

April 14th, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, DC 20500

Re: The Roadless Area Conservation Rule

Dear Mr. President:

We write to applaud your commitment to protecting the remaining undeveloped and roadless areas within the national forests of the United States and to urge you to take early, decisive action to defend, embrace, and implement the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule) on all acres that it covers. As scientists working in natural resource-related disciplines including biology, forest ecology, climatology, geology, aquatic ecology, fisheries, soil science, and natural resource management, we are greatly concerned about the continuing loss and fragmentation of the nation's forests.

The final Roadless Area Conservation Rule, issued January 12, 2001, was an important step towards preserving the invaluable ecological benefits that intact forests provide. Now, as the realities of global climate change become ever more apparent, the critical need to preserve these last remaining, intact roadless areas within the national forests could not be more urgent. The importance of maintaining large terrestrial carbon stores, particularly in forests, is swiftly being recognized as a critical element in addressing climate change. To avoid climate catastrophe we must reverse global deforestation which contributes 20 percent of the world's climate pollution and impoverishes the land of critical refugia for the world's already threatened biodiversity.

Scientific research has amply documented the greater health and resiliency of intact forest ecosystems versus those disturbed by roads and logging. Less disturbed forests are less susceptible to tree diseases, insect attacks, and invasions from non-native species, and less likely to have suffered the adverse effects of fire suppression. These healthier ecosystems are in turn more able to withstand the effects of global climate change and act as refugia for sensitive wildlife and plant species, many of which are vulnerable to extirpation in more developed areas. Thus, intact forests can serve as vital reservoirs and safety nets, as surrounding landscapes become genetically impoverished and fragmented, greatly impeding species' abilities to adapt to the increasing stress of global warming.

Intact forests play an important role in the function of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems. They are spared the potentially massive soil erosion that can accompany road building and logging, which fouls streams and rivers. As a result, roadless areas in our national forests contain some of the most intact aquatic ecosystems in the country, including some of the healthiest salmon stocks. Intact forests provide direct watershed benefits to people by reducing flood threats and supplying clean sources of drinking water. In fact, National Forests and Grasslands are the largest single source of water in the continental U.S., contributing nearly 20

percent of the Nation's water supply¹.

It is particularly important that immediate action be taken before recently planned development goes forward in roadless areas, both permanently degrading these ecosystems and setting a dangerous precedent. A prime example of this is the Tongass National Forest in Alaska. Our largest expanse of intact forest, and the heart of the world's remaining coastal rainforest, the Tongass represents one of North America's largest carbon sinks, some of the richest, most biologically productive land on earth, and constitutes 30 percent of the world's unlogged coastal temperate rainforest². Its old-growth trees live 200 to 700 years, with yellow cedar living 1,000 years or more. These large expanses of ancient forest are critical to maintaining a wide variety of wildlife, including the world's largest concentration of bald eagles³, endemic plants and animals like the Alexander Archipelago wolf, and more grizzly bears per square mile than anywhere on the globe⁴. Despite this, new logging could begin in Tongass roadless areas as soon as this Spring under a "temporary" exemption issued by the Bush administration.

Considering all of the above reasons, it is imperative that early action be taken in the Tongass—and throughout the country—to uphold the Roadless Rule. Doing so will help preserve the important ecological benefits of the remaining undeveloped 30% of our national forests (an area that represents only 2% of the country's land area).

Again, we thank you for your pledge to revitalize our country's leadership in addressing critical environmental issues here and abroad and urge you to implement and vigorously administer the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Thank you for considering our views on this matter of vital importance to the nation's ecological health.

Respectfully yours,

Thomas Lovejoy, Ph.D.
Biodiversity Chair,
Heinz Center

Edward O. Wilson, Ph.D.
University Professor Emeritus,
Harvard University

Paul R. Ehrlich, Ph.D.
Bing Professor of Population Studies
Stanford University

David S. Wilcove, Ph.D.
Ecology & Evolutionary Biology
Princeton University

¹ USDA Forest Service. "Healthy Waters Fact Sheet". 2007.

http://www.fs.fed.us/biology/resources/pubs/watershed/waterfacts_101907.pdf (December 9, 2008)

² Kramer, M., A.J. Hansen, M.L. Taper, E.J. Kissinger. 2001. ABIOTIC CONTROLS ON LONG-TERM WINDTHROW DISTURBANCE AND TEMPERATE RAIN FOREST DYNAMICS IN SOUTHEAST ALASKA. *Ecology*. **82(10)**: 2749-2768 <http://www.homepage.montana.edu/~hansen/documents/downloadables/ecology.pdf> ;

³ USDA Tongass SEIS. February 2003. Vol. 1. Page 178

⁴ USDA Tongass SEIS. February 2003. Vol. 1. Page 177 and

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/districts/admiralty/fwe/index.shtml>

Stanley A. Temple, Ph.D.
Dept. of Forest and Wildlife Ecology,
University of Wisconsin

Stephen H. Schneider, Ph.D.
Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies,
Stanford University

John G. Robinson, Ph.D.
Executive Vice President, Conservation &
Science, Wildlife Conservation Society

George M. Woodwell, Ph.D.
Director Emeritus
The Woods Hole Research Center

Norman L. Christensen, Jr., Ph.D.
Nicholas School of the Environment
Duke University

Harold Mooney, Ph.D.
Professor of Environmental Biology
Stanford University

Mary E. Power, Ph.D.
Department of Integrative Biology
University of California, Berkeley

Virginia H. Dale, Ph.D.
Environmental Sciences Division
Oak Ridge National Laboratory

James S. Clark, Ph.D.
Nicholas School of the Environment
Duke University

Kurt D. Fausch, Ph.D.
Fish, Wildlife, & Conservation Biology
Colorado State University

Steve Williams, Ph.D.
Department of Zoology,
North Carolina State University

F. Stuart Chapin, III, Ph.D.
Institute of Arctic Biology,
University of Alaska

Gretchen C. Daily, Ph.D.
Dept. of Biology and Woods Institute
Stanford University

Simon A. Levin, Ph.D.
Dept. of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology
Princeton University

Clifford S. Duke, Ph.D.
Ecological Society of America,
Washington, DC

Dennis D. Murphy, Ph.D.
Professor, Biology Department
University of Nevada

Russell Lande, Ph.D.
Division of Biology,
Imperial College London, UK

H.H. Shugart, Ph.D.
Department of Environmental Sciences
University of Virginia

Beverly E. Law, Ph.D.
Professor, Global Change Forest Science
Oregon State University

Robert K. Colwell, Ph.D.
Dept. of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology
University of Connecticut

James D. Nations, Ph.D.
Center for State of the Parks,
National Parks Conservation Association

Mary Turnipseed, Ph.D.
Nicholas School of the Environment,
Duke University

William D. Bowman, Ph.D.
Dept. of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology,
University of Colorado

Knute Nadelhoffer, Ph.D.
Director, University of Michigan
Biological Station

Barry R. Noon, Ph.D.
Fish, Wildlife, & Conservation Biology,
Colorado State University

John T. Ratti, Ph.D.
Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources
University of Idaho

Thomas L. Fleischner, Ph.D.
Professor of Environmental Studies,
Prescott College

Mark Hay, Ph.D.
School of Biology,
Georgia Institute of Technology

Steve Osofsky, DVM
Director, Wildlife Health Policy,
Wildlife Conservation Society

Rob Bierregaard, Ph.D.
Department of Biology
University of North Carolina

Robert Stelzer, Ph.D.
Dept. of Biology and Microbiology,
University of Wisconsin

Craig W. Benkman, Ph.D.
Department of Zoology and Physiology,
University of Wyoming

Luke Bruner, Ph.D.
Ecologist, Conservation Research Center
of Teton Science Schools

Jon Rosales, Ph.D.
St. Lawrence University
Canton, NY

Philip Myers, Ph.D.
Dept. Ecology & Evolutionary Biology,
University of Michigan

Diane M. Debinksi, Ph.D.
Ecology, Evolution, & Organismal
Biology, Iowa State University

William Z. Lidicker, Jr., Ph.D.
Professor of Integrative Biology,
University of California, Berkeley

Jessica L. Deichmann, Ph.D.
Department of Biological Sciences,
Louisiana State University

Healy Hamilton, Ph.D.
Center for Biodiversity Research
California Academy of Sciences

David M. Armstrong, Ph.D.
Dept. of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology,
University of Colorado

Diana H. Wall, Ph.D.
Department of Biology,
Colorado State University

Chris Graham, Ph.D.
Department of Plant Biology
University of Georgia

Dhruba Naug, Ph.D.
Department of Biology,
Colorado State University

David W. Inouye, Ph.D.
Department of Biology,
University of Maryland

Judith S. Weis, Ph.D.
Department of Biological Sciences,
Rutgers University

Anjali Kumar, Ph.D.
Center for International Educational
Exchange, Montverde, Costa Rica

Eric T. DeWeaver, Ph.D.
Dept. Oceanic & Atmospheric Sciences,
University of Maryland

John Mull, Ph.D.
Department of Zoology,
Weber State University

Gary W. Roemer, Ph.D.
Fish, Wildlife & Conservation Ecology,
New Mexico State University

Linda A. Deegan, Ph.D.
Senior Scientist, The Ecosystems Center,
Marine Biological Laboratory

Robert Fuerstenberg, Ph.D.
Dept. of Natural Resources and Parks,
Seattle, WA

Edward O. Garton, Ph.D.
College of Natural Resources,
University of Idaho

Andrea Shipley, Ph.D.
Eastern Kentucky University,
Richmond, KY

Cara R. Nelson, Ph.D.
College of Forestry and Conservation
University of Montana

Jennifer Garrison, Ph.D.
Sustainable Resources Group Intn'l, Inc.
Kailua, HI

Jim Cummings, Ph.D.
Executive Director,
Acoustic Ecology Institute

Kathleen L. Goodin, Ph.D.
Deputy Director, Science Division,
NatureServe

John F. Weishampel, Ph.D.
Department of Biology,
University of Central Florida

James M. Carpenter, Ph.D.
Division of Invertebrate Zoology,
American Museum of Natural History

Richard S. Ostfeld, Ph.D.
Senior Scientist,
Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies

Mark A. McPeck, Ph.D.
Professor of Biological Sciences,
Dartmouth College

Skip J. Van Bloem, Ph.D.
Depto Agronomía y Suelos,
Universidad de Puerto Rico

Grace Kostel, Ph.D.
Herbarium Manager,
Black Hills State University

Anna Pidgeon, Ph.D.
Dept. of Forest & Wildlife Ecology,
University of Wisconsin

Inés Ibáñez, Ph.D.
Dept. of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology,
University of Michigan

Jessica Dawn Pratt, Ph.D.
Ecology and Evolutionary Biology,
University of California at Irvine

John A. Cigliano, Ph.D.
Department of Biological Sciences,
Cedar Crest College

Kevin Rohling, Ph.D.
Adjunct Instructor,
Lewis and Clark Community College

Kristian Demary, Ph.D.
Biology Department,
Boston College

Richard Halsey, Ph.D.
Director,
California Chaparral Institute

Lorna Habegger Harder, Ph.D.
Department of Biology,
Hesston College

Roger A Powell, Ph.D.
Department of Zoology
North Carolina State University

John D. Varley, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Big Sky Institute,
Bozeman, Montana

Marni Koopman, Ph.D.
National Center for Conservation Science
and Policy

Michael S. Ross, Ph.D.
Department of Earth & Environment,
Florida International University

Jason B. MacKenzie, Ph.D.
Museum of Vertebrate Zoology,
University of California

Renee Robinette Ha, Ph.D.
Ecology Program,
University of Washington

Wirt Atmar, Ph.D.
AICS Research, Inc,
University Park, NM

Ron Carroll, Ph.D.
River Basin Center,
University of Georgia

Candan Soykan, Ph.D.
Biology Department,
San Diego State University

Joshua Lawler, Ph.D.
College of Forest Resources,
University of Washington

Bruce G. Baldwin, Ph.D.
Department of Integrative Biology
University of California, Berkeley

Tania Schoennagel, Ph.D.
Dept. of Geography
University of Colorado

Reed F. Noss, Ph.D.
Department of Biology,
University of Central Florida

Melissa Wolfe, Ph.D.
Independent Field Biologist,
Fort Collins, CO

Philip J. Nyhus, Ph.D.
Environmental Studies Program,
Colby College

Rich Fredrickson, Ph.D.
College of Forestry & Conservation,
University of Montana

Yamile Molina, Ph.D.
University of Washington,
Seattle, WA

Sally A. Lahm, Ph.D.
Ecology and Environment, Inc.,
Lancaster, NY

Jedediah Brodie, Ph.D.
Wildlife Biology Program
University of Montana

Malcolm R. MacPherson, Ph.D.
Retired Scientist,
Santa Fe, NM

Peter F. Brussard, Ph.D.
Department of Biology,
University of Nevada

Don Waller, Ph.D.
Department of Botany,
University of Wisconsin

Dale R. McCullough, Ph.D.
Department of Environmental Science,
University of California, Berkeley

Robert L. Jarvis, Ph.D.
Department of Fisheries and Wildlife,
Oregon State University

Wayne P. Sousa, Ph.D.
Department of Integrative Biology
University of California, Berkeley

Don C. Erman, Ph.D.
Wildlife, Fish, and Conservation Biology
University of California, Davis

Margaret A. Shannon, Ph.D.
Environment & Natural Resources,
University of Vermont

Amy C. Krist, Ph.D.
Department of Zoology and Physiology,
University of Wyoming

Peter Alpert, Ph.D.
Department of Biology
University of Massachusetts

Joseph A. Cook, Ph.D.
Department of Biology,
University of New Mexico

Brett G. Dickson, Ph.D.
Center for Sustainable Environments,
Northern Arizona University

Mark E. Harmon, Ph.D.
Dept. of Forest Ecosystems & Society
Oregon State University

Richard Hutto, Ph.D.
Division of Biological Sciences,
University of Montana

Dominick DellaSala, Ph.D.
National Center for Conservation Science
and Policy

Paul C. Paquet, Ph.D.
Faculty of Environmental Design,
University of Calgary

Erica Fleishman, Ph.D.
National Center for Ecological Analysis
and Synthesis, UC Santa Barbara

Lisa J. Graumlich, Ph.D.
School of Natural Resources,
University of Arizona

Peter B. McIntyre, Ph.D.
Natural Resources & Environment,
University of Michigan

David Ackerly, Ph.D.
Department of Integrative Biology,
University of California, Berkeley

Steve Hoffman, Ph.D.
Executive Director,
Montana Audubon State Office

Shawn T. McKinney, Ph.D.
Division of Biological Sciences,
University of Montana

Andrew R. Blaustein, Ph.D.
Professor of Zoology,
Oregon State University

Lee Hannah, Ph.D.
Climate Change Biologist
Santa Barbara, CA

Thomas Michael Power, Ph.D.
Economics Department,
The University of Montana

David A. Perry, Ph.D.
Dept. of Forest Ecosystems & Society
Oregon State University

James R. Strittholt, Ph.D.
President and Chief Scientist,
Conservation Biology Institute

Vicki Tripoli, Ph.D.
National Center for Conservation Science
and Policy

James R. Karr, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus
University of Washington

Christopher C. Smith, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus, Division of Biology
Kansas State University

Steven R. Beissinger, Ph.D.
A. S. Leopold Chair in Wildlife Biology
University of California

William H. Romme, Ph.D.
Professor of Fire Ecology
Colorado State University

Richard A. Houghton, Ph.D.
Acting Director
The Woods Hole Research Center

cc: Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack
Department of Agriculture

Secretary Kenneth L. Salazar
Department of the Interior

Carol Browner
Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change

Nancy Sutley
Chair, White House Council on Environmental Quality

John P. Holdren
Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy