

THE ROADLESS AREA CONSERVATION RULE: WHY CHANGE IT?

On May 4, 2001, Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman announced that in June the Bush administration would propose amendments to the Roadless Area Conservation Rule based on five principles. As the chart below demonstrates, these principles were already clearly and specifically addressed in the rule.

Bush Administration	Roadless Area Conservation Rule
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the rule based on the local forest planning process¹; 	<p>The rule was devised as a result of the failure of the local planning process to protect forests.</p> <p>The Bush administration has also circulated draft regulations that would severely limit ecological and scientific standards for forest planning.²</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with states, tribes, local communities and the public, through a process that is fair, open, and responsive to local input and information³; 	<p>The rule has already been the subject of more than 1.6 million official comments and 600 public hearings, held on each national forest and in each Forest Service region. Ninety-five percent of public comments favored the strongest forest protection.⁴</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect roadless areas from the negative effects of severe wildfire, insect and disease activity;⁵ Protect communities, homes, and property from the risk of severe wildfire and other risks that might exist on adjacent federal lands;⁶ 	<p>The rule says, "Roads may be constructed when needed to protect public health and safety in cases of an imminent threat of flood, fire or other catastrophic event..."⁷</p> <p>According to the Forest Service, less than 2 percent of the inventoried roadless areas are at combined risk of insects, disease and fire.⁸</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that states, tribes, and private citizens who own property within roadless areas have access to their property as required by existing law.⁹ 	<p>The access to state and private land inholdings is not inhibited in any way by the rule. The Federal Register notice accompanying the rule clearly states, "this rule does not affect a state's or private landowner's right of access to their land."¹⁰ In addition, the maintenance of roads and trails in roadless areas is not prohibited or hindered.¹¹</p>

1. <http://www.usda.gov/news/releases/2001/05/0075.htm>

2. Katherine Pfleger, Associated Press, June 14, 2001

3. <http://www.usda.gov/news/releases/2001/05/0075.htm>

4. <http://roadless.fs.fed.us/>

5. <http://www.usda.gov/news/releases/2001/05/0075.htm>

6. ibid

7. Section 294.12(b)(1)

8. FEIS, Vol. 1, 3-119

9. <http://www.usda.gov/news/releases/2001/05/0075.htm>

10. 66 Fed. Reg. p.3253

11. Section 294.12(c) and FEIS, Vol.I, p 3-212