeting the needs and expectations of users of the Tongass National Forest. The 2010, 2015, and 2020 NVUM reports provide

overall satisfaction of visitors to designated wilderness across four elements surveyed: developed facilities, access, services, and feeling of safety (Table 3). Overall, there is a declining trend in satisfaction for all four elements, although “feeling of safety” remains well above 95%.

Table 3. Percent of satisfied survey respondents visiting designated wilderness (composite of good or very good ratings as reported in the 2010, 2015, and 2020 Alaska Region Master Reports).

Survey Element	2010	2015	2020
Developed Facilities	95.1	93.9	66.2
Access	94.8	81.07	70.3
Services	84.4	76.1	73.6
Feeling of Safety	100.0	92.2	98.8

During the National Visitor Use Monitoring survey, visitors to designated wilderness areas were asked about their perception of crowding. This information is useful when looking at designated wilderness because these areas are managed to provide opportunities for solitude. Crowding was reported on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents “hardly anyone was there” and 10 represents “overcrowded.” The average rating of crowding was generally consistent between 2010 and 2015 (Table 4). No data was available for 2020. The 2020 report lists 0.0% for all crowding ratings in wilderness. These data were either not collected in 2015-19, or the number of respondents was too low for meaningful evaluation.

Table 4. Percent of wilderness visits by crowding rates (from Alaska Region 2010 and 2015 NVUM Master Reports).

Crowding Rate	2010	2015
10 (Overcrowded)	3.0	0.0
9	1.4	0.0
8	2.8	7.2
7	6.0	0.0
6	4.9	10.4
5	4.9	0.0
4	6.6	22.2
3	14.1	0.0
2	48.1	60.2
1 (Hardly anyone there)	8.0	0.0
Average Rating	3.4	3.3

Forest-wide Management

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classifications help manage recreation activities to meet appropriate levels of social encounters, onsite development, methods of access, and visitor impacts (Table 5). Wilderness areas on the Tongass are primarily in the Primitive (47%), Semi-primitive Non-motorized (19%), and Semi-primitive Motorized (31%) ROS classifications.

Table 5. Management direction for three ROS classes used for designated wilderness areas on the Tongass National Forest (2016 Tongass Land Management Plan).

ROS Class	Management Direction
Primitive	high scenic integrity infrequent sights and sounds of human activity high opportunity for discovery with few controls (such as signs) less than three encounters per day group sizes limited to no more than 12 persons
Semi-primitive Non-motorized	high scenic integrity sights and sounds of human activity is rare but distant sights and sounds may occur on-site controls are rare less than six encounters per day group sizes limited to no more than 12 persons
Semi-primitive Motorized	moderate scenic integrity sights and sounds of human activity is rare but distant sights and sounds may occur on-site controls are rare less than six encounters per day group sizes limited to no more than 12 persons



Figure 4. Group sizes are limited to less than 12 people in wilderness.

To ensure opportunities for solitude are available in wilderness, the current Tongass Land Management Plan includes the following direction for designated wilderness areas:

- Group size (Figure 4) is limited to no more than 12 persons for commercial or public use of a wilderness unless otherwise approved by the appropriate line officer.
- Length of stay at any one location is limited to 14 days except for uses approved through a special use authorization.

-
- Do not authorize commercial services in wilderness with more than two groups of 12 people from a single vessel or other means of transport or access. These groups are required to disperse out of sight and sound from each other when using National Forest System lands to minimize impacts to a specific site or other groups who may want to use an area.
 - Encounters should be less than three groups per day to maintain a more primitive experience.
 - Management restrictions on visitor behavior will be primarily for resource protection and to minimize conflicts.
 - Use will not be encouraged into more pristine areas as a means of resolving conflicts in areas of concentrated use.

Activities outside of wilderness can adversely affect experiences within wilderness. Many visitors to Tongass wilderness areas utilize the shoreline, where most accessible by boat or floatplane. These areas look out over marine waters, which are plied by numerous commercial and private ships. Aircraft are used to move people and goods over the Tongass, and certain routes are used extensively, such as for tourism. While the Tongass does not control the airspace nor marine waters, extensive use of these areas can impact wilderness users, at least in certain locations within the wilderness areas.

Visitor use is highly dependent on multiple variables, including day of the week, weather, and publicity about specific locations. While NVUM data suggest wilderness areas are seldom visited on the Tongass National Forest, high variability in visitation and monitoring data comprised of a small sample of dates is considered a poor indicator of overall visitor use and encounter rates. Wilderness managers gather wilderness solitude monitoring data every year, but again the data collected are from just a few dates and places. As a result, we do not have extensive data about actual uses of wilderness or locations of that use.

We do, however, have institutional knowledge of wilderness use patterns and how they may be affecting opportunities for solitude. In 2020, five solitude monitoring priority areas were defined and mapped for all 19 wilderness areas (2020 Tongass National Forest Wilderness Solitude Monitoring Plan):

- Priority 1: Sites that are frequently used and where opportunities for solitude may be compromised. These sites are monitored regularly.
- Priority 2: Sites where there is reason to be concerned about use levels degrading opportunities for solitude and where we have some encounter data. These sites may be surveyed.
- Priority 3: Sites where there is reason to be concerned about use levels degrading opportunities for solitude and where we have no data. Surveys may be conducted in these areas.
- Priority 4: Remote areas that get little use and are seldom surveyed; areas that likely retain opportunities for solitude
- Priority 5: Sites where opportunities for solitude are believed to no longer exist due to excessive use.

Ten wilderness areas have one or more Priority 5 sites which are areas where opportunities for solitude are believed to no longer exist due to excessive use either within or immediately adjacent to the wilderness. Fourteen wilderness areas have Priority 2 and/or 3 sites which are locations where there is reason to be concerned about use levels degrading opportunities for solitude. All 19 wilderness areas have Priority 4 sites which are locations that are seldom used and likely retain opportunities for solitude.



Figure 5. Tebenkof Wilderness tide lands.

Recommended Wilderness

There are no recommended wilderness areas on the Tongass National Forest. A detailed roadless area evaluation for wilderness recommendation was completed in 2003 (Supplemental EIS to the 1997 Tongass Land Management Plan). In the Record of Decision, the Regional Forester stated:

“I have decided that no additional Congressionally designated wilderness is needed on the Tongass National Forest currently. First, almost 40 percent of the Tongass National Forest is already designated, by Congress, as Wilderness, National Monument, or to other special land use allocations. Second, most of the rest of the Tongass is managed to remain in a largely untouched, wildland state for the next fifty years, and the rest is protected by a body of law, regulation, and policy that assures its long-term sustainability. Third, the communities and their associated economies are changing rapidly in SE Alaska, and I don’t want to make commitments right now that will pre-empt future decisions important to the people who live here. A lack of strong need for wilderness designation is the main rationale for my decision.”

Key Takeaways

- There are currently 19 congressionally designated wilderness within the Tongass National Forest administrative boundary. These areas make up one-third of the Tongass.
- Designated wilderness provides for primitive, semi-primitive (non-motorized and motorized) recreation settings to set appropriate levels for: social encounters, amount of on-site development, methods for access and impacts from visitors, and to preserve the natural condition of the area.
- Overall satisfaction, as noted by percent of satisfied visitors to designated areas, range from good to very good.

-
- As part of the Forest Plan revision process, the Tongass will be evaluated to determine if there is additional land suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and determine whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness designation.

Land Use Designation II (LUD II)

Establishment

The Land Use Designation II (LUD II) was originally from the 1979 Tongass Land Management Plan. The 1979 Plan had 4 LUD designations: LUD I – recommended Wilderness or areas under study for Wilderness; LUD II – greater management flexibility than LUD I but still mostly protected areas; LUD III – managing for a combination of amenity and commodity values; and LUD IV – development of resources. Some of these LUD II areas, but not all, became congressionally designated LUD II areas (Figure 6) by the Tongass Timber Reform Act, ANILCA Amendment, Section 201 on November 28, 1990, and detailed in the 1991 Amendment of the 1979 Land Management Plan. These areas were included in the 1997 Land and Resource Management Plan as LUD II. The other LUD II areas from the 1979 Plan were assigned other LUD designations in the 1997 Plan, such as Remote Recreation LUD. Additional areas were designated by Congress as LUD IIs by the Sealaska Land Entitlement Finalization on December 19, 2014, from the Carl Levin and Howard P. “Buck” McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, Sec. 3002. These lands were given this designation to ensure that they would remain in their unmodified natural state, maintaining their wildland character and unroaded state.

Designated Land Use Designation II (LUD II) areas on the Tongass designated by the Tongass Timber Reform Act, ANILCA Amendment Section 201, 11/28/1990:

- Primitive
- Anan Creek
- Berners Bay
- Kadashan
- Lisianski River/Upper Hoonah Sound
- Mt. Calder/Mt. Holbrook
- Naha
- Nutkwa
- Outside Islands
- Point Adolphus/Mud Bay
- Salmon Bay
- Trap Bay
- Yakutat Forelands

Designated Land Use Designation II (LUD II) areas on the Tongass designated by the Sealaska Land Entitlement Finalization 12/19/2014:

- Bay of Pillars
- Kushneahin Creek

- Northern Prince of Wales
- Western Kosciusko
- Eastern Kosciusko
- Sarkar Lakes
- Honker Divide
- Eek Lake and Sukkwan Island

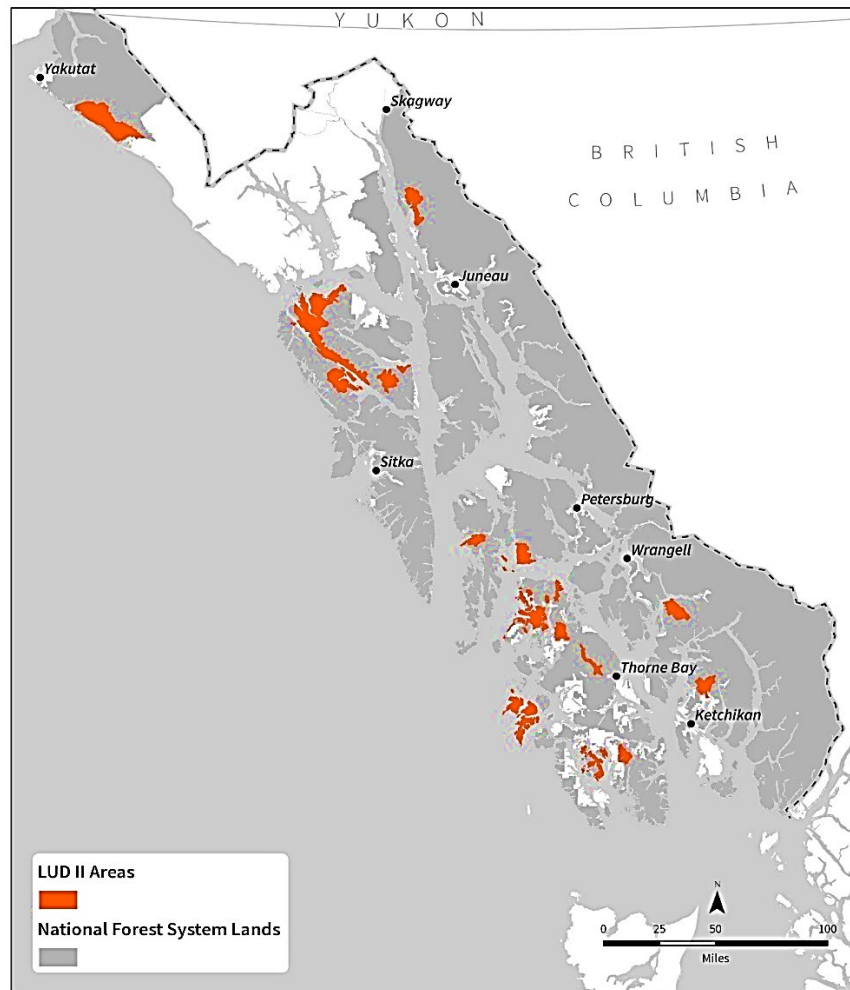


Figure 6. Land Use Designation II areas on Tongass National Forest.

Range of Uses and Management

These lands are maintained to protect the unmodified and natural state of the lands. There is specific direction for what uses are allowable as detailed originally in the 1979 Tongass Land Management Plan. These uses include direction on timber harvest and timber for personal use, water and power developments, road development, mineral development, permit access, fish and wildlife habitat improvements and recreation facilities.

Key Takeaways

- The Tongass National Forest has twenty established LUD IIs with a total size of approximately 873,000 acres.
- The 1979 Tongass Land Management plan provided the direction to maintain the unmodified natural environment of these areas, retaining their wildland character in perpetuity.

Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Exchange Lands

Establishment

A land exchange was authorized under The Alaska Mental Health Trust Act of 2017 through the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, Public Law 115-31, which exchanged 18,500 federal acres with approximately 18,000 non-federal acres (Figure 7). Lands included in the exchange are associated with six different communities in Southeast Alaska, as shown in Table 6 below. An amendment to the Forest Plan was completed in April 2022 to assign land use designations to ensure any United States Forest Service (USFS) management preserves the undeveloped natural character of the land and the wildlife, watershed and scenic values of the land. In return, the USFS Forest Service conveyed approximately 18,500 acres of land to the State of Alaska Mental Health Trust.

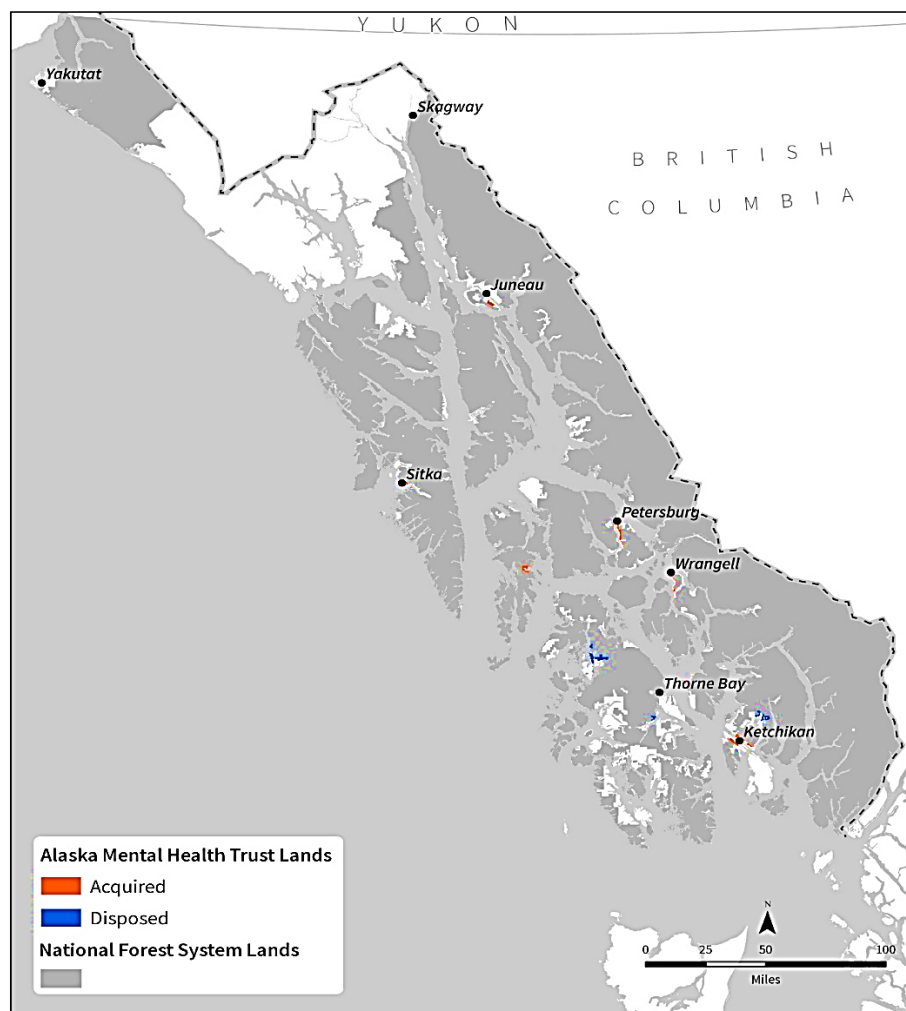


Figure 7. Alaska Mental Health Trust Lands.

Table 6. Land Use Designations (LUDs) acquired by the USDA Forest Service under the Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Exchange Act of 2017 (Data from Administrative Change 2 to Tongass Land Management Plan, April 2022).

Parcel Name (LEX IDs)	Ranger District	Area (acres)	LUD Assignment
Mt Bradley Trail (J-1A)	Juneau	428	Semi-Remote Recreation
Douglas S (J-1B)	Juneau	2261	Semi-Remote Recreation
Signal Mtn. (K-1)	Ketchikan Misty Fjords	1878	Special Interest Area- Recreation
Minerva Mtn. (K-2)	Ketchikan Misty Fjords	707	Semi-Remote Recreation
Deer Mtn. (K-3 and K-3 Conservation Easement)	Ketchikan Misty Fjords	901	Old-Growth Habitat
Gravina Mid (K-4A)	Ketchikan Misty Fjords	3180	Semi-Remote Recreation
Meyers Chuck (MC-1)	Wrangell	168	Semi-Remote Recreation
No Name Bay (NB-1)	Petersburg	3373	Semi-Remote Recreation (south end 3,071 acres) and Old-Growth Habitat (north end 302 acres)
Twin Creek (Administrative Site)	Petersburg	42	Semi-Remote Recreation
Twin Creek (P-1A)	Petersburg	3120	Semi-Remote Recreation
Twin Creek (P-1B)	Petersburg	143	Semi-Remote Recreation
S Fall Creek (P-2B)	Petersburg	182	Semi-Remote Recreation
Blind Pt. E (P-3B)	Petersburg	92	Old-Growth Habitat
Kupreanof N (P-4)	Petersburg	280	Semi-Remote Recreation
Indian Creek E (S-2)	Sitka	284	Semi-Remote Recreation
Indian Creek W (S-3)	Sitka	109	Semi-Remote Recreation
Cascade Creek (S-4)	Sitka	26	Semi-Remote Recreation
W-1 (W-1)	Wrangell	204	Semi-Remote Recreation
W-2 (W-2)	Wrangell	104	Semi-Remote Recreation
W-3 (W-3)	Wrangell	63	Semi-Remote Recreation
W-4 (W-4)	Wrangell	658	Old-Growth Habitat

Range of Uses and Management

These lands were exchanged with the Forest Service for the purpose of securing Federal ownership and protection of non-Federal land in the State of Alaska that had significant natural, scenic, watershed, recreational, wildlife and other public values. To meet the intent of this act, any future management designations will be those that both protect the land and manage it to provide recreational opportunities including the development or maintenance of recreational trails for hiking, biking and skiing.

Key Takeaways

- 18,500 federal acres were exchanged with approximately 18,000 non-federal acres that became part of the Tongass National Forest through the Alaska Mental Health Trust Act of 2017, which also set requirements for the USFS to manage and preserve the undeveloped natural character of the lands, as well as the wildlife, watershed, and scenic values of the land. The Act also directed the Forest Service to provide recreational opportunities consistent with the lands' purposes and values, including the development or maintenance of recreational trails.

Non-Wilderness National Monuments

Establishment

Jimmy Carter, the President in 1978, proclaimed (Proclamation 4611 & 4623), that Admiralty Island and Misty Fjords needed protection on the Tongass (Figure 8). Congress enacted this protection by creating a combination of wilderness and two non-wilderness designations (Table 7) within the National Monuments to be managed for use and access consistent with the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

Table 7. National Monument Acres and associated acreage of Wilderness vs. Non-Wilderness (Data from 2023 Lands Report).

National Monument	Acres Administered by USFS	Total Wilderness Acres	Total Non-Wilderness Acres
Admiralty National Monument	1,008,069	989,922	18,147
Misty Fjords National Monument	2,293,162	2,144,010	149,152

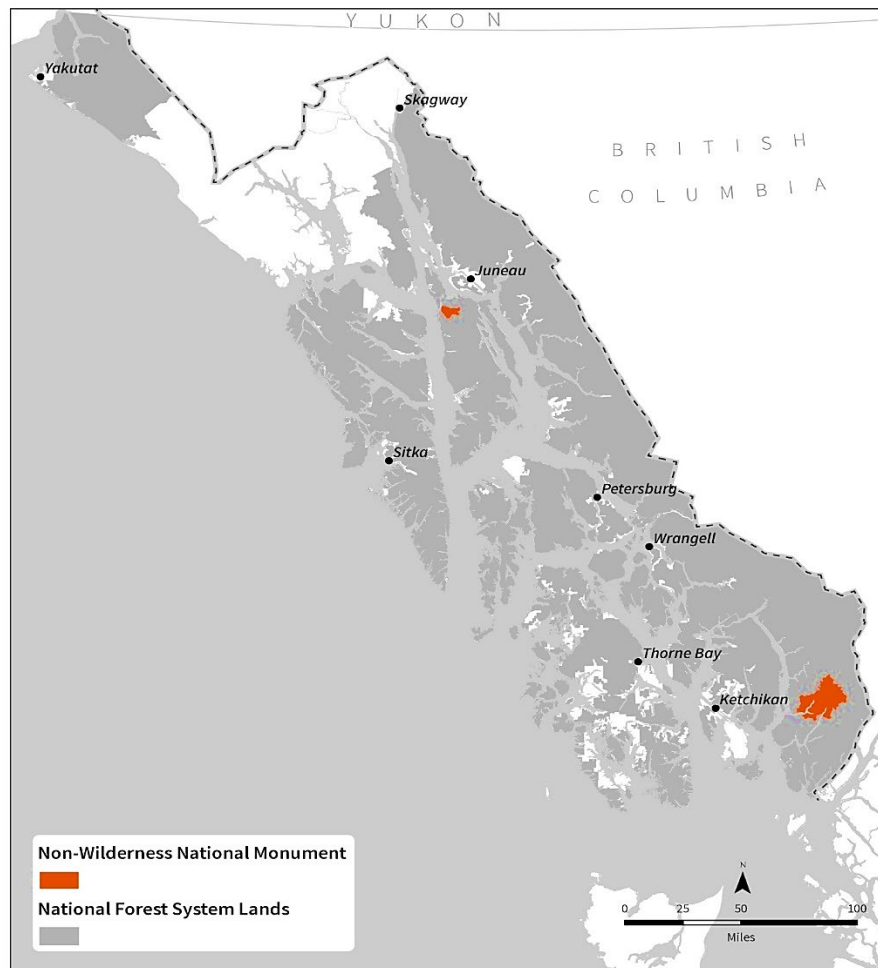


Figure 8. Non-Wilderness National Monument areas on Tongass National Forest.

The Admiralty Island National Monument Land Management Act of 1990, Public Law 378 designated this area of importance, noting its “unparalleled natural beauty containing multiple values including but not limited to fish and wildlife, forestry, recreational, subsistence, educational, wilderness, historical, cultural and scenic values of enduring benefit to the Nation and the Natives people residing therein...” (Public Law 101-378, 1990). This area provides opportunities for study of Admiralty Island’s ecology and its notable cultural, historical, and wildlife resources, within its relatively unspoiled natural ecosystem as a coastal island ecosystem (USDA 2016). This area also provides for the protection and study of Tlingit cultural resources, other historical resources, brown bear and bald eagle populations (USDA 2016).



Figure 9. Misty Fjords National Monument Wilderness.

The Misty Fjords National Monument (Figure 9) provides opportunities for the study of Misty Fjord’s geology and ecology, including the complete range of coastal to interior climates and ecosystems (USDA 2016). Protection and study of the geology, plant and animal succession, historical resources, and fish and wildlife resources are specifically directed (USDA 2016).

Range of Uses and Management

These monuments were created to preserve both their unique historic and scientific features. To maintain these significant resources, uses are limited to those allowed by ANILCA for both public access and use. Creation of these monuments included requirements that there was to be no commercial harvesting of timber and to mitigate the impacts and effects of any mining activities.

Key Takeaways

- The Tongass National Forest has two established non-wilderness National Monuments with a total size of approximately 167,299 acres.
- Admiralty Island, exclusive of the Mansfield Peninsula, was designated as a National Monument for the scientific purpose of preserving intact a unique coastal island ecosystem with its notable cultural, historical and wildlife resources (USDA 2016).

- Misty Fjords was designated as a National Monument to serve the scientific purposes of preserving a unique ecosystem and the remarkable geologic and biological resources, historical resources and features it contains (USDA 2016).
- To preserve the unique features of these areas, uses are limited to those allowed by ANILCA for public access and use.

Research Natural Areas

Establishment

Research Natural Areas (Figure 10) are designated to preserve the biological diversity of representative ecosystems that are found on National Forest Land. Most of these research natural areas, (seven out of twelve) were established in the 1997 Tongass Land Management Plan (Table 8). Five of the areas were established earlier, again by administrative designation between 1951 and 1980.

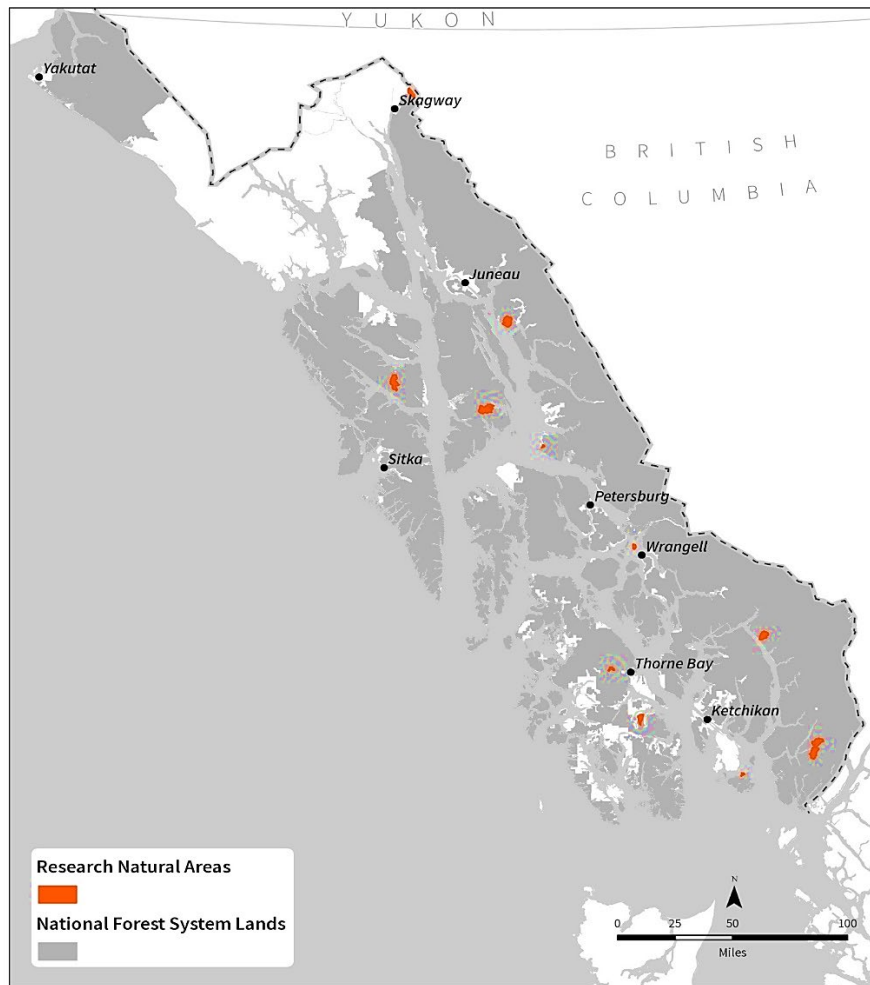


Figure 10. Research Natural Areas on Tongass National Forest.

Table 8. Research Natural areas on the Tongass National Forest (acres from USDA 1997, USDA 2008).

Research Natural Area	Year Administratively Established	Approximate Area (acres)	Characteristics
Limestone Inlet	1951	9,102	Represents an intact drainage, found in the northern mainland coast with representative vegetation, avalanche chutes and stream characteristics found in the area
Old Tom Creek	1951	4,544	Representative cedar-hemlock old growth forest with some riparian spruce forest, tidal meadows with both the presence of bald eagles and black bear populations (reduced in size by Public Law 113-291)
Cape Fanshaw	1965	614	Undisturbed old-growth yellow-cedar and western hemlock forests
Dog Island	1976	705	Small island ecosystem with the upper limit of Pacific yew (<i>Taxus brevifolia</i>), scrub timber and mixed-conifer
Red River	1980	8,031	Representative of the northern range of Pacific silver fir (<i>Abies amabilis</i>).
Kadin Island	1997	1,623	An area of high interest as it has both a source of new loess deposition and receives high rainfall, which is a very rare combination. This area also has a very high concentration of bald eagle nests. Kadin Island is now included in Honker Divide LUD II area due to Public Law 113-291
Marten River	1997	6,213	An area with riparian spruce stands and habitat preferred by brown bear.
Rio Roberts	1997	1,560	Has riparian flood plain spruce stands, upland old-growth and natural young-growth stands, and upland hemlock on drumlin fields.
Robinson Lake	1997	4,297	Representative of the vegetation found in the southern part of Southeast Alaska, at a natural slump lake, with shoreline vegetation found next to deep water.
Tonalite Creek	1997	9,515	Is home to many important species found on the Tongass as an intact representation of Sitka spruce, western and mountain hemlock and yellow cedar forest habitats which support several wildlife and aquatic species.
Warm Pass	1997	8,980	Is the northernmost representation of subalpine fir in Alaska. Due to a rain shadow effect the habitat has a different climate which supports a mixture of species that use both high and low elevation habitats.
West Gambier Bay	1997	11,790	Representative of the northern island habitats of Southeast Alaska with Pybus Lake and a variety of geologic features and species of interest.

Range of Uses and Management

These areas are set aside for research and study. To preserve their condition, these areas remain undisturbed, in their natural state. Research and/or other activities are conducted in a manner that does not impact the habitats' ability to maintain its natural physical and biological processes whereas Experimental Forests can allow for moderate development activities for research or demonstration needs.

Key Takeaways

- The Tongass National Forest has twelve established research natural areas.

-
- Research Natural areas are established to preserve areas of ecological importance in their natural condition for the purposes of research, monitoring, education and/or to maintain natural diversity. They remain undisturbed by human uses or activities to provide quality opportunities for non-manipulative scientific research, observation and study (USDA 2016).



Figure 11. Mendenhall Recreation Area

Special Interest Areas

Types of Areas

There are different types and areas of special interest designated across the forest, administratively or otherwise to protect unique and special habitats and/or features (Figure 12). These areas include Recreation Areas, Zoological Areas, Scenic Areas, Geologic Areas, Botanical Areas and Cultural Areas (Table 9). Recreation areas are areas that are noteworthy locations for recreational enjoyment. Zoological areas are habitats that create the type of environment that supports species of interest on the Tongass National Forest. Scenic areas are areas that have notable beauty or features that people frequent and/or can view from frequently accessed locations. Geologic areas have notable or unique geologic features and/or have the presence of fossilized plants and/or animals. Botanical areas are habitats that have an ecology, composition and/or structure that makes them rare or unique. Cultural areas are designated to protect areas that are known to have prehistoric/historic sites, buildings or artifacts listed in the National Register of Historic Places, or are sites of importance to the local indigenous communities.

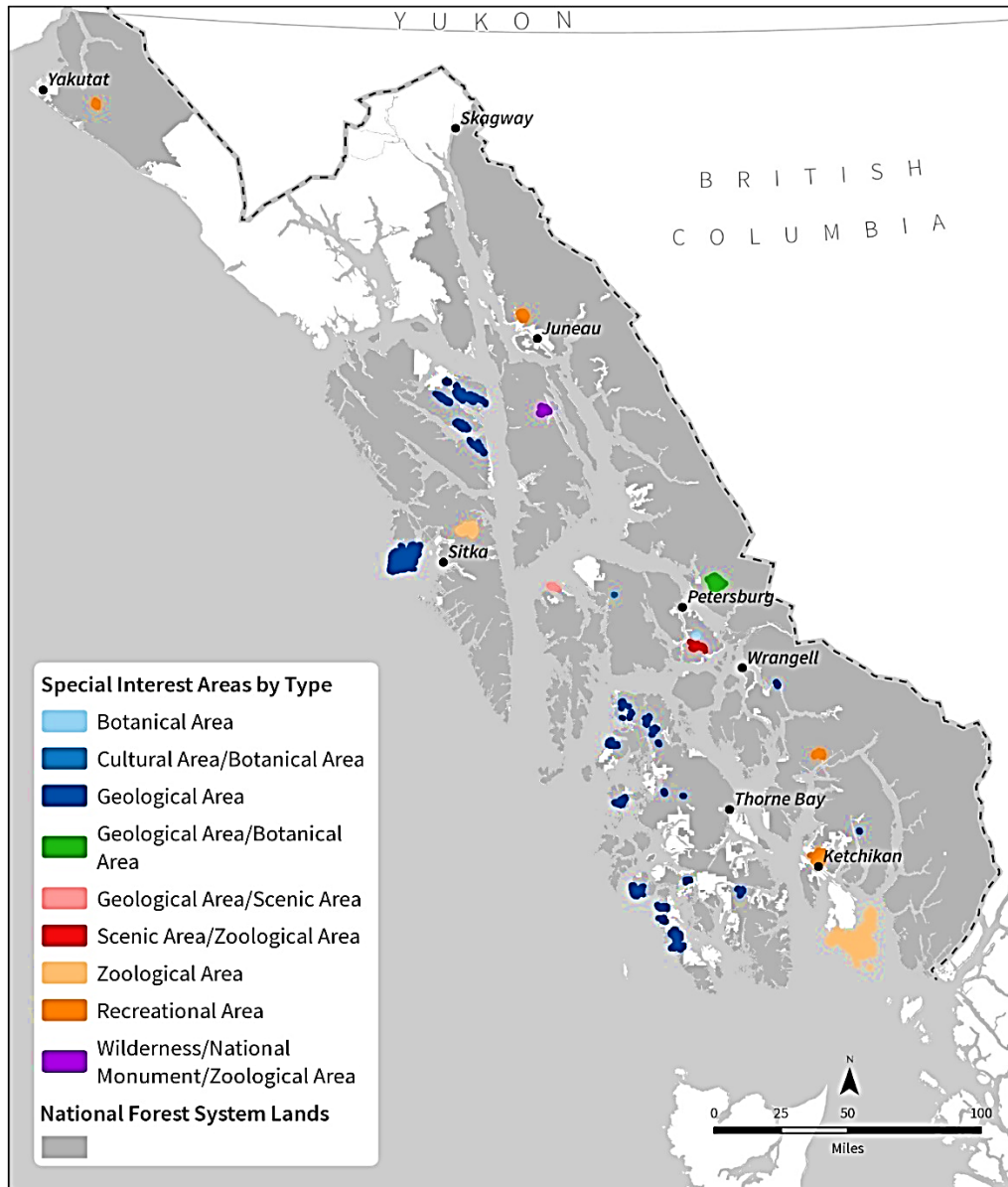


Figure 12. Special Interest Areas on the Tongass National Forest.

Table 9. Special Interest areas on the Tongass National Forest (acres from USDA 1997, USDA 2008, USDA 2016b).

Special Interest Area	Type	Approximate Area (acres)	Characteristics
Admiralty Lakes	Recreation Area	8,710	Established by Regional Forester in 1965. Is located in Admiralty Island National Monument and Kootznoowoo Wilderness.
Bailey Bay Hot Springs	Recreation Area	3,510	Notable scenic area providing dispersed recreational opportunities.
Fish Creek Hot Springs	Recreational Area	100	Area with hot springs with current and planned recreational opportunities.
Mendenhall Glacier	Recreation Area	5,791	Was set aside by the President in 1947 to designate the area for recreational purposes (Figure 11).
Naha	Recreational Area	2,363	Area designated within Naha LUDII.

Special Interest Area	Type	Approximate Area (acres)	Characteristics
Pike Lakes	Recreation Area	2,340	A unique muskeg habitat with lakes that are the only known habitat of the northern pike (<i>Esox Lucius</i>) in Southeast Alaska.
Ward Lake	Recreation Area	7,535	Established in 1948. Area surrounding ward lake to support additional recreational opportunities.
Clear River	Zoological Area	11,530	Unique and important estuary that supports many species of fish and other plants and animals.
Duke Island	Zoological Area	44,650	Area with an abundant wildlife and waterfowl population.
Pack Creek	Zoological Area	5,837	Area for Brown bear viewing. The local bear population has become habituated to the visitors. Area has viewing tower, campsites and cabins. Is within Admiralty Island National Monument and Kootznoowoo Wilderness.
Blind Slough	Scenic and Zoological Area	8,150	A unique ecosystem, known for its notable beauty, that supports a large and diverse population of birds.
Tracy Arm-Fords Terror	Scenic Area	283,000	Designated by Secretary of Interior in 1960. Is within Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wilderness.
Walker Cove-Rudyerd Bay	Scenic Area	93,540	Established in 1952 by Regional Forester. Is within Misty Fjords National Monument and Wilderness.
Keku Islets	Scenic and Geological Area	2,300	Site has both uncommon limestone geologic features and uncommon types of plants.
Arena Cove/Cape Felix	Geological Area	9,465	A volcanic unit with Cenozoic volcanic rocks and other notable geologic features.
Big Creek	Geological Area	2,000	Notable alpine karst features.
Blake Channel	Geological Area	700	Site with notable karst and cave features.
Blue River Lava Flow	Geologic Area	13,520	Representative area with multiple periods of volcanic activity within Misty Fjords National Monument and Wilderness.
Calamity Creek Caves	Geologic Area	200	Site with notable karst features.
Dall Island	Geological Area	13,600	Site with notable karst features. Includes part of former Karst Geological Area
Eastern Chichagof	Geological Area	23,900	Twelve areas with notable alpine karst features and a cave system.
Heceta Island	Geological Area	4,100	Site with a large amount of karst development.
Hubbard Glacier	Geological Area	46,000	Established by the Secretary of the Interior in 1986 to observe and study the movement of the glacier across the landscape. Is within Russell Fjord Wilderness.
Karst Areas	Geological Area	13,635	Areas with extremely high concentration of karst features, some of which will only be discovered through further inventory.
Kosciusko Island	Geological Area	8,700	Two areas with significant karst development.
Mount Edgecumbe	Geological Area	49,050	Area that is representative of unique geologic processes and history. Is a place favored by recreationists.
New Eddystone Rock	Geological Area	1	Established by Regional Forester in 1966. Is within Misty Fjords National Monument and Wilderness.
Northern Prince of Wales	Geological Areas	2,400	Three sites with karst system caves (Figure 13).
North-central Prince of Wales	Geological Areas	700	Site with notable karst features including cave systems.
Soda Springs	Geological Area	3,515	Unique site with mineral springs and tufa deposits.

Special Interest Area	Type	Approximate Area (acres)	Characteristics
Suemez Island Volcanics	Geological Area	7,100	Site with notable volcanic features.
Patterson Glacier	Geological and Botanical Area	13,900	Representative site showing both natural processes and plant succession in relation to an active glacier.
Falls Creek Windthrow	Botanical Area	820	Representative of an even-aged, productive stand of spruce and hemlock following a significant windthrow event.
North Hamilton River Redcedar	Cultural and Botanical Area	80	Is the northernmost reach for redcedar which are important for local subsistence and cultural use.

There is also an area on the Forest designated as part of the International Biosphere Network: The Glacier Bay-Admiralty Island Biosphere Region. This area was created in 2019 recognizing the unique beauty and biodiversity found in the area. These Biosphere regions are non-regulatory focused areas for collaboration, with the USFS and National Park Service, to support both the noted region and the communities that surround them.



Figure 13. Photo of cave formations in a cave on Prince of Wales.

Range of Uses and Management

Special interest areas support public use and enjoyment. Uses and/or development are allowable when they protect the features and/or intended purposes of the designated area.

Key Takeaways

- There are currently 34 special interest areas designated on the forest.
- Are areas where unique features and/or uses are preserved in these areas.
- These areas provide opportunities for public study, use, and enjoyment.

Experimental Forests

Establishment

There are two experimental forests that have been administratively designated on the Tongass, the Maybeso and Héén Latinee. There originally was a third experimental forest designated, the Young Bay

Experimental Forest, but given that it did not provide optimal research opportunities, it was delisted in 2009. The Maybeso Experimental Forest (approximately 10,600 acres) is located on Prince of Wales Island and was established in 1956. The forest is an example of a second-growth spruce and hemlock forest as the area was clearcut logged between 1953-1960. During this time all the commercial timber was removed including in riparian areas. This area provides an example the effects of large-scale clearcutting on the habitat, hydrology and the effect of harvesting in spawning areas for anadromous salmon. Permanent research plots were established and monitored to study hillslope erosion, movement of large woody debris in and through streams, forest regeneration and vegetation responses to precommercial and commercial thinning (USDA 2008).

The Héen Latinee Experimental Forest (approximately 25,595 acres), north of Juneau, was established in 2009. Héen Latinee was a name recommended by the Tlingit & Haida Central Council, meaning “river watcher.” This experimental area was designated to provide a representative site of coastal temperate rainforest that could be studied. This area provides a wide range of habitat types encompassing temperate rainforests, marine estuaries, glacial ridges and alpine tundra.

Range of Uses and Management

Experimental forests provide areas on the forest for research that can help guide management throughout the other areas of the forest. These areas differ from Research Natural areas as there are allowable uses, e.g. timber harvesting if its purpose is for research and/or for a demonstration area. The resources in experimental forests are subjected to use and/or impacts as dictated by different research goals.

Key Takeaways

- There are two experimental forests on the Tongass.
- The Pacific Northwest Research Station maintains development plans for each experimental forest to meet the identified research needs.
- Activities are allowed that meet research needs.



Figure 14. LeConte glacier.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Establishment

Sections 1(b) and (c) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (Public Law 90-542; 16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.) describe Congress' intent and purpose for the establishment of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as follows:

“It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Congress declares that the established national policy of dam and other construction at appropriate sections of the rivers of the United States needs to be complemented by a policy that would preserve other selected rivers or sections thereof in their free-flowing condition to protect the water quality of such rivers and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes.... The purpose of this Act is to implement this policy by instituting a national wild and scenic rivers system, by designating the initial components of that system, and by prescribing the methods by which and standards according to which additional components may be added to the system from time to time.”

The Act is recognized for safeguarding the special character of these rivers, while also allowing for their appropriate use and development. The Act promotes river management across political boundaries and public participation in developing goals for river protection.

Types of WSRs

A wild, scenic, or recreational river is eligible to be included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System if it is a free-flowing stream and the river and/or its adjacent related land area possesses one or more outstandingly remarkable values (listed in the paragraph above). Section 16(a) defines the term “river” as “a flowing body of water or estuary or a section, portion, or tributary thereof, including rivers, streams, creeks, runs, kills, rills, and small lakes.” Whether a river qualifies as wild, scenic, or recreational depends largely on the level of existing development along the shorelines:

- Wild river areas typically are generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive.
- Scenic river areas have shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but the river may be accessible in places by roads.
- Recreational river areas are those that are readily accessible by road or railroad and that may have some development along their shorelines.

Evaluation of rivers for inclusion

Section 5(d)(1) of Wild and Scenic Rivers Act directs land management agencies to consider and evaluate rivers on lands they manage for potential inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System while preparing land and resource management plans. Specifically, the Act says: “In all planning for the use and development of water and related land resources, consideration shall be given by all Federal agencies involved to potential national wild, scenic and recreational river areas, and all river basin and project plan reports submitted to the Congress shall consider and discuss any such potentials.”

An inventory of eligible rivers for inclusion in the wild and scenic rivers system is also required under the 2012 Planning Rule for forest plan revision. Planning policy (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 80) requires forests

to review all named waters on 7.5-minute U.S. Geological Survey quadrangle maps. They can exclude from study previously evaluated waters provided there is no changed circumstance that would make them a lesser or stronger candidate river.

The final step in the river study process is a determination of suitability. Suitability is intended to answer whether a river's free-flowing character, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values are important enough to warrant protection, whether designation is the best method for that protection, and whether there is a demonstrated commitment to protect the river. A suitability study is not a required element of land management plan revision.

1997 Tongass Management Plan evaluation

There are currently no rivers designated as wild and scenic on the Tongass National Forest. The Tongass National Forest conducted a systematic survey of approximately 300 rivers in 1990-91 and determined 112 of these rivers (or segments thereof) as being eligible. In 1997, the Tongass completed a suitability study of these eligible segments as part of the 1997 Tongass Land Management Plan. The Record of Decision determined 32 of the studied waters (Table 10) were suitable and recommended them all for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. In 1999, the Under Secretary signed a Record of Decision resolving multiple appeals to the 1997 Revised Plan. In that ROD, the Under Secretary directed a reevaluation of the South Sullivan River. The Forest Supervisor completed that evaluation in July 2000 and determined that the river is not eligible as a wild and scenic river. After this adjustment, 31 candidate rivers or 557 miles and 97,716 acres (accounting for a ½ mile buffer on each side of the river), remain on the Tongass (Figure 15).

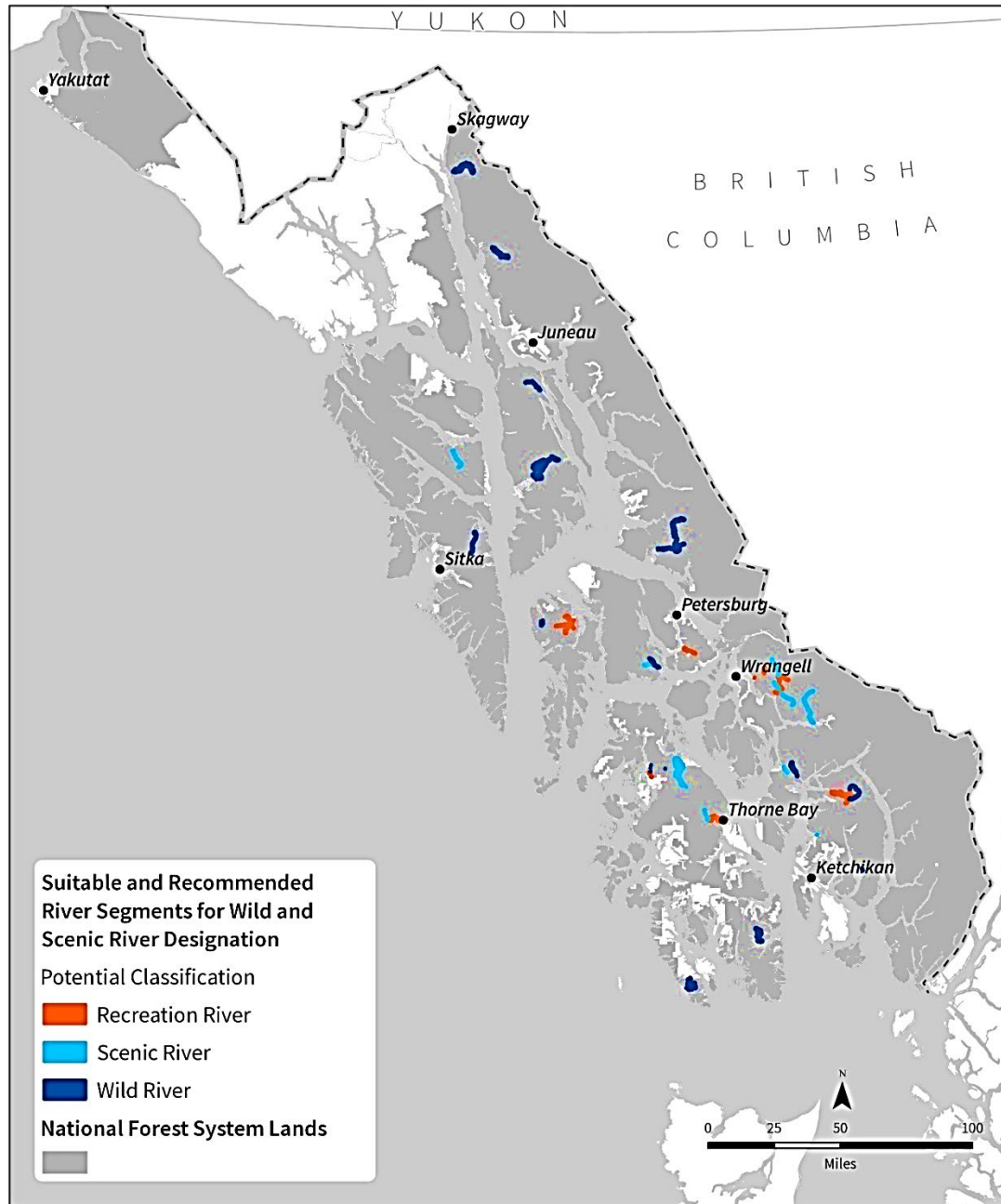


Figure 15. River segments on the Tongass National Forest previously determined suitable and recommended for wild and scenic river designation.

Table 10. River segments on the Tongass National Forest previously determined suitable and recommended for wild and scenic river designation (acres from USDA Forest Service Natural Resource Manager, Candidate Wild and Scenic River Profile Report).

River Name	Potential Classification	Outstandingly Remarkable Values	Total Length (miles)
Aaron, Oerns, and Berg Creeks	Scenic and Recreational	Scenic, Recreational, Fish, Wildlife	58
Anan Creek	Wild and Scenic	Recreational, Fish, Wildlife	18
Blind River	Recreational	Recreational, Fish, Wildlife, Other	5

River Name	Potential Classification	Outstandingly Remarkable Values	Total Length (miles)
Blue River	Wild	Scenic, Geologic, Wildlife, Other	26
Chickamin River	Wild and Scenic	Scenic, Recreational, Geologic, Fish, Wildlife, Historic, Cultural, Other	96
Essowah Lakes and Streams	Wild	Scenic, Fish, Wildlife	13
Fall Dog Creek	Wild	Scenic, Fish, Wildlife, Cultural	4
Farragut River	Wild and Scenic	Scenic, Fish, Wildlife	30
Gilkey River	Wild	Scenic, Geologic	9
Glacial River	Wild	Scenic, Geologic	10
Gokachin, Mirror, Low, and Fish Creeks	Wild	Scenic, Recreational, Fish, Wildlife, Historic, Cultural	30
Harding River	Scenic	Recreational, Fish, Wildlife	16
Hassleborg River and Lakes	Wild	Recreational, Fish, Wildlife, Cultural	24
Kadake Creek	Recreational	Recreational, Fish, Wildlife, Historic, Cultural	23
Kadashan River	Scenic	Scenic, Fish, Wildlife, Other	8
Kah Sheets Creek and Lake	Wild Scenic	Recreational, Fish, Wildlife, Cultural	9
Katzehin River	Wild	Scenic, Geologic, Fish	10
Kegan Lake and Streams	Wild	Scenic, Recreational, Fish	9
King Salmon River	Wild	Fish, Wildlife	8
Kutlaku Creek and Lake	Wild	Fish	2
LeConte Glacier (Figure 14)	Wild	Scenic, Geologic	6
Lisianski River	Wild	Wildlife, Other	5
Naha River	Wild Scenic	Recreational, Fish, Wildlife, Historic, Cultural	19
Orchard Creek and Lake	Wild and Recreational	Scenic, Recreational, Fish, Wildlife, Other	26
Petersburg Creek	Wild	Scenic, Recreational, Fish, Historic	7
Salmon Bay Lake and Stream	Wild and Scenic	Scenic, Fish, Wildlife	6
Santa Anna Creek and Lake Helen	Wild and Scenic	Recreational, Fish	4
Sarkar Lakes	Wild, Scenic and Recreational	Scenic, Fish, Wildlife, Historic, Cultural	19
Thorne River and Hatchery Creek	Scenic and Recreational	Scenic, Recreational, Fish, Wildlife	42
Virginia Lake and Creek	Recreational	Recreational, Fish	9
Wolverine Creek and McDonald Lake	Wild	Recreational, Fish, Wildlife	6

To date, Congress has taken no action on any of the 31 suitable and recommended rivers. The Tongass continues to maintain the rivers' potential for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System using the interim management included in the current Tongass Land Management Plan. There is separate management direction for Wild, Scenic, and Recreational rivers, reflecting the different development levels and management goals of the different river classifications. There is no single ROS classification that applies to the recommended river areas, nor is there any NVUM data collected that would isolate visitor use to these rivers over other NFS lands.

Key takeaways

- There are no rivers designated as wild and scenic on the Tongass National Forest. As of today, Congress has taken no action on any of the thirty-one suitable and recommended rivers identified in the 1997 Forest Plan and they are not designated or added to the National Wild and Scenic River system.
- As part of the Tongass land management plan revision process, the Forest Service must review rivers and streams for their potential eligibility for designation in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. River and stream segments can only be designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers by Congress.

Inventoried Roadless Areas

Establishment

The intent of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule) is to provide lasting protection for inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) within the National Forest System (NFS) in the context of multiple-use management. The prohibitions and restrictions established under the rule are not subject to reconsideration, revision, or rescission during forest plan revisions (36 CFR 294.14(e)). There are about 9.2 million acres of IRAs on the Tongass National Forest. These areas constitute approximately 56 percent of the land administered by the Forest (Figure 16) which are areas that can potentially overlap and/or include other types of designated areas.

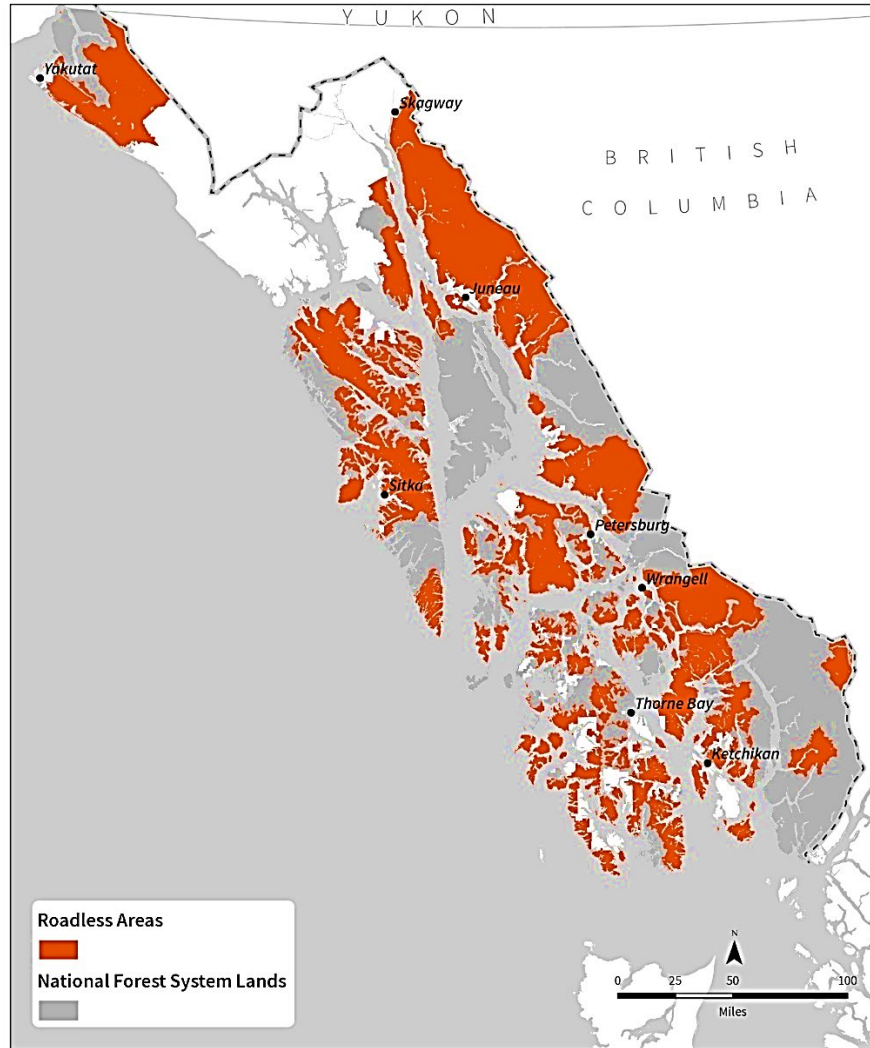


Figure 16. Roadless areas on Tongass National Forest.

Range of Uses and Management

The Roadless Rule established general prohibitions on and exceptions allowing road construction, road reconstruction, and timber harvest on IRAs on NFS lands across the United States. The intent of the Roadless Rule is to provide lasting protection for IRAs within the NFS in the context of multiple-use management. The Roadless Rule prohibits activities that have the greatest likelihood of altering and fragmenting landscapes, resulting in immediate, long-term loss of roadless area values and characteristics. It limits permanent road construction and reconstruction, thereby reducing fiscal demands and responsibilities. IRAs in the National Forest System help to maintain habitats, natural processes, and remote recreation opportunities in the regional and national network of protected forested lands.

Management activities on the Tongass National Forest currently must follow the direction in the Roadless Rule, as provided for in the U.S. District Court for the District of Alaska's Judgement in *Organized Village of Kake v. USDA*, 776 F. Supp. 2d 960 (D. Alaska 2011). The Roadless Rule allows road construction, reconstruction, and timber harvesting in specific circumstances, which require additional project review under current regional direction (36 CFR 294 Subpart B, 294.12 and 294.13).

Status and Trends

The Alaska Region tracks all ground-disturbing activities in IRAs and maintains a list of projects in IRAs that have included road construction/reconstruction and/or tree removal that has required higher level line officer review. Project proposals are reviewed in accordance with agency policy and implemented as permitted under the exceptions allowed in the Roadless Rule.

Since the Alaska Region began documenting and tracking certain decisions for projects within roadless areas in 2009, the Tongass has received many different project proposals in IRAs that included tree removal and/or road construction using the exceptions authorized by the Roadless Rule, including for mineral, energy, recreation, and transportation projects. All projects were approved. These project approvals demonstrate that the Roadless Rule's exceptions for access and mineral rights, as well as appropriate special uses, have been effective, and that the operation of the Roadless Rule on the Tongass has coexisted with State, Tribal, and private interests and allowed the Forest Service to fulfill its multiple use mission. Proposed projects in IRAs continue to be evaluated for consistency with Roadless Rule and Tongass Forest Plan requirements.

Key takeaways

- Inventoried roadless areas in the Alaska Region include approximately 9.2 million acres (56 percent) of the Tongass National Forest. The majority of the Tongass inventoried roadless areas (7.4 million acres) are allocated to non-development land use designations in the current forest plan.
- The Roadless Rule protects the social and ecological values and characteristics of inventoried roadless areas from road construction and reconstruction and certain timber harvest activities.
- Inventoried roadless areas provide large, relatively undisturbed blocks of important habitat for a variety of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and plants; contribute to ecosystem services like healthy watersheds and clean drinking water; and provide extensive opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism. Protection of these roadless characteristics on the Tongass National Forest is of local and national importance.
- The Responsible Official is required to identify all administratively designated areas, including IRAs, and must ensure that forest plan components applicable to IRAs are consistent with the Roadless Rule.

Looking Forward: Conclusions and Concerns

The condition of existing designated areas needs to be addressed during Plan Revision to determine if the protected resources and/or habitat needs increased or different levels of protection. Impacts to designated areas can occur from increasing or changing use and/or from other impacts such as from changing climates which have the potential to threaten some of the unique values of these areas. It is important to maintain the integrity of these areas with any changes or impacts that the areas may face.

While there are many existing designated areas on the Forest, during past reviews, staff have made recommendations to add seventeen additional special interest areas with unique cultural, geological, botanical, zoological, scenic or other special features, to provide them the same level of inventory, maintenance, interpretation and resource protection as other designated areas (Dillman 2020). There are also Key Coastal Wetlands that are recommended for designation by staff from the Alaska Regional office due to their importance to fish and wildlife populations, which is recognized at a state, national and international level. Those include the Yakutat Forelands and the Lower Stikine (USDA 2018). The

Yakutat Forelands are made up of wetlands, shrubland and forest communities which support significant proportions of breeding populations of hundreds of bird species and are a stopover habitat for hundreds of thousands of migratory waterfowl. The Lower Stikine is a transboundary river supporting a rich diversity of fauna and migratory birds.

While these areas have been proposed by experienced staff from the Tongass and Region, further review of these recommendations and any changed circumstances is needed to determine whether additional special interest areas or changes to current areas are warranted under the revised plan. Those that participated in the assessment engagement expressed their appreciation of the resource protection that designated areas provided, but they also wanted to see fewer areas on the Forest in the revised plan.

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