

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 7, 2006

HELP PROTECT MILLIONS OF ACRES OF PRISTINE NATIONAL FOREST LANDS

Support the 'Roadless Area Conservation Act'

Dear Colleague:

In May of 2005, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service repealed the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, eliminating protections for 58.5 million acres of National Forest lands. In doing so, the Administration rejected the express request of dozens of Senators and overturned what was the most extensive public outreach in the history of the National Environmental Policy Act, with input from over 600 public meetings (at least two on every National Forest) over three years. By 2004, the Forest Service had received over 4.2 million comments on the Roadless Rule — the vast majority of which were in support of a strong protection plan.

We will soon reintroduce the "Roadless Area Conservation Act," which would permanently protect our National Forest roadless areas by codifying the 2001 Rule. Although less than two percent of our National Forest lands remain wild and pristine, they are some of the most valuable areas in our country for clean drinking water, critical fish and wildlife habitat, and irreplaceable hunting and fishing, camping, and hiking opportunities. Like the original Roadless Rule, our bill will ensure protections for roadless areas, while at the same time retaining flexibility for economic utilization and limited road construction (e.g., resource protection and public safety).

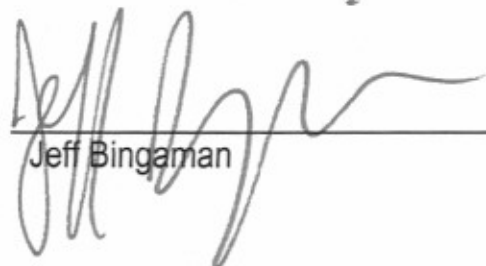
In repealing the 2001 Rule last May, the Forest Service created a disturbing precedent which requires governors to petition the Forest Service if they wish to have roadless protections reinstated on National Forest lands within their States. Even if it survives legal challenges from a number of States, the new rule contemplates a protracted process of dozens of rulemakings in response to States' efforts to retain protections for roadless areas.

The Roadless Area Conservation Act is economically, environmentally, and fiscally sound legislation that reflects the values that Americans place on these untouched lands. We urge you to join us in our effort to protect these wild forest lands for current and future generations of Americans. If you would like to become an original cosponsor or have questions, please contact Amit Ronen in Senator Cantwell's office at: 202.224.3441.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell



Jeff Bingaman