



Since taking office, the Bush administration has steadily undermined the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. May 5, 2006 marks the one-year anniversary of the Bush administration's announcement to end protections for roadless areas in our national forests.

<http://ourforests.org/press/pr05-05-05b.html>

Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee (RACNAC) Meeting May 8-9, 2006

On May 8 and 9, the RACNAC will meet for to consider state petitions submitted from Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. <http://roadless.fs.fed.us/documents/adv-comm/RACNAC-Bios.pdf>

This will be the first time RACNAC takes any substantive actions and/or makes recommendations on petitions submitted under the Bush administration's new roadless policy. RACNAC's actions could serve as a bellwether and could begin to set precedents on how the committee will consider petitions and roadless area protection.

Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina were the first states to submit petitions. All three states asked for 100 percent protection of roadless areas within their boundaries in accordance with the protections and process of the 2001 roadless rule. Together, these states account for one-half million acres in some of the last pristine areas east of the Mississippi. Representatives from the VA, NC and SC governors' offices will present their state's petitions at the RACNAC meeting.

- Gov. Warner (VA) was the first governor to submit a petition on December 22, 2005. <http://ourforests.org/press/pr05-12-23.html>
- Gov. Easley (NC) submitted his petition on March 9, 2006. <http://www.ourforests.org/press/pr06-03-09.html>
- Gov. Sanford (SC) submitted his petition April 19, 2006. <http://www.ourforests.org/press/pr06-04-19.html>

Meeting Logistics:

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/E6-5268.htm>

New Research – Forest Service Breaks Promise

Report: “Broken Ground” – Despite its pledge of interim protection a year ago, the U.S. Forest Service is moving ahead with new activities in more than 20 inventoried roadless areas, despite agency assurances that these areas will be protected while their fate is still being decided.

<http://ourforests.org/press/pr06-03-30.html>

According to a USDA press statement made on May 5, 2005 from Undersecretary of Agriculture Mark Rey:

[T]he reality on the ground tomorrow will remain the same as it was yesterday. These areas will remain protected by the interim directive, and that will continue to be so as we move, hopefully, with some alacrity to develop state-specific rules and bring this issue to closure after all these years.

Mounting Opposition to the Administration's Repeal of Roadless Forest Protections

In the past year, a bi-partisan group of Governors and members of Congress, locally elected officials, hunters and anglers, outdoor businesses, conservationists and other citizens from across the country have voiced their strong opposition to overturning protections for our last remaining pristine forests and have taken positive steps forward to protect these natural treasures. From Maine to California, the chorus of diverse voices speaking out and taking action for the complete protection of these wild forests has been overwhelming . . . and it's still growing.

- In August 2005, the attorneys general from New Mexico and California and the governor of Oregon challenged the Bush administration repeal of the roadless rule in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. Since the initial filing, the state of Washington has joined the case as a plaintiff while Maine and Montana have filed amicus briefs in this case.
- Twenty conservation organizations have challenged the legality of the repeal itself.
- In late February 2006, more than a quarter of a million citizens used the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) to petition the Department of Agriculture to reinstate the original rule. Among these citizens, were 100 Olympic Athletes who voiced their support for ongoing protection for our most pristine forests.
- Members of Congress, in the House and the Senate have introduced legislation that would codify the 2001 rule into law. Over 175 members support this legislation.
- Several governors have filed, or have announced their intentions to file, petitions for the complete protection of roadless areas in their states, even as they voice their opposition to the administration's uncertain process.
- Thus far, the governors of VA, NC, and SC have filed petitions for the complete protection of these public lands.
- Additionally, the governors of NM, OR, MT, ME, AL, AZ, IL and CO have all taken steps to protect roadless areas within their state either through the petition process or alternative means.

For a complete chronology please see:

<http://www.wilderness.org/OurIssues/Roadless/chronology.cfm?TopLevel=Chronology>

All these actions continue to demonstrate the support and mounting pressure in Congress, the courts and the general public to reinstate the protections that limited logging, drilling, and other destructive activities on nearly 60 million acres of wild national forests.

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