

**Sierra Club • The Wilderness Society • California Wilderness Coalition • Californians for
Western Wilderness Natural Resources Defense Council Coalition
Defenders of Wildlife • Environment California**

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**Conservationists Applaud Efforts of Governor and Attorney General
to Protect Southern California Forests**

Los Angeles – Californian conservationists today applauded the bipartisan leadership of California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and Attorney General Edmund Brown in defending ecologically important roadless areas in southern California's four national forests. Brown and California Secretary of Resources Mike Chrisman each filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Forest Service for failing to protect nearly 1 million acres of roadless areas in the Angeles, Cleveland, San Bernardino, and Los Padres national forests.

Southern California's roadless areas are an important refuge for the 8 million visitors a year who come to the forests to enjoy the outdoors and escape the pressure of the surrounding cities. These unroaded forests are the source of clean drinking water for many southern Californians and they are home to over 470 imperiled plant and animal species. Roadless areas are also less prone to the large, devastating wildfires that have threatened southern California communities and the Forest Service has the full authority to fight fires in roadless lands just as it does in non-roadless lands.

Sara Barth, California/Nevada Regional Director for The Wilderness Society said, "Governor Schwarzenegger and Attorney General Brown are to be congratulated for their bipartisan commitment to protecting California's irreplaceable forest legacy. Their leadership is not only the right thing to do, but it reflects the desire of the vast majority of Californians to see these remaining forest lands protected for future generations."

"Californians value roadless areas for clean water, wildlife and recreation, and although thousands of citizens have asked the Forest Service to preserve these areas, that request was ignored. Today the Governor and the Attorney General have taken an important step in righting that wrong," said Bill Corcoran, Senior Regional Representative of the Sierra Club.

This lawsuit challenges the Forest Service's plans for 3,530,723 acres of national forest land in southern California, which will guide long-term management decisions about future development activities, new roads, oil and gas drilling, recreation, wildlife conservation, wilderness protection, and fire management. The plans failed to guarantee protection for nearly 1 million acres of roadless land and opened the door for damaging projects such as a proposed pump storage hydroelectric reservoir in the Cleveland national forest in an ecologically sensitive roadless area.

Ryan Henson, Policy Director for the California Wilderness Coalition said, "California's roadless forests are a national treasure. Today, Governor Schwarzenegger and Attorney General Brown took the necessary action to ensure these forests are preserved for all to enjoy."

"We can't afford to lose another half million acres of precious national forest land to development," said Helen O'Shea of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). "Southern California has already lost too much of its natural heritage. The governor and attorney general's actions show they understand that Californians want to preserve and protect wild, roadless areas."

"We very much appreciate that the Governor, Resources Secretary, and Attorney General are taking such a strong, leading role protecting California's environment against the plans of the current federal administration. This action on the four forests is a welcome follow up to the state's attempts to limit greenhouse gases," said Michael Painter Executive Director for Californians for Western Wilderness.

Governor Schwarzenegger filed an appeal in July 2006 requesting that the Forest Service revisit the plans. When the Forest Service denied that appeal, it left the Governor and the Attorney General with no option other than a legal challenge for ensuring the protection of California's great forest resources.

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