

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 9, 2002

President George W. Bush  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

A year ago, your Administration publicly promised to uphold and defend the Roadless Area Conservation Rule to protect 58.5 million acres of America's wild national forests from road-building.

In a news conference on May 4, 2001, Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said:

*"We're here today to announce the department's decision to uphold the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Through this action, we are reaffirming the Department of Agriculture's commitment to the important challenge of protecting roadless values."*

But over the last year, your Administration has not kept its promise. The Forest Service has taken a number of actions that undermine the core protections offered by the rule--issuing several directives that, on a cumulative basis, negate protections for our national forests. Despite Attorney General Ashcroft's promise in his confirmation hearing to uphold the rule, the Administration has repeatedly failed to make a single argument in defense of it or even appear at all in the main legal challenge to the rule, and instead has issued "interim directives" that allow road building in direct contravention of the rule.

The Roadless Rule was the result of years of deliberation and the input of more than 1.6 million Americans. It is a balanced policy that allows for the continued management of roadless areas against catastrophic fire and other disturbances while also preserving these relatively limited acres of public forest lands as a legacy for our children. The Roadless Rule neither limits public access to existing roaded areas nor limits recreational opportunities throughout the forest land. Currently, our national forests contain over 383,000 miles of roads, many of which are in great disrepair. This policy allows the Forest Service to concentrate its efforts on addressing the \$8.4 billion needed to maintain existing roads instead of constructing new roads that will add to the maintenance burden in the future.

The Roadless Rule protects our national forests in a sustainable manner to the benefit of all who seek to enjoy them, not only in this generation, but in generations to come. We believe that policies that promote new activities on these lands in a manner that will permanently diminish them are short-sighted, and contradicts what the American public wants, as well as the Administration's pledge to protect "roadless values."

The public has been waiting for a full year for the Administration to follow through on the promises of the Attorney General and the Secretary of Agriculture to uphold and defend the Roadless Rule and to preserve our national forests. Preserving America's national forests is a critical test of your commitment to environmental protection. We strongly encourage you to uphold and defend the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

Sincerely,

Maria Cantrell

Tom Kasch

BB Bin

Thos. J. Smith

Red Kennedy

Barbara Boxer

Charles Schumer

Jack Reed

John McCain

105 P. Smith

John F. Kerry

Patrick Leahy

Robert B. Neufeld

David J. Fingert

Paul Garbar

Patty Murray

John Edwards

Tim Wollings

Max Cleland

J. Biden

Tim O'Keefe

Dr. Di

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Jim Jeffords

Tom Harkin

Phyllis