

# Trump admin plans 'sprint' on lifting logging bans

The Forest Service laid out a draft timeline to rescind roadless-area protections and ease timber harvesting on nearly 59 million acres.

By: Marc Heller | 07/21/2025 01:52 PM EDT



A view of Alaska's Tongass National Forest. Rob Bertholf/Flickr

**GREENWIRE** | The Trump administration aims to end the prohibition on logging on tens of millions of acres of roadless areas in national forests by the end of next year, according to a draft schedule at the Forest Service.

The draft timeline, viewed by POLITICO's E&E News and circulating among outside organizations, sets a schedule for drafting the new policy, conducting public comment sessions and consulting with tribes before making a final decision in November or December of 2026.

Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins has already said she's decided to rescind the roadless-area protections, which have blocked road construction, timber harvesting and other types of development — with few interruptions — since 2001. The rule applies on

58.5 million of the forest system's 193 million acres, with Alaska's Tongass National Forest having the most in any one place.

[In a June 23 statement](#), Rollins said, "Once again, President Trump is removing absurd obstacles to common sense management of our natural resources by rescinding the overly restrictive roadless rule."

A USDA spokesperson said in a statement, "The Department will issue a formal notice regarding the rescission in the coming weeks. We expect to release the final rule in late 2026 or early 2027 after completing the rulemaking process."

According to the draft schedule, the Forest Service will by the end of August publish a notice of intent in the *Federal Register* and open it to public comment for two weeks.

Then, in a process the agency calls an interdisciplinary team "sprint," Forest Service staff — already diminished from workforce reductions — would conduct a cost-benefit analysis and other tasks from September to December. That would include a preliminary environmental impact statement.

The next "sprint" would be from April to September of next year, with development of a final rule after a 30-day public comment period. A final rule and record of decision would be published in the *Federal Register* next November or December.

An interdisciplinary team for such a project would typically draw on biologists and environmental specialists, whose numbers were reduced through the administration's various efforts to cut personnel, said a Forest Service employee familiar with the process who wasn't authorized to speak to reporters about it and was granted anonymity.

Supporters of rescinding the protections — including Republican lawmakers and timber interests — say they're outdated and prevent forest thinning that could reduce wildfire risks in many places.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) has blamed the roadless-area rule in part for the timber industry's decline in Southeast Alaska, as well for hurdles to hydropower and other development.

Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) said at a recent hearing that the roadless-area rule backfired environmentally by leaving unmanaged forests more vulnerable to fire — an assertion challenged by environmental groups that point to risks of fire ignition in places where logging and other human activity are plentiful.

Although rescinding the regulations wouldn't lead to a quick spate of timber projects — each project requires environmental analysis, planning and a bidding process, the move would align with the administration's goal of increasing timber production in the U.S. by 25 percent.

Timber industry groups have said the country could increase production sharply, even without ending the roadless-area rule, by matching timber harvest levels more closely with what's already allowed in national forests' management plans. Forests typically fall well short of those numbers.

The Sierra Club, which supports keeping the roadless-area rule in place, said the Trump administration is trying to tamp down public comment, which could be strongly in favor of the restrictions, if history is a guide.

Public comment for the original regulation in 2001 was overwhelmingly in favor of limiting road construction, and a similar sentiment emerged when the first Trump administration rescinded the rule for Alaska — a move the Biden administration reversed.

“In 2001, you saw an incredibly robust process that yielded strong results — well over a million comments overwhelmingly in favor of protecting intact forests. In contrast, the current administration seems inclined to pursue the bare minimum when it comes to public engagement,” said Alex Craven, the Sierra Club's forest campaign manager, in a statement.

Craven added, “A handful of days is not enough time to gather public input on longstanding and overwhelmingly popular environmental policy. It's locking out the public from crucial decision-making on our public lands.”

*Contact this reporter on Signal at hellmarcman.49.*