



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

August 22, 2003

Mark R. Warner
Governor

Secretary Ann Veneman
Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Re: National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Rule

Dear Secretary Veneman:

We are writing to express our support for conserving the roadless areas of our national forests in Virginia and across the nation. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule was adopted in 2001 protecting nearly 400,000 acres of roadless areas in Virginia. More than 45,000 comments in support of the rule were submitted by citizens of the Commonwealth, an unprecedented outpouring of public support.

The balanced rule protects the status quo by generally restricting road building and commercial logging. However, the rule allows for new roads needed to protect public health and safety in cases of fire or flood and for accessing private property or existing oil and gas leases. The rule does not close any existing roads or limit access for hunting, fishing, camping and other recreational activities.

In June, Senator John Warner of Virginia and Senator Cantwell of Washington introduced the Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2003. We support this legislation that would codify this important conservation measure. The legislation, like the rule, provides a balanced approach assuring conservation of roadless areas while still allowing exemptions for necessary road building or harvesting activities.

We understand the administration is planning to propose state-by-state exemptions to the National Roadless Area Conservation Rule. We believe that approach is unnecessary given the current rule's reasonable exemptions. Such an approach would undermine the important national rule necessary to insure the conservation of roadless areas for the use of present and future generations.

We thank you for your careful consideration of our position on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark R. Warner".

Mark R. Warner

cc:

Senator John Warner
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dale Bosworth, Forest Service Chief
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