

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Mark R. Warner
Governor

July 30, 2004

Secretary Ann Veneman
Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Re: Roadless Area Proposal of 7/12/04

Dear Secretary Veneman:

As you know, I have been a strong supporter of protection of roadless areas, including 387,000 acres here in the Commonwealth's national forests. I have supported the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule and the legislation introduced by Senator John Warner that would codify the 2001 rule. I believe the federal government should carry out its responsibility to protect our last remaining roadless areas.

Your July 12th proposal to require a state to file a petition to seek protection of roadless areas in its national forests is unduly burdensome on the states and appears unlikely to ensure protection of these valuable public lands. I urge you to withdraw your proposal and reinstate the Roadless Areas Conservation Rule of 2001.

While we appreciate your attempt to allow states greater input in these decisions, your rule confirms that the U.S. Forest Service has the final say over management of these lands. The proposed rule would burden this state and others with taking the time, resources and effort to seek protection of these critical areas when the decision still properly rests with your Department, which has already undertaken a 3 year process concluding that roadless areas should be protected.

The people of the Commonwealth want their national forest roadless areas protected. More than 45,000 comments from Virginia have been filed in support of roadless area protection. These areas are critical for their scenic beauty, clean water, wildlife habitat, and many recreation opportunities. They are also vital to the long term protection of our natural heritage for future generations. Finally, building roads in these remote areas is fiscally irresponsible, especially when Virginia's national forests already

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have 3000 miles of roads and the agency does not have to budget to maintain those existing roads.

I urge you to provide full protection for roadless areas pursuant to the Roadless Area Conservation Rule of 2001. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark R. Warner". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mark R. Warner

c: Governor Mike Easley
Governor Phil Bredesen
Governor Mark Sanford
Governor Sonny Perdue *SW*
Governor Bob Riley