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**INSLEE AND BOEHLERT INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN
BILL TO RESTORE ROADLESS AREA PROTECTIONS**

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Rep Jay Inslee (D-WA) and Science Committee Chairman Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) introduced legislation today to restore protections to roadless areas in America's national forests.

Earlier this year, the Bush Administration repealed the Clinton-era Roadless Area Conservation Rule to allow road building in 58.5 million acres of wild and pristine forests. The National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act will reinstate and codify the protections to the roadless areas that were designated in the widely popular Roadless Rule. The legislation currently has 143 original bipartisan cosponsors.

Said Inslee, "Americans have overwhelmingly expressed their preference for preserving these pristine roadless areas. Roadless areas such as the Eagle Rock and Dark Divide in Washington State provide clean drinking water and outdoor recreation for countless Washingtonians. Instead of clear-cutting these forests with chainsaws, we should be preserving these crown jewels in our national heritage for future generations. We should also address the backlog of existing road projects in our national forests instead of giving road construction subsidies at the expense of American taxpayers."

Chairman Boehlert added, "National forests are assets of concern to citizens throughout the United States, because they belong to all of us. By protecting currently roadless areas in national forests, we can ensure that they will continue to provide sources of clean drinking water, undisturbed habitats for fish and wildlife, and recreational opportunities."

Two million acres of the nine million acres of national forests in Washington State had been protected as roadless areas, but are now at risk of logging. 45 public meetings were held in Washington State on the Roadless Rule in 1999, and more than 140,000

comments were received from Washington State residents on the Roadless Rule, the overwhelming majority of whom supported the rule. Notable roadless areas in Washington State include the Eagle Rock Roadless Area that includes most of the Wild Sky Proposed Wilderness Area, the Dark Divide Roadless Area and the Kettle River Range.

In May of this year, the Administration removed protection for 58.5 million acres of wild and pristine national forests by requiring each governor to request that the United States Forest Service prevent road-building in inventoried roadless areas in that governor's state, whereas before this protection was guaranteed. Eighty-two percent of the roadless area is located in states with governors unlikely to petition for protections for their state's roadless areas. Even if a governor petitions against the elimination of a roadless area, the ultimate decision of whether an inventoried area will remain roadless lies with the Forest Service.

The National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act represents a balance between environmental and economic concerns about our national forests. The bill would prohibit most new road construction in roadless areas, but would allow road building for fire fighting, fuel reduction and when other natural disasters threaten public safety. The bill also allows full access for recreational activities such as backpacking, camping, hunting and fishing.

This legislation responds to the overwhelming support expressed for protecting our national forests received after several public comment periods. By the end of the 2004 comment period, the Forest Service had received over 4.2 million comments on the Roadless Rule — 97.9 percent of which were in support of a strong protection plan. The 4.2 million comments were the most comments the federal government has ever received on any rule in history.

In 2003, Inslee introduced an amendment to the Interior Appropriations bill that would have preserved the Roadless Rule through FY2004. The Inslee amendment received 185 votes, twenty of which were cast by Republicans.

The legislation is supported by groups such as the Outdoor Industry Association, Trout Unlimited, the American Hiking Social and numerous scientists, industries and environmental and religious organizations.

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