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## Forest Chief Will Make Logging Decisions

By The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 7 -- The chief of the Forest Service announced today that he would decide on logging and road building in a large expanse of the national forest system pending the outcome of legal disputes about the future of forest land.

In a directive to his regional forest managers, the chief, Dale N. Bosworth, said he chose to assume decision-making authority because a Clinton administration rule restricting commercial operations in so-called roadless areas was tied up in at least eight lawsuits involving seven states. "At this point, it appears that the roadless rule may be embroiled in legal controversy and process for a very long time, with an ultimate outcome that is far from certain," Mr. Bosworth wrote.

An aide said Mr. Bosworth said he had discussed the decision with Ann M. Veneman, the secretary of agriculture.

"Thus, it is necessary for the agency to act decisively, proactively and with common sense to ensure that our efforts to protect roadless values will not be confined to legal proceedings in courtrooms scattered throughout the country."

The Clinton rule, which was issued in January, covered 58.5 million acres and barred most road building and logging. A federal judge in Idaho, granting a request from timber companies, has banned enforcement of the rule in a decision that is now being appealed.

A spokeswoman for the Forest Service said Mr. Bosworth wanted to take the responsibility for decisions from local offices in the interest of providing "immediate protections until long-term protections can be established."

Conservation groups said they were dismayed by the directive. They said it granted Mr. Bosworth too much discretion and could lead to logging in areas they hoped would be off-limits.

"This is all smoke and mirrors," said Brian Vincent, California organizer for the American Lands Alliance. "It gives the authority to the chief to offer commercial timber sales in roadless areas."

Jane Danowitz, director of the Heritage Forests Campaign and a supporter of the logging ban, said she was worried about the directive's emphasis on using the forest planning process to categorize roadless areas. "That is the process which the timber industry historically used to overcut and destroy national forests," Ms. Danowitz said.