

Lost in the Forest: Road Construction and Maintenance Backlog

For decades American taxpayers have been burdened with subsidizing significant road construction and long-term maintenance costs while the timber industry continues to turn profits. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which bans most road-building and commercial logging in the remaining 31 percent of wild national forests can help relieve this burden. Current efforts by industry, Congress and the Bush Administration to weaken the roadless rule will only increase taxpayer subsidies to the timber industry and the price taxpayers must pay for long-term road maintenance.

The information below was taken from *Lost in the Forest: How the Forest Service's Misdirection, Mismanagement, and Mischief Squanders Your Tax Dollars* by Taxpayers for Common Sense.¹

Taxpayer Subsidies for Road Construction

From Fiscal Year 1998–2001 taxpayers have provided more than \$116 million in direct subsidies to the timber industry for construction of logging roads at a cost of nearly \$30 million per year and \$15,000 per mile of road.

Regions FY 1998-2001	Specified Roads	Temporary Roads	Purchaser Road Credits	Total
Northern	\$6,260,900	\$1,289,701	\$5,054,079	\$12,604,680
Rocky Mountain	\$5,682,347	\$15,263	\$2,300,520	\$7,998,130
Southwest	\$83,324	-	\$96,570	\$179,894
Intermountain	\$2,250,133	-	\$1,864,697	\$4,114,830
Pacific SW	\$14,460,464	\$230,695	\$764,335	\$15,455,494
Pacific NW	\$11,300,252	\$2,358,565	\$9,660,516	\$23,319,333
Southern	\$7,030,817	\$4,552,177	\$15,102,048	\$26,685,042
Eastern	\$8,341	\$1,450,045	\$1,719,348	\$3,177,734
Alaska	\$15,550,239	\$4,265,058	\$2,821,436	\$22,636,734
Total Cost to Taxpayers	\$62,626,820	\$14,161,505	\$39,383,549	\$116,171,874

Road Maintenance Backlog

U.S. national forests in 16 states have a road maintenance backlog of more than \$100 million each. The total for all 50 states equates to a backlog of more than \$8.4 billion.

State	Total Backlog	State	Total Backlog
California	\$1,089,025,849	Texas	\$245,311,785
Oregon	\$942,881,661	Utah	\$225,370,665
Alaska	\$807,486,674	Arkansas	\$187,602,836
Montana	\$669,799,924	Colorado	\$163,058,150
Idaho	\$646,582,131	Michigan	\$157,965,184
New Mexico	\$480,666,501	Wyoming	\$154,431,725
Arizona	\$307,494,628	Nevada	\$139,896,236
Washington	\$278,277,692	South Dakota	\$102,044,671

Of the 382,000 miles of system roads and more than 50,000 miles of unclassified roads in the national forest system, only 21 percent meet adequate road maintenance standards, a percentage which has increased by over 16 percent since the late 1990s.

Fiscal Year	Road System Total (miles)	Unclassified Roads (miles)	Roads Maintained to Standard (percent)
1998	383,518	51,903	37.6%
1999	385,572	52,330	27.8%
2000	384,219	23,919	26.3%
2001	382,388	50,421	21.4%

¹ For more information, citations or to download the report please refer to <http://www.taxpayer.net/forest/lostintheforest/index.htm>.