



# Draft Alaska Roadless Rule – Alaska Roadless Area Characteristics

## Supplementary Information – Alaska Roadless Area Characteristics

Roadless area characteristics, as established by the 2001 Roadless Rule, are resources or features that are often present in and characterize inventoried roadless areas. These characteristics are utilized by the Forest Service in evaluating roadless area project proposals.

The State of Alaska’s advisory committee provided the Governor with its own Alaska-specific perspective of roadless area characteristics by further elaborating on the unique social and cultural context, rich habitat, scenic quality, and economic importance of Alaska roadless areas.

The State Advisory Committee’s elaboration of the unique social and cultural context, rich habitat, scenic quality, and economic importance of Alaska roadless areas provides important context for considering local perspective for this rulemaking. The Committee identified its view that the unique roadless characteristics represented by the Roadless Areas in the Tongass National Forest include the following:

	Context	Discussion
1	Alaska Native people who have been on this land for more than 10,000 years, and for whom this place has cultural and spiritual significance.	The use of places, sites, waters, structures, resources, and objects are historically significant in the beliefs, customs, practices, and perpetuation of the culture(s) of communities and indigenous peoples of the area. While the Alaska Native people now share this place with other residents, it is critical that they continue to have the ability to sustain their cultures and their communities through economic, social, and cultural opportunities.
2	Expansive areas where high quality intact habitat exist and ecosystems function with all of their native species and components; there are no listed or endangered species; and invasive species are generally not present.	These areas function as biological strongholds and refuges for many species, harbor a diversity of plant and animal communities, and serve as a globally significant example of a temperate rainforest ecosystem that is both utilized and conserved by the people that live within and adjacent to it. Species exist in Alaska Roadless Areas that are endangered, threatened, or reduced in other places on the continent.
3	Opportunities for economic development of visitor industry products, including remote setting guided nature tours to view wildlife, hunt, fish, and hike.	Alaska Roadless Areas contribute to a regional resource of undeveloped lands that are an important resource for a segment of the visitor sector – an important component of the matrix of Tongass lands that provide opportunity for medium to larger groups to go ashore in a wilderness-type setting. The intact ecological systems in these areas, with natural settings and iconic fish and wildlife, are a draw for visitors.
4	Stands of old growth forests.	These old growth forests are nationally and globally significant because they exist in quantities and extensions in Alaska like few other places on the planet. They support subsistence and traditional hunting and gathering, unique plant and wildlife populations, a significant volume of sequestered carbon and forest/soil processes that mitigate climate change and represent a globally significant reference landscape and intact old growth forest ecosystem.
5	Multiple species of fish (including salmon) harvested for subsistence and personal use, commercial fisheries, and tourism and guided recreational fishing.	Salmon, trout, char, and hooligan of the Tongass National Forest are harvested in subsistence fisheries and for personal use by local residents. Salmon and trout are also the basis of tourism and guided fisheries enjoyed by thousands of visitors, supporting hundreds of tourism and support businesses. The commercial fisheries derived from Tongass streams and rivers produce a significant proportion of the total Alaska salmon harvest, and support fishing and processing jobs for thousands of local residents and nonresidents.



6	High-quality scenery, especially scenery with natural-appearing landscapes, is a primary quality that people value in Alaska Roadless Areas.	Quality scenery contributes directly to the quality of life and recreation opportunities for residents, property owners, and visitors.
7	Watersheds that are important sources of public drinking water and water sources for fish and aquatic resources, including hatcheries.	State regulations are currently enforced and applied using the most restrictive standard for water quality criterion as listed in Alaska’s Department of Environmental Conservation Water Quality Standards (18 AAC 70). Careful management of these watersheds is crucial in maintaining the flow of clean water to local communities, and to support continued production of fisheries and aquatic food webs.
8	An important source of subsistence resources for Alaskans.	Alaska Roadless Areas are rich in important subsistence resources, including game, fish, and foraging resources for those residents whose use and access rights are specifically recognized and guaranteed by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).
9	A major source of economic activity for Southeast Alaskans.	The Tongass National Forest surrounds 34 communities and approximately 73,000 year-round residents. These residents heavily rely on Alaska Roadless Areas for economic activities, including mining, visitor products, ocean products, forest products, energy production, and other economic activities.

**§294.51 Definitions – Roadless Area Characteristics**

The Department appreciates the thoughtful process undertaken by the State’s Advisory Committee and is proposing a new definition after consideration of the State’s input and the Forest Service’s own reflection of roadless characteristics. Resources or features that are often present in and characterize Alaska Roadless Areas:

	Characteristics	Discussion
1	Physical Environment	Roadless areas provide high-quality or undisturbed soil, water, and air.
2	Water	Roadless areas provide a variety of water resources including public drinking water sources, fish and aquatic resources, and hatchery aquatic resources.
3	Diversity	Roadless areas support a diversity of plant and animal communities including stands of old-growth forests.
4	Habitat	Roadless areas are expansive areas where high-quality intact habitat exists and ecosystems function with all their native species and components. Roadless areas serve as habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, and sensitive species and for those species dependent on large, undisturbed areas of land.
5	Remoteness	Roadless areas provide economic opportunity due to rich primitive, semi-primitive motorized, and semi-primitive non-motorized classes of dispersed recreation.
6	Landscape	Roadless areas provide reference landscapes of relatively undisturbed areas that serve as a barometer to measure the effects of development on other parts of the landscape.
7	Scenery	Roadless areas have natural-appearing landscapes with high-scenic qualities that people value.
8	Cultural	Roadless areas are rich in traditional cultural properties and sacred sites. In Alaska indigenous peoples have been on national forests for more than 10,000 years and the forests have cultural significance.
9	Locally-Unique Characteristics	Roadless areas represent geographic areas with additional locally-unique characteristics specific to Alaska including: (a) important source of subsistence resources including terrestrial wildlife, waterfowl, mammals, fish, and plant-based resources; (b) rich habitat that supports multiple species of fish for



		personal, subsistence, sport, recreation, and commercial harvest; and (c) supports diverse economic opportunity that is especially important for rural community well-being.
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