

ERNEST F. HOLLINGS  
SOUTH CAROLINA

OFFICE

1006 ASSEMBLY STREET  
COLUMBIA, SC 29201  
803-795-8781

126 FEDERAL BUILDING  
GREENVILLE, SC 29603  
864-220-2365

112 CANTON HOUSE  
200 EAST BAY STREET  
CHARLESTON, SC 29401  
803-721-0528

## United States Senate

125 RUSSELL OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4002  
202-224-6121

EMAIL: <http://www.senate.gov/~hollings>

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May 4, 2001

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to bring to your attention our support for the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, and to respectfully request that the Administration proceed with implementation of this important conservation policy.

The Roadless Area Conservation initiative has been under development for several years, with the proposed rule subject to hundreds of public hearings and meetings held by the Forest Service in areas that would be affected by the rule. In our three states, over 45,000 public comments were submitted on the rule, with over 96 percent of the views expressing support.

In January 1998, the Forest Service instituted a proposed moratorium on new road building and commercial timber sales in the inventoried roadless areas, that was later finalized in March, 1999 for 18 months. Ever since that time, we have been working towards achieving more lasting protection for these roadless areas in the Southern Appalachians and nationwide.

Mr. President, we have supported the "multiple use" approach to the management of our national forests. Timber and mineral resources on these public lands are assets that should be appropriately utilized and available for all Americans. A central component of the multiple-use approach, however, recognizes and advances the recreational and preservation demands of our national forests.

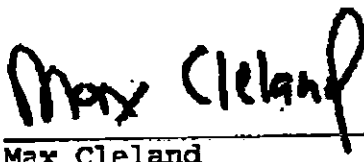
Today, only 15 percent of the 4.7 million acres in the Southern Appalachians remain "roadless", in a relatively unspoiled, natural condition. Preserving a small portion of the Southern Appalachians, 726,000 acres, under the roadless initiative is a small step that we must take. Most importantly, this proposal maintains access to existing Forest Service roads and allows for new road building to accommodate existing oil and

gas leases and existing mineral rights.

The Roadless Area Conservation Rule is a balanced proposal that promotes a strong conservation ethic for the management of our national forests. We respectfully request that you consider the many benefits of this rule and provide for its full implementation, without modification.

Sincerely,

  
Ernest F. Hollings  
United States Senate

  
Max Cleland  
United States Senate

  
John Edwards  
United States Senate