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**Inslee Opposes Bush Administration Decision to Repeal the Roadless Rule  
Will Introduce Legislation to Codify Roadless Area Protections**

Washington, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Jay Inslee joined environmental leaders in expressing opposition to today's decision by the Bush Administration to repeal the widely popular Roadless Area Conservation Rule. In response to the President's decision, Inslee announced he will soon reintroduce his National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act to codify the protections to the roadless areas that were designated in the Clinton-era Roadless Rule. Inslee, a Member of the House Resources Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health, secured over 150 bipartisan cosponsors for the legislation in the last Congress.

"President Bush decided today to side with the timber and mining industries against overwhelming public support for preserving our pristine roadless areas and clean drinking water. The Eagle Rock and Dark Divide Roadless areas will be among the regions in Washington State stripped of their protections and opened to clear cutting," said Inslee. "We currently have a backlog of \$10 billion for road projects in national forests. New road construction represents a Bush Administration subsidy to special interests at the expense of the American taxpayer. These national forests belong to all Americans and are crown jewels in our natural heritage. The American people, not governors, should be able to decide how to best protect these untouched national treasures."

Inslee added, "In the Olympic National Forest, we have two old growth cedar trees named for Presidents Teddy and Franklin D. Roosevelt. These men were a true testament to bipartisan conservation efforts. But today, Teddy would be turning over in his grave if he knew that the President had opened up his environmental legacy to logging."

Currently, 2 million acres of the 9 million acres of national forests in Washington State are protected as roadless areas and would be at risk of being developed under the Bush Administration plan. 45 public meetings were held in Washington State on the Roadless Rule in 1999, and more than 81,000 comments were received from Washington State residents in support of the Roadless Rule during the most recent public comment period. Notable roadless areas in Washington State include the Eagle Rock Roadless Area, the Dark Divide Roadless Area and the Kettle River Range.

Of the 2.5 million original comments that were solicited for the Roadless Rule, the overwhelming majority (96%) favored protecting these roadless areas. Today's announcement by Agriculture Undersecretary Mark Rey ends years of speculation over the fate of this Clinton-era program that protected millions of acres of national forests and effectively ends all protection for these forests.

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### Background

The Bush Administration's final proposal will eliminate protection for 58.5 million acres of wild and pristine national forests by forcing each governor to request that the federal government prevent road-building in inventoried roadless areas in that governor's state, whereas before this protection was automatic. Eighty-two percent of the roadless area is located in states with Republican governors. The Bush proposal also undermines the federal government's ability to oversee roadless areas on federal lands by granting individual governors exemptions from the Roadless Rule.

In 2003, Inslee introduced an amendment to the Interior Appropriations bill that would have preserved the Roadless Rule through FY2004. The Inslee amendment, which received 185 votes, twenty of which were cast by Republicans, would have prohibited the Administration from pursuing these changes.

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