

May 1, 2001

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

**Re: The Roadless Area Conservation Rule**

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge you to take decisive action to protect the remaining undeveloped and roadless areas within the national forests of the United States. As scientists working in natural resource-related disciplines including biology, forest ecology, geology, aquatic ecology, fisheries, soil science, and natural resource management, we are greatly concerned about the continuing loss and fragmentation of the nation's forests. In light of the many important benefits they provide, we feel it wise that the few remaining, intact roadless areas within the national forests be preserved. The final Roadless Area Conservation Rule, issued January 12, 2001, is an important step towards preserving the invaluable ecological services and the tremendous aesthetic and recreational benefits that intact forests provide.

Scientific research has amply documented the greater health and resiliency of intact forest ecosystems versus those disturbed by roads and logging. Undisturbed forests are less susceptible to tree diseases, insect attacks, and invasions from non-native species, and are less likely to have suffered the adverse effects of fire suppression. These healthier ecosystems are in turn more able to withstand the effects of global climate change and act as refugia for sensitive wildlife and plant species, many of which are vulnerable to extirpation in more developed areas. Thus, intact forests can serve as reservoirs as surrounding landscapes become genetically impoverished.

Intact forests play an important role in the function of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems. They are spared the often-massive soil erosion that typically accompanies road building and logging, which fouls streams and rivers. As a result, roadless areas in our national forests contain some of the most intact aquatic ecosystems in the country, including some of the healthiest salmon stocks. Intact forests provide direct watershed benefits to people by reducing flood threats and supplying clean sources of drinking water. In fact, 42 million acres of national forests land are classified as municipal watersheds.

In order to preserve these important ecological benefits, as well as the immeasurable aesthetic and recreational value of the remaining undeveloped 30% of our national forests (an area that represents only 2% of the country's land area), we urge you to implement and vigorously administer the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Thank you for considering our views on this matter of vital importance to the nation's ecological health.

Sincerely,

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