

Tebenkof Bay Wilderness



Wilderness Character

A complex system of bays with many small islands, islets, and coves is the prominent feature of Tebenkof Bay Wilderness. The land is covered by a thick forest of Western hemlock, Sitka spruce, and Alaska yellow cedar, muskeg, and alpine areas. Coho, pink, sockeye and chum salmon along with Dungeness and tanner crabs, halibut and shrimp thrive in the waters off this island wilderness. The southern boundary of this wilderness marks the northern boundary of Kuiu Wilderness, and the two are managed practically as one. Some older publications list the Aleck's Creek Portage Trail; this route is no longer maintained and not advised as a portage. Campers are encouraged to camp on durable surfaces, such as gravel and sand beaches, keeping in mind tidal changes.

The United States Congress designated 66,812 acres as the Tebenkof Bay Wilderness. Located 15 miles from the community of Port Alexander, 10 miles from the communities of Port Baker and Port Protection on Prince of Wales Island, and 60 miles from Petersburg, this Wilderness area can be accessed by floatplane, motored, or oared boat. The Tongass National Forest manages this undeveloped, enduring ecosystem 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.



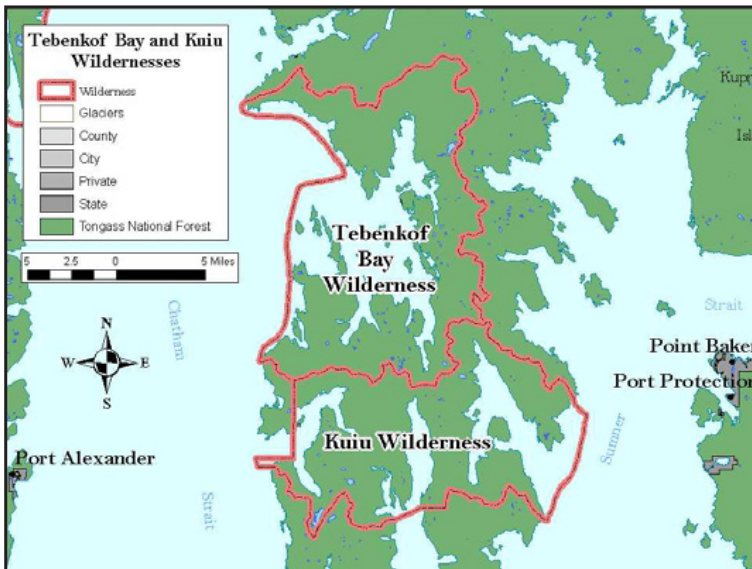
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Wilderness Challenges

People are lured to Alaska for its beauty and excitement, but environmental conditions can be very unforgiving. This wilderness area is remote and far from assistance where the 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 area also contains black bears, so store food and trash properly. During the summer months, be especially careful around salmon spawning streams. When traveling by boat, be aware of the weather conditions coming from Chatham Strait.

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.

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. Heritage resource damage, loss of solitude resulting from the increase of visitors, and resource damage by littering, spread of invasive species and damaged flora are the major human threats to these wilderness areas. 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 where humans remain only as visitors. Due to the action of Congress in 1980, the Tebenkof Bay Wilderness will remain protected for future generations.

Wilderness Facilities

There are no established hiking trails or public recreation facilities in this Wilderness area. There is one primitive portage trail that goes through the wilderness area connecting this wilderness to the Kuiu Wilderness adjacent to the south.