



# Roadless Area Protection Makes Sense for Taxpayers

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- **The FY2004 Forest Service Budget Justification identifies an estimated \$10 billion backlog in deferred road and bridge maintenance and capitol improvement needs for the national forest road system.<sup>i</sup> A 2002 Program Assessment and Rating Tool (PART) review by the Office of Management and Budget found that the Forest Service “has been unable to demonstrate that it can maintain its current infrastructure needs.”<sup>ii</sup>**
- **A more than \$50 million line item for Forest Service Deferred Maintenance and Infrastructure Improvement (DMII) was eliminated in the fiscal year 2004 Forest Service budget.** Eliminating the DMII line item sends a clear message that maintaining current national forest roads is not a priority for the Forest Service.
- **The National Forest Road System includes 381,000 miles of road - enough to circle the globe 17 times - and 7,700 bridges.<sup>iii</sup> Of this, only 20 percent are passable to passenger cars, 58 percent are passable to high clearance, off-road vehicles, and the remaining 22 percent are closed due to unmanaged maintenance and resource protection.<sup>iv</sup> This is a taxpayer outrage. **Taxpayers foot the bill for national forest road building and maintenance, yet passenger cars cannot access an estimated 80 percent of all Forest Service roads.****
- **Limiting areas of national forests where road building can occur will help to limit the future costs of road maintenance, and would allow the Forest Service to better address the needs of roads already in the system.** The Roadless Area Conservation Rule protects over 58 million acres from unrestrained road building efforts, and would therefore, save taxpayers from additional road building and maintenance costs. New roads will simply add to the taxpayer burden. **The Roadless rule, as implemented by the Clinton administration, would allow exceptions for significant threats such as wildfire.**
- **The rule was precipitated by congressional actions to eliminate the Purchaser Road Credit program and eliminate subsidies for road building and logging in the 192 million acre National Forest System.** The main beneficiary of Forest Service roads has been the timber industry; yet, taxpayers still foot the bill for subsidized road construction and long-term maintenance.
- **Roadless areas have remained undeveloped because of their steep, high-elevation terrain and because of the low value of the timber resources in the areas.** Due to the low value of timber and high-cost of road building and maintenance, roadless sales would likely lose money.
- **Removing the remaining roadless areas from the timber base would affect less than 0.0025 – or one quarter of one percent - of the nation’s timber supply.** According to the Forest Service, national forests provide less than 4 percent of the nation’s timber supply, and timber from roadless areas represents just 6 percent of the total national forest cut.

(Notes on back)

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<sup>i</sup> Source: *Forest Service Budget Justification FY2004*, Capital Improvement and Maintenance, p. 8-2.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, *Report of the Forest Service, Fiscal Year 1995*. Washington, DC: June 1996. p. 129.

<sup>iv</sup> Source: *Forest Service Budget Justification FY2004*, Special Exhibits, p. 13-15.