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Brandon MacGillis (HFC) – (202) 887-8830
Rick Johnson, (ICL) - (208) 863-4099

**Bush Administration Plan Would Open Six Million Acres of Pristine
National Forests in Idaho to Mining and Logging**
Poll finds majority of Idahoans oppose proposed development

WASHINGTON -- A new poll released today finds that a majority of Idaho voters oppose a Bush administration plan that would open nearly two-thirds of Idaho's national forest roadless areas to phosphate mining, logging and new road construction.

"In its final months, the Bush administration is attempting to give logging and mining industries the keys to what is arguably some of the most biologically diverse and valuable fish and wildlife habitat in the nation," said Robert Vandermark, manager of the Heritage Forests Campaign, a project of the Pew Environment Group. "This is America's last forest frontier – open the door to industrial use and it could be gone forever."

On Monday, Idaho Lieutenant Governor Jim Risch, called the administration proposal a "good plan," but raised issues regarding broad exceptions for development that he hopes to address in tomorrow's Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee meeting. Risch previously committed to protecting 95% of the 9.3 million acres of national forest roadless lands in the state from most new roads, logging and industrial development.

"We appreciate the lieutenant governor's request to have the Forest Service fix the language, but we remain concerned about the inconsistencies between what he promised and what the administration delivered," said Rick Johnson, Executive Director of the Idaho Conservation League. "Idahoans want to see Lieutenant Governor Risch honor his commitment to protect these pristine forests."

The new poll, conducted by Moore Information, finds that 65% of Idaho voters oppose a new Bush plan that would open up nearly two-third's of the state's national forest roadless areas. Opposition is even more intense when it comes to allowing industrial development on national forest roadless lands in the state, with 76% believing that such activity should not be permitted, including 60% who hold this view strongly. The poll also found that 62% believe that the federal government should not reduce existing protections on national forest roadless lands, including the majority of the state's hunters.

"It is clear from the documents that the Forest Service wants additional discretion to log, mine and build roads in Idaho's roadless areas," said James Furnish, former deputy chief of the U.S. Forest Service. "This proposed change to the rule is unnecessary, ill-advised and inconsistent with the agreement reached with the State of Idaho."

“We may often disagree with some environmental organizations on many issues, but regarding this Forest Service Plan, we share common concerns about potentially negative wildlife impacts,” said Jerry Bullock, president, Idaho chapter, Safari Club International. “We are particularly concerned about the impacts of proposed activities in Southeastern Idaho on the area's unmatched wildlife habitat. Mule deer populations in the area are just now recovering from historic lows brought on by drought, development and other factors. The activities envisioned under this proposed rule could not only cut short that recovery, but likely cause severe damage to elk herds as well.”

To see the Moore Poll, please click here:

<http://www.ourforests.org/pdf/summary-idaho-voters.pdf>.

Analysis of the Proposed Rule by James Furnish:

<http://www.ourforests.org/FurnishAnalysisFullFinal.pdf>

For more information:

<http://www.ourforests.org>

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