

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

March 30, 2006

Dear Chief Bosworth,

On behalf of our collective membership, we are writing to urge you to enact a moratorium on logging and other development in pristine roadless areas within Oregon's national forests until a roadless area conservation policy for these lands is adopted.

Oregon's backcountry roadless forests are enjoyed by our members for hiking, climbing, mountain biking, kayaking, cross country skiing and a host of other outdoor recreation activities. However, these outstanding recreation areas are threatened by a rule announced on May 5, 2005 by the Department of Agriculture. The new rule allows for mining, logging, and other development within National Forest System roadless areas, which would ruin the special qualities of the land enjoyed by our members.

The rule requires Governors to file petitions with the US 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 no 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. No guarantee is given that recommendations contained in each state's petition will be followed.

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."

In order to ensure that no actions are taken which might preclude a full range of options for consideration by the state, we write to request that the Forest Service agree to not propose projects in inventoried roadless areas that would alter the roadless qualities of the areas, and to halt and withdraw all such projects under development (see attachment).

In Oregon there has long been broad public support for safeguarding roadless forests. During the 13-month official review and public comment period that preceded the adoption of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, 79,676 Oregonians submitted official comments, the highest per capita rate in the nation. Of those, 92% were in favor of complete protection of *all* roadless areas. During the 4-month comment period for the 2004 proposal for new Roadless Repeal rule, over 55,000 Oregonians submitted comments, the overwhelming majority of which favored protecting roadless areas.

Additionally, Oregon's governor has been a strong proponent of safeguarding unspoiled roadless lands. On October 14, 2005, the Governor petitioned you, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns, and Under Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment Mark Rey, to reinstate the 2001 Roadless Rule so Oregon could quickly and efficiently resume protection on all inventoried roadless areas.

Considering the overwhelming and recent support for roadless forest protection by Oregonians, and given the actions of Oregon's governor to reinstate the 2001 Roadless Rule and reapply complete protections for all inventoried roadless areas, it would seem inappropriate for the Forest Service to approve or conduct projects in inventoried roadless areas or to restrict the boundaries of those areas until Oregon crafts its final recommendations and the Forest Service subsequently finalizes the rulemaking for Oregon's national forests.

Given the values that are at stake in the roadless area debate, decisions regarding the management of these lands must 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.

Wild, pristine roadless areas of our national forests provide Oregon citizens and our membership with superb scenic and recreational opportunities, and significantly add to Oregon's high quality of life. The trails, scenery, solitude, waterways, and slopes all provide Oregonians with unparalleled opportunities to spend time with friends, family, or alone, and participate in activities that engage the body, refresh the soul, and reinvigorate the mind. Enjoying Oregon's natural heritage, particularly its roadless forests, is a strong Oregon tradition. On behalf of our membership, we write to continue that tradition.

We look forward to your response

Respectfully,

**Cog Wild Bicycle Tours**

Based in Bend, Oregon

**Central Oregon Trail Alliance**

Based in Bend, Oregon

**Central Oregon Backcountry Skier**

Based in Bend, Oregon

**Chemeketans**

Based in Salem, Oregon

**International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA)**

Based in Boulder, Colorado

**Mazamas**

Based in Portland, Oregon

**Obsidians**

Based in Eugene, Oregon

**Oregon Mountain Bike Alliance**

Based in Portland, Oregon

**Oregon Nordic Club**

Based in Portland, Oregon

**Portland United Mountain Pedalers (PUMP)**

Based in Portland, Oregon

**Ptarmigans**

Based in Vancouver, WA

**Winter Wildlands Alliance**

Based in Boise, Idaho

## Attachment

According to our calculation, the Forest Service is currently proposing at least four commercial projects in inventoried roadless areas in the state of Oregon, mainly in southwestern Oregon. If all these projects were approved as proposed, a significant amount of Oregon's inventoried roadless areas would be degraded or lost. Perhaps of greater concern is what projects may be proposed in the time between now and when a final rulemaking is issued regarding management of Oregon's roadless forests.

As detailed in the preceding letter, we hereby request that any current and future projects that could be introduced before a final rulemaking is issued, which would alter the roadless qualities of inventoried roadless areas in the State of Oregon, precluding a full range of options for their protection under the state petition process enacted by your agency, be halted and withdrawn.