

Colorado Environmental Coalition
Colorado Mountain Club
Colorado Wild
Environment Colorado
High Country Citizens Alliance
National Wildlife Federation
Rocky Mountain Recreation Initiative
San Juan Citizens Alliance
San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council
Sierra Club
Upper Arkansas South Platte Project
Western Resources Advocates
Wilderness Workshop

Dale Bosworth
Chief, US Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-0003

March 29, 2006

Dear Chief Bosworth,

We are a coalition of conservationists and backcountry recreationists representing tens of thousands of Coloradans. We are writing to you to request that the Forest Service voluntarily agree to not propose projects in Colorado's inventoried roadless areas that would alter the roadless qualities of the areas until both the Colorado Roadless Areas Task Force has completed its recommendations to the Governor (per 2005 Colorado Senate Bill 243) and the Forest Service has completed the rulemaking that would establish management direction for inventoried roadless areas in Colorado's National Forests (pursuant to the 2005 Final Rule on State Petitions for Inventoried Roadless Area Management, 70 Fed. Reg. 25,653 (May 13, 2005), codified at 36 C.F.R. Part 294).

The federal roadless areas of our state provide our citizens with rich scenic and recreational opportunities and serve as an essential part of our economic security. The citizens of Colorado have repeatedly voiced their support for strong protection for these National Forest lands.

On May 5, 2005, the Department of Agriculture announced the adoption of a final rule requiring Governors to file petitions with the Forest Service in order to receive protections for roadless areas within their states above those afforded by the forest planning process. According to the Rule, any such petition must be submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture not later than November 13, 2006. After the petition is submitted, it will be reviewed by a National Advisory Committee that will provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary on any subsequent state-specific rulemakings within 90 days. If the petition is accepted, the Forest Service shall be directed to initiate notice and comment rulemaking to address the petition.

According to a statement by Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns concurrent with the issuance of the Rule, the rule would, “advance President Bush's commitment to cooperatively conserve inventoried roadless areas within our national forests.” Similarly, on September 6, 2005, Under Secretary of Agriculture Mark Rey stated, “We are providing interim protection to roadless areas, pending the development of state specific rules provided for in our 2005 rulemaking.”

Hence, in furtherance of this spirit to protect roadless values while the decision-making process continues, we are writing to respectfully request the Forest Service agree to not propose projects in inventoried roadless areas that might disqualify areas or portions of areas from protection, or degrade their special roadless qualities, and to halt and withdraw all such projects under development as long as the disposition of these areas remains unresolved.

The roadless areas of our national forests provide Colorado’s citizens not only rich scenic and recreational opportunities, but also contribute to the economic health of our state. Decisions regarding the management of these lands as roadless areas ought to be afforded significant consideration and weight. Moreover, decisions to take actions which may disqualify areas or portions of areas from protection, or degrade their roadless qualities and values should not be made while the state is reviewing its options for the conservation of these areas per the request of the Department of Agriculture.

We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Matt Baker, Executive Director
Environment Colorado
1536 Wynkoop St., First Floor, Suite 100
Denver, Co 80202

Vera Smith, Conservation Director
Colorado Mountain Club
710 10th Street, #200
Golden, Colorado 80401

Sloan Shoemaker, Executive Director
Wilderness Workshop
Carbondale, CO

Mike Chiropolous, Lands Program Director
Western Resources Advocates
Boulder, CO

Dan Morse, Public Lands Director
High Country Citizens Alliance
Crested Butte, CO

Michael Rogers, President
Upper Arkansas South Platte Project
Florissant, CO

Amber Clark, Public Lands Coordinator
San Juan Citizens Alliance
Durango, CO

Elise Jones, Executive Director
Colorado Environmental Coalition
Denver, CO

Michael Saul, Associate Counsel
National Wildlife Federation
Boulder, CO

Rocky Smith, Policy Analyst
Colorado Wild
Denver, CO

Kirk Cunningham, Conservation Chair
Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Sierra Club
Denver, CO

Christine Canaly, Executive Director
San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council
Alamosa, CO

Roz McClellan, Director
Rocky Mountain Recreation Initiative
Nederland, CO

Proposed Projects in Colorado's Roadless Areas

HD Mountains Coalbed Methane Project

Type: Oil and Gas

Roadless Area: HD Mountains

Forest: San Juan National Forest

Description:

36 miles of roads and 79 wells inside the inventoried roadless area. The agency proposed to permit about 79 wells inside the roadless area, and about a dozen of those were probably located on leases issued after 2001. BLM and FS are proposing to allow previously prohibited surface drilling on five leases in the HD Mountains Roadless Area and the proposed Archuleta Mesa Research Natural Area.

Bull Mountain Natural Gasline Project

Type: Pipeline

Roadless Area: Clear Creek and East Willow

Forest: White River and the Grand Mesa NFs

Description:

Gas and water pipelines across portions of the Clear Creek and East Willow Roadless Areas on the White River and the Grand Mesa NFs.

Natural Gas Leasing in the Thompson Creek and Reno Mountain Roadless Areas

Type: Oil and Gas

Roadless Area: Thompson Creek and Reno Mountain Roadless Areas

Forest: WRNF

Description:

New leases located within the Thompson Creek and Reno Mountain Roadless Areas. IBLA appeal pending.

GMUG OIL AND GAS LEASES

http://www.ewg.org:16080/reports/losingground/sitedetail.php?showall=1&place_name=Grand+Mesa-Uncompahgre-Gunnison+Forest+Roadless+Area

Type: Oil and Gas

Roadless Area: Springhouse Creek and Battlement Mesa Roadless Areas

Forest: GMUG

Description:

New leases located within the Battlement Mesa and Springhouse Park Roadless Area

Arapaho-Basin expansion

Type: Ski Area Expansion

Roadless Area: Porcupine Peak

Forest: White River

Description:

Proposed expansion of a ski area into an 8744-acre roadless area.
