

Determination of Need for Commercial Services within the Karta River Wilderness Area

Thorne Bay Ranger District Tongass National Forest

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Thorne Bay Ranger District (TBRD), Tongass National Forest, developed this needs assessment (NA) to determine the type of outfitter/guide use that could take place in the Karta River Wilderness (KRW) area. An NA is a methodology for determining if, in fact, there is a 'need' for private enterprise to assist the agency in providing access, services and/or other assistance for the recreating public to safely and properly enjoy National Forest Wilderness areas. This document is tiered to the Tongass Forest Plan as amended in February 2008 and the *Determination of Need and Extent of Commercial Uses within Wilderness Areas on the Tongass National Forest* (USDA Forest Service 2007).

Determination of need for commercial use for guided camping:

It is recommended that commercially guided camping **not be** authorized in the KRW area through this needs assessment.

Determination of need for commercial use for guided hunting:

It is recommended that commercially guided hunting **be** authorized in the KRW through this needs assessment, but only in the uplands at least one mile from the Karta River and associated developments.

Determination of need for commercial use for guided freshwater fishing:

It is recommended that guided sport fishing **not be** authorized in the KRW through this needs assessment.

Determination of need for commercial use for guided passive touring:

It is recommended that commercially guided Passive Touring **not be** authorized in the KRW through this needs assessment.

Determination of need for commercial use for guided active touring:

It is recommended that commercially guided Active Touring **not be** authorized in the KRW through this needs assessment.

/s/ Jason Anderson

Jason Anderson
Thorne Bay District Ranger

11/15/2010

Date

Determination of Need for Commercial Services within the Karta River Wilderness Area

Thorne Bay Ranger District Tongass National Forest

Prepared by: Victoria Houser,

Date: October 2010

I. Introduction

The Thorne Bay Ranger District (TBRD), Tongass National Forest, developed this needs assessment (NA) to determine the type of outfitter/guide use that could take place in the Karta River Wilderness (KRW) area. An NA is a methodology for determining if, in fact, there is a 'need' for private enterprise to assist the agency in providing access, services and/or other assistance for the recreating public to safely and properly enjoy National Forest Wilderness. This document is tiered to the Tongass Forest Plan as amended in February 2008 and the *Determination of Need and Extent of Commercial Uses within Wilderness Areas on the Tongass National Forest* (USDA Forest Service 2007).

This 39,894 acre wilderness is about five miles by water from Kasaan and Hollis. Both communities are linked by road to other Prince of Wales Island (POW) communities including Craig, Klawock, Thorne Bay, and Coffman Cove. Prince of Wales Island is served by the Interisland Ferry Authority (IFA), which provides transportation from Ketchikan to Hollis. Infrastructure for a north end IFA ferry exists from Coffman Cove to Wrangell and Petersburg. Lack of funding and low ridership forced this portion of the ferry route to stop running. From Hollis visitors from Ketchikan and other locations may quickly access the Karta River Wilderness Area. This wilderness of rugged, alpine beauty also features the Karta River drainage, which is considered a high quality fishery. It is a popular destination for subsistence fishing and recreation.

Assumptions

The following are assumptions made to aid in the assessment of the need for outfitter/guide operations:

- We expect overall visitor use to remain at current levels (Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) Record of Decision 2008), unless the Karta River fishery and black bear populations decline substantially. There may
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also be shifts in use patterns (timing and location) and user types (hikers, backpackers, day users, etc.).

- Some people would not visit the wilderness without an outfitter or guide because they lack the skills, knowledge, equipment, or ability to do so on their own.
- Outfitter and Guides are limited to areas away from the Karta River corridor based on the *Environmental Analysis for the Determination of Issuing Special Use Permits for Sportfishing Outfitter and Guide Services Throughout Ketchikan Area, Tongass National Forest 1993 (known locally as the Sportfishing EA)*. The *Steelhead Revision*, signed in 1998, did not affect the decision to prohibit commercial use on the Karta River.
- Access points and use locations are limited and the demand and use levels at the popular locations could become an item of concern.
- Conflicts between outfitter/guide operations and the non-outfitted/guided public have the potential to increase if overall use increases.

II. Wilderness Management Direction

See Appendix 1. Wilderness Management Direction.

Goals and Objectives for Wilderness

Manage designated Wilderness to maintain an enduring wilderness resource while providing for the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use, as provided in the Wilderness Act of 1964 and ANILCA.

- Provide for public use of the Wilderness in accordance with ANILCA provisions for motorized and non-motorized access and travel, including reasonable traditional subsistence use by rural residents.
- Provide trails and primitive facilities that are in harmony with the natural environment and that promote primitive recreation opportunities. Feature facilities designed primarily to provide resource protection and encourage smaller group size. Facilities and trails tend to allow for challenge and risk instead of convenience.
- Maintain the wilderness to provide information on natural ecological processes.
- Preserve and perpetuate biodiversity. Inventory and reduce or eliminate invasive species in Wilderness.
- Manage Wilderness as a place where self-reliance and primitive skills are needed and honed.

III. Visitor Use and Commercial Use in the KRW

Historical use of the wilderness area by outfitters and guide

Permitted uses from 2004 to 2009 have included:

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009	Total
FISHING	0	17	18	0	0	35
HUNTING	12	2	0	9	5	28
HIKING	0	8	0	0	0	8
Total	12	27	18	9	5	71

Permitted operators are required to submit Actual Use Reports within 30 days of the end of their operating season. These reports identify the use location (with latitude and longitude coordinates), type of use, and number of clients, and the length of stay at each location. From this information, the number of RVDs utilized at each location is calculated. This tracking method provides an effective mechanism to track and monitor commercial use in Wilderness. Currently we have no means to track the number of private users that recreate in the Wilderness and do not rent a Forest Service public recreation cabin.

In 2005 and 2006, fishing permits were permitted on the Karta River, a commercial use prohibited by the Karta River EA. These erroneous permits were not allotted in subsequent years.

Existing Condition

One way existing condition can be looked at is by breaking down wilderness character into the four components of untrammeled, natural, undeveloped, and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation:

Untrammeled, This quality describes the degree to which management actions “hinder” or “control” the land and natural processes. For example, the wilderness area has remained free of management activities that have altered natural systems, such as dams or regulations that govern visitor activities. The Karta River Wilderness area was not designated a Wilderness until 1990 through the Tongass Timber Reform Act. Up to this point, the Karta River area was managed for multiple uses including mining and the construction of several recreation cabins and miles of recreation trails. Much of the remote alpine areas of this wilderness are uncontrolled or untrammeled, but the Karta River corridor is developed with human constructs to ease travel through the area, and fishing, hunting and cabin use regulations control the recreation experience. Outfitters and guides are prohibited from using this river corridor.

Natural - This quality describes the ecological effects of management actions that manipulate vegetation, soils, air quality, or other physical and biological components of wilderness. Wildlife found within the area includes black bear, Sitka black-tailed deer, and wolf. The list of smaller fur bearing animals common to the area include beaver, mink, pine marten, land otter, and weasel. Annual surveys for native and non-native plants were begun in 2004. Due to the mining history and road construction within the Karta River Wilderness area, populations of non-native plants are located along the historic road corridor, next to the river. Non-native plants have also been identified at previously disturbed sites, such as cabins and along trails.

The nearest roads are located to the north and enter the wilderness from the Steelhead drainage and in the south from the Maybeso Experimental Forest.

Undeveloped, This quality describes the effects of structures, habitations, or other evidence of human presence or occupation. There are 3 maintained reservation cabins within the area and 3 more cabins that are not maintained and are in varying degrees of disrepair. A 5-mile, maintained trail travels from Karta Bay to the Salmon Lake Cabin. It has two main spurs; one to Karta Bay where an old mining cabin still stands, and one to Karta Falls, where a small developed picnic area once was. Floatplanes can land on Karta Lake and Salmon Lake and access the reservation cabins on these lakes. Evidence of hunters hiking into the Wilderness from the north is prevalent in the Salmon Lake area. Yet, most visitors enter the wilderness by boating to Karta Bay or taking a relatively inexpensive, 30-minute floatplane trip from Ketchikan to Karta Lake or Salmon Lake. In general access to the Karta River Wilderness is not difficult, which accounts for much of its popularity and frequent use.

Opportunities for solitude and primitive/unconfined recreation - Visitors to the upland areas of the wilderness areas can expect a moderate to high probability of experiencing isolation from most sights human. They are likely, however, to hear planes, even in the most isolated alpine areas, because the Karta River Wilderness area is located in the center of Prince of Wales Island, and thus the center of air traffic from community to community in the area. Solitude would be difficult to find on the Karta River corridor during prime fishing periods. During these times, all of the cabins are booked and parties of fishermen travel the Karta River Trail, seeking out preferred fishing locations. Visitors unconnected to the cabins are likely to come to the Karta Bay by boat to fish the river corridor. Encounters with more than one group of individuals are likely during these high density periods, commonly June through August. The small size of the cabins, rooming only 3-4 people, and the distance between cabins (5 miles from Karta Bay to Salmon Lake Cabin) somewhat reduces the encounters.

Current Management Direction in the KRW area

In many areas across the Tongass, user conflicts between unguided and guided recreation users have occurred. To control resource impacts from increased use or to address concerns due to competition between outfitter and guide groups and other unguided forest users, the Forest Service developed mitigation measures. The mitigation measures are included with all Outfitter and Guide Special Use Permits as Special Stipulations and therefore become part of the permit. Failure to adhere to the Special Stipulations would be a violation of the terms of the Special Use Authorization and could eventually lead to the termination of the permit. Forest-wide stipulations are listed first, then Special Stipulations that address areas of concern in the KRW Area:

1. Outfitter/Guides will submit revisions of their Operating Plans in writing.
2. Land ownership is mixed and it is the responsibility of the permit holder to determine ownership and obtain proper authorization for use of private, native, and/or local government-held lands.
3. Outfitter-guides will incorporate "Leave No Trace" skills into all activities on National Forest System lands (www.lnt.org).
4. Outfitter-guide camps are prohibited within one mile of any Forest Service recreation cabin (except Yakutat Ranger District which has a 1/4 mile limit and Stikine River which has a 1/2 mile limit.) unless specifically authorized in this permit.
5. Outfitter-guided use of public use recreation cabins or their amenities (e.g. skiffs, firewood, fire rings) is prohibited. Exceptions may occur as specifically approved for a site by the District Ranger. These exceptions must be identified in the permit or addressed in District Stipulations.

6. Within designated Wilderness, no more than 12 people (including guides) can occupy a site at one time. "Site:" an area on the National Forest occupied by persons not within sight and sound of other Forest users.
7. All campfires will be built below high tide, as mound fires (a LNT technique) or in firepans.
8. Beach Meadows: Outfitter/guides will not establish camps, or allow their clients to camp in these areas. When walking through these areas, people should stay on existing paths and game trails to avoid trampling or damaging vegetation in beach meadows. Located at the margin between marine beaches and the forest fringe, beach meadows, characterized by the presence of tall grasses, beach pea, Indian paintbrush, Pacific silverweed, yarrow, chocolate lily, pretty shooting star, and Nootka lupine. These meadows often have between 20-40 different plant species, some of which are on the sensitive species list.
9. Impacts on Bald Eagle Nest Sites: The Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have a Memorandum of Understanding which establishes a minimum 330-foot radius "habitat management zone" around each bald eagle nest tree. Camping in this zone is prohibited to guided groups.
10. A copy of the permit must be with the operator at all times, when operating on National Forest System lands.
11. Use Reports will reflect specific locations of use on National Forest System lands.
12. 36 CFR Ch.11 261.10 The following are prohibited: "...(d) Discharging a fire arm or any other implement capable of taking human life, causing injury, or damaging property: (1) In or within 150 yards of a residence, building, developed recreation site or occupied area, or (2) across or on a Forest development road or a body of water adjacent thereto, or in any manner or place whereby any person or property is exposed to injury or damage as a result in such discharge."

Mitigation measures/special stipulations will continue to evolve in response to current conditions/trends and they will continue to be used as a management tool to respond to impacts or conflicts that become apparent during the monitoring efforts.

Desired Condition

The Wilderness Act of 1964 directs "each agency administering any area designated as wilderness shall be responsible for preserving the wilderness character of the area." Section 2(c) of the Act defines four qualities of wilderness that managers try to preserve.

As described in the 2008 Amended Forest Plan,

All designated Wilderness on the Tongass National Forest is characterized by extensive, unmodified natural environments. Ecological processes and natural conditions are not measurably affected by past or current human uses or activities. Users have the opportunity to experience independence, closeness to nature, solitude, and remoteness, and may pursue activities requiring self-reliance, challenge, and risk. Motorized and mechanized use is limited to the minimum needed for the administration of the Wilderness. Allow for access to state and private lands, subsistence uses, and public access and other uses to the extent provided for by ANILCA.

- **Untrammled – *The wilderness is essentially unhindered and free from modern human control or manipulation.***

The desired condition is the trend in actions that control or manipulate the wilderness is stable or improving. These actions include ones that manipulate plants, animals, pathogens, soil, water, or fire, whether authorized by the Forest Service or unauthorized actions by agencies, citizen groups, or individuals..

- **Natural - Wilderness ecological and evolutionary systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization.**

The desired condition for “Natural” is for the trend of modern civilization effects on plant, animal, pathogen, physical, and biophysical resources to be stable or decreasing.

- **Undeveloped - Wilderness retains its primeval character and influence and has minimal evidence of modern human occupation or modification.**

The trends in recreational and non-recreational developments, use of motor equipment and transport, and loss of statutorily protected cultural resources is stable or decreasing.

- **Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation -Wilderness provides outstanding opportunities for people to experience natural sights and sounds, solitude, freedom, risk, and the physical and emotional challenges of self-discovery and self-reliance.**

The trend is stable or improving for: remoteness from sights and sounds of people inside and outside wilderness; number of facilities that decrease self-reliant recreation; number of trails and level of trail classes; and amount of management restrictions on visitor behavior.

Areas of Concern

Areas of concern are areas that have exceeded the determined standards or are perceived to exceed visitor use expectations. Karta River Wilderness areas of concern are:

Karta River Corridor from Karta Bay to Piggyback Creek.

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) and Visitor Capacity in the KRW area

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is a system for inventorying recreation experience opportunities into seven classes. Each class is defined in terms of the degree to which certain recreation opportunities are possible based on the extent to which the natural environment has been modified, types of facilities provided, the number of interactions expected with other groups of people, and the relative density of recreation use. There are seven classes identified within the Tongass Land Management Plan.

The KRW area consists of Primitive and Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) ROS classes. Yet the Forest Plan ROS prescription or ROS goal for all Wilderness areas is Primitive. (Appendix 2, description of “Primitive and SPM” ROS classes). Therefore management direction for the KRW is to reach a primitive ROS throughout the Wilderness Area.

Capacity is also a consideration. Visitor use capacity is the approximate number of people that can visit a portion of the national forest and each person would have the prescriptive (ROS) experience consistent with the desired conditions. The reason to determine capacity is to ensure both that visitors can enjoy recreational experiences that meet their expectations and that the landscape can sustain that level of use. To determine capacity, the FS analyzes knowledge of existing use, projections of future demand, capability of an area to withstand

impact, and useable terrain. For example, an area accessed by foot with multiple valleys to hunt would have a greater ability to accommodate a higher capacity of users than a small alpine lake, accessed seasonally by float plane, with one flat site for camping. There are several aspects in determining capacity, including social, biophysical, managerial, and facility capacity:

- **Social.** This refers to the sights and sounds of other people, which may impact a group's experience:
 - Is this an area heavily used by local people?
 - Can people spread out over the area with little chance of encounters?
 - How long is the useable season?
 - Are there other types of recreation use that are not compatible with the proposed use?
- **Biophysical.** This refers to the biological resources found in the area potentially impacted by visitors. Biophysical attributes influence whether a setting is capable of providing a particular recreation opportunity without degrading an area's ecological processes, structure, composition, resilience, integrity, potential, as well as the setting's ability to restore itself and provide for other resource uses and values:
 - Are there issues with sensitive or rare plants or wildlife concerns?
 - Are campsites durable?
 - Are user-created trails causing erosion?
- **Facility.** This refers to physical attributes of the area that make it useable by visitors:
 - How many campsites are available?
 - Are there adequate locations for camps?
 - Are there adequate anchorages in the adjacent waters?
 - Is access by foot, water, or plane easy or difficult?
- **Managerial.** This refers to policies, management objectives, or rules that can increase or decrease visitor capacity in an area. For example, a Forest Service Decision outlined in the Karta River EA, restricts outfitter and guide use in the Karta River corridor.

Once a need is determined, the Forest Service estimates the capacity of the area to accommodate the activity by evaluating social, resource and managerial factors. See the 2009, Outfitter Guide Carrying Capacity Analysis for Prince of Wales Island.

IV. Special Knowledge and Skills Needed for Activities in the KRW area

Potential categories of public need¹ for commercial services:

- People with physical limitations.
- People pursuing activities where knowledge and skill needed makes unguided use extremely difficult, if not impossible; or where the opportunity does not exist outside of wilderness.
- People wanting to take trips that focus extensively on wilderness

Wilderness stewardship activities that could be enhanced by outfitter/guides:

Guides can serve as important partners for the Forest Service. In particular, guides can provide wilderness awareness and ethics education. Resource protection activities, such as reporting of invasive plants and illegal activities have been helpful in the past and could help the wilderness areas achieve a higher level of wilderness stewardship. For those groups of folks who might not otherwise be exposed through typical outreach, guides can help build constituency and support for wilderness (e.g., big game hunters).

Process for Determination of Public Need

“Public need” is a need determined to be essential for the well being of the entire public, guided and unguided, or to meet the intent of the Forest’s mission to manage and protect resources, provide for public safety, and to provide high quality recreation services. Within Wilderness the intended use should be dependent on the wilderness resource. A guide wanting a permit does not always mean there is a public need.

Evaluation Criteria used for determining the need for outfitter assistance in the management of the KRW wilderness area:

Skills and Equipment— outfitter/guide skills and equipment are needed by a portion of the public because of one or more of the following:

- a. Specific skills required for activities appropriate for the area require substantial time and/or talent to learn, such as a boat operator.
- b. Learning necessary skills and participating in the activity requires acquisition and consistent use of expensive, specialized equipment for which the public could not, or normally would not, expend the dollars or time, such as a shallow draft river boat.
- c. The skills required are so unique that the use of a guide is almost a prerequisite if the public is to have any opportunity to participate in and enjoy the activity, such as Stikine River navigation.

Knowledge—guide knowledge of the wilderness resource and the activity area is needed by the public, especially nonresident visitors, in order to safely enjoy

¹ People should not confuse “need” with a “desire” for commercial services or the fact that the presence of a guide could enhance a visitor’s experience.

recreational opportunities in a manner that reduces resource damage and user conflicts. This includes knowing where and by what method to best access and travel through an area, including knowledge of the river channels and sloughs.

Safety—an outfitter/guide’s special skills and equipment are needed for a reasonable level of safety for the participants. Without guide assistance, members of the public could seriously endanger their health or lives, or would not visit the wilderness due to safety concerns. This criterion is not meant to diminish the wilderness values of self-reliance or the opportunity to challenge one’s self or experience a degree of risk from rough seas and cold water hazards.

Special Management Objectives and/or Issues—to insure special management objectives are met and/or issues resolved, outfitter assistance is needed. Examples could include recreational opportunities for disabled populations, instilling a wilderness ethic in clients, contribution to rural area development and economy of formerly commodity based areas, and assistance in reducing critical resource impacts and/or conflicts between users.

Extent to Which Existing Outfitter/Guide Permits are Being Utilized—are current outfitted or guided assignments booked or over-booked, indicating a larger interest in the service?

Level of Use and Conflict—conflicts between all types of users, private and commercial in the wilderness. The extent to which already authorized use days or capacity exists for existing permittees to fill the need. What is the compatibility of commercial, institutional, and general public use, and the amount of use and social capacity within a given area of the wilderness? Are trail systems and use patterns (congestion and number of encounters) a potential problem? Is there a temporal congestion pattern—weekend use vs. weekday use, day vs. overnight use? Over time, what is the general trend? Is the projected future condition compatible with desired future condition?

Land Capability & Resource Concerns—can the guide contribute to the protection of the land through his/her educational emphasis? What is the amount of interference an outfitter/guide operation will have with the natural biological and physical processes of the wilderness?

Wilderness Dependency—the extent to which the proposed service can be offered on private or non-wilderness national forest lands. Some examples of these services could be:

- a. Outfitted supported camps more than a days’ easy hike from a road.
- b. Trips in which solitude and unconfined, primitive recreation are the central components of the experience.
- c. Visits to ecosystems, geological, or physical resources found in wilderness for recreational, scientific, or educational purposes

Wilderness Character- would outfitter/guide activities degrade wilderness character to an unacceptable level? Alternatively, could outfitter/guide activities improve wilderness character? How does this activity fit in with the wilderness “niche?”

Forest Consideration: does this activity occur elsewhere in other wildernesses on the Tongass? For example, if an activity occurs in abundance in other areas, there may not be a need to accommodate it in these wilderness areas.

Public purpose: The Wilderness Act section 4(b) specifies “wilderness areas shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use.” Guide services must help fulfill these purposes of Wilderness. Does this activity contribute to the public purposes established for this wilderness? When considering the extent necessary, can people reasonably participate in this activity without a guide or is having a guide a prerequisite? Does this activity serve a broad segment of the population or limited to a select few?

KRW Niche and Description

The KRW area is located on the TBRD of the Tongass National Forest. The niche statement for the Karta River Wilderness area describes the area as:

The Karta River flows from the Klawock Mountains down through Salmon and Karta Lakes to the sea. Rich and full of salmon, this artery carries the lifeblood of the Karta Valley. Attracted by its bounty, The Kaigani Haida of Kasaan fished this river and hunted the forest it supports. Later non-natives came, drawn by the same desires to hunt and fish and they built cabins, roads and mines. Today only a few cabins remain on the shores of the lakes and river so that visitors may stay for a short time and continue to seek out the heartbeat of the wilderness.

V. Need for and Extent of Commercial Use in the KRW area.

In order to determine Need for Commercial Use in KRW, the information from the section “process for determining need” was put into a table and used to evaluate the five types of permits available on the Tongass—Big Game Hunting, Fishing, Camping, Passive Touring and Active Touring. Each criterion is evaluated and rated to help determine whether a need for commercial use exists.

Table 2. Summary Tables of Potential Special Use Permit Activities in the KRW

Fishing	
Type of Activity	Rating Summary
Special Use Permits for fishing on the Karta River are prohibited by the Karta River EA.	
Big Game Hunting	
Type of Activity	Rating Summary
Skills and Equipment	Moderate – Equipment can be expensive. Hunting requires a certain level of skill and knowledge.
Knowledge	High—guides must know terrain, animals and where to find big game.
Safety Risk	Moderate to high for extended length trips (Leave No Trace Skills). Klawock Mountains can be treacherous
Special Objectives	High—looking for prize bear and deer
Demand/utilization	Moderate – Consistent requests and permits for hunting in the past 5 years. Not huge numbers of participants, but limited by numbers of big game
Level of use and conflict	Moderate—only one guide permitted at this time. Non-commercial use not known, but several deer are taken from this WAA annually.
Land Capability	Low – relatively small area and big game tend to have a larger territory.
Wilderness Dependency	Moderate –hunting can take place in other FS areas but wilderness solitude and challenge are important to some clients
Wilderness Character	Low—hunting is not likely to have great social impacts because it is done individually or in

Forest-wide Availability	small groups, but it may impact wildlife population.
Public Purpose	Moderate: Productive hunting areas are available in non-wilderness areas but areas of cultural significance for local peoples may not be available in other locations. Moderate: only a select group will participate (recreation and scenic purposes)
Active Touring	
Type of Activity	Rating summary
Skills and Equipment	Low—KRW not good kayaking. Backpacking and hiking require little gear and moderate skill. Developed trail makes hiking/backpacking easier.
Knowledge	Low to moderate – most people are able to hike, but there is some knowledge of orienteering needed not to get lost if parties leave developed trails.
Safety Risk	Low to moderate—several shelters in the area for protection against the elements
Special Objectives	Low
Demand/utilization	Low—no requests or permits since 2005
Level of use and conflict	High—KRW is used heavily almost all year round with over 100 nights of use at 2 cabins and over 75 at the other. User conflicts on the river corridor occur. Complaints of crowding on the river have been received in 2008.
Land Capability	Moderate – crowds in the one hiking corridor could cause conflicts and resource damage
Wilderness Dependency	Moderate—people could hike and backpack outside KRW, but no other extensive trail system exists on POW.
Wilderness Character	Moderate to high—visitors on the corridor will have increased social impacts to wilderness character, affecting solitude. The hardened trail reduces some environmental impacts in KRW.
Forest-wide Availability	Low—the experience offered in KRW is not available anywhere else on POW
Public Purpose	
Passive Touring	
Type of Activity	Rating summary
Skills and Equipment	Low—KRW not good for observing from boat.
Safety Risk	Low—centrally located on POW, not as much weather risks.
Special Objectives	High—people want to see specific wildlife/birds
Demand/utilization	Low—no passive touring requests
Level of use and conflict	High—KRW is used heavily almost all year round with over 100 nights of use at 2 cabins and over 75 at the other. User conflicts on the river corridor occur. Complaints of crowding on the river have been received in 2008.
Land Capability	Moderate – crowds in the one hiking corridor could cause conflicts and resource damage
Wilderness Dependency	Moderate—people could come to see untrammled area, but KRW has a lot of development
Wilderness Character	Moderate to high—visitors on the corridor will have increased social impacts to wilderness character, affecting solitude. The hardened trail reduces some environmental impacts in KRW.
Forest-wide Availability	Low—the experience offered in KRW is not available anywhere else on POW
Public Purpose	Moderate – a guide would help point out wildlife to view, help people orient in a new area and use Leave No Trace ethics
Camping	
Type of Activity	Rating summary
Skills and Equipment	Moderate—takes some skill to find durable camping locations, but in KRW there are rental cabins to use
Knowledge	Moderate – guides inform people that they are in wilderness and the regulations to follow. Help with LNT
Safety Risk	Low to moderate
Special Objectives	Low
Demand/utilization	Low—no requests for permits
Level of use and conflict	High—KRW already has 3 rental cabins which are filled nearly all year round.
Land Capability	Moderate – KRW is relatively small and most suitable locations are already developed with the trail and cabins.
Wilderness Dependency	Moderate—one can camp out in a remote location in many parts of the forest, but not all places are regulated to enhance solitude and wilderness character.
Wilderness Character	Moderate—done conscientiously, camping wouldn't have too much affect on character, but many people, on unsuitable terrain could affect solitude and environmental factors
Forest-wide Availability	Low—the experience offered in KRW is not available anywhere else on POW
Public Purpose	Moderate – a guide would help point out wildlife to view, help people orient in a new area and use Leave No Trace ethics

Since Outfitter and Guide lead fishing has been restricted on the Karta River, the only active permits in the Karta are big game hunting permits for the remote upland areas within the Wilderness Area. Big game hunting, in order to be successful, requires a certain amount of

solitude, skill and acceptance of risk. In addition, numbers of participants are limited by the number of animals, the terrain and the need to quietly stalk or silently wait for an animal. Hence, big game hunting use tends to be somewhat self-regulated, with only those that are willing to put the extra effort forth to climb into the remote uplands for game participating. It is recommended that big game hunting in the uplands of the KRW be permitted because this commercial use fits the character of the wilderness area.

Hiking and Nature Tours have not been occurring in the KRW since 2005. It is likely that outfitter and guide services for these activities are not necessary due to the developed trail system and 3 reservation cabins established in the Karta River Wilderness Area. It is recommended that commercially guided hiking and scenic tours in the Karta River Corridor will not be authorized by this needs assessment based on existing infrastructure and development in the KRW, which allows visitors to hike and view wildlife without the need for a guide.

Commercial freshwater fishing is restricted by an existing decision.

VI. Summary

Statement defining the Wilderness Character of the KRW area

This 39,894 acre wilderness is located in the center of Prince of Wales Island. It is relatively close to the communities of Kasaan and Hollis. The Karta River Wilderness is surrounded by the Klawock Mountains, which makes its terrain more remote, despite its centralized location. The majority of the use in this wilderness area is on the Karta River corridor for its premiere fishing opportunities.

Specific information regarding the wilderness values which require monitoring or protection

Untrammelled: assure a wild, free flowing, natural river.

Natural: no leaving litter or human waste in Wilderness.

Undeveloped: no more structures (outhouses, shelters, cabins).

Solitude: keep cabin sizes small to ensure small group size. Do not develop a trail into the wilderness area through the Klawocks.

Finding or determination of need for commercial use

Determination of need for commercial use for guided camping:

It is recommended that commercially guided camping **not be** authorized in the KRW area through this needs assessment.

Determination of need for commercial use for guided hunting:

It is recommended that commercially guided hunting **be** authorized in the KRW through this needs assessment, but only in the uplands at least one mile from the Karta River and associated developments.

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Jason Anderson
District Ranger

Date

Appendix 1. Wilderness Management Direction

Wilderness Management Direction for a Needs Assessment

Following is a discussion for when a needs assessment may be employed to address commercial use requests within wilderness based on a regional or local wilderness management concern.

Direction Provided by the 1964 Wilderness Act

The Wilderness Act of 1964 states the purpose of Wilderness is “to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of Wilderness.” Wilderness being an area “affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable;” . . . “has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive unconfined type of recreation; . . . and “may also contain ecological, geological, or other feature of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.”

The Wilderness Act also describes how Wilderness areas are to be used and managed. Management is to focus on preserving the wilderness character of the area; and use of the area “shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, education, conservation, and historical uses.” In realizing these uses Wilderness provides an opportunity for solitude or primitive unconfined types of recreation not attainable in settings more man-made, or influenced by humans.

In accomplishing the purpose of, and uses of Wilderness, the Wilderness Act gives some additional direction. Specifically, with one notable exception commercial enterprises are prohibited by Section 4(c) of the Act. The exception covered in Section 4(d) (6) says; “commercial services may be performed within the Wilderness area . . . to the extent necessary for activities which are proper for realizing the recreation or other Wilderness purposes of the areas.”

Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA)

Section 707 of ANILCA states; “Except as otherwise expressly provided for in this Act, wilderness designated by this Act shall be administered in accordance with applicable provisions of the Wilderness Act ...”

Items expressly provided for in ANILCA wilderness are many. Some include;

1. Section 811 – Reasonable access for subsistence resource uses
 2. Section 1010 – Mineral assessments with access by air.
 3. Section 1110(a) – Special Access allowing for the use of airplanes, motorboats, and snowmachines (during periods of adequate snow) within conservation system units as defined by Section 102 (4). These rights may be subject to reasonable regulation to protect the natural and other values of the conservation system units.
 4. Section of 1303(b)(1) – Allowance for the construction of new cabins and administrative cabins if necessary for the administration of the area as wilderness
 5. Section 1303(b)(2) – Allowance for the continuation of existing cabins.
 6. Section 1310 – Allowing for the maintenance of existing and future navigation aids and other facilities.
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7. Section 1315(c) – Permitting the continued use and maintenance of public use cabins. 1315(d) allows for the construction of new cabins if they're necessary for the protection of public health and safety.
8. Section 1316(a) – Allows for existing and future establishment of temporary structures necessary for the taking of fish and game subject to reasonable regulation to insure compatibility, the continuance of existing uses, and the future establishment, and use, of temporary campsites, tent platforms, shelters, and other temporary facilities and equipment directly and necessarily related to such activities. Section 1316(b) allows for the denial of the temporary facilities if the use of equipment or facilities is determined to be detrimental to the wilderness character.

ANILCA exceptions may influence the character of some wildernesses more than others. During the evaluation of commercial recreation use for any one wilderness, an effort should be made to consider the long-term effects of accommodating increasing uses or proposals for new use. The economic benefits to a business are not a substantive basis of a decision to allow use presented in either the Wilderness Act or ANILCA.

Direction Provided by Regulation

Federal Regulations 36 CFR 293.2 – Objectives, states in part: “Except as otherwise provided in the regulations..., National Forest Wilderness shall be so administered as to meet the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical uses; and it shall also be administered for such other purposes for which it may have been established in such a manner as to preserve and protect its wilderness character...To that end:

(a) Natural ecological succession will be allowed to operate freely to the extent feasible.

(b) Wilderness will be made available for human use to the optimum extent consistent with the maintenance of the primitive conditions.

(c) In resolving conflicts in resource use, wilderness values will be dominant to the extent not limited by the Wilderness Act, subsequent establishing legislation, or the regulations in this part.”

Federal Regulations 36 CFR 293.8 - Permanent structures and commercial services, states in part that: “The Chief, Forest Service, may permit . . . commercial services within National Forest Wilderness to the extent necessary for realizing the recreational or other Wilderness purposes, which include, but are not limited to, the public services generally offered by packers, outfitters, and guides.”

Agency Direction

USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan for 2004 - 2008

The mission of the USDA Forest Service is based on the relationship between the American people and their natural resource heritage. The relationship is founded on the principles of sustaining U.S. natural resources for future generations, producing personal and community well-being, and providing economic wealth for the Nation.

The Strategic Plan embodies the Forest Service's many areas of responsibility, as captured in the agency's mission statement:

“The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forest and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.”

One of the many goals of the Strategic Plan is to provide high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities on forests and grasslands, while sustaining natural resources, to meet the Nation's recreational demands.

Forest Service Chief's 10-Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge

In 2005, the Chief of the Forest Service adopted the 10-year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge (WSC) as recommended by the Chief's Wilderness Advisory Group. This effort is a renewal of the commitment to wilderness by pledging to bring all 406 wildernesses administered by the Forest Service to a minimum level of stewardship within 10 years. Element 7 of the WCS identifies that, "**Needs assessments are completed for new operations or for major changes to existing outfitter programs.**" As clarified in the definitions for this element; "*needs assessments*"; a methodology for determining if, in fact, there is a "need" for private enterprise to assist the Agency in providing access, services and/or other assistance for the recreating public to safely and properly enjoy National Forest wilderness."

Another part of the WSC related to forest plan management direction is Element 5 – Protecting Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. Managing to protect "outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation" has been perhaps the most controversial aspect of wilderness management to date. Controversy typically emerges if managers propose any type of restriction on visitor access or behavior, such as use limits, to improve opportunities for solitude. Factors contributing to this controversy include:

1. Lack of clarity over the meaning of solitude thus leading to lack of agreement over what the problem really is (e.g. visitors may view the concept holistically while managers may focus on the number of encounters in particular locations).
2. Perception that solitude is too subjective and individualistic to manage for.
3. Lack of standards or agreement on standards that define when there is a problem requiring corrective action.
4. Managing for solitude without equal consideration of managing for primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities.
5. The importance of access to visitors even when they support wilderness preservation.
6. Tension between providing outstanding opportunities for solitude vs. primitive and unconfined recreation.

Forest Service Manual Direction

Forest Service Manual Chapter 2320 – Wilderness Management, has been reserved by the Washington Office. Management direction regarding the implementation of specific exemptions for wilderness management in the Regional Supplements to the Forest Service Manual, remain in effect. The Forest Service Manual from the Washington Office is expected to be reissued sometime in 2008.

Other FSM direction includes

Under FSM 2340 – Privately Provided Recreation Opportunities,

2340.2 - Objectives

To provide, under special use authorization, sufficient, suitable facilities and services that supplement or complement those provided by the private sector, State, and local government on private land and the Forest Service on National Forest System land to meet public needs, as determined through land and resource management planning.

To facilitate the use, enjoyment, understanding, and appreciation of natural resource settings on the National Forest.

Forest Plan Direction for Wilderness

Goals

To manage all designated Wilderness to maintain an enduring wilderness resource while providing for public access and uses consistent with the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA).

Protect and perpetuate natural biophysical and ecological conditions and processes. Ensure wilderness ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization.

To provide a high degree of remoteness from the sights and sounds of humans, and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation activities consistent with wilderness preservation.

Keep wilderness untrammled and free from modern human control or manipulation, including actions taken to manage wilderness.

Protect the undeveloped character of wilderness by following legislative guidelines regarding permanent improvements or modern human occupation, including mechanized transport and motorized equipment.

Objectives

Apply a multi-disciplinary focus to wilderness management. The stewardship of the wilderness is considered in the annual program of work by all resources.

Manage recreation activities so the levels of social encounters, on-site developments, methods of access, and visitor impacts indicated for the Primitive Recreation Opportunity Class are emphasized. Areas managed as semi-primitive within a wilderness are an exception and are not encouraged. .

Provide for public use of the Wilderness in accordance with ANILCA provisions for motorized and non-motorized access and travel, including reasonable traditional subsistence use by rural residents.

Maintain trails and primitive facilities that are in harmony with the natural environment and that promote primitive recreation opportunities. Feature facilities designed primarily to provide resource protection and encourage smaller group size. Facilities tend to allow for challenge and risk instead convenience.

Maintain the wilderness capacity to provide information on natural ecological processes

Preserve and perpetuate biodiversity

Inventory, reduce, and when possible, eliminate non-native species in wilderness

Manage wilderness as a place where self reliance and primitive skills are needed and can be honed.

Desired Condition

All designated Wilderness on the Tongass National Forest is characterized by extensive, unmodified natural environments. Ecological processes and natural conditions are not measurably affected by past or current human uses or activities. Users have the opportunity to experience independence, closeness to nature, solitude and remoteness, and may pursue activities requiring self-reliance, challenge and risk. Motorized and

mechanized use is limited to the minimum needed for the administration of the wilderness. Allow for access to state and private lands, subsistence uses, and for public access and other uses to the extent provided by ANILCA. If not specifically provided through an ANILCA exception, the resources within a designated wilderness shall be administered in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Wilderness Act.

The Forest Plan notes that; "Special Use Authorizations permitting individuals or organizations to provide visitor services in wilderness may be issued if there is a demonstrated need for the service(s) and they are deemed appropriate for the area proposed."

Appendix 2. Semi-Primitive motorized ROS classes KRW Wilderness Area.

Semi-Primitive motorized

Setting indicators	Standards and Guidelines
Scenic Quality	Not to exceed the Moderate Scenic Integrity Objective. Existing Scenic Integrity levels ranging from Very High through High are fully compatible and encouraged.
Access	Travel on motorized and non-motorized trails and Traffic Service Level D roads, although some Traffic Service Level C roads provide access to and through the area. Use by high-clearance vehicles and motorized water travel is common. Road density is less than 1 mile per square mile. Off-road snowmachine travel on snow may occur.
Remoteness	Nearby sights or sounds of human activity are rare, but distant sights or sounds may occur. Setting is located within 0.5 hour walk or paddle or within 0.5 mile (greater or less depending on terrain and vegetation, but no less than 0.25 mile) of infrequently traveled waterways or small aircraft access points and/or roads that are open and maintained for passage by high-clearance and four-wheel drive vehicles (Maintenance Level 2), and provide access to recreation opportunities and facilities. Areas are generally greater than 2,500 acres, but may be smaller if contiguous with Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized classes.
Visitor Management	On-site regimentation and controls are few. Control facilities consist primarily of informational signs and site-specific road closures. Visitor information facilities may be used to interpret cultural and natural resource features, but are not elaborate and harmonize with the setting.
On-site Recreation Development	Facilities and structures generally do not exceed Development Scale II and are maintained to accommodate the types and levels of use anticipated for the site and area. Forest Service recreation cabins are fully compatible.
Social Encounters	User meets less than 10 parties per day (6 parties per day in Wilderness) on trails, roads, and shorelines during 80 percent of the primary use season. During 80 percent of the primary use season, no other parties are visible from campsites. Maximum party size for commercial uses in Wilderness is 12 people. Exceptions should be rare. Refer to REC122 in Chapter 3 for exceptions. A party size of up to 20 people can be considered in Semi-Primitive settings outside of Wilderness. Outside of Wilderness, party sizes larger than 20 people may occur during less than 15 percent of the primary use season in limited locations.
Visitor Impacts	Visitor-caused impacts may be noticeable, but not degrading to basic resource elements. Site hardening is very infrequent, but, when it occurs, is in harmony with, and appropriate for, the natural-appearing backcountry setting.

