



Roadless Rule under Attack

Since January 2001, the United States Forest Service’s (USFS) Roadless Area Conservation Rule has protected public lands that are free from the impacts of roads. Specially designated as Roadless Areas, these lands are safeguarded from activities such as logging, mining, and oil and gas development, which would require building roads into undisturbed lands.

Roadless Areas have never been designated arbitrarily. The Roadless Rule was established after the most extensive public rulemaking process in history: 18 months of review and analysis and 600 public hearings. Because more than half of our national forests are open to logging and extractive industries, the rule was put into place to protect the last remaining *third* of our undeveloped forestlands—58.5 million acres of pristine land.

Water, Wildlife, and Habitat

With more than 240 million people living within 100 miles of a national forest or grassland, the benefits of protecting Roadless Areas are significant. Twenty-nine million people drink water from watersheds that lie within these protected lands. Roadless Areas ensure the conservation of essential habitat for fish and wildlife, including more than 2,100 threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant and animal species. Natural, intact ecosystems also offer resilience and refuge from the stresses of a changing climate.

Unfortunately, the current administration and Congress have launched relentless attacks on the Roadless Rule and the critical protections it provides for our nation’s forests. Several bills in Congress intend to open up designated Roadless Areas to industrial development. The resulting roads and related infrastructure would tear up the landscape and change the undisturbed character of the land forever.

Roads Wreak Havoc

The impacts presented by a road extend well beyond the road itself, influencing an area two to three times the width of the road. The more extensive the road network, the greater the affected zone. (Hiking and biking trails create impacts, too, though the trails are generally smaller in size.)

Roads and road building displace and compact soils and increase erosion. Displaced soils and erosion degrade watercourses and water quality and harm aquatic wildlife and habitat. Roads also interrupt ecosystems and impede natural migration corridors.

There have been repeated attempts by the administration to access enormous swaths of Tongass National Forest Roadless Areas in Alaska. A recent effort was thwarted (see *Broader Wilderness*, page 6), however we can’t become complacent. If the administration gets its way, up to 9 million acres of Roadless Areas on the forest would be vulnerable to clear-cut logging and road building. Efforts to weaken the Rule are simply a giveaway to the logging industry, and taxpayers will foot the bill. According to a report by the USFS, “From 2008 through 2013, the USFS spent \$139.1 million on timber sales (including road construction) in the Tongass and received \$8.6 million in proceeds from these sales, a net loss of \$130.5 million.”

Let’s Join Forces

Broads are working across the country to protect Roadless Areas such as in the Gunnison and Routt National Forests of Colorado and Nez Perce–Clearwater National Forest in Idaho. In fact, most states have designated Roadless Areas, and chances are, if there are Broads there, they are working to protect the lands.

Here’s a state-by-state guide: <http://bit.ly/StateRoadless>

The Roadless Rule was developed to protect the values that undeveloped lands provide to the United States. As advocates, we must work together to defend the Rule to keep wild lands wild and to protect unspoiled lands from development. Here’s how you can help:

- **Contact your Senator or Representative and tell them you support our wild forests and the exceptional recreation opportunities and wild habitat they provide. Urge them to do all they can to keep the Roadless Rule intact.**
- **Write a letter to the editor to your local newspaper voicing your support for the Roadless Rule.**
- **Educate your friends and family about this issue using social media to share information about the value of our national forests and the importance of the Roadless Rule.**