



FORESTS FOREVER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act re-introduced

Bipartisan bill would permanently protect roadless areas

On Thursday, July 28, U.S. Reps. Jay Inslee (D-WA) and Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) re-introduced the National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2005, a forest protection bill with 143 bipartisan co-sponsors.

Inslee is re-introducing the bill in response to the recent U.S. Forest Service repeal of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule of 2001, which had been signed by President Clinton just before leaving office.

The original Roadless Area Conservation Rule was the most popular environmental rule ever written, with 4.2 million comments over several public comment periods. The overwhelming majority of these comments (97.9 percent) were favorable to the original rule. The roadless rule protected 58.5 million roadless acres of national forest from roadbuilding, logging, drilling, mining, and other development.

The loss of protection for roadless areas puts at risk hundreds of plant, insect, and animal species, threatens water quality and leaves forests more vulnerable than before to invasive species.

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“In California we have 18 national forests and more than 4 million roadless acres,” said Paul Hughes, executive director of Forests Forever in San Francisco. “They were off limits under Clinton’s Roadless Rule of 2001, but now these areas are at risk of road construction– which would literally pave the way for more logging, dams, industrial development, erosion, water pollution, and oil and gas drilling.”

Forests Forever has campaigned for preserving the protections of the original roadless rule since 2003. The San Francisco-based group is urging people to write, email, FAX, or phone their congressional representative and urge him or her to support Inslee’s bill.

The National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2005 would:

- keep logging, oil and gas drilling, mining, and other forms of development out of pristine, unroaded national forest land;
- help preserve watersheds and provide a clean water supply. More than 2,000 watersheds that contribute to public drinking water are found in roadless areas;
- keep rivers and streams able to sustain fish populations by protecting them from damage by road runoff, logging and other kinds of development;
- protect wildlife habitat on which many endangered species depend. More than 1,600 threatened, endangered or sensitive plant and animal species are found in roadless areas;
- write the protections afforded by the original Roadless Area Conservation Rule into federal law, which could not be changed by executive whim.

“The Bush administration has abandoned roadless forests,” Hughes said. “This bill will help us hold the line against any attempt to give away California’s roadless areas to extractive industry.”