



For Immediate Release
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Forest Service Roads in Shambles

Report Documents Waste in the National Forest Road System

Washington, D.C. – The U.S. Forest Service is ignoring a growing crisis of national forest road disrepair, while advocating for policy changes and supporting road subsidies to the timber industry that will only compound its record \$10 billion dollar road maintenance backlog, according to Taxpayers for Common Sense, a national budget watchdog organization.

“Bad policy and corporate welfare to timber companies are putting the backlog on steroids,” said Jill Lancelot, President of Taxpayers for Common Sense. “The federal government is paving the way to even more dangerous forest road disrepair.”

During its year-long investigation, TCS analyzed thousands of Forest Service documents obtained through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and concluded that the states with the largest, most unsustainable maintenance backlogs also contain the greatest acreage of roadless areas, highlighting the potential for a massive growth of the road maintenance backlog if these areas are opened to new taxpayer financed road building.

These findings are being released only weeks before an expected decision by the administration regarding the status of the roadless areas in the lower 48 states. The administration should consider the present and future backlog problems before deciding on whether to ease the restriction on new roads, as any change in policy would almost certainly compound the future backlog problem. The Tongass National Forest in Alaska has already been exempted by the administration from the restriction on new road building.

“It is crystal clear that Forest Service bureaucrats have been unwilling and unable to keep this road disrepair crisis in check,” said Lancelot. “Rather than focus on fixing the current road system, they would rather build roads to cheap timber as a favor to their timber industry buddies.”

Road Wrecked: Why the \$10 Billion Forest Service Road Maintenance Backlog Is Bad for Taxpayers reveals that:

- The maintenance and capital improvement backlog on the national forest road system has surpassed \$10 billion.
- California, Alaska, Montana, Oregon, Idaho, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Washington and Utah account for more than \$7 billion of the \$10 billion backlog.

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- Between fiscal years 1998 and 2002, the timber industry received more than \$140 million in subsidies for timber road construction.

“The fiscal mismanagement of the Forest Service’s road maintenance program needs to be brought to light,” concluded Lancelot. “Common sense solutions would reduce the current backlog and ensure that it does not expand in the future.”

For a copy of the report or to access additional state specific information on the road maintenance backlog, visit www.taxpayer.net

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Taxpayers for Common Sense is a non-partisan budget watchdog organization based in Washington, D.C. TCS is dedicated to cutting wasteful spending and subsidies in order to achieve a responsible and efficient government that operates within its means.