

John Ashcroft

United States Attorney General

John Ashcroft is a key player in charge of defending the rule in court and of ensuring its proper enforcement.

Despite the fact that he pledged during Senate confirmation hearings to uphold the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, his actions as Attorney General demonstrate that he has broken that pledge. Ashcroft, who had a lifetime rating of 5% from the League of Conservation voters, has financial ties to the extraction industry, and his previous voting record on protection our national heritage demonstrates his true colors.

In Confirmation Hearings, Ashcroft Said It Was His “Responsibility to Defend” the Roadless Rule. During his confirmation hearings, Attorney General John Ashcroft said he would defend the roadless initiatives if they were ever attacked. Senator Cantwell asked, “The roadless area policy that has now been implemented by the Administrative Procedures Act and just completed that process -- and I asked you earlier about that. And I was unclear, exactly -- I wasn’t clear whether -- and I can go back to the record -- where you say you are unclear about the policy.” Ashcroft said, “It’s my responsibility to defend both the laws and the rules and regulations -- it’s my understanding that it would be my responsibility to defend these regulations if and when they’re attacked. But I’m not familiar with them.” [FDCH Political Transcripts, 1/17/01]

Ashcroft Broke His Promise By Not Adequately Defending Roadless Rules From Industry Attack. In a letter addressed to Attorney General John Ashcroft, Senator Maria Cantwell said Ashcroft’s decision not to defend Clinton’s roadless designation in a lawsuit against Boise Cascade was “contrary” to the promise he made during his confirmation hearings. [[The Columbian](#), 4/18/01]

- **Cantwell’s Letter:** “A de facto reversal (of Clinton’s order) accomplished via nonenforcement and nondefense would be precisely contrary to the promise you made to me in your confirmation hearing. ... I respect the Administration’s right to disagree with and ultimately to reverse this rule. However, in the meantime, the Department of Justice has a legal duty to uphold and defend this Rule. ... I found your staff’s repeated reliance on the fact that the Rule has not yet taken effect, and their unwillingness to acknowledge that the Roadless Rule is final, to be puzzling,” Cantwell wrote in her letter. [[The Columbian](#), 4/18/01]
- **Atlanta Journal-Constitution: Ashcroft’s Actions a Betrayal.** “U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft might as well have waved a white flag and surrendered to the timber and mining industries in an Idaho federal court last week... Ashcroft’s refusal to defend the rule in court is nothing short of a betrayal of the 2 million Americans who turned out at 600 public hearings last year to support more roadless areas. It is also a broken promise: Ashcroft pledged in his confirmation hearings to defend

existing regulations, whether or not he agreed with them.” [[Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#), 5/17/01]

Justice Department Researched Ways to Overturn Clinton’s Roadless Designation.

According to [The Washington Post](#), the White House instructed the Justice Department to research ways to overturn Clinton’s roadless policy. “According to the sources, high-ranking White House policy officials instructed Justice Department lawyers to find a way to set aside the regulation until the administration can produce either a less restrictive proposal or eliminate the rule entirely. The lawyers were asked ‘to see if they can make this work legally,’ explained one administration source.” [[Washington Post](#), 4/26/01]

Ashcroft Holds Stock in Mining Company. Attorney General John Ashcroft holds between \$1,000 and \$15,000 in stock in Placer Dome Inc., the nation’s third largest gold mining company. It is also the third largest gold mining company in the world. [[Federal Government Personal Disclosure Form](#), 1/22/01; www.placerdome.com]

Ashcroft Received Nearly \$2 Million in Campaign Funds from Anti-Roadless Industries. In his failed Senate campaign in 2000, Ashcroft received \$1.7 million in campaign contributions from oil, chemical and paper companies that were grateful for Ashcroft’s anti-environmental positions in the Senate. [[Des Moines Register](#), 2/14/01]

Ashcroft Had a Poor Record on Environmental Issues in the Senate. As a Senator, Ashcroft’s voting record on the environment left much to be desired. He had a lifetime rating of 5% from the League of Conservation Voters. Looking closer at his votes related to protecting our national treasures, Ashcroft’s record is found even more wanting. [www.lcv.org]

For example:

- Ashcroft voted to allow mining companies to dump cyanide and other mining waste on large areas of public lands next to mining sites. [www.pfaw.org]
- Ashcroft voted to build on the infamous "salvaged timber rider" by extending indefinitely the time for old growth timber sales directed by this provision. The rider, attached to the 1995 Budget Rescissions Act, allows timber companies to purchase and log parcels in our national forests without regard to federal environmental laws. These riders have had the effect of ravaging old growth and healthy trees under the guise of "salvaging" dead or diseased timber while destroying wildlife habitat and degrading water quality in streams and rivers. [Senate Testimony, Brent Blackwelder, Friends of the Earth, 1/16/01, Roll Call Vote No. 33, March 14, 1996]