



Roadless Area Conservation Rulemaking Facts

On October 13, 1999, President Clinton instructed the Forest Service to develop and propose for public comment regulations that provide appropriate long-term protection for inventoried roadless areas. President Clinton stated, "In the final regulations, the nature and degree of protection afforded should reflect the best available science and a careful consideration of the full range of ecological, economic, and social values inherent in these lands."

Inventoried roadless areas possess social and ecological values and characteristics that are becoming scarce in our Nation's increasingly developed landscape. Protecting air and water quality, biodiversity, and opportunities for personal renewal are highly valued qualities of roadless areas. Conserving inventoried roadless areas leaves a legacy of natural areas for future generations.

The Roadless Area Conservation Rule limits or prohibits activities that would most negatively affect these values. The Roadless Rule:

- Prohibits new road construction and reconstruction in inventoried roadless areas on National Forest System lands, except:
 - To protect health and safety in cases of an imminent threat of flood, fire, or other catastrophic event that, without intervention, would cause the loss of life or property.
 - To conduct environmental clean up required by federal law.
 - To allow for reserved or outstanding rights provided for by statute or treaty.
 - To prevent irreparable resource damage by an existing road.
 - To rectify existing hazardous road conditions.
 - Where a road is part of a Federal Aid Highway project.
 - Where a road is needed in conjunction with the continuation, extension, or renewal of a mineral lease on lands that are under lease, or for new leases issued immediately upon expiration of an existing lease.
- Prohibits cutting, sale, and removal of timber in inventoried roadless areas, except:
 - For the cutting, sale, or removal of generally small diameter trees which maintains or improves roadless characteristics and:
 - To improve habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species, or
 - To maintain or restore ecosystem composition and structure, such as reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire effects.
 - When incidental to the accomplishment of a management activity not otherwise prohibited by this rule.
 - For personal or administrative use.
 - Where roadless characteristics have been substantially altered in a portion of an inventoried roadless area due to the construction of a classified road and subsequent timber harvest occurring after the area was designated an inventoried roadless area and prior to the publication date of this rule.
- Applies immediately to the Tongass National Forest. Includes a transition provision that allows projects that have published a Notice of Availability for a draft environmental impact statement by the date of publication of the Final Rule to continue.

Acreages and Miles

- The Roadless Rule protects 58.5 million acres, or 31% of National Forest System (NFS) lands, about 2% of the total land base of the United States.
- Approximately 386,000 miles of roads are currently administered on NFS lands. The Roadless Rule could prevent

the construction of up to 232 miles of new road construction or reconstruction each year in inventoried roadless areas.

Biological Diversity

- Inventoried roadless areas provide benefits to over 220 wildlife species listed as either threatened, endangered, or proposed by the Endangered Species Act – approximately 25% of all animal species and 13% of all plant species.
- Inventoried roadless areas also provide large, relatively undisturbed blocks of important habitat for a wide variety of native terrestrial and aquatic plants including more than 1,400 Forest Service listed sensitive species.

Production

- Implementation of the Roadless Rule would decrease the amount of timber harvested on NFS lands by 2% -- from 3,308 million board feet (MMBF) to 3,234 MMBF, less than 0.5% of total US production.
- Prohibiting timber harvest in inventoried roadless areas could directly affect about 461 timber jobs nationwide over the next 5 years. As timber harvest levels decrease on the Tongass National Forest over the next 5 years, another 269 timber-related jobs associated with reduced harvests from the Tongass National Forest could also be directly affected.
- Currently, total oil and gas production from all National Forest System lands is about 0.4% of national production. The Roadless Rule is estimated to directly affect up to 546 jobs related to coal and phosphate commodities.

Outreach

- More than 180 American Indian and Alaska Native groups were consulted during the rulemaking process, and 7 other federal agencies collaborated on the rulemaking.
- Over 600 public meetings were held nationwide, and an estimated 25,000 people attended the public meetings.
- 500,000 comments were received on the initial proposal, and 1.1 million comments were received during the comment period for the draft environmental statement (DEIS).
- More than 14 million hits were recorded on the **roadless.fs.fed.us** website.
- 7 separate hearings were held before US House and Senate committees and subcommittees.