

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 1, 2001

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On May 4, the Administration will present the results of its review of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule to the U.S. District Court in Boise, Idaho. We ask that the Administration support this regulation. Attorney General John Ashcroft pledged during his confirmation hearing to "defend" rules with the force of law. To fail to defend this rule in court, repeal or even modify this rule will simply reopen a debate that has plagued the Forest Service, frustrated the public and tied up the court system.

The roadless forest protection rule is a considered and balanced policy, and an appropriate exercise of rulemaking authority. The rulemaking process conducted by the Forest Service was the most extensive public outreach in the history of the National Environmental Policy Act. As you are no doubt aware, the rulemaking included over 600 meetings in local communities across the country—attended by more than 23,000 citizens—and it garnered more than 1.6 million comments. Those comments overwhelmingly favored protection for roadless forest areas. And further, recent polls show that there is strong widespread support for the rule among the American people.

Protecting roadless forests will also have major economic benefits—not just in the preservation of recreational areas for active use, but also in finally allowing the Forest Service to begin to reduce its \$8.4 billion backlog in maintenance on the existing 380,000 miles of roads in our national forests. In the absence of the rule, plans to build about 1,160 miles of new roads into protected areas would simply add to the Forest Service's backlog.

While there are those who believe the rule went too far to protect roadless areas, others believe it did not go far enough. Clearly, the final regulation struck a balance on contentious land-use issues. It reflects public input and a detailed analysis of the place national forests hold in the larger picture of American land and resource use. Specifically:

- The rule exempts all 759,000 acres currently under lease.
- It preserves access to all roadless areas for motorized recreational access, mountain biking, hunting and fishing.

- It permits the construction of new roads for fire suppression, health and safety purposes, as well as access by inholders pursuant to existing statutory rights and treaties.
- It allows a seven-year window for timber sales to continue at current logging rates in the Tongass National Forest and leaves an extensive roaded land base open to additional logging.

While the roadless rule may not strike the precise balance that some of us would have chosen, none of us wish to rekindle a frustrating and fruitless debate that rewards conflict at the expense of the citizens in our states who use and enjoy national forests. We ask this Administration to abide by the law.

Sincerely,

Maria Cantrell

Barbara Boyer

John  
Diana Swain

Harry Reid

John  
Hillary Rodh Clinton

Jim Kersch  
Patricia Leahy

Patty Murray  
Betsy Johnson

Ernie Boyle  
Bill Nelson

Charles Schumer

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Ed Kennedy

J. L. Linn

John Edwards

James Christman

W. H. Linn

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Thos. G. Smith

Robert A. McLaughlin

Paul S. Linn

Paul Reed

W. H. Linn

Wm. Feingold

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## **Signatures**

**Cantwell  
Daschle  
Boxer  
Leahy  
Corzine  
Murray  
Durbin  
Reid  
Bayh  
Kerry  
Bill Nelson  
Clinton  
Schumer  
Biden  
Torrice  
Kennedy  
Mikulski  
Lieberman  
Sarbanes  
Edwards  
Reed  
Feinstein  
Bingaman  
Harkin  
Feingold**