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INDIVIDUAL ROADLESS AREA DESCRIPTION

ROADLESS AREA NAME: Hydaburg (533)

ACRES (NFS): 13,720

BIOGEOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: North Central Prince of Wales Island

ECOLOGICAL SECTION: Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands and Prince of Wales Mountains

2003 WILDERNESS ATTRIBUTE RATING: 19

I. Overview and Description

(1) **Location and Access:** The Hydaburg Roadless Area is on Prince of Wales Island, southeast of the community of Hydaburg. The roadless area is approximately 50 air miles southwest of Ketchikan and 20 air miles south of Hollis, the closest community on the Alaska Marine Highway. Sukkwan Strait lies to the southwest and Hetta Inlet lies to the east. Non-National Forest System lands lie to the north and northwest. There is also a small parcel of non-National Forest System land in the south, surrounding Eek Inlet. Access is by floatplane or boat. A road from Hydaburg reaches to less than a mile from the west corner of the roadless area. There are no places suitable for landing wheeled aircraft. Access to the interior is by foot or helicopter and floatplanes that land in Eek Lake. There are no developed trails in the roadless area.

(2) **History:** South Prince of Wales Island was inhabited by the Tlingit until the Haida, who migrated north from the Queen Charlotte Islands, displaced them in the early 1700s. Since then, the roadless area has been within the principal traditional-use area of the Haida. Land conveyed to the Haida Corporation nearly surrounds the roadless area. The modern community of Hydaburg was established in 1916. Prior to that, Haida people who wintered in the village of Sukkwan had subsistence camps in most of the bays in this area.

(3) **Geography and Topography:** The roadless area is a combination of flat to rolling topography and steep, rugged areas. The highest elevation is approximately 2,200 feet. The roadless area contains three medium-sized lakes, including Eek Lake. Freshwater lakes cover approximately 234 acres. There are 13 miles of saltwater shoreline, 171 acres of rock, and 161 acres of alpine mapped in the area. The area also includes 5 islets totaling 2 acres.

(4) **Ecosystem:**

(a) **Classification:** Biogeographic Province. The area is in the North Central Prince of Wales Island Biogeographic Province. This province is characterized by rolling, gentle landforms but with localized rugged topography. Limestone is common and overall forest productivity is high. Karst topography and caves are often present, though there are no known karst features in this roadless area. Precipitation is relatively low due to interception by lands to the south and southwest.

Ecological Section/Subsection. The Hydaburg River Roadless Area is covered by two ecological sections: the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands (M247F) in the western two-thirds of the roadless area and Prince of Wales Mountains (M247I) in the eastern third. These areas are represented by two ecological subsections (see table below). The Soda Bay Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection covers two-thirds of the roadless area and is composed of a rolling landscape of sedimentary and volcanic geology. Wetlands are common on poorly drained soils, while productive hemlock or hemlock-spruce forests are on colluvium or well-drained till. Terrain in the Hetta Inlet Metasediments Ecological Subsection, which covers the remaining third of the roadless area, rises from deep fjords to sedimentary and volcanic peaks over 3,000 feet in elevation. The steep slopes are prone to frequent landslides. Soils in the lowlands, lying over poorly

drained glacial till, support wetlands. Productive forests are rare in the Hetta Inlet Metasediments Ecological Subsection (Nowacki et al., 2001).

Ecological Section	Ecological Subsection	Percent of Roadless Area
Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands	Soda Bay Till Lowlands	67%
Prince of Wales Mountains	Hetta Inlet Metasediments	33%

(b) Soils: These highly organic, low clay content soils are generally formed over bedrock, and are typically about 40 inches deep. Generally, steeper areas have better-drained soils and flat areas are poorly drained.

(c) Vegetation: This area is typical Southeast Alaska coastal temperate rain forest. The forest is primarily western hemlock and Sitka spruce, with a large cedar component. Less than 100 acres of muskeg are mapped for the area; however, due to their small size and association with forested sites, accurate acreage estimates are difficult.

There are approximately 13,039 acres mapped as forest land of which 7,880 acres or 60 percent are mapped as productive old-growth forest. Of the productive old growth, 4,113 acres (52 percent) are mapped as high-volume, old-growth forest. The productive old growth includes about 1,000 acres of high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth. There is no second growth in the area.

(d) Fish Resources: The streams and lakes in this area provide habitat for sockeye, pink, chum, and coho salmon as well as steelhead trout (ADF&G, 2000). There are very few fish-bearing waters in this area. Eek Lake and Creek and the headwaters for the stream flowing through Hydaburg into Sukkwan Strait are the primary producers.

(e) Wildlife Resources: This area has populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, coyote, wolves, river otter, marten, mink, loon, and common waterfowl. Moose and mountain lion reportedly inhabit Prince of Wales Island, but they have not been reported here. Brown bear and mountain goats do not inhabit the area (MacDonald and Cook, 1999).

(5) Management Direction and Current Uses: The entire roadless area was allocated to one Land Use Designation (LUD) under the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. The LUD in this area is Semi-remote Recreation, a non-development LUD.

LUD	Acres
Semi-remote Recreation	13,720

(6) Appearance (Apparent Naturalness): This roadless area appears unmodified and in a natural condition; however, timber management-related developments have altered the surrounding landscape. This affects the apparent naturalness of the adjacent areas within the roadless area.

(7) Surroundings (External Influences): Developments on adjacent private lands nearly surround the roadless area. Haida Village Corporation owns the land to the south and northwest of the roadless area. Sealaska Regional Corporation owns land to the north. The southwest side of the roadless area abuts unmodified land, which is the Sukkwan Roadless Area. The Sukkwan Roadless Area lies about 1 mile across the Sukkwan Strait from the Hydaburg Roadless Area.

(8) Attractions and Features of Special Interest: There are no features of special interest in the roadless area. The area contains no inventoried recreation places.

(9) Differences between the 1989 and 2003 Roadless Area Boundary: The roadless area was not included in the 1989 inventory because it was thought to be roaded. Better mapping during the 1997 Plan Revision showed

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the area to be unroaded and it was included in the 1997 inventory. Minor adjustments in landownership along the boundaries is ongoing.

II. Capability for Management as Wilderness

(1) Natural Integrity and Apparent Naturalness: The area appears unmodified and in a natural condition. Developments on adjacent private lands to the north and west and on the east side of Hetta Inlet have altered the surrounding landscape. The natural integrity and apparent naturalness of the roadless area is relatively high, but its relatively small size and the extensive modification of the surrounding area makes the roadless area less suitable for wilderness classification.

(2) Opportunity for Solitude and Serenity, Self-reliance, Adventure, Challenging Experiences, and Primitive Recreation: The opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation in the roadless area is moderate due to activities on adjacent non-National Forest System lands and boat traffic in Hetta Inlet and Sukkwan Strait. The area receives some primitive recreation use, particularly near Eek Inlet and Eek Lake.

The roadless area contains some steep, rugged terrain, rising to over 2,000 feet in elevation. The steep nature of portions of the area, the lack of developed trails, and the presence of black bears presents a degree of challenge and the need for woods skills and experience. However, much of the roadless area has relatively gentle topography and is less challenging to cross. Also, the roadless area is relatively small and close to the community of Hydaburg. Overall, the roadless area is less challenging than larger and more remote roadless areas.

This area provides primarily 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
Primitive (P)	11,196	82%
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	2,428	18%
Roaded Modified (RM)	93	1%

The area contains no inventoried recreation places.

ROS Class	# of Rec. Places	Total Acres
Primitive	0	0
SPM	0	0
RM	0	0

There are no developed recreation facilities in the roadless area.

(3) Wilderness Attribute Rating System: In 1977, the Forest Service, along with public interest groups, developed the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS), which was used to inventory the wilderness characteristics of roadless areas during the second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation process (referred to as RARE II). The purpose of WARS was to provide a measure of the area's wilderness quality, based on the key attributes of wilderness as defined in the Wilderness Act. It is largely based on the attributes described above in items 1 and 2 of this section (natural integrity, apparent naturalness, outstanding opportunity for solitude, and primitive recreation opportunities).

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 included both the individual VCU ratings done in 1979 and the composite rating that was done for each roadless area in 1989. The Hydaburg Roadless Area was not rated in 1989 and has received a rating of 19 for this update to the AMS.

(4) Ecologic and Geologic Values: The roadless area contains no apparent unique ecologic or geologic features.

(a) Fish Resources: The Tongass Fish and Wildlife Resource Assessment (ADF&G, 1998) listed VCU 672, the majority of the roadless area, as a primary salmon and sportfish producer.

The streams and lakes in this area provide habitat for sockeye, pink, chum, and coho salmon as well as steelhead trout (ADF&G, 2000). There are very few fish-bearing waters in this area; however, Eek Lake, Eek Creek, and the headwaters for the stream flowing through Hydaburg into Sukkwan Strait are the primary producers. Eek Lake has runs of sockeye salmon and steelhead trout (ADF&G, 2000). Eek Lake receives an estimated peak escapement of 61,400 pink salmon (ADF&G, 1998).

(b) Wildlife Resources: This area has populations of Sitka black-tailed deer, black bear, wolves, river otter, marten, mink, loon, and common waterfowl. Moose and mountain lion reportedly inhabit Prince of Wales Island, but they have not been reported here. Brown bear and mountain goats do not inhabit the area (MacDonald and Cook, 1999).

(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, nine sensitive plant species are known or suspected to occur in the Craig 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 known in this area.

(5) Scientific and Educational Values: There are no known special features within this roadless area. There are opportunities to study forests, wildlife, fish, and geologic processes close to a town.

(6) Scenic Values: The area displays natural characteristics when viewed from major and minor water travel routes and from inside the area. The exception is when the area is viewed from South Pass/upper Sukkwan Strait and Hetta Inlet. The viewer may see activities in the adjacent roaded areas. Visual Priority Routes and Use Areas identified by the Forest Plan, that are within or adjacent to the area, include Hydaburg Road #13, the small boat route from Ulloa Channel to Hydaburg, the saltwater use area around Hydaburg and south through Sukkwan Strait, Hetta Inlet, and the Hydaburg Community.

Approximately 47 percent of this area was inventoried as Variety Class B, which possesses landscape characteristics common for the character type. Approximately 36 percent of the land was inventoried as Variety Class C, which possesses a low degree of landscape diversity. Approximately 17 percent of the area was not inventoried for Variety Class type.

The Existing Visual Condition (EVC) for approximately 47 percent of this area was listed as EVC I. Land in EVC I displays a natural landscape that has remained unaltered by human activity. Another 36 percent of the area was inventoried as EVC II, in which changes in the landscape are not noticeable to the average visitor unless pointed out. Approximately 17 percent of the area was not inventoried for EVC.

(7) Social, Cultural, and Historical Values: South Prince of Wales Island was inhabited by the Tlingit until the Haida, who migrated north from the Queen Charlotte Islands, displaced them in the early 1700s. Since then, the roadless area has been within the principal traditional-use area of the Haida. Land conveyed to the Haida Corporation nearly surrounds the roadless area. The area receives some recreation and subsistence use, primarily by the residents of Hydaburg. Neither of the VCUs in the roadless area are listed among the VCUs with the highest

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community fish and wildlife values. VCU 672, the majority of the roadless area, is listed among the VCUs with the highest sensitivity to disturbance of subsistence use areas (ADF&G 1998). No outfitter/guide permits were issued for the area in 2000. There has not been any timber harvest in the roadless area and none is planned.

(8) Manageability as Wilderness and Boundary Conditions/Changes: The southwest and east boundaries of this roadless area consist of saltwater shorelines. Haida Corporation lands form the boundary on the north and northwest and there is a small parcel of State land near Eek Inlet. The boundaries with these non-National Forest System lands are not well defined by topographic features. There are no apparent topographic boundaries that could be used to develop well-defined boundaries. The lack of well-defined boundaries, the development on adjacent lands, and the small size of the roadless area would make it more difficult to manage as a wilderness than most other roadless areas.

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

(1) Recreation, including Tourism Potential: Tourism has been increasing in Southeast Alaska and is expected to continue to increase. The roadless area is close to Hydaburg, which is approximately 30 miles by road from Hollis, a stop on the Alaska Marine Highway. There is the potential for some of the tourists visiting Prince of Wales Island to be drawn to the roadless area for remote recreation; however, the potential of other nearby roadless areas is much greater due to access, size, and the presence of features likely to draw visitors.

(2) Subsistence Uses: Management as a wilderness would not conflict with current subsistent use.

(3) Fish Resources: No fish habitat enhancement projects are planned within the roadless area.

(4) Wildlife Resources: No wildlife enhancement projects are planned within the roadless area.

(5) Timber Resources: There are 7,880 acres of productive old-growth forest and no second growth due to harvest mapped in the roadless area. Of this, approximately 7,002 acres are categorized as tentatively suitable for timber harvest. None of this are is designated as suitable for timber production based on the Forest Plan LUDs assigned to this area. Managing timber in most of the roadless area would require extending the road system from adjacent areas.

(6) Fire, Insects, and Disease: The area has no significant fire history. Endemic tree diseases common to Southeast Alaska are present.

(7) Minerals: Mineral development potential is very low. This area contains 13,493 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources (Brew et al., 1990; USDA Forest Service, 1991); all but 6 of these acres are considered to have low potential for development.

(8) Transportation and Utilities: There are no proposed transportation or utility corridors within the roadless area. A road from Hydaburg reaches to less than 1 mile from the west corner of the roadless area. The transportation corridor connects Hydaburg with the cities of Craig and Klawook. A potential power transmission corridor is also located along the existing transportation network.

(9) Water Availability and Use: There are no public recreation cabins or other facilities to create a water demand. 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 no special use permits or other land use authorizations in the roadless area.

(12) Land Status: There are no non-National Forest System inholdings in the roadless area. There are several large parcels of land within the roadless area that are overselected and thus encumbered by Native Corporations.

IV. Wilderness Evaluation (Need for Wilderness)

(1) Public and Congressional Interest:

- (a) Interest Expressed by Local Users and Residents:** Both the Haida Natives and the Haida Native Corporation have an interest in the future of this area because of its historic use by the Haida and because of adjacent corporation land holdings.
- (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 Hydaburg Roadless Area. In 2001, HR 2908 proposed managing the roadless area as LUD II in an unroaded condition.
- (c) Public Input During Forest Plan Revision and Appeals:** There were no specific comments on the roadless area. The Alaska Forest Association, the Alaska Miners Association, and the Alaska Visitors Association recommended that no new wilderness be designated on the Forest. Others stated that all unroaded areas should be designated wilderness. Timber industry representatives recommended managing all areas not designated as wilderness for timber.
- (d) Public Input During Roadless Area Conservation Rule and Road Management Policy Review:** This area was not specifically identified in the public comments received during the Roadless Area Conservation Rule or Road Management Policy Review. However, some commenters wanted all unroaded lands on the Tongass to be protected from development.
- (e) Public Input Expressed for Project-level EISs and Other Input:** No project-level comments for this roadless area have been identified.
- (f) Public Input Expressed During Supplemental EIS Process:** SEACC recommended this area for permanent protection through LUD II designation. The Alaska Rainforest Campaign (a coalition of national and Alaska conservation groups) recommended Roadless Area 533 for permanent protection as LUD II.

(2) Nearby Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Uses: The area is separated from other roadless areas by saltwater. The Sukkwan Roadless Area (504) is about 1 mile to the southwest, across Sukkwan Strait. The Nutkwa Roadless Area (531) is 2 to 4 miles to the southeast, across Hetta Inlet and an area of non-National Forest System land. The South Prince of Wales Wilderness is adjacent to (and southeast of) the Nutkwa Roadless Area. Recreation and subsistence are the main uses in these areas. Use levels are generally low.

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

Community	Air Miles	Water Miles
Juneau (Pop. 30,711)	225	180
Ketchikan (Pop. 14,070)	50	100
Wrangell (Pop. 2,308)	90	180
Petersberg (Pop. 3,324)	110	180

Hollis, the closest stop on the Alaska Marine Highway, is approximately 30 miles by road from Hydaburg.

(4) Relative Contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System: The Hydaburg Roadless Area is on Prince of Wales Island, southeast of the community of Hydaburg. Sukkwan Strait lies to the southwest and Hetta Inlet lies to the east. Non-National Forest System lands lie to the north and northwest. There is also a small parcel of non-National Forest System land in the south, surrounding Eek Inlet. The roadless area is a combination of flat to rolling topography and steep, rugged areas. The highest elevation is approximately 2,200 feet. The roadless area contains three medium-sized lakes, including Eek Lake.

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The area appears unmodified and in a natural condition. However, the area is influenced by developments on adjacent private lands. The natural integrity of the area is very high and the apparent naturalness is rated high. The opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation is moderate.

None of the landscape is considered distinctive for the character type from a scenery standpoint. There are no known features of ecologic, geologic, scientific, or cultural significance in this area.

The roadless area includes about 4,113 acres of high-volume, old-growth forest. Of these acres, approximately 1,000 are mapped as high-volume, coarse-canopy old growth.

The Hydaburg Roadless Area is in the North Central Prince of Wales Island Biogeographic Province and makes up about 1 percent of the province. It is one of 15 inventoried roadless areas found in the province that make up about 44 percent of the province. Unlike much of the province, the area has no karst or other outstanding or unique features. The Karta River Wilderness represents about 3 percent of the province. This province also contains the Mt. Calder-Mt. Holbrook, Pt. Baker-Port Protection, and the Salmon Bay Congressionally-designated LUD II areas, which make up about 5 percent of the area, and are managed to remain roadless.

The Hydaburg Roadless Area lies within two ecological sections; it represents 1 percent of the Kuiu-Prince of Wales Fjordlands Ecological Section and 1 percent of the Prince of Wales Mountains Ecological Section. These ecological sections contain relatively low representation in existing wilderness (13 and 8 percent, respectively) and LUD II (8 and 3 percent, respectively), but they are well represented in other existing non-development LUDs (33 and 22 percent, respectively).

Two-thirds (67 percent) of the roadless area is in the Soda Bay Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 6 percent of the entire ecological subsection, none of which is in existing wilderness or LUD II, but 4 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs. One-third (33 percent) of the roadless area is in the Hetta Inlet Metasediments Ecological Subsection; this portion of the roadless area represents 2 percent of the entire ecological subsection, 2 percent of which is in existing wilderness, 9 percent in LUD II, and 14 percent is protected by other existing non-development LUDs.

The Hydaburg Roadless Area is rated at 19 out of a possible 28 points under the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). As such, its WARS rating is ranked 69th from the highest (along with 14 other roadless areas) among the 109 Tongass inventoried roadless areas.

There is some local and national support for managing the roadless area in an unroaded condition, but there is little support for designating the area as a wilderness. Designation of the area would add Congressional protection to about 6 percent of the Soda Bay Till Lowlands Ecological Subsection, none of which is currently in wilderness or LUD II. Designation would create a wilderness with no known features of ecologic, geologic, scientific, or cultural significance in this area. Overall, the factors identified here indicate that the relative contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System for this area would be low.

V. Environmental Consequences

The Hydaburg Roadless Area would be managed under the existing Forest Plan if Alternative 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 7 is implemented. All of the roadless area would be managed under non-development LUDs. This area contains an estimated 13,493 acres of undiscovered locatable mineral resources; all but 6 of these acres are considered to have low potential for development. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area are protected by the Forest Plan.

Under Alternative 6, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended LUD II. Because the area is already allocated to non-development LUDs, this conversion would have little effect on existing or future uses. Mineral prospecting and development, special uses, and recreation programs would continue. The values associated with the natural settings of the roadless area would be provided long-term protection if designated LUD II.

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With Alternative 8, the entire roadless area would be converted to Recommended Wilderness. Mineral prospecting and development, special uses, and recreation programs could be 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 would be provided long-term protection if designated wilderness.

Land Use Designation Allocations and Suitable Timber Lands by Alternative for Roadless Area 533 (in acres)								
Land Use Designation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7	Alt 8
Recommended Wilderness								13,720
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	13,720	13,720	13,720	13,720	13,720		13,720	
Recommended LUD II						13,720		
LUD II								
Wild, Scenic, Recreational River								
Experimental Forest								
Scenic Viewshed								
Modified Landscape								
Timber production								
TOTAL	13,720	13,720	13,720	13,720	13,720	13,720	13,720	13,720
Suitable Timber Lands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0