



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Rocky
Mountain
Region

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Date: FEB 21 2008

Pete Kolbenschlag
Coordinator, Colorado's Forest Legacy
P.O. Box 1864
Paonia, CO 81428

Dear Mr. Kolbenschlag:

This letter is in response to your February 12, 2008 letter requesting to extend the 60 day public comment period announced in the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the rulemaking process for the management of roadless areas on National Forest lands within the State of Colorado.

The NOI initiates the scoping process in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and its implementing regulations (40 CFR 1501.7) to determine the nature and scope of environmental, social, and economic issues related to the rulemaking that should be analyzed in depth in the EIS. We have found through the comments already received in this scoping, and the comments from previous roadless rulemaking efforts, that the issues are similar across all these efforts; hence, there is not a compelling need for an extension to identify additional issues.

In addition, on the release of the draft EIS and proposed rule language, public comment will be solicited through a 90-day comment period. The proposed rule and accompanying draft EIS will include much more specific information on the roadless restrictions in the proposed rule and the analysis of impacts. I feel that the sooner we get to this level of discussion, rather than working from what the original Petition contained, or from what the future proposal might contain, the further ahead we will be in involving the public in a meaningful way in the decision.

You mentioned that information regarding the CO Roadless Rule effort was not easy to obtain. The link you mentioned in your letter, www.roadless.fs.fed.us, was included in the NOI. There have been numerous opportunities in the past for public comment on roadless area conservation and management. Over two million public comments were received during rulemaking efforts for the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR) and the 2005 State Petitions Rule. Additionally, during the development of the Colorado petition, nine public meetings were held in Colorado, producing local, regional and national public input for the petition process. Many individuals, including folks from Colorado's Forest Legacy, attended these meetings. The knowledge gained from the aforementioned public comment periods will help inform the identification and analysis of issues for the Colorado roadless area EIS.


In summary, I believe the 60-day comment period announced in the NOI provides adequate time for public scoping, especially given the volume of public input received on roadless area management in the past and the opportunity for further public input later in the Colorado



rulemaking process. Despite the fact that I have decided not to extend the comment period, you may continue to provide information to the Forest Service throughout the preparation of the EIS. Per your suggestion, we have provided a link to the Forest Service's Colorado Roadless Rule Web site on the Rocky Mountain Region's homepage. All information you provide will be reviewed and considered as we develop the draft and final EIS. The Forest Service values your comments and looks forward to your continued involvement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick D. Cables", written in a cursive style.

 RICK D. CABLES
Regional Forester

cc: Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee, Kathy Kurtz, Paul Orbuch