



U.S. SENATOR MARIA CANTWELL WASHINGTON

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ADMINISTRATION GUTS PROTECTIONS FOR PRISTINE FEDERAL FOREST LANDS

**CANTWELL: GIVEAWAY TO SPECIAL INTERESTS A FISCALLY IRRESPONSIBLE
MOVE THAT IGNORES COMMENTS OF NEARLY 4 MILLION AMERICANS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) blasted the Bush Administration's decision today to gut the U.S. Forest Service's 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

"It's payback time for the special interests, as the Bush Administration paves over long-term protection for 60 million acres of pristine federal forest lands," said Cantwell, a member of the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee and primary sponsor of bipartisan legislation to codify the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. **"Since Teddy Roosevelt established the national forest system 100 years ago, we have protected it. During times of skyrocketing federal budget deficits, and with a \$10 billion forest road repair backlog, it is fiscally irresponsible to start building new subsidized roads."**

Cantwell noted that on May 4, 2001 – four years ago this week – Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman promised to uphold the rule, when she said that the Bush Administration was "committed to providing roadless protection for our national forests."

"It's a disturbing pattern," added Cantwell. **"First the Administration tries to raise Northwest energy rates for families and communities across our state just to pay down the deficit. But now they seem to be intent on adding to it, to subsidize additional exploitation of remaining pristine public lands. These are the wrong priorities for our country and future generations of Americans."**

Developed after unprecedented outreach and study, including 45 public meetings in Washington state alone and four million public comments of Americans nation-wide, the 2001 Roadless Rule represented balanced and common-sense approach to stewardship of our nation's remaining wild federal forest lands.

In Washington state alone there are 2,015,000 acres of National Forest system lands that qualified for protection as Roadless areas under the 2001 Clinton rule.

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