



U.S. Forest Service Roadless Areas

A Conservation Success

Roadless Area Conservation Rule of 2001

- Hailed as one of America's most successful conservation measures, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (the Rule) protected drinking water, wildlife habitat, and world-class recreation opportunities across 58.5 million acres of national forests.
- The Rule protects undeveloped, road-free places on our national forest by placing these areas off limits to logging and road construction, with limited exceptions.
- The Rule originally protected pristine roadless lands in 38 states.
- In Alaska, the Rule protects 9.3 million acres of roadless lands in the Tongass and 5.4 million in the Chugach National Forests.
- A fundamental strength of the Rule is its flexibility for some new road connections between communities, personal-use tree cutting, management of wildfire risks, hard rock mining projects, off-road vehicle use, construction of utility lines and hydropower development.
- National forests serve as the source of drinking water for more than 60 million Americans. Roadless Areas on our national forests contain all or portions of 354 municipal watersheds.
- The USFS has over 370,000 miles of roads. This massive road system is fragmenting wildlife habitat and created a multi-billion dollar backlog of uncompleted road work. These unmaintained roads are bleeding sediment runoff into streams degrading clean water.

Social and Ecological Value of Roadless Areas

Protected roadless areas are vital because they:

- Serve as important sources of drinking water for millions of Americans
- Generate a significant portion of the outdoor recreation industry's \$730 billion in annual revenue and 6.5 million in jobs across the country
- Provide habitat for more than 1,600 threatened or endangered plants and animals, including grizzly bear and Canada lynx
- Protect our most unspoiled national forest lands and world-class outdoor recreational opportunities for hikers, mountain bikers, climbers, birders, horseback riders, backpackers, hunters, anglers, backcountry skiers, and more
- Save untold millions of taxpayer dollars a year by reducing federal subsidies for logging roads, especially in the Tongass National Forest where road construction costs are roughly \$160,000/mile, with peak costs at \$500,000/mile because of the nature of the terrain and materials available

Did you know?

If you recreate on our national forests, you've probably visited a protected roadless area without knowing it. Protected roadless areas provide the scenic backdrop for many of America's most iconic trails, like the Continental Divide Trail, Pacific Crest Trail, and Appalachian Trail. Additionally, extremely popular trails to mountain peaks, canyon bottoms, waterfalls, and fishing holes are often in protected roadless areas. Some of the best game and cold-water fish habitat in the country is within protected roadless areas. Mountain bikers, too, ride through protected roadless areas.



Widely Supported, Then and Now

The Rule has been widely supported by many stakeholders, including the outdoor recreation industry, recreationists, hunters and anglers, scientists, conservations, economists, state game and fish agencies, and elected officials. When the Forest Service was developing the Rule in 1999, it involved the most extensive public participation in the history of federal rulemaking. More than 1.6 million people commented during the rulemaking process, with 95% supporting strong roadless area protection.

Roadless Area, Salmon-Challis National Forest in Idaho (Mason Cummings). Back photo top: Tongass National Forest (Amy Gulick). Back photo bottom: Frisco Box Roadless Area on the Gila National Forest (Mason Cummings).



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