

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20500-0001

Dear President Bush:

We are writing to express our support for the Roadless Area Conservation Rule as it was issued in January 2001. This landmark conservation policy protects 58.5 million acres of National Forest land, including almost 6 million acres in Montana. As businesses and organizations of Montana, who benefit greatly from recreation activities on our National Forests, we wish to publicly voice our support of upholding the Roadless Rule in its entirety.

The Roadless Rule ensures that our National Forests will continue to provide clean drinking water for millions of Americans and critical habitat for fish and wildlife. The Rule provides full access for recreational activities and enriches the lives not only Montana residents, but the millions of Americans who come to Montana as our guests each year.

The Roadless Rule enjoys widespread support from a broad spectrum of Montanans who hunt, fish, ski, hike, backpack or participate in a variety of other activities on our National Forest lands.

The balanced approach of this Rule does not close any existing roads and allows for the necessary management to protect public health and safety in the cases of fire or flood and for accessing private property or existing oil and gas leases.

We are deeply disappointed that your Administration recently exempted Alaska's Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule. We are further troubled by recent reports that changes to weaken the roadless rule are under consideration.

We believe this approach is unnecessary given the current rule's reasonable exemptions. Such an approach would undermine the important national rule necessary to ensure the conservation of roadless areas for the use of present and future generations. We urge you to leave the Roadless Rule intact for our National Forest system.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[please see attached list of 117 Montana businesses]

Why Roadless - The Value of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule

I. Timely

The Forest Service just published their intent to amend the Roadless Rule in the Federal Register
Outdoor Industry Assn has taken strong and growing interest in issue over last few years

- Big press release in June 2004 - see Salt Lake Tribune 6/6/04
- Outdoor Industry Foundation produced information booklet entitled "Protect Today, Play Tomorrow"

Major outdoor firms sent letter in May to Agriculture Undersecretary Mark Rey in support of Roadless Rule

- Adidas, Nike, Columbia Sportswear, and 8 more

New forest management regulations due to be released soon expected to greatly weaken environmental safeguards

II. Popularity

Polls show nearly 70% support for maintaining roadless lands nationwide

95% of two million comments on Roadless Rule were in support of protection

- more comments than on any other rulemaking

In MT, 34 hearings were held on Roadless Rule and 78% of Montanans commenting were in favor

Over 80% of Montanans go outdoors to do some human-powered activity, 4th highest rate in nation

III. Economics

Outdoor recreation industry is an \$18 billion per year operation

In MT, over \$40 million is spent just on general outdoor gear per year alone

- This does not including downhill skiing or snowmobiling or other specialized gear
- This does not include transportation, guides, lodging, food, transport, etc.

US Fish and Wildlife Service says hunting and fishing are worth over \$500 million a year to the economy

- Wildlife watching accounts for another \$350 million

Outdoor recreation value on National Forests exceeds value of timber sales

Forest Service has maintenance backlog of \$8 billion on existing roads, more make no sense

Roading and logging on National Forest system runs a deficit that costs taxpayers \$300 million or more a year

The House passed an appropriations amendment that defunds taxpayer subsidy of logging on the Tongass NF

- Last year, government brought in under \$2 million and spent over \$36 million

IV. Resources

The prime lands within the National Forest system have already been roaded and developed

- This working landscape makes up 50% of our National Forests and would still be available

Only 4% of timber on national forests in roadless lands, that is .25%-one quarter of one percent-of timber in US

Proven oil and gas reserves of roadless lands are negligible, current leases would be honored

In Montana, wildlife and fish depend on roadless lands and are too valuable to squander

V. Fire

Very little connection between inventoried roadless lands and the wildland-urban interface (where people live)

The 2001 Roadless Rule has specific provisions allowing for fire protection management

The Forest Service has documented that building roads into high fire risk zones increases the risk of fire

Roadless areas are not where the problem fires in Montana have occurred or started in the last 4 years

- The fires that have done the most damage occur in roaded, logged and developed areas

The argument that the Roadless Rule impedes protection from fire is purely alarmist to hide real issues

VI. Wildlife Habitat

Roadless areas protects vulnerable and sensitive species by insuring maintenance of habitat

Westslope cutthroat trout, a species of concern, requires undisturbed, pristine water which roadless land provides

Many species require unroaded habitat, such as grizzly bear, wolverine, lynx and more

Value of roadless habitat is exemplified by length of hunting season in areas of MT with the most roadless

- Studies show that as road density increases, elk numbers go down.

Hunting and fishing are solid part of MT's economy; roadless areas important to maintaining pristine habitat

Note: this is by no means a complete list of values that roadless lands provide. Numbers and facts listed are documented.

For clarification or more information, contact:

Rick Meis, Roadless Organizer

The Wilderness Society, Northern Rockies Office

406-586-1600 rick_meis@tws.org

Yes, let us "reflect the social attitudes and economic concerns of Montana citizens" and not forget that evidence from multiple studies indicates that counties that protect their natural resources faster growth in jobs and incomes. I will attach a sheet "Roadless Areas are Good for Montana" that discusses these economic issues. Hunting, Fishing and other recreation depends on these roadless lands. Hunting, fishing and wildlife watching are worth over \$800 million to our economy each year. And that is growing. We cannot afford to destroy the base on which it depends, which is healthy and secure habitat and clean, cold water.

As I peruse Section 1 of the proposed bill, I see some big problems. I see conjecture that overlooks the facts. Is the sponsor implying that the US Forest Service, the several National Forest Supervisors' offices and the many district offices do not have professional foresters who were involved in providing information that went into the Roadless Rule?

In Section 1(2)(b), I am upset by this unscientific conjecture. There is zero, zip, nada, no basis in fact for this connection between roadless lands and fire. As a former firefighter who fought big fires around the nation for several years, I do know about fire on the ground. As a person who grew up in the Bitterroot Valley and worked on the Sula Ranger District for many years I know about wildfire risk and catastrophic fires. I want you all to be sure to note that the horrific fires in the south end of the Bitterroot were on heavily roaded and logged lands. I remember this country well. I worked throughout a lot of the area. The Darby and Sula districts were logged to the hydrological limits in an effort to prevent the very fires that happened. Much of it grew back as even-aged lodgepole that was like gasoline. If you look at the GIS maps for the fire spread speed, you will see that the fires burned more slowly and less hot in the areas that were roadless.

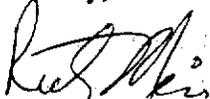
There is very little connection between inventoried roadless lands and the wildland-urban interface where people live and property is exposed. If we want to address fire, this interface is where we should do it. Why is that not being proposed? And as a matter of fact, the Roadless Rule has specific provisions allowing for fire protection management.

The Forest Service has documented that building roads into high fire risk zones increases the risk of fire. Roadless areas are not where the problem fires in Montana have occurred or started in the last 4 or 5 years. In fact, the fires that have done the most damage occur in roaded, logged and developed areas. The argument that the Roadless Rule impedes protection from fire is purely alarmist to hide real issues.

In Section 1(2)(h), it should be noted that the economic value of the roads is a net negative number as the existing roads are suffering from a very real and expensive backlog of maintenance. More roads mean more tax dollars spent. We are talking roadless here and this talks about roads as if there were lots in these roadless lands. There are few and maybe none that are none that provide access for emergency response in a real sense.

Again, I urge you to vote against SB 417. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Rick Meis

Encl.

business name	Contact	city
4M Ranch	Phil Keck	Pray
Acoustical Therapy	Dustin	Bozeman
Back to Nature		Missoula
Baker Light Industries	Wayne Baker	Alder
Barrel Mountaineering	Laura Ryan	Bozeman
Basic Blocks	Pam Fuqua and Mary Campbell	Troy
Battle Mountain Ranch	John Grant	Livingston
BC/OC Outdoor Consulting	Beth Cochran	Bozeman
Bear Canyon Cabins	Mary Sadowski	Bozeman
Bearpaw River Expeditions	Justin Walsh	Missoula
Betsy Robinson and Steve Gehman, Professional Guides	Betsy Robinson	Bozeman
Big Dipper Ice Cream		Missoula
Big Wild Adventures	Howie Wolke	Emigrant
Bighorn	John Schuley	Great Falls
Blackfoot River Brewing Company	Brian Smith	Helena
Blacktail Ranch	Sandra Renner	Wolf Creek
Blank Canvas		Missoula
Body Basics		Missoula
Computer Help, Inc	Don Killian	Bozeman
Conservation Resource Group	Gary Wolfe	Missoula
Crazy Creek Products, Inc.	Rob Hart	Red Lodge
Crystal Video	Tim Huffman	Missoula
Dee Mast, LCPC	Dee Mast	Bozeman
Earth Wind and Fire	Chris Evans	Bozeman
Edge of the World	Chris Barrow	Missoula
Equi-Imports	Michele Evans	Bozeman
Fields Construction Services, Inc.	Edwin Fields	Whitefish
Fireweed Homeowners Association	Kris Standley	Troy
Gaia Gardens	Brad Banerly	Belgrade
Garr Canyon Ranch	Rebecca Congdon	Dell
Goodman Realty	Jana Goodman	Kalispell
Granny's Country Store	Renee Elpel	Silver Star
Grassroots Consulting		Troy
Green Hanger Cleaners		Missoula
Grizzly Hackle Store and Outfitters	Dan Sheperd	Missoula
Harmony's Garden	Adele Tate	Bozeman
Harold's Hot Mustard	Jim Owens	Absarokee
Hayden-Tanner Consulting	Molly McCabe	Troy
Heart and Soul Herbs	Nata Dayhoff	Bozeman
Herman's Hemp	Anna Herman	Deer Lodge
HH Perspectives, Drafting and Design	Hans Haumberger	Manhattan
Hob Nob Café	Justin	Missoula
Hoitsma Ecological	Todd Hoitsma	Bozeman
Hollowtop Outdoor Primitive School, LLC	Thomas J. Elpel	Silver Star
HOPS Press, LLC	Thomas J. Elpel	Pony
Human Interactive Products	James Olsen	Hamilton

Insty Prints	John	Bozeman
Jeannette Rankin Peace Center	Jean Claire Duncan	Missoula
Knicker Biker	Brin Grosfield	Great Falls
Kootenai Collusion	Ed Pedersen	Troy
Lakeside Family Dentistry	Dr. Doug Morehouse	Lakeside
Latigo and Lace	Sara Walsh	Augusta
Lehrkind Mansion Bed and Breakfast	Chris Nixon	Bozeman
Lewis and Clark Trail Adventures	Gia and Wayne Fairchild	Missoula
Linehan Outfitting Company	Tim and Joanne Linehan	Troy
Loken Builders, Inc.	Steve Loken	Missoula
Lone Mountain Guest Ranch	Robert L. Schaap	Big Sky
Meadowsweet Herbs, Inc	Kristina Myer	Missoula
Melvin Blecher, CPA		Troy
Missoula Bicycle Works	Alex Gallego	Missoula
Montana Art and Garden	Ursula Neese	Livingston
Montana Harvest	Matt Martincich	Bozeman
Montana Made Batik	Mary Byers	Hamilton
Montana Senior News	Jack Love	Great Falls
New Moon Gardens	Trevor Tracy	Livingston
One Stop Photo	Bud Journey	Libby
Outaware	Andy Tuller	Belgrade
Park Café and Grocery	Kathryn Heistand	St. Mary
Park-Ponder Coffeehouse	Francee Robertson	Great Falls
Patagonia Outlet Store	Kathey Rebish	Dillon
Penny's Gourmet To Go	Penny Rubner	Great Falls
Pine Edge Cabins/Whispering Pines Cabins	Henry Finkbiner	Silvergate
Pipestone Mountaineering	Jim Wilson	Missoula
Planet Earth	Beth Evenson	Great Falls
PR Media Consultants	Paul Richards	Boulder
Prairie Garden Herbs of Montana	Wendy Whitehorn	Dutton
Quality Solar	Jimmy Martin	Troy
Rainy Pass Repair, Inc	Bob Upton	Whitefish
Randy Beacham Photography		Troy
Raven Café		Missoula
Recycle-It, Inc.	Jim Hassler	Bozeman
Refuge Sustainable Building Center	David Schaub	Bozeman
Reynolds, Motl and Sherwood, Attys at Law	Jon Motl	Helena
Rocky Mountain Outfitter	Don Scharfe	Kalispell
Sawbuck Ranch, L.P.	Paul Roos	Lincoln
Scoren Construction	Gene Mone	Bozeman
Shakespeare Co.	G Whitston	Missoula
Sherry Daily Massage Therapy		Troy
Smith, Doherty and Belcourt, PC	Patrick Smith	Missoula
Soft and Knotty Pine	Vince Godby and Jeremy O'Day	Troy
Solar Plexus, LLC		Missoula
Southern Purcell Restoration	Scott Daily	Troy
Summit Bike	Steve	Bozeman
Synergy Corporation	Ginger Keck	Pray
The Basecamp	Scott Brown	Billings
The Bike Doctor		Missoula

The Cleaning Center
The Cooke City Bike Shack
The Flower Bed

The Root and the Leaf, LLC
The Savory Olive
The Sports Exchange
The Trailhead
Thirteen Mile Farm
Timber Trails
Tipu's Tiger, Inc.
TJ Enterprises
Trout Headwaters, Inc.
Water and Environmental Technologies, LLC
Wild Wind Records
Wild Wood Trails
Wilderness Packtrips, Inc.
Wookey Backpacks
Yellowstone Country Adventures
Yellowstone River Inn Cabins
Yellowstone Safari

Dave Minnick
Bill Blackford

Jennephyr Reicke-Sterling or Beatrix
Jenness
Eric Stenberg

Todd Frank
Rebecca Weed
Dale Sexton

Bob Telljohn
Austin O'Dea
Josh Vincent
Jim Stoltz
Ted Wood
Erin and Mike Thompson
Sky Sterry
Linda Wallace
DeeDee VanZyl
Ken Sinay

Livingston
Cooke City
Missoula

Great Falls
Bozeman
Missoula
Missoula
Belgrade
Livingston
Missoula
Livingston
Livingston
Butte
Big Sky
Livingston
Livingston
Bozeman
Bozeman
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