South Prince of Wales Province

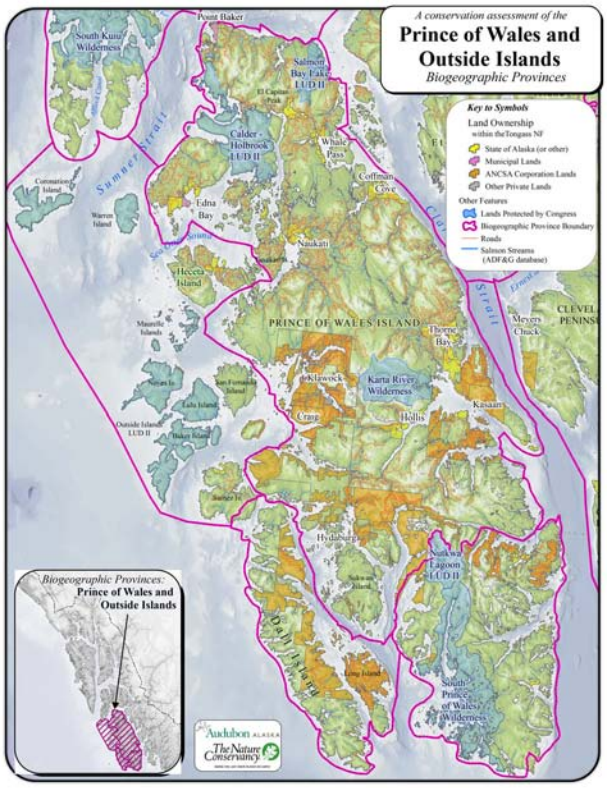

FIG 1. South Prince of Wales Province.

The South Prince of Wales Province, located at the south tip of Prince of Wales Island, is one of the smaller provinces in Southeast and includes the Barrier Islands (Fig 1). This province also includes the South Prince of Wales Wilderness and Nutkwa LUD II which represents 29% of the province in congressionally protected lands. Thirty-four percent of the province is administratively protected by the Tongass Land Management Plan while 38% is allocated to development designations.

The South Prince of Wales Province falls entirely within the Alexander geologic terrane. Compared to the North Prince of Wales Province, a smaller portion is underlain by highly productive bedrock types. The southern half of the province is largely granitic and has less large-tree forest.

As on the North Prince of Wales, deeply penetrating fiords reduce connectivity for wildlife. Extensive roading and logging in some of the resulting bottlenecks (for example the base of the Chasina Peninsula) further fragments the landscape.

The South Prince of Wales Province has many plant species not found on islands to the north, including salal, Pacific ninebark, and twinflower honeysuckle (*Lonicera involucrata*). Western redcedar is a dominant forest tree, highly targeted in recent and proposed timber sales.

As on Mitkof Island, wind plays a major role in the distribution of forest communities on Southern Prince of Wales. Southerly slopes exposed to storms from Dixon Entrance are generally covered by even-aged, fine-canopied “wind forest.” Unlike Mitkof Island, however, little of this wind forest is of commercial quality. Large-tree forest is mostly restricted to north facing lee slopes and a very few alluvial bottoms.

The Nutkwa Lagoon watershed has the 4th highest pink salmon escapement (155,000 fish) of all surveyed watersheds in Southeast (Flanders et al. 1998). Also outstanding is Klakas Inlet, with an estimated pink escapement of 108,033 fish. Nutkwa and Klakas watersheds are congressionally protected LUD 2 and Wilderness, respectively. The two next highest ranking pink systems in South Prince of Wales Province are not protected. Kitkun Bay, with an escapement of 66,415 fish, is divided between private land and timber LUDs. South Moira, with 53,555 fish, is mostly timber land as well. South Moira and Nutkwa were the highest ranked watersheds (based on this conservation assessment) on South Prince of Wales for habitat for all salmon combined.

The top three winter deer habitat watersheds identified by this assessment were Klakas Inlet, Nutkwa Lagoon and Kitkun Bay. The top summer black bear habitats were Klakas Inlet and Nutkwa Lagoon.

FIG 2. Highly productive hemlock forest on Nutkwa River. The Nutkwa LUD II–a congressionally protected land designation–contains as much acreage of large-tree forest as Karta Wilderness on about half of the Karta's total area. (David Job photo)

Productive old growth makes up approximately 44% of the South Prince of Wales Province and about 10% of the original POG has been harvested (Chapter 2, Table 5). The northeastern portion of South Prince of Wales Province has been intensively high-graded, both on federal and corporation lands. In contrast, the northwestern and southeastern quadrants of the province hold some of the largest contiguous blocks of large-tree forest remaining in Southeast. South Prince of Wales has the highest remaining percentage (25.8%) of large-tree forest of any Southeast province, more even than North POW (21%) or Admiralty (17%). Very little of this valuable timber is in the South Prince of Wales Wilderness area, but the Nutkwa LUD II (Fig 2) is one of Southeast's finest examples of protected large-tree forest. Forty-two percent of large-tree stands occur in watershed reserves, 18% in sub-watershed reserves, and 29% in development lands (Chapter 2, Table 6). Recent and proposed federal timber sales have not adequately accounted for logging on neighboring private lands. Kootznowoo Inc. has almost completely logged its lands on Cholmondely Sound and the Chasina Peninsula, including one 7,960 acre (3221 hectare) contiguous clearcut.

It is estimated that the South Prince of Wales Province retains 86% of the original value of summer black bear habitat (Chapter 2, Table 15). Fifty-five percent of that habitat is protected in watershed-scale reserves, 11% in sub-watershed reserves, and 33% occurs on development lands. The province also retains 89% of its original winter deer habitat values (Chapter 2, Table 8). Forty-eight percent of winter deer habitat is protected in watershed reserves, 14% in sub-watershed reserves, and 28% occurs on managed lands. Murrelet nesting habitat is estimated to be 88% of its original value and 47% occurs in watershed reserves with 16% in sub-watershed reserves (Chapter 2, Table 10). The province has 271 mi (435 km) of anadromous fish streams (Chapter 2, Table 11). Thirteen percent of riparian forest associated with anadromous fish have been cut in this province, 44% occur in watershed reserves, 13% in sub-watershed reserves, and 42% occur on development lands (Chapter 2, Table 12).

FIG 3. Klakas Island near the abandoned Haida village of Klinkwan, South Prince of Wales Wilderness. The combination of wind exposure and unproductive granitic bedrock makes for scrubby forest throughout most of this Wilderness Area. (Richard Carstensen photo)

Forest types, historical logging, and roads are mapped within the South Prince of Wales Province in Figure 7. Refer to the Arc Reader GIS database in Appendix C of this report to review detailed mapped

information on location of large-tree stands, past timber harvest, roads, forest reserves, protected areas, and regions of core ecological values.

FIG 3 Existing and proposed logging on karst, Chasina project area. A 1989 clearcut blew down along the margins. A proposed cutting unit, 679-409, is outlined in white. It contains large redcedars like the one in Fig 4. (Richard Carstensen)

FIG 4. Large redcedar inside Chasina project area. In recent years, value of red- and yellow-cedar in the timber market has increased. (Richard Carstensen)

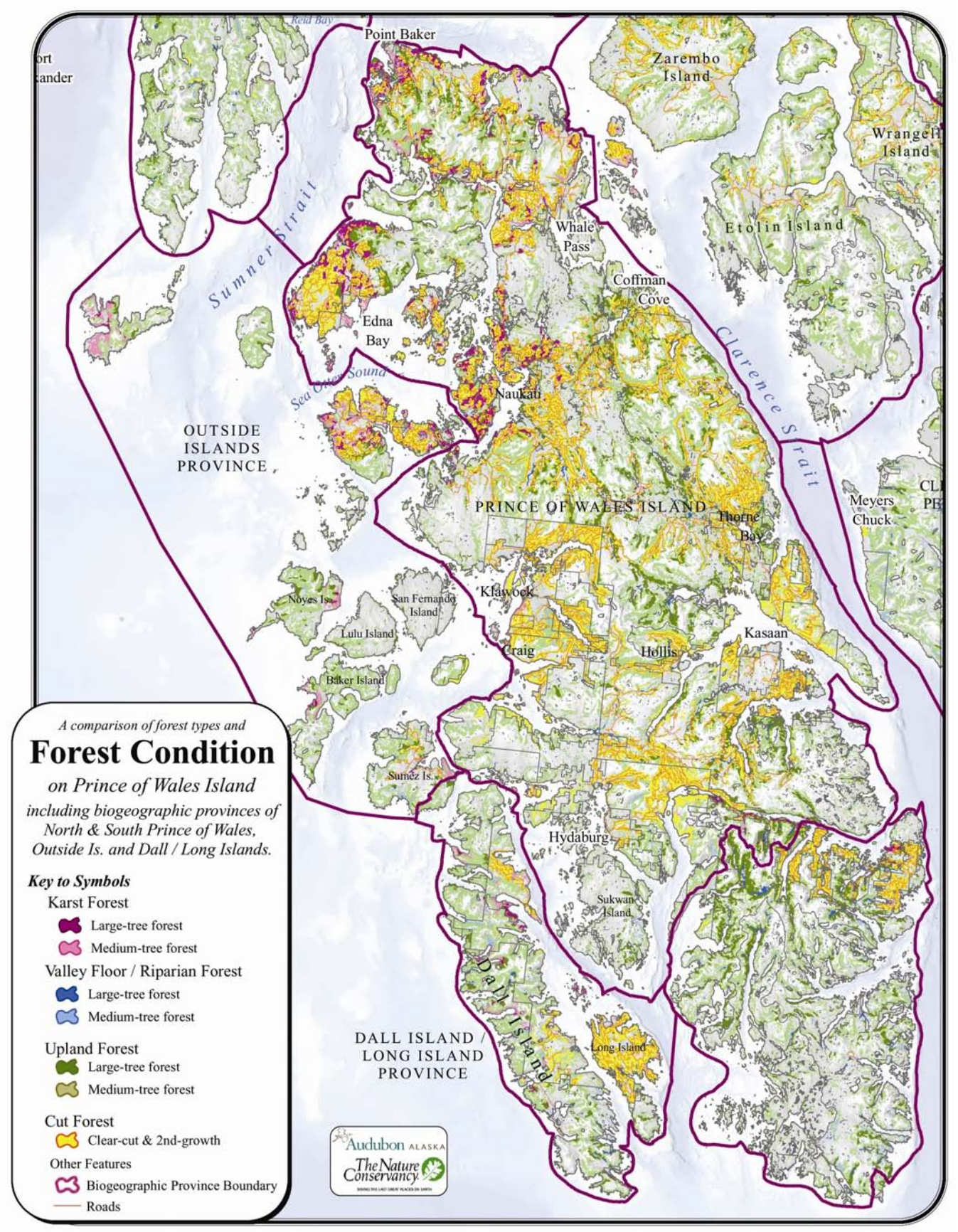

FIG 5. A comparison of forest type and condition in the South Prince of Wales Province of southeastern Alaska.