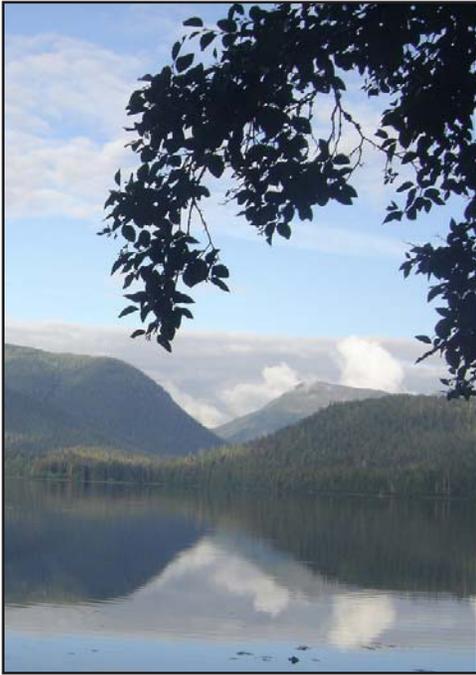


# Karta River Wilderness



## Wilderness Character

Karta Bay, one of the western extensions off the head of Kasaan Bay, forms the eastern border of the Karta River Wilderness on east-central Prince of Wales Island. During historic times Alaska Native people, particularly the Haida, lived around the bay and utilized the rich food sources of this area. The area includes the drainage of the Karta River system and two major lakes, Salmon and Karta. Wildfires affected the area around the turn of the century, but second-growth spruce, cedar, and hemlock stand an average of 60 feet tall in the area today. This area is best known for large salmon runs and scenic quality of the large river drainage system. Wildlife includes wolves, black bears, Sitka black tailed deer, beavers, otters, minks, martens, and weasels. Trumpeter swans and other waterfowl are commonly seen on the river.

In 1990, the United States Congress designated 39,894 acres as the Karta River Wilderness. Situated on the east-central side of Prince of Wales Island about 3 miles north of Hollis and 40 miles west of Ketchikan, this Wilderness contains the Karta River drainage which empties into Karta Bay. This Wilderness can be accessed by boat, floatplane or on foot. The Tongass National Forest manages this undeveloped, enduring set of ecosystems to preserve them for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

## Wilderness Management Direction

Management direction for the wilderness comes from the Wilderness Act, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), and the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended, 2008. The Wilderness Act prescribes the general management direction, but ANILCA provides for some specific exceptions. Direction includes:

- The Wilderness Act prohibits commercial uses with the exception of what may be allowed as necessary for visitor services.
- The Wilderness Act prohibits the use of motorized equipment, but ANILCA Section 1316 can allow for the continued use of traditional equipment directly necessary for the taking of fish and game (subject to regulation and compatibility).
- The Wilderness Act prohibits mechanized form of transport (i.e. bicycles, wheelbarrows), but ANILCA Section 811 can allow for the continued use of traditional equipment used for subsistence activities by rural Alaska residents (subject to regulation and compatibility)
- While the Wilderness Act prohibits the use of aircraft, ANILCA Section 1110 allows for the use of airplanes, motorboats, and snow-machines (during periods of adequate snow cover). Helicopters are not specifically identified in the ANILCA exception and their use is prohibited.
- The Tongass Plan identifies **group size limit of no more than 12 persons** for commercial or general public use within this wilderness.

These regulations are established for the wilderness character to remain undeveloped, natural and untrammled for future use.



Tongass National Forest

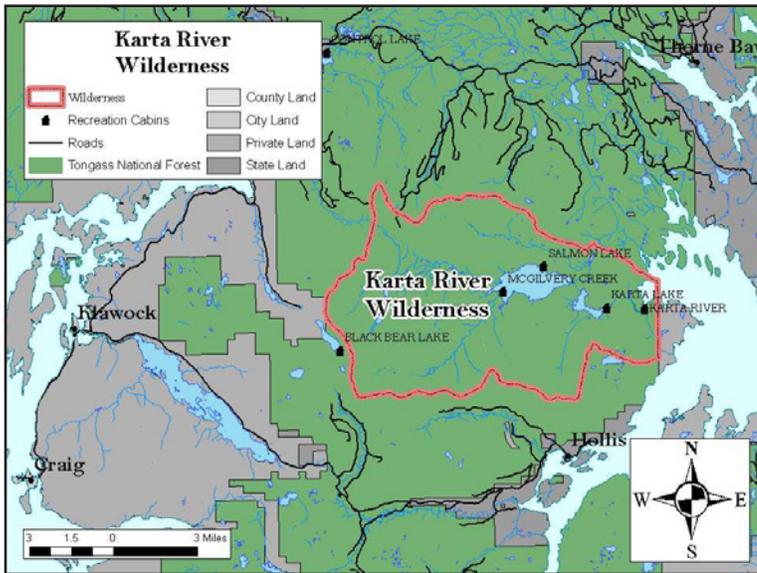


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## Wilderness Challenges

People are lured to Alaska for its beauty and excitement, but environmental conditions can be very unforgiving. The Karta River Wilderness is in a temperate rainforest, average summer temperatures are between 45-65°F. Be prepared with the appropriate clothing, safety equipment, shelter supplies, and water purifying devices for a cool and frequently overcast climate. This Wilderness also contains black bears so store food and trash properly. During the summer months, be aware of bears around salmon spawning streams.

## Threats and Benefits

While designated wilderness areas have the most protections of any other public lands, there are still threats that degrade the wilderness resource. Illegal outfitting and guiding on the Karta River, damaging of cultural and historical sites, recreational overuse between the three Forest Service cabins, and resource damage by disturbing wildlife, spread of invasive species, and damaging riparian flora are the major threats to this wilderness. Building awareness and a better understanding of designated wilderness areas is the key foundation to ensure that these areas stay wild.

Along with providing recreational opportunities, designated wilderness areas protect natural ecosystems. They provide us with clean air and clean water, and allow the natural processes to continue without the permanent presence of humans. Due to the action of Congress in 1990, Karta River Wilderness will remain protected for future generations.

## Wilderness Facilities

Three Forest Service recreation cabins lie within the Karta River Wilderness and one 4.8 mile long hiking trail begins at the mouth of Karta River and connects all three cabins.

## Leave No Trace

To insure that this area is left unimpaired for future use, practice the following Leave No Trace principles.

- Plan ahead and prepare for extreme weather conditions, hazards, and emergencies.
- Clean equipment and gear **before** going to the field to avoid the potential spread of invasive plants or seeds.
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces. When possible, disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
- Dispose of waste properly. **Pack out** all trash, leftover food, and toilet paper. At appropriate conditions dispose of human waste in the intertidal zone. If camping in upland forests dispose of solid waste by digging a cat hole 6 to 8 inches deep located at least 200 feet from water or campsite.
- Leave what you find. Examine but do not touch the historical structures or artifacts.
- Minimize campfire impacts. Use a lightweight stove when possible. When a campfire is necessary, keep fires small. Build a fire below mean high tide, or when in a forested area, build a mound fire or use a fire pan to avoid damaging the ground vegetation. Stay away from boulders or tree bases to avoid long lasting black scars.
- Respect wildlife and be considerate of other visitors.

