

Determination of Need for Commercial Outfitter/Guide Services
in the South Baranof Wilderness,
Sitka Ranger District, Tongass National Forest

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Date

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	- 1 -
Introduction.....	- 2 -
South Baranof Wilderness.....	- 3 -
Area Description	- 3 -
Determination of Need for Commercial Services –	
Assumptions and Evaluation Criteria.....	- 8 -
Assumptions.....	- 8 -
Evaluation Criteria	- 9 -
Determination of Need for Commercial Services by Activity	- 13 -
Activities Considered	- 13 -
Big Game Hunting – Brown Bear.....	- 14 -
Big Game Hunting – Deer	- 15 -
Big Game Hunting – Mountain Goat.....	- 16 -
Camping	- 18 -
Floatplane Landing Tours.....	- 19 -
Freshwater Fishing	- 21 -
Remote Setting Nature Tours.....	- 22 -
Citations	- 24 -
Appendix A. Management Direction	- 25 -

Executive Summary

This document applies to the criteria of Section 4(d)6 of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (“Wilderness Act”) to determine which commercial recreation service activities may be necessary in the South Baranof Wilderness.

Commercial services may be performed within the wilderness areas designated by this Act to the extent necessary for activities which are proper for realizing the recreational or other wilderness purposes of the areas.

This assessment pertains solely to commercial recreation service activities. It does not consider other commercial or noncommercial uses. The need for commercial recreation service activities is determined by their ability to realize the recreational or other wilderness purposes of the Wilderness Act and their compatibility with preserving wilderness character. This assessment concludes with a determination of need for seven commercial recreation service activities in the South Baranof Wilderness. Need was determined with a set of evaluation criteria that assessed the ability of activities to fulfill the purposes of the Wilderness Act and compatibility with preserving wilderness character. Market-generated demand for conducting outfitter and guide activities does not, by itself, constitute a need for commercial services. Identification of need also considers how an outfitter and guide operation can contribute to meeting the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA Forest Service 2008b) management objectives. The following summarizes the findings.

Determination of Need for Commercial Service Activities:

- Big Game Hunting for Brown Bear commercial service activities **are necessary** in the South Baranof Wilderness
- Big Game Hunting for Deer commercial service activities **are necessary** in the South Baranof Wilderness
- Big Game Hunting for Mountain Goat commercial service activities **are necessary** in the South Baranof Wilderness
- Camping (including overnight use of public recreation cabins) commercial service activities **are necessary** in the South Baranof Wilderness
- Floatplane Landing Tours commercial service activities **are not necessary** in the South Baranof Wilderness
- Freshwater Fishing commercial service activities **are necessary** in the South Baranof Wilderness
- Remote Setting Nature Tours commercial service activities **are necessary** in the South Baranof Wilderness

It is important to note that a determination of need does not imply that a commercial activity will be authorized for all locations in the South Baranof Wilderness. This document does not fully address the effects (e.g. social, physical) of existing and proposed commercial uses. Decisions regarding the appropriate types and levels of commercial use in particular locations will be accomplished in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. Guided activities will only be authorized to the extent consistent with the Wilderness Act’s direction to maintain wilderness character.

Introduction

The Forest Service has developed this needs assessment to determine the types of commercial outfitter/guide activities that could take place in the South Baranof Wilderness (SBW). A needs assessment is a methodology for determining if there is a 'need' for private enterprise to assist the agency in providing access, services and/or other assistance for the recreating public to enjoy National Forest wilderness areas. This document is tiered to the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan ("Forest Plan"; USDA Forest Service 2008b) and the *Determination of Need and Extent of Commercial Uses within Wilderness Areas on the Tongass National Forest* (USDA Forest Service 2007). Relevant management direction is provided in Appendix A.

This needs assessment is part of a sequential process of evaluating commercial recreation use on National Forest System lands within wilderness. It only pertains to commercial recreation activities and not to other commercial or non-commercial uses. Other aspects of administering commercial recreation use outside the scope, but tiered to this assessment include:

Visitor capacity is the amount of recreational use (both commercial and non-commercial) an area can accommodate given the desired natural conditions, visitor experiences, and management program. Visitor capacity is an administrative process to identify the reasonable amount of recreation opportunities that are consistent with management direction for an area. Once a capacity is determined it can be used as a tool to develop a proposed action for allocating commercial outfitter and guide use and environmental analysis.

Environmental analysis document per National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyzes a proposed commercial outfitter and guide allocation of the overall recreation capacity and will establish mitigation measures that balance use with protection of the National Forest resource. These public planning processes inform decision makers of choices among alternative courses of action based upon resource capability and public input.

A *prospectus* may be necessary to implement NEPA decisions when demand for commercially guided recreation opportunities exceeds the available capacity. A prospectus requires commercial operators to submit bid applications that meet specific criteria. The Authorized Officer allocates commercial use to businesses that best meet the criteria.

Special uses permits authorize individual outfitter and guides within the determined allocation and according to established mitigation measures.

The need for commercial services is determined by assessing the ability of activities to be compatible with the Wilderness Act of 1964 ("Wilderness Act"). A determination of need may be found where activities fulfill the purposes of the Wilderness Act and are compatible with preserving wilderness character. Market-generated demand for conducting outfitter and guide activities does not, by itself, constitute a need for commercial services. Identification of need also considers how an outfitter and guide operation can contribute to meeting Forest Plan management objectives.

This needs assessment:

1. Determines the need for various activities of commercial outfitter and guide services based on fulfilling the purposes of the Wilderness Act and compatibility with preserving wilderness character within the SBW.
2. Is an internal analysis.
3. Does not analyze or mitigate potential environmental impacts from commercial outfitting and guiding activities.
4. Does not determine, establish, allocate or authorize commercial outfitter and guide services.

Outfitter/guides can serve as important partners for the Forest Service. In particular, they can provide wilderness awareness and Leave No Trace education for visitors that may not be reached by other educational efforts. Outfitter/guides can also assist with monitoring activities, such as reporting invasive plants and illegal activities; these activities help the Forest Service achieve a higher level of wilderness stewardship.

Existing outfitter/ guide activities occurring in SBW are authorized under the Shoreline Outfitter/Guide Record of Decision and Final Environmental Impact Statement (USDA Forest Service 2004). This decision is currently under review.

South Baranof Wilderness

Area Description

The South Baranof Wilderness (SBW; Figure 1) includes 319,568 acres of coastal temperate rainforest. Numerous bays along the area's rugged shoreline cut deep into the mountainous interior of Baranof Island, providing safe anchorage for boats in an otherwise exposed ocean environment. The community of Sitka lies approximately 19 miles to the north of the SBW and Port Alexander is approximately 20 miles to the south.

At 4,528 feet, Mount Ada is the highest peak in the SBW. On the eastern side of Baranof Island, Mount Ada's peak lies less than three miles from saltwater. Permanent snowfields and active glaciers blanket the higher elevations and several high-elevation lakes offer outstanding recreation opportunities. The SBW is part of the temperate rainforest that extends along the Pacific coastline from northern California to Cook Inlet, Alaska. Most of the area's lower-elevations offer old-growth western hemlock and Sitka spruce, with a scattering of yellow cedar and mountain hemlock.

SBW receives an average of 200 inches of precipitation per year with temperatures ranging from mid-20s to high 60s. Wildlife includes brown bears, Sitka black-tail deer, mountain goat, mink, marten, and river otters; trout and salmon (seasonally); as well as eagles and shorebirds. Seals, sea lions, whales, and a large population of sea otters are often seen offshore, and crab, shrimp, herring, salmon and halibut are harvested from the ocean.

The area supports a full range of life zones, from the marine to the alpine. It is this combination of rugged mountains, glaciers, dense rainforest, and the sea that gives the SBW its variety and high value as "wilderness."

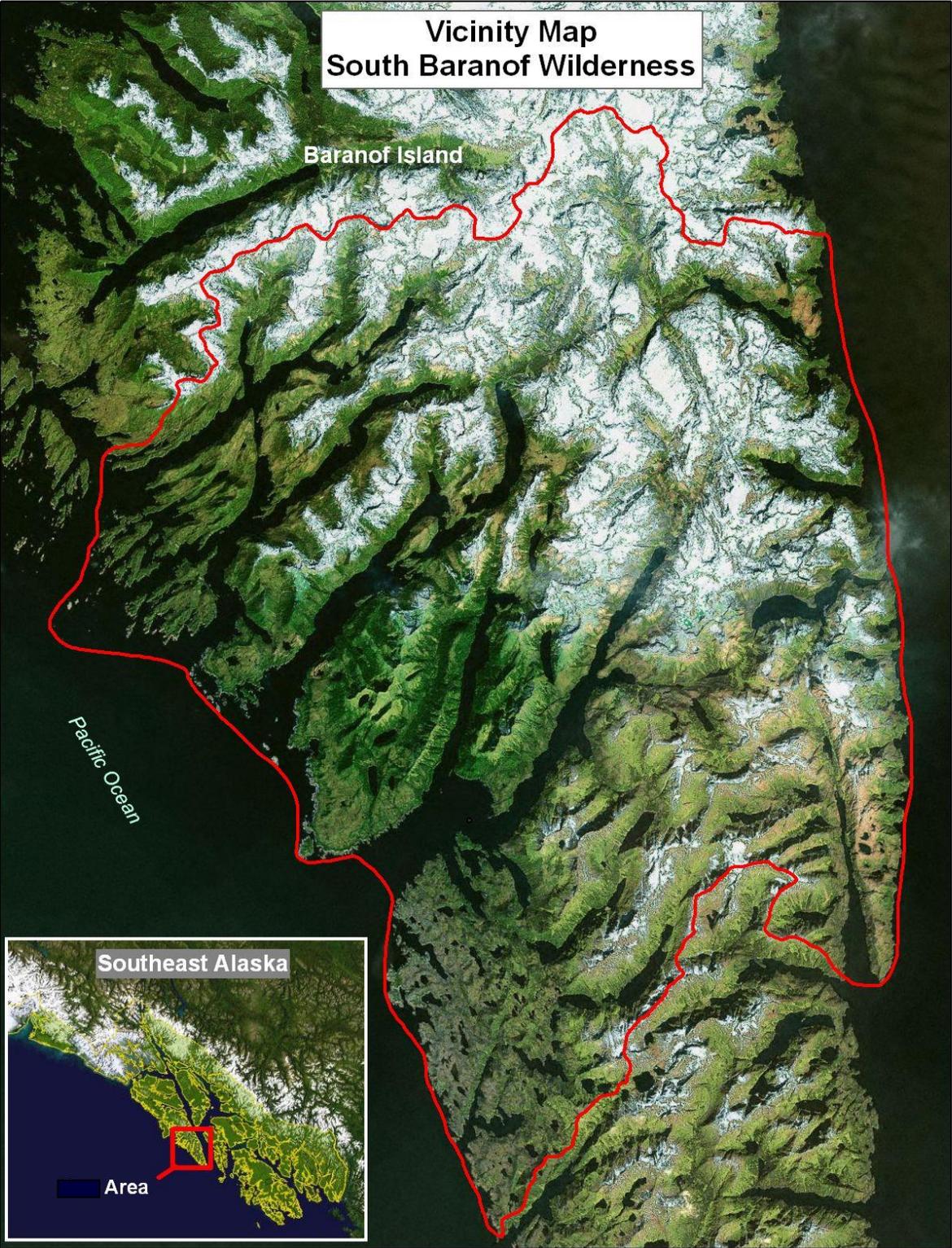


Figure 1. South Baranof Wilderness vicinity map.

Access

Weather, marine conditions, and terrain make this remote area difficult to access. Much of the high mountains are permanently snow covered and the scenery is dramatic. Access to high-elevation lakes is difficult due to the steep terrain, particularly in the northern portion of the wilderness. Motorized boat, floatplane and kayak are the methods of access primarily used to visit the SBW. Most of the upland use in SBW is accessed by floatplane. Visitors can hire air taxi operators to provide transport services to lakes without a Forest Service special use permit. Upland areas are used for hunting, fishing, overnight use of public recreation cabins, and hiking. It is possible, though difficult, to access some of the lakes by foot from saltwater. There is also increasing interest in cross-island hiking trips and pack-rafting some of the interior lakes.

The long and narrow steep-sided bays on the west side provide a limited number of protected anchorages, resulting in a concentration of use at certain locations. The northwestern portion of the wilderness is comprised of large and small islands offering more protected passages for boaters, providing relatively easy access for the skilled skiff operator or kayaker due to proximity to Sitka. The east side provides several protected bays for taking a break from the open waters of Chatham Strait, and Red Bluff Bay is a common stopping point for those traveling inside waters around Admiralty Island.

There are concerns about the impacts of motorized transport, particularly floatplanes and motorized boats, in some areas of the SBW. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA) allows for the use of motorized boats and planes to access SBW, but does not discuss their use for commercial outfitting and guiding purposes. Ultimately, the Forest Service must ensure that the area is administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people leaving it unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness while protecting the area and preserving its wilderness character (Wilderness Act, Section 2(a)).

Visitor Use

South Baranof Wilderness provides a diversity of recreation, subsistence, commercial and personal use opportunities. Most activities take place in, and depend on, settings that are primarily undeveloped. The entire area is wild and remote, with no road access available. Recreation facilities are limited, consisting of three public recreation cabins and one short system trail between Plotnikof Lake Cabin and the south end of Davidof Lake. Plotnikof Lake Cabin receives the most use of the three with an average of 15 nights annually (2009-2013). Avoss Lake Cabin receives 13 nights of use on average (2009-2013) followed by Davidof Lake Cabin with 6 nights (2009-2013).

Recreation activities cover a broad spectrum of uses, including sightseeing, wildlife viewing, fishing, hunting, kayaking, camping, and hiking. Some of the lakes support a good trout sport fishery and most streams and inlets support good salmon sport fishing. Port Banks, in particular, is known for a spring steelhead run, early summer coho run, and a fall run of coho making this a popular location throughout the fishing season. Politofski Lake Creek and Sandy Bay also support popular steelhead fisheries in the spring. However, most fishing in the area is commercial and occurs in the saltwater adjacent to the wilderness. Marine passages and bays are used for boating, crabbing, shrimping, and personal and commercial fishing.

Subsistence Use

On the eastern side of Baranof Island, the people of Kake and Angoon have traditional ties to this area and continue to depend on resources within the wilderness for a part of their livelihood. Sockeye salmon are harvested for subsistence purposes from Gut Bay and the Falls Lake system. The west side of the wilderness is used by residents of Sitka and Port Alexander for sockeye salmon from the Benzeman Lake and Politofski Lake streams. Table 1 shows the subsistence fishing seasons for these areas:

Stream	Subsistence Fishing Season
Falls Lake	June 1 – August 15
Gut Bay	June 1 – July 20
Necker Bay	June 1 – August 31
Politofski	June 1 – July 31

Subsistence hunting and trapping occurs seasonally by the above mentioned communities. These activities are not intensive on the east side because of game animals and furbearers that are much closer to Kake and Port Alexander.

Historic Use

Unlike other parts of the Tongass National Forest, the area contained within the SBW boundary does not have an active mining history. There have been uses related to the early commercial fishing industry in the area. These include a cannery and herring reduction plant in Red Bluff Bay operating through the 1930's. Remains of this activity can be seen on the ground and draw some visitation to the site. Whale Bay area saw heavy commercial fishing use starting in the 1920s and a store was established during that timeframe in Port Banks. The old structure is still visible. In addition, historic cabin structures have been found in the Yamani Islets and on Lodge Island. The sites that still have evidence of past use have the potential to draw visitors interested in exploring historic ruins.

Commercial Outfitter/Guide Use

Thirty-five outfitter/guides were permitted and providing visitor services in SBW between 2008 and 2012; their activities provide services for forest visitors that are unfamiliar with southeast Alaska's wilderness. Authorized outfitted and guided activities include big game hunting for brown bear, mountain goat, and deer; remote setting nature tours (including hiking, beach use, and wildlife viewing), camping, and freshwater fishing. There was also a small amount of waterfowl and small game hunting that occurred in association with brown bear hunts.

Outfitter/guides are required to submit use reports annually that identify the use location, type of use, number of clients, number of groups, and length of stay at each location. From this information, the number of service days used at each location is calculated. A service day is defined as a day, or any part of a day, on National Forest System lands for which an outfitter/guide provides goods or services, including transportation, to a client. Actual use reports provide an effective mechanism to track and monitor outfitter and guide use in wilderness. Table 2 shows the type and amount of outfitter/guide use that occurred on SBW between 2008 and 2012.

Table 2. Outfitter and guide activities occurring in SBW, 2008-2012.						
Activity	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Average Annual Use 2008-2012
Big Game Hunting – Brown Bear	53	88	105	107	46	80
Big Game Hunting – Deer	0	0	1	0	2	1
Big Game Hunting – Mountain Goat	59	17	46	0	4	25
Camping	35	84	44	132	54	70
Freshwater Fishing	251	293	244	206	225	244
Remote Setting Nature Tours (including hiking, wildlife viewing, photography, and beach use)	267	115	111	297	212	200
¹ A service day is defined as a day, or any part of a day, on National Forest System lands for which an outfitter or guide provides goods or services, including transportation, to a client.						

Freshwater fishing and remote setting nature tours (including hiking, wildlife viewing, photography, and beach use) are the most popular guided activities occurring in the SBW. Brown bear hunting, camping, and mountain goat hunting are also popular guided activities. The Forest Service has also received proposals for guided use at low-use public recreation cabins in SBW, but this use has not been authorized.

Nineteen guides provided freshwater fishing trips in the SBW between 2008 and 2012. Most freshwater fishing is accessed by motorized boat and occurs within a ½-mile distance of the shoreline, in the creeks and bays supporting anadromous fish populations. Gut Bay Creek, Politofski Lake Creek, Port Banks, Red Bluff Bay Creek, and Sandy Bay are the most popular guided fishing locations. Port Banks and Politofski Lake Creek support a steelhead run during April and May, which draws catch-and-release fly fishing operators. A small amount of fishing also occurs on Brentwood, Pass, Plotnikof, Politofski, Rezanof, and Upper Brentwood Lakes. One operator has been authorized to provide fly-in fishing trips in SBW. There have been several requests from guides for fly-in access for fishing and remote setting nature tours at lakes in the SBW, particularly lakes supporting steelhead populations.

Twenty-three guides provided guided remote setting nature tours (includes hiking, wildlife viewing, photography, and beach use) in SBW between 2008 and 2012. The most popular remote setting nature tour activity in SBW is hiking at Red Bluff Bay. Guides have reported using approximately 96 service days per year at Red Bluff Bay for remote setting nature tours activities. Other locations of interest include Gut and Patterson Bays.

Guided brown bear hunters typically access the SBW via motorized boat and camp onboard the boat during their hunt. In spring, they scan the shoreline beaches from their vessel before beginning their stalk. More use occurs in the uplands during the fall season when hunters often travel by foot along

streams. Floatplane access for brown bear hunting at lakes in SBW has been authorized in the past, but all reported use (2008-2012) has occurred in coastal inlets and bays accessed from saltwater.

Guided mountain goat hunts also occur in SBW; popular locations include Crawfish, Hoggatt, and Red Bluff Bays. A small amount of guided mountain goat hunting has been reported in the uplands of Politofski Lake. The majority of goat hunts are boat-based, with occasional use of spike camps in the uplands. Floatplane access for guided mountain goat hunting at inland lakes has been authorized and reported in the past. Most hunts last approximately seven days and hunters may hike to the alpine once or twice during a hunt. Camps are typically occupied for a few nights each season. Non-guided hunters typically access high lakes in SBW for goat hunting in the early fall before guides begin conducting hunts, but there is some overlap in November. Access to herds is difficult and use tends to be concentrated at a few areas.

A small amount of guided deer hunting occurs in association with guided brown bear and mountain goat hunts; clients are given the option of including a deer hunt as part of a package, with the target species still being brown bear or mountain goat. In recent years, however, there has been an increased interest in guided deer-only hunting in SBW, with two guides currently authorized in SBW for deer-only hunts.

Three outfitter/guide companies have offered guided camping tours in SBW (2008-2012). Camping is usually offered as part of a multi-day, kayak- or motorized boat-based excursion and occurs along the shoreline of Baranof Island and the smaller, surrounding islands. Actual use locations include Patterson Bay, Rakof Islands, Lodge Island, Cedar Pass, West Crawfish Inlet, and Beauchamp Island. There have also been requests to utilize the existing public-use cabins for fly-in camping excursions at the lakes within SBW.

Determination of Need for Commercial Services – Assumptions and Evaluation Criteria

Assumptions

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

- Some people would not visit the SBW without an outfitter or guide because they lack the skills, knowledge, equipment, or ability to do so on their own, or they have safety concerns.
- There will be a continued demand for special use permits to conduct outfitter and guide operations in the SBW. Access points and use locations are generally limited to safe harbors and accessible beaches. Increased demand and use levels at popular locations are issues to consider.
- Overall visitor use is expected to remain at current levels or continue to increase (Forest Plan). There may also be shifts in use patterns (timing and location) and user types (hikers, backpackers, campers, day users, etc.).

- Visitor conflicts have the potential to increase if overall use increases. Conflicts are already occurring in some areas on the district, particularly between guided bear hunters and visitors participating in other types of activities (e.g. freshwater fishing, remote setting nature tours). Guided and unguided groups tend to participate in similar activities at similar locations.

Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria were used to determine the public need for commercial outfitter and guide services in SBW:

- Wilderness Dependence
- Potential Impacts to Wilderness Character
- Knowledge, Skills, and Equipment Needed
- Visitor Safety
- Outfitter and Guide Demand and Utilization
- Public Purpose & Management Objectives

Wilderness Dependence

The Forest Plan directs managers to “Avoid authorizing uses that are not dependent upon Wilderness resources or uses for which reasonable alternative locations exist outside of Wilderness” (USDA Forest Service 2008b, p.3-12). Determination of need is based on the extent to which the proposed service can or cannot be offered on non-wilderness National Forest System (NFS) lands or non-NFS lands, including private or other public lands. Wilderness dependence may also be considered for 1) trips in which solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation are the central components of the experience; and 2) visits to ecosystems, geological features, or physical resources found predominantly in wilderness for recreational, scientific, or educational purposes.

This needs assessment is one part of a sequential process of administering commercial recreation use on NFS lands within wilderness. Applications for outfitter and guide use in SBW must include adequate justification for why the proposed activity requires the use of wilderness.

Potential Impacts to Wilderness Character

Determination of need is based on the extent to which outfitter and guide activities have the potential to degrade or improve wilderness character. The Wilderness Act specifies that “each agency administering any area designated as wilderness shall be responsible for preserving the wilderness character of the area” (Section 4(b)). The wilderness character of SBW is largely intact due to the area’s remoteness, challenging terrain, and limited means of access. There are, however, some areas where wilderness character is affected by recreational use. Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act defined four qualities of wilderness character that managers shall try to preserve, including the following:

- **Untrammeled** – *The wilderness is essentially unhindered and free from modern human control or manipulation.* 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. Outfitter and guide activities generally do not affect the untrammeled quality of wilderness character.
- **Natural** - *Wilderness ecological and evolutionary systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization.* This quality describes the ecological effects of human activities on vegetation, soils, air quality, or other physical and biological components of wilderness. Outfitter and guide activities have the potential to impact the natural qualities of wilderness character.

The natural quality of wilderness character in SBW is largely unaffected by past and present human activity; however there are some noted instances of effect:

- Three non-native plant species, covering less than 0.1 acres, have been documented.
 - Red squirrels, marten, beaver, and mountain goat have been introduced. Coho salmon were stocked in Banner and Blanchard Lakes in the 1980s.
 - In 1982, a permit was issued to the Tlingit and Haida Fisheries Development Corporation for the construction of a fish hatchery in Sandy Bay at the outlet of the Maksoutof River. The hatchery was constructed in 1982. Due to various problems which occurred during the hatchery's operation, the facility closed in 1985. In 1993, most of the remains of the hatchery were removed and the ground was recontoured to eliminate the man-made berms and rectangular race-way holes. Some materials still remain on site.
 - Forest Service employees have documented vegetation impacts (primarily tree cutting) at Port Banks and Sandy Bay.
- **Undeveloped** - *Wilderness retains its primeval character and influence and has minimal evidence of modern human occupation or modification.* This quality describes the effects of structures, habitations, or other evidence of human presence or occupation.

The past and current presence of humans is evident in some parts of SBW. Existing developments include the Falls Lake fish weir and Patterson Bay net pen shoreties. The remains of past developments include the Sandy Bay hatchery as well as a cannery and herring reduction plant in Red Bluff Bay operating through the 1930's. Whale Bay area saw heavy commercial fishing use starting in the 1920s and a store was established during that timeframe in Port Banks. The old structure is still visible. In addition, historic cabin structures have been found in the Yamani Islets and on Lodge Island.

The Forest Service maintains three public recreation cabins in SBW, including the Avoss Lake, Davidof Lake, and Plotnikof Lake Cabins. Two additional cabins at Rezanof and Maksoutof Lakes exist, but are identified for decommission and removal. Impacts at cabins and dispersed campsites include tree damage, litter, fire ring construction, and social trails. Outfitters and guides are required to practice Leave No Trace to minimize these impacts.

In general, there is less evidence of human occupation or modification as one travels inland from the shoreline zone. Outfitter and guide activities that require the use of temporary or permanent structures, or create noticeable impacts on the ground, have the potential to further impact the undeveloped quality of wilderness character in SBW.

- **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.*

Noise associated with motorized transport (e.g. motorized boats and float planes) has the potential to diminish wilderness character by reducing opportunities for solitude. Some parts of the wilderness lie on the path of weekly flights heading south from the community of Sitka as well as daily jet flights in the region, which affect noise levels in the southern portion of SBW, particularly during the summer months. While some motorized activities occur in the air and on the marine waters adjacent to SBW and are outside of Forest Service jurisdiction, other activities (e.g. floatplane landings on lakes and shoreline excursions associated with motorized transport) are within Forest Service jurisdiction and require a special use authorization.

Red Bluff Bay is a popular location; social encounter monitoring during late June (2012 - 2013) and late July (2011-2013) indicates visitors can expect to encounter on average eight or more groups per day in the bay. The majority of this use is occurring on the adjacent saltwater. Land access that occurs is typically via motorized boat, with some access via kayak off nearby mother ships.

Competition for use at lakes and streams occasionally occurs, particularly during the overlapping brown bear hunting season (April – May) and steelhead fishing seasons (April - June) at Port Banks, Politofski Lake Creek, and Sandy Bay, coho season (June – July and September-October) at Port Banks, sockeye season (June – August) at Gut Bay, Necker Bay, and Politofski Lake Creek, and early in the mountain goat hunting season (August-October).

Opportunities for solitude are greater in the interior and northern portions of the SBW; upland areas receive fewer visitors due to the lack of facilities and difficult lake landings. The terrain is mountainous and generally without facilities or trails.

- **Other Features of Value.** *This quality pertains to distinct features fundamental to the wilderness character that are not contained within the other qualities.* This aspect is based on the last clause of Section 2(c) in the Wilderness Act, that a wilderness “may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.” This fifth quality is unique to an individual wilderness based on the features that are inside that wilderness. These features typically occur only in specific locations within a wilderness and include cultural resources, historical sites, paleontological sites, or any feature not in one of the other four qualities that has scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. The following unique qualities are associated with SBW:
 - **Red Bluffs** – Red Bluff Bay is one of the primary attractions in SBW due to the scenic mountain landscape surrounding the bay, waterfalls, brown bear viewing in the

estuary, and the “red bluffs” rising above the entrance to the bay. The bluffs are a unique geologic feature of the area composed of serpentinites and serpentinized periodotites.

- **Glacial Features** - Unique to Baranof Island, among the hundreds of islands which make up the southeast Alaska panhandle, are its active glaciers. Associated with these glaciers are narrow, sharp ridges between U-shaped glacial valleys and scenic fiords. Numerous rocky crests, sharp ridges, horns, aretes and cirques are found at higher elevations. Snow can be seen year round on higher summits with cirque glaciers and small permanent icefields, especially in the north half of the area.
- **Brown Bear** - Admiralty, Baranof, and Chichagof Islands together are considered unique due to the singular large predator (brown bear) dominating these landscapes.
- **Historic and Pre-Historic Values** - Since pre-historic times the lands within the SBW have supported a broad range of human use, development and occupancy. Thousands of years ago South Baranof became an area of seasonal habitation by local native peoples. Little is known about the prehistoric use of the present-day wilderness. There are a few documented prehistoric sites, but surveys have been very limited. Later, Russians and Americans arrived. Despite the continual presence by humans, the wilderness character of the area remained virtually uncompromised until the early 1900s when commercial fishing and whaling operations occurred and facilities in support of these activities were established (e.g., cannery, herring reduction plant). Since 1950, the facilities have been discontinued and many of the sites are being reclaimed by nature.
- **Subsistence Use** - Gathering wild food and other items has been an integral part of the way of life in southeast Alaska for thousands of years. The people of Kake and Angoon have traditional ties to this area and continue to depend on resources within the wilderness for a part of their livelihood. Sockeye Salmon are harvested for subsistence purposes from Gut Bay and the Falls Lake system. The west side of the wilderness is used by residents of Sitka and Port Alexander for taking sockeye salmon from the Benzeman Lake and Politofski Lake streams. Subsistence hunting and trapping occurs seasonally by the above mentioned communities. These activities are not intensive on the east side because of game animals and furbearers that are much closer to Kake and Port Alexander.

Knowledge, Skills, and Equipment Required

Determination of need is based on the degree to which outfitter and guide services are needed by the public because 1) the specific skills required for activities appropriate to the area require substantial time and/or talent to learn; 2) participating in the activity requires acquisition and use of expensive, specialized equipment for which the public could not, or ordinarily would not, expend the time and money; and 3) the skills, knowledge, and equipment required are so unique that the use of an outfitter or guide is almost a prerequisite if area visitors are to have the opportunity to participate safely, while still achieving a level of self-reliance and challenge in the activity. Outfitters and guides possess knowledge about the local area and wilderness resource that may be required to safely access the area and minimize resource damage and visitor conflicts. This knowledge may include knowing where, and by what method, to best access and travel through an area.

Visitor Safety

Determination of need is based on the degree to which outfitter and guide services are needed by the public because of the special skills, knowledge, and equipment needed for a reasonable level of visitor safety. Without guide assistance, members of the public and visitors to the area may seriously endanger their health or lives, or would not visit the wilderness area due to safety concerns.

Outfitter and guide services should not diminish other wilderness visitors' opportunities to experience a degree of challenge and risk, and/or sense of self-reliance.

Outfitter and Guide Demand and Utilization

Determination of need is based on the amount of demand that exists for an outfitter and guide activity and the extent to which the activity is already authorized, and the amount of use currently occurring. Market-generated demand for conducting outfitter and guide activities does not, by itself, constitute a need for commercial services. However, the determination of public need for a service is informed by examining current and past use trends.

Public Purposes / Management Objectives

The Wilderness Act specifies that "wilderness areas shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use" (Section 4(b)).

Determination of need is based on the extent to which guide services help fulfill these public purposes of wilderness. Determination of need is also based on the degree to which outfitters and guides help the Forest Service meet management objectives to 1) provide opportunities for public use, enjoyment, and understanding of the wilderness through experiences that depend upon a wilderness setting and are consistent with management of the area as wilderness, and 2) provide opportunities for special populations, including persons with disabilities and the elderly, to access certain areas and participate in recreational and educational activities. Guides can serve as important partners for the Forest Service by providing wilderness awareness education and training in outdoor skills and ethics. Consideration will also be given to the compatibility of commercial use with use by the general public.

Determination of Need for Commercial Services by Activity

Activities Considered

A review of past and current outfitter and guide use in the SBW provided a starting point for this needs assessment. Based on past proposals and actual use, the following commercial outfitter and guide activities were considered:

- Big Game Hunting for Brown Bear
- Big Game Hunting for Deer
- Big Game Hunting for Mountain Goat
- Camping (including overnight use of public recreation cabins)
- Floatplane Landing Tours
- Freshwater Fishing
- Remote Setting Nature Tours

This assessment may be revised in the future as recreation use patterns change and demands for new outfitter/guide services are identified.

Big Game Hunting – Brown Bear

Brown bear hunting includes day use and overnight activities in the wilderness. Activities incidental to the primary brown bear hunt may involve camping, remote setting nature tour activities, freshwater fishing, or hunting for lower value game and waterfowl species.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation of Need
Wilderness Dependence	<p>Guide Use Areas (GUAs) 04-01 and 04-02 encompass the SBW. Both GUAs have large tracts of non-wilderness National Forest System (NFS) lands with suitable bear habitat. There is also some municipal land at Green Lake, and along the Green Lake Road, however these areas are characterized by a more urban setting. City land may also be available at Goddard Hot Springs, but this area receives a large amount of visitation and may not provide the visitor experience sought by guided bear hunters.</p>
Wilderness Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Natural Quality</u>: The majority of guided hunting in SBW and surrounding areas on the Tongass National Forest is boat-based and results in minimal impacts to vegetation, soil, and water resources. Guided groups typically stay aboard a boat and hike up streams and very little use occurs in the uplands. ADF&G provides recommendations, population estimates, and historical harvest data to help the Forest Service determine the number of guided hunts an area can sustain. • <u>Undeveloped Quality</u>: Guided hunting groups have the potential to impact the undeveloped quality of wilderness if tent platforms are constructed or remain in place when not in use. • <u>Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive & Unconfined Recreation Quality</u>: Guided groups also have the potential to impact opportunities for solitude, particularly if access is by motorized boat or floatplane, and use occurs in popular areas. Conflicts have been reported between guided bear hunting groups and other permitted users, such as freshwater fishing and remote setting nature tour groups. Conflicts with unguided visitors are less common as brown bear hunting is not a popular unguided activity. • <u>Other Features of Value</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brown Bear – ADF&G manages the brown bear population to ensure long-term sustainability of the resource.
Skills, Equipment, and Knowledge Required	<p>Visitors primarily access the SBW using motorized boats or float planes. Outfitters and guides can provide the skills, equipment, and knowledge required to safely access and enjoy the wilderness. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) requires non-resident brown bear hunters to be accompanied by a registered guide or a relative within the second degree of kin. The knowledge and skills required to identify male bears and properly care for the animal carcass in accordance with State law are beyond the average person’s abilities.</p>
Visitor Safety	<p>Southeast Alaska’s weather conditions and tidal fluctuations can be extreme throughout the year. Exposure to wind and cold weather poses a threat to visitor safety. Wildlife encounters, particularly with brown bear, also pose a risk to safety. Guides know how to track and retrieve animals, carry radios and/or satellite phones for communication, and carry back-up rifles in case of emergency.</p>
Outfitter and Guide Demand and Utilization	<p>There is consistently high demand for guided brown bear services in SBW. An average of 80 service days was reported annually for this activity (2008-2012). Most authorizations are being fully utilized by existing guides. There are also several prospective applicants should more guided brown bear hunts become available. Most guides are booked years in advance for these hunts.</p>
Public Purposes & Special Management Objectives	<p>Guided brown bear hunting contribute to the recreational purpose of wilderness. Guides can also help the ADF&G male to female harvest ratio objectives and ensure that hunters care</p>

	for and process carcasses in accordance with State law. Guide hunt records also help track harvest locations and success rates, contributing to better management of bear populations. Guides can also teach clients about low-impact skills.
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Outfitter/guides provide access to brown bear hunting opportunities in SBW that would otherwise be unavailable to many members of the general public because of the high level of knowledge, skills, and equipment needed to safely conduct a remote hunt. Outfitters and guides also help the Forest Service meet special management objectives for dispersing impacts related to nonresident harvest. This activity contributes to the recreational purpose of wilderness and has little resource concerns. These factors, along with the State of Alaska’s requirement for non-resident hunters to be accompanied by a licensed guide, indicate there is a need for outfitter/guide brown bear hunting services in SBW. Guides can educate clients about low-impact skills to minimize impacts to the natural and undeveloped qualities of wilderness character.

Big Game Hunting – Deer

Deer hunting includes day use and overnight activities in the wilderness. Activities incidental to the primary deer hunt may involve camping, remote setting nature tour activities, freshwater fishing, or hunting for lower value game and waterfowl species.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation of Need
Wilderness Dependence	<p>Guide Use Areas (GUAs) 04-01 and 04-02 encompass the SBW. Both GUAs have large tracts of non-wilderness National Forest System (NFS) lands with suitable deer habitat. A limited amount of private land (Shee Atika Incorporated) could be available in Katlian Bay. Permission would need to be secured. There is also some municipal land at Green Lake, and along the Green Lake Road, however these areas are characterized by a more urban setting. City land may also be available at Goddard Hot Springs, but this area receives a large amount of visitation and may not provide the visitor experience sought by guided deer hunters.</p>
Wilderness Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Natural Quality</u>: The majority of guided hunting in SBW and surrounding areas on the Tongass National Forest is boat-based and results in minimal impacts to vegetation, soil, and water resources. The majority of deer hunts are boat-based, with occasional use of spike camps in the uplands. Camps are typically occupied for a few nights each season, but because they are located in alpine areas, impacts could become noticeable with a small amount of use. ADF&G provides recommendations, population estimates, and historical harvest data to help the Forest Service determine the number of guided hunts an area can sustain. • <u>Undeveloped Quality</u>: Guided hunting groups have the potential to impact the undeveloped quality of wilderness if tent platforms are constructed or remain in place when not in use. • <u>Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive & Unconfined Recreation Quality</u>: Guided groups have the potential to impact opportunities for solitude, particularly if access is by motorized boat or floatplane, and use occurs in popular areas. Guided hunting groups typically consist of 2-4 hunters plus guides. Occasionally two groups will camp together and hunt different areas. Due to the nomadic approach taken for deer hunting, and the small size of groups involved, the potential for visitor conflicts is minimal. Currently, conflicts are uncommon with guided deer hunters and non-guided or subsistence hunters due to the limited amount of guided use that has occurred. • <u>Other Features of Value</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Subsistence use has historically occurred in this wilderness area. If demand for guided deer hunting increases, consideration will need to be made for subsistence users.

Skills, Equipment, and Knowledge Required	Visitors primarily access the SBW using motorized boats or float planes. Outfitters and guides can provide the skills, equipment, and knowledge required to safely access and enjoy the wilderness. A guide can ensure that State regulations and ethical hunting procedures are followed. Guides are also knowledgeable about deer behavior and where conflicts with unguided visitors may occur. There is no State requirement for a registered guide for deer hunting.
Visitor Safety	Southeast Alaska's weather conditions and tidal fluctuations can be extreme throughout the year. Exposure to wind and cold weather poses a threat to visitor safety. Wildlife encounters, particularly with brown bear, also pose a risk to safety. There have been documented incidents of deer hunters being attacked by brown bear. Guides carry radios and/or satellite phones for communication and back-up rifles in case of emergency.
Outfitter and Guide Demand and Utilization	Between 2008 and 2012, there was a low level of demand for guided deer hunting. Most guided deer hunting occurs as incidental take to a bear or goat hunt, or as part of combination hunt for bear and deer. Five permits have been issued authorizing 38 deer hunts; only two of these were exclusively for deer hunting. None of these permits has been fully utilized. Recently, there has been an increased demand for adding deer hunts to existing big game hunting permits.
Public Purposes & Special Management Objectives	Guided deer hunting contributes to the recreational purpose of wilderness. Guide hunt records help track harvest locations and success rates, contributing to better management of deer populations. Guides can also teach clients about low-impact camping and hiking skills.

Outfitter/guides provide access to deer hunting opportunities in SBW that would otherwise be unavailable to many members of the general public because of the high level of knowledge, skills, and equipment needed to safely conduct a remote hunt. Outfitters and guides also help the Forest Service meet special management objectives for dispersing impacts related to nonresident harvest. This activity contributes to the recreational purpose of wilderness and results in limited impacts to Forest resources, including wilderness character. These factors indicate there is a need for outfitter/guide deer hunting services in SBW. Guides can educate clients about low-impact camping and hiking skills to minimize impacts to the natural and undeveloped qualities of wilderness character.

Big Game Hunting – Mountain Goat

Mountain goat hunting includes day use and overnight activities in the wilderness. Activities incidental to the primary goat hunt may involve camping, remote setting nature tour activities, freshwater fishing, or hunting for lower value game and waterfowl species.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation of Need
Wilderness Dependence	The majority of accessible goat herds on National Forest System (NFS) lands within the Sitka Ranger District occur outside of wilderness, particularly in the area north of Sitka. These non-wilderness NFS lands are also more heavily used by local residents. With the exception of Katlian Valley and Medvejie, there are no private lands in the vicinity of SBW where goats occur during the hunting season.
Wilderness Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural Quality: ADF&G provides recommendations, population estimates, and historical harvest data to help the Forest Service determine the number of guided hunts an area can sustain. The majority of goat hunts are boat-based, with occasional use of spike camps in the uplands. Hunts generally last approximately seven days and hunters may hike to the alpine once or twice during a hunt. Camps are typically occupied for a few nights each season, but because they are located in alpine areas, impacts could become noticeable with a small amount of use.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Undeveloped Quality</u>: Guided hunting groups have the potential to impact the undeveloped quality of wilderness if tent platforms are constructed or remain in place when not in use. • <u>Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive & Unconfined Recreation Quality</u>: Guided groups have the potential to impact opportunities for solitude, particularly if access is by motorized boat or floatplane, and use occurs in popular areas. Guided goat-hunting groups typically consist of one hunter and one or two guides. Occasionally two groups will camp together and hunt different areas. Due to the nomadic approach taken for goat hunting, and the small size of groups involved, the potential for visitor conflicts is minimal. Local hunters typically access high lakes in SBW for goat hunting in the early fall before guides begin conducting hunts, but there is some overlap in November. Access to herds is difficult and use tends to be concentrated at a few areas. Potential for conflicts exist at Lake Diana and Crawfish Inlet where both guided and unguided groups hunt. This has become more of an issue in recent years as hunting seasons have closed early due to more restrictive nanny harvest. Goat hunting guides have shifted their use patterns to earlier in the season in order to be more assured of the opportunity to hunt with their clients.
Skills, Equipment, and Knowledge Required	Visitors primarily access the SBW using motorized boats or float planes. Outfitters and guides can provide the skills, equipment, and knowledge required to safely access and enjoy the wilderness. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) requires non-resident goat hunters to be accompanied by a registered guide or a relative within the second degree of kin. Goat hunting in Southeast Alaska is substantially different than hunting in other states. Hunters need to be skilled in identifying and stalking goats in a dynamic and challenging environment. It is also important that they understand how to identify males and females and are familiar with Guide Use Area boundaries identified by the State. A guide can ensure that State regulations and ethical hunting procedures are followed.
Visitor Safety	Southeast Alaska's weather conditions and tidal fluctuations can be extreme throughout the year. Exposure to wind and cold weather poses a threat to visitor safety. Wildlife encounters, particularly with brown bear, also pose a risk to safety. Guides know how to track and retrieve animals, carry radios and/or satellite phones for communication, and carry back-up rifles in case of emergency. Mountain goat hunting is one of the most dangerous guided activities offered in Alaska. Hunts are typically carried out in very hazardous terrain where the risk of injury from slips, trips, and falls is substantial.
Outfitter and Guide Demand and Utilization	There are more requests for guided mountain goat hunting in SBW than can be accommodated. ADF&G has population concerns and authorized hunts have been kept at a low number. An average of 25 service days was reported annually for this activity (2008-2012). Existing authorizations are being fully utilized by guides. Most guides are booked years in advance for these hunts.
Public Purposes & Special Management Objectives	Guided mountain goat hunting contributes to the recreational purpose of wilderness, although only a small segment of the population is willing or physically able to participate in this activity. Guides can help the ADF&G male to female harvest ratio objectives and ensure that hunters care for and process carcasses in accordance with State law. Guide hunt records also help track harvest locations and success rates, contributing to better management of goat populations. Guides can also teach clients about low-impact camping and hiking skills.

Outfitter/guides provide access to mountain goat hunting opportunities in SBW that would otherwise be unavailable to those members of the general public interested in this activity because of the high level of knowledge, skills, and equipment needed to safely conduct a remote hunt. Outfitters and guides also help the Forest Service meet special management objectives for dispersing impacts related to nonresident harvest. Guides can help identify gender correctly, thereby limiting female harvest, which has been deemed critical by ADF&G for maintaining goat populations. This activity contributes to the recreational purpose of wilderness and has few resource concerns. These factors, along with the State of Alaska's requirement for non-resident

hunters to be accompanied by a licensed guide, indicate there is a need for outfitter/guide mountain goat hunting services in SBW. Guides can educate clients about low-impact camping and hiking skills to minimize impacts to the natural and undeveloped qualities of wilderness character.

Camping (including overnight use of public recreation cabins)

Camping is defined as overnight use within the wilderness. Daytime activities may involve boating or kayaking on marine waters or remote setting nature tours, hunting, or freshwater fishing within the wilderness. This use depends on sites amenable to camping such as level ground, accessible beach, availability of water, secure boat anchorage or storage, a food cache site, minimal signs of use by bears, and so on.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation of Need
Wilderness Dependence	<p>Opportunities for guided camping exist in the non-wilderness portion of the Sitka Ranger District and surrounding areas of the Tongass National Forest. Wilderness, however, provides the remote wild land setting desired for this type of activity. Wilderness also provides an opportunity for guided visitors to practice Leave No Trace camping skills and learn about outdoor ethics. On non-wilderness NFS lands surrounding the SBW, there are relatively few high-elevation lakes available for camping and no high elevation public recreation cabins. There are several cabins on low-elevation lakes available outside of wilderness, including Baranof Lake, Sitkoh Lake, Kook Lake, and Lake Eva cabins.</p>
Wilderness Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Natural Quality</u>: Guided camping generally occurs on the beaches along the shoreline of SBW and results in minimal impacts to vegetation, soil, and water resources. There are some locations where impacts to vegetation and soil are noticeable. Guided camping may increase the size of existing campsite boundaries. Firewood collection for campfires could occur, resulting in “human browse lines” or stumps. Stipulations for waste disposal and use of fire pans would have to be added to permits to ensure degradation of areas did not occur. • <u>Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive & Unconfined Recreation Quality</u>: There is also a potential for guided groups to impact opportunities for solitude in the wilderness, particularly if the groups are large or use is authorized in popular locations (e.g., Red Bluff Bay). Many of the lakes in SBW are small and can only accommodate one group for camping. Along the adjacent waterways, motorized boat traffic has the potential to diminish opportunities for solitude. Use of public recreation cabins in SBW at Avoss, Davidof, and Plotnikof Lakes is low (on average 6-15 nights reserved per year), so competition is low.
Skills, Equipment, and Knowledge Required	<p>Camping visitors primarily access the SBW using kayaks, motorized boats or float planes, including charter services. Outfitters may also provide camping equipment that visitors do not have. Outfitters and guides can provide the skills, equipment, and knowledge required to safely access and enjoy the wilderness. Many wilderness cabins are located in remote, steep basins and are not accessible by trail. Visitors may have limited experience in this type of terrain and weather conditions. Guides also provide the skills, equipment, and knowledge needed to minimize impacts from overnight visitors. Camping (including stays at remote wilderness public use cabins) involves skills that embrace traditional techniques and include elements of risk and challenge, especially for those new to the activity. It encourages self-reliance and helps strengthen independent decision-making.</p>
Visitor Safety	<p>Southeast Alaska’s weather conditions and tidal fluctuations can be extreme throughout the year. Exposure to wind and cold weather poses a threat to visitor safety. Wildlife encounters also pose a risk to safety. Outfitters and guides may provide communication with rescue services in the event of an emergency.</p>
Outfitter and Guide Demand and Utilization	<p>There is demand for guided camping services in the SBW. An average of 70 service days annually was reported for this guided activity (2008-2012). The beaches and high-elevation lakes in this wilderness provide desirable recreation settings for this type of activity. There</p>

	have been no commercial use requests for fly-in, non-hunting related camping, with the exception of cabin camping, at any lakes in SBW. No permits have been issued for guided camping at public recreation cabins although interest has been expressed for this type of use.
Public Purposes & Special Management Objectives	Guided camping tours provide an opportunity for the visiting public to safely access and enjoy the SBW for recreational pursuits. Multiple day experiences allow visitors to forge deep connections with nature. Outfitters and guides providing camping tours emphasize Leave No Trace skills and outdoor ethics. Campers often seek a wild land setting and this activity is consistent with the management of the area as wilderness. Forest Plan direction for public use cabins located in wilderness is to maintain them at present or improved condition. However, high costs of maintenance for low-use cabins are becoming prohibitive. An opportunity exists for partnerships with guides to perform deferred maintenance on low-use cabins or provide firewood. Guides who pursue this activity could educate visitors on the use of primitive tools as well as the enabling legislation, which allows for these structures in wilderness.

In summary, guided camping generally occurs on the beaches and along the shoreline of SBW and results in minimal impacts to vegetation, soil, and water resources. Wilderness provides an opportunity for guided visitors to practice traditional skills, learn about outdoor ethics, and forge deep connections with nature. Backcountry camping experiences depend on a wild land setting and are consistent with management of the area as wilderness. Outfitters and guides can provide area visitors with the skills, equipment, and knowledge required to safely access and enjoy the wilderness. There is a need for outfitter/guide camping services in SBW.

There is a potential for guided groups to impact opportunities for solitude in the wilderness, particularly if the groups are large, use is authorized in popular locations (e.g., Red Bluff Bay), and access is via motorized transport. Group size will be limited to twelve in non-cabin locations and six to eight persons at cabins (depending on cabin capacity). Permit stipulations will be designed to reduce potential conflicts with unguided visitors. Preference will be given to operators that access the wilderness using non-motorized transport, that promote Leave No Trace and outdoor ethics, and educate their clients about wilderness values.

Floatplane Landing Tours

A floatplane landing tour is defined as a day-use activity that predominantly involves viewing natural features by air and landing once or multiple times within the wilderness and returning back to its point of origin. Visitors typically spend little time on land at each stop. Floatplane landing tours do not include authorized point-to-point floatplane transport used as an ancillary service to another commercial service for activities such as remote setting nature tours, hunting, fishing, or camping (including public use cabins).

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation of Need
Wilderness Dependence	Floatplanes are a common and allowed method of transport for recreation use on the Tongass National Forest. However, the authorization of floatplane landing tours on the Tongass National Forest is limited and has not been authorized within the SBW. Misty Fiords National Monument provides a high number of service days for operators with lake landings. There are also several air taxi companies who provide this service without lake landings. In addition, several lakes exist outside of wilderness that offer sightseeing in a lake environment.

Wilderness Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Natural Quality</u>: Visitors typically step off the plane and explore the nearby area on foot, spending a short amount of time in the wilderness before re-boarding the plane. As a result, these activities typically result in minimal impacts to vegetation, soil, and water resources; however the potential for vegetative damage and soil erosion exists. Potential resource concerns include repeated use on unprotected native tread (e.g., muskeg and forested wetlands), user-created trails and trail marking (e.g. flagging and rock cairns), particularly in areas with interesting features and recreation attractions. • <u>Undeveloped Quality</u>: This activity is entirely dependent on the use of floatplanes. ANILCA Special Access provisions (Section 1110(a)) specifically allow for the continued use of airplanes for traditional activities and travel to and from villages and homesites. Recreation activities, such as sightseeing, are considered “traditional” as defined in Forest Service Manual 2326.1(6) (USDA Forest Service 2008a). As such, the presence of floatplanes in SBW is an accepted method of access and does not constitute a degradation of the undeveloped quality of wilderness character. • <u>Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive & Unconfined Recreation Quality</u>: The frequency and duration of floatplane use can affect outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. Repeated landings at locations within wilderness by floatplane landing tour activities are not compatible with preserving these outstanding opportunities. The higher incidence of floatplane flights and landings that are associated with floatplane landing tours degrades the opportunities for those visitors seeking to experience the natural sounds of the wilderness and primitive recreation.
Skills, Equipment, and Knowledge Required	Floatplane landing tours typically do not require a high degree of specialized skill, equipment or challenge for the forest visitor. Visitors typically step off the plane and explore the nearby area on foot, spending a short amount of time in the wilderness before re-boarding the plane. However, this activity does require an aircraft and pilot with experience in the challenging flying conditions of southeast Alaska. The average person would not have this equipment or skill and commercial services are typically needed for this activity.
Visitor Safety	Any activity that exposes people to southeast Alaska’s wind, rain, and cold weather conditions poses a threat to visitor safety if visitors are unprepared. Wildlife encounters may also pose a risk to safety. Hazards that people could encounter include brown bears, sudden weather changes, uneven terrain, falls and hypothermia. Since the time spent out of the plane is relatively brief and groups typically stay close to the landing site, risk of hypothermia and exposure to the elements is low.
Outfitter and Guide Demand and Utilization	No outfitter/guides have been authorized for floatplane landing tours in SBW. There have been commercial use requests for this activity.
Public Purposes & Special Management Objectives	This activity predominantly involves viewing natural features from the air and landing for only short periods of time within the wilderness. The act of viewing the wilderness from an aircraft and spending relatively short periods of time on the ground, within the landscape and soundscape, represents an activity predominantly inhibited by modern civilization. Although floatplanes are an accepted method of access in SBW, the activity itself does not fulfill the purposes of wilderness that strives for invoking opportunities for spirituality and/or allow for deep connections with nature.

In summary, floatplane landing tours do not offer opportunities for self-reliance and challenge to the wilderness visitor. This activity is entirely dependent on the use of aircraft to view the wilderness from the air with short periods of time on the ground. Although the method of access is allowed, the activity itself degrades outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive types of recreation, and does not provide visitors the opportunity for developing deep connections with nature. There is not a need for outfitter/guide floatplane landing tour services in SBW.

Freshwater Fishing

Freshwater fishing includes both catch-and-take and catch-and-release methods under Alaska sport fishing regulations (excludes commercial and subsistence fishing). This use depends on places and times where anadromous and resident fish are located.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation of Need
Wilderness Dependence	Several streams on non-wilderness NFS lands on the Sitka Ranger District and surrounding areas of the Tongass National Forest support anadromous fish populations and provide excellent freshwater fishing opportunities, including the Nakwasina, Salmon Lake, Lake Eva, Deer Lake, and Sashin Lake river systems. Opportunities for fishing on non-NFS lands are limited, but include Katlian Bay (Shee Atika Incorporated) and possibly State park areas. In addition to the lakes mentioned previously, there are a limited number of nearby high-elevation lakes outside of the wilderness. Catch & release steelhead fishing is a guided activity that is desired throughout southeast Alaska and there are a limited number of primary steelhead streams available, three of which are in SBW (Politofski Lake Creek, Port Banks, and Sandy Bay Creek).
Wilderness Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Natural Quality</u>: Guided freshwater fishing is accessed via motorized boat or plane and results in minimal impacts to vegetation, soil, and water resources. Current resource concerns at streams include litter, development of “fishing paths,” and wildlife displacement. ADF&G provides sport fishing guidelines that help maintain the natural quality of wilderness character through the sustainable management of fish populations. • <u>Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive & Unconfined Recreation Quality</u>: Guided groups have the potential to impact opportunities for solitude, particularly if the groups are large and use is authorized in popular locations (e.g., Port Banks, Sandy Bay, Red Bluff Bay), or access is via motorized boat or floatplane. There is also potential for conflicts during spring and fall bear hunting seasons and subsistence fish harvest seasons (Table 1). Many of the lakes in SBW are small and can only accommodate one or two groups for fishing. Visitor conflicts may occur, particularly during steelhead, coho, and sockeye fishing seasons. • <u>Other Features of Value</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Subsistence use has historically occurred in this wilderness area. Consideration will need to be made for subsistence users. ○ Brown Bear - There have been some reports of possible habituation of bears in site-specific areas on the Sitka district (e.g. Port Banks, Red Bluff Bay).
Skills, Equipment, and Knowledge Required	Visitors primarily access the SBW wilderness using motorized boats or float planes. Outfitters and guides can provide the skills, equipment, and knowledge required to safely access and enjoy the wilderness. Navigating and route-finding in steep, brushy terrain may also be beyond the skill level of many visitors. Outfitter/guides can impart knowledge of catch and release techniques, where and when the fish runs are occurring, fish identification, and proper disposal methods.
Visitor Safety	Southeast Alaska’s weather conditions and tidal fluctuations can be extreme throughout the year. Exposure to wind and cold weather poses a threat to visitor safety. Wildlife encounters also pose a risk to safety.
Outfitter and Guide Demand and Utilization	There are numerous streams and low- and high- elevation lakes in SBW that support anadromous fishing populations. Between 2008 and 2012, 19 guides were authorized to provide guided freshwater fishing services in SBW and an average of 244 service days were reported annually. The current level of use for fishing is low to high depending on the area and species. There is potential for conflicts as well, especially in fall and spring during guided bear hunts and during times of subsistence fish harvest (Falls Lake: June 1 – August 15; Gut Bay: July1 – July20; Necker: June 1 – August 31; Politofski: June 1 – July 31).

Public Purposes & Special Management Objectives	Guided freshwater fishing contributes to the recreational purpose of wilderness. Outfitter/guides promote proper catch and release techniques and an understanding of population dynamics in isolated streams and lakes. Outfitter/guides are required to turn in freshwater fishing logs to ADF&G; the results of these can be used to determine non-resident fishing harvest.
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In summary, there are several streams and lakes in the SBW that provide outstanding remote freshwater fishing opportunities. Fishing is an appropriate use of wilderness and outfitter/guides contribute to the recreational purpose of wilderness. Guides can assist visitors by navigating and route-finding in steep, brushy terrain and teach low-impact practices. Guides also impart knowledge of catch and release techniques, where the runs are occurring, fish identification and proper disposal methods. There is a need for outfitter/guide freshwater fishing services in SBW. Preference will be given to outfitter/guides that promote Leave No Trace and outdoor ethics and educate their clients about wilderness values. In addition, consideration will need to be made for subsistence users.

Remote Setting Nature Tours

Remote setting nature tours encompass, but are not limited to, a wide variety of day use activities such as hiking, paddling, wildlife viewing, photography, exploring, sightseeing, and cultural tours. Visitors may spend a few minutes to many hours participating in these activities. Desirable attributes for these activities include accessible sections of shoreline, maintained trails and facilities, and unique features of geological, ecological, or cultural interest.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation of Need
Wilderness Dependence	<p>There are opportunities for guided remote setting nature tours (RSNT) on non-wilderness NFS lands on the Sitka Ranger District and surrounding areas of the Tongass National Forest. For example, lakes to the north and south of the wilderness can provide sightseeing and hiking opportunities at a lake environment. There are also outstanding hiking opportunities at Lake Eva, Kruzof Island, and Mist Cove. Guides currently offer tours in all of these areas. RSNT opportunities are limited on non-NFS lands; some opportunities exist at Katlian Bay (Shee Atika Incorporated), nearby State parks including an outstanding trail to Sea Lion Cove. Guides currently offer hikes in some of these non-NFS locations.</p> <p>However, wilderness provides the remote, wild land setting often desired for these activities. SBW in particular provides visitors the opportunity to learn about and experience the glacial features, geological features at Red Bluff Bay, brown bear, cultural history features, and rural Alaskan lifestyle that are unique to this wilderness.</p>
Wilderness Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Quality: RSNTs occurring in the SBW are primarily boat-based and use is generally concentrated on beaches and along established trails. It is rare that most visitors participating in RSNT travel more than one-half mile from shorelines unless there is an established trail. As a result, these activities typically result in minimal impacts to vegetation, soil, and water resources. However, potential resource concerns include repeated use on unprotected native tread (e.g., muskeg and forested wetlands), user-created trails and trail marking (e.g. flagging and rock cairns), particularly in areas with interesting features and recreation attractions. The potential for vegetative damage and soil erosion exists. • Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive & Unconfined Recreation Quality: There is also a potential for outfitted/guided groups to impact opportunities for solitude in the wilderness, particularly if the groups are large, use is authorized in popular locations, or access is by motorized boat or float plane. Impacts to opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation will be most noticeable in areas where visual screening from vegetation and topography is low.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Other Features of Value:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brown Bear - There have been some reports of possible habituation of bears in site-specific areas on the Sitka district (e.g. Port Banks, Red Bluff Bay).
Skills, Equipment, and Knowledge Required	Visitors primarily access the SBW using kayaks, motorized boats or float planes. Outfitters and guides can provide the skills, equipment, and knowledge required to safely access and enjoy the wilderness. Equipment for day hiking (e.g. rain gear, footwear, warm clothing) can be obtained at relatively inexpensive prices at stores nationwide. Air taxi services can drop off and pick up visitors at locations of their choice, but without local knowledge of the landscape, it may be difficult for a visitor to identify suitable locations for this activity. Outfitters/ guides can provide the skills, equipment, and knowledge required to safely access the wilderness.
Visitor Safety	While hiking and beach walking are simple skills, southeast Alaska's weather conditions and tidal fluctuations can be extreme throughout the year. Exposure to wind and cold weather poses a threat to visitor safety if visitors are unprepared. Wildlife encounters may also pose a risk to safety. Hazards that people could encounter include brown bears, sudden weather changes, steep terrain, falls and hypothermia. Risk to safety and the physical and emotional challenges of surviving in this environment are high.
Outfitter and Guide Demand and Utilization	Twenty-three outfitter/guides were authorized to provide RSNTs in SBW between 2008 and 2012. The most popular guided RSNT activity is hiking at Red Bluff Bay. Other consistently used locations include Gut Bay, Patterson Bay, Sandy Bay, and Port Banks. Most RSNT use occurs in the shoreline zone surrounding protected bays and beaches. Use of the uplands is low, but operators have expressed an interest in providing hiking tours in the upland portion of the wilderness from saltwater, as well as floatplane access to lakes.
Public Purposes & Special Management Objectives	Guided RSNTs provide an opportunity for the visiting public to safely access and enjoy SBW for recreational pursuits. Outfitters/guides providing RSNTs emphasize Leave No Trace skills and outdoor ethics. RSNTs depend on a wild land setting and are consistent with management of the area as wilderness. Guides authorized to operate in wilderness are required to educate clients about Leave No Trace outdoor ethics. For example, a guide could encourage clients to spread out in alpine and muskeg areas rather than walk single file. Additionally, an opportunity exists for partnerships with guides to perform deferred maintenance on low-use wilderness trails that are becoming cost-prohibitive to maintain.

Remote setting nature tours depend on a wild land setting and are consistent with management of the area as wilderness. There is a potential for guided groups to impact opportunities for solitude in the wilderness, particularly if the groups are large, use is authorized in popular locations (e.g., Red Bluff Bay), and access is via motorized boat or float plane. Guides can assist visitors by navigating and route-finding in steep, brushy terrain and teach low-impact practices. Outfitter/guides provide visitors with the skills, equipment, and knowledge required to safely access and enjoy the wilderness while still achieving a high level of self-reliance and challenge in the activity. There is a need for outfitter/guide remote setting nature tour services in SBW. Preference will be given to outfitter/guides that promote Leave No Trace and outdoor ethics, educate their clients about wilderness values, use smaller group sizes, and use non-motorized transport. Permit stipulations will be designed to reduce potential conflicts with unguided visitors as well as minimize impacts to soils and vegetation.

Citations

ANILCA, 1980. Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, Public Law 96-487, 96th Congress.

USDA Forest Service, 2008a. Forest Service Manual, Alaska Region (Region 10), FSM 2300 – recreation, wilderness and related resource management, chapter 2320 – wilderness management. November 14, 2008.

USDA Forest Service, 2008b. Tongass National Forest Land Resource and Management Plan. January 2008. R10-MB-603b.

USDA Forest Service, 2007. Determination of Need and Extent of Commercial Uses within Wilderness Areas on the Tongass National Forest.

USDA Forest Service, 2004. Shoreline Outfitter/Guide Record of Decision and Final Environmental Impact Statement. December 2004. R10-MB-519a.

Wilderness Act, 1964. Public Law 88-577. 19 U.S. C. 1131-1136. 88th Congress.

Appendix A. Management Direction

The Wilderness Act of 1964

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)

In 1990, the Tongass Timber Reform Act (TTRA) amended ANILCA and designated two new wilderness areas. Section 707 of ANILCA specifies that, “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 that apply to this assessment include:

1. Section 811 – Reasonable access for subsistence resource uses.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Section 1307(b) – Provides a preference for providing visitor services (except for fishing and hunting) within conservation system units to Native Corporations and local residents.
5. Section 1315(c) – Allows for the permitting, maintenance, replacement, and continued use of public use cabins.

6. 1315(d) allows for the construction of new cabins if they are necessary for the protection of public health and safety.
7. 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.
8. 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.”

Forest Service Manual and Handbook Direction

Outfitters/guides must also meet agency objectives. These objectives are specifically outlined in the Forest Service Manuals (FSMs) and Forest Service Handbooks (FSHs).

FSM 2702 Special Uses Management states:

The objectives of the Special Uses program are to:

1. Authorize and manage special uses of National Forest System lands in a manner which protects natural resources and public health and safety, consistent with National Forest System Land and Resource Management Plans;

2. Administer special uses based on resource management objectives and sound business management principles;
3. Develop and maintain a well-trained workforce to properly manage and administer special uses; and
4. Facilitate the delivery of recreational opportunities on National Forest System lands for services not provided by the Forest Service.

Forest Service Special Uses objectives specifically for outfitting and guiding, provided in FSH 2709.14, Chapter 50, Section 53.1b states:

1. Provide for outfitting and guiding services that address concerns of public health and safety and that foster successful small businesses consistent with the applicable land management plan.
2. Facilitate greater participation in the outfitting and guiding program by organizations and businesses that work with youth and educational groups.
3. Encourage skilled and experienced individuals and entities to conduct outfitting and guiding activities in a manner that protects environmental resources and ensures that national forest visitors receive high-quality services.

Forest Service Special Uses policy for outfitting and guiding provided in FSH 2709.14, Chapter 50, Section 53.1c states:

1. Authorize only those outfitting and guiding activities that are consistent with the applicable land management plan and that meet the screening criteria in 36 CFR 251.54(e) and FSH 2709.11, chapter 10.
2. Not authorize any development or permanent improvements in non-wilderness in the National Forest System for outfitting and guiding services, except when there is a demonstrated public need and the structures, improvements, or installations have negligible value and minimal impact on national forest resources, as with hitching posts, corrals, tent frames, permitted access routes, and shelters.
3. Not authorize any development, improvements, or installations in wilderness areas for the purpose of convenience to the holder or the holder's clients; caches in wilderness areas; and permanent structures, improvements, or installations in wilderness areas unless they are necessary to meet minimum requirements for administration of the area for the purposes of the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1133c).
4. Work with other Federal agencies, State and local authorities, outfitters and guides, outfitting and guiding organizations, and other interested parties to ensure that outfitting and guiding activities are consistent with applicable laws and regulations and to identify unauthorized outfitting and guiding activities. Follow procedures in FSM 5300 in investigating and preventing the occurrence of unauthorized outfitting and guiding activities.

Forest Service policy addressing outfitter and guide operations in wilderness found in FSM 2323.13g states that managers should:

Address the need for and role of outfitters in the Forest Plan. The plan must address the type, number, and amount of recreation use that is to be allocated to outfitters. Ensure

that outfitters provide their service to the public in a manner that is compatible with use by other wilderness visitors and that maintains the wilderness resource.

Objectives for wilderness management provided in FSM 2323.11 are to:

1. Provide, consistent with management of the area as wilderness, opportunities for public use, enjoyment, and understanding of the wilderness, through experiences that depend upon a wilderness setting.
2. Provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Forest Service policy addressing recreation management in wilderness in FSM 2323.12 states:

1. Maximize visitor freedom within the wilderness. Minimize direct controls and restrictions. Apply controls only when they are essential for protection of the wilderness resources and after indirect measures have failed.
2. Use information, interpretation, and education as the primary tools for management of wilderness visitors.
3. Manage for recreation activities that are dependent on the wilderness environment so that a minimum of adaptations within wilderness are necessary to accommodate recreation.
4. Consistent with management as wilderness, permit outfitter/guide operations where they are necessary to help segments of the public use and enjoy wilderness areas for recreational or other wilderness purpose.

Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Direction for Wilderness (pages 3-7 to 3-25)

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 untrammelled 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."