

Dear Secretary Rollins,

The U.S. Forest Service should abandon its short-sighted and disastrous proposal to rescind the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This would open Roadless Areas in America's National Forests to road construction, logging, mining, and oil and gas drilling, causing significant adverse impacts to wildlife, clean drinking water, recreation, and natural and cultural resources. Many threatened and endangered species need large, intact forests to survive, but roads break up that habitat and introduce new hazards such as vehicle collisions. Roads also increase erosion, depositing sediment into streams, which decreases habitat quality for aquatic species and increases costs for treating drinking water.

When the Forest Service approved the Rule in 2001, it explained that protecting Roadless Areas was critically important because they:

1. Function as biological strongholds for threatened, endangered, and other at-risk species.
2. Contain all or portions of 354 municipal watersheds that provide clean drinking water to millions of people.
3. Conserve native biodiversity by serving as a bulwark against the spread of nonnative invasive species.
4. Provide outstanding opportunities for remote recreation.

This is as true today as it was 25 years ago.

The Forest Service's claim that repealing the Roadless Area Conservation Rule is necessary to address wildfires is misleading. The fact is, wildfires are four times as likely to start in areas with roads versus Roadless Areas. Researchers agree: building more roads in Roadless Areas is likely to increase the number of fires, not decrease them.

The Forest Service should abandon this brazen attempt to hand over Roadless Areas to the timber, mining, and oil & gas industries.

Sincerely,