



# FORESTS FOREVER

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Sprint to the finish for wild forests bill** *AB 715 would prohibit state agencies from helping to dismantle roadless rule's protections*

As time runs out in this legislative session in Sacramento, a bill that would help lock in Californians' stated preference for the protections of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule is entering the home stretch.

This strong bill does more than just state a preference, however. It actually would prevent the State of California from taking actions to degrade roadless forestlands.

"Californians value their dwindling roadless forests," said Paul Hughes, executive director of Forests Forever. "The Bush administration has made it clear that it wants to log or develop every available acre of the national forests. Now that the task of protecting our national roadless areas has been thrown back on the states, it's important that we take a stand."

Assemblyman Lloyd Levine (D-Van Nuys) introduced AB 715 in June. The measure would forbid any state department or agency from spending funds to implement plans by a federal agency that are not compatible with the original, protective 2001 federal roadless rule.

The measure has been passed by the state Assembly, and is now in the Senate, where it could come up for a floor vote any day.

Forests Forever, a nonprofit group in San Francisco dedicated to protecting California's wild forests, strongly supports the measure.

The deadline for floor action on all bills in the state legislature is Sept. 9. Levine's bill is the only piece of legislation this session that addresses the strongly expressed desire of Californians to protect roadless forests in the state. (140,000 public comments came from Californians during the development of the original roadless rule, 136,000 in favor of it.)

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There are 18 national forests in California; inventoried roadless areas within them cover about 4.4 million acres. It is these roadless areas that the recent Bush administration repeal of the 2001 roadless rule would leave vulnerable to logging, roadbuilding, and other kinds of development.

The Bush administration repealed the original roadless rule in May 2005 and substituted a burdensome petition process in which governors can ask to protect (or open to development if they choose) the roadless forests in their states. These requests, in turn, can be approved or denied by the Bush administration.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger let it be known back in November 2004 that he will not file a petition under the Bush administration's new rule. The governor has not yet indicated whether he will sign AB 715.

"He can help keep his promise to protect California's forests by signing the bill when it reaches his desk," Hughes said. "The governor's environmental record has had some encouraging green spots, but in the forestry arena has been lackluster."

Forests Forever has campaigned for preserving the protections of the original roadless rule since 2003. The group is urging people to write, email, fax, or phone their state senators and urge them to support Levine's bill.

"The citizens of California have already expressed their demand for roadless protections," said Hughes. "We shouldn't be forced to ask for them all over again. Nevertheless, AB 715 will serve as a reminder that we like our roadless forests just the way they are."

"Now is the time to let your political representatives know how strongly you feel about California's roadless forests."