



Action Tool Kit: Protecting our Roadless Forests

One of the most important land protection measure of our lifetimes — The Roadless Rule — is under attack. The Roadless Rule has protected 58 million acres of our forest lands for more than a generation, but the Trump administration wants to undo these protections in all but two states in the name of profit. We won't let that happen — and we need your voice.

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Background on Roadless Rule

The Roadless Rule has protected 58 million acres of our wildest national forest lands from road building and logging for more than a generation. The rule was created after more than 600 public hearings were held around the nation, and the public provided more than 1.6 million comments with more than 95% in favor of adopting it — more comments than any other rule in the nation's history.

The Trump administration now wants to throw these forest protections overboard so the timber industry can make huge money by punching roads into the backcountry and hauling public forests away to the sawmill. These are lands that belong to all Americans, not the timber industry.

Resource links:

- The maps and acreage for each state can be found on the [USDA website](#).
- [Timeline](#) of the Roadless Rule
- [Video message](#) from Drew Caputo, Earthjustice Vice President of Lands, Oceans, and Wildlife explaining the threat to the Roadless Rule.

List of Priority Actions

1. [Action alert](#) to defend the Roadless Rule
 - a. The U.S. Forest Service has kicked off a process to repeal the Roadless Rule, and we are collecting letters for the official public comment period. We want to show the public's overwhelming support for this landmark land-conservation policy.
2. [Action alert](#) to send a letter to your member of Congress to tell them to oppose the Fix Our Forests Act
 - a. Our forests are also under a legislative attack, and we need your help. This bill (H.R.471 / S. 1462) is supposedly a measure against wildfires but it really weakens environmental protections for our forests and communities, handing the keys to the Trump administration to clearcut our public lands.
3. Call your member of Congress and tell them to oppose the Fix Our Forests Act (H.R.471 / S. 1462)
 - i. U.S. Capitol switchboard number: **(202) 224-3121**
 - ii. Find your House office phone numbers:
<https://www.house.gov/representatives>
 - iii. Find your Senate office phone numbers:
https://www.senate.gov/general/resources/pdf/senators_phone_list.pdf

- iv. Jump to the [Fix Our Forests call-script](#)

How to write an effective letter

We encourage you to customize each of the letters you send through our [action alerts](#) by adding personal messages with your own viewpoints and personal experiences. Be as clear, factual, and personal as possible. Point out how you and your home region would be impacted. Start with a compelling opening that clearly states your position and why you're writing. Provide specific examples and evidence to support your claims and conclude with a clear request for action. Restate your position at the end. Here are some tips to get you started:

1. Clarity and Conciseness:
 - a. **Subject Line:** Make it clear and concise, indicating the topic of your letter (e.g., "Support for [Specific Issue] in [Location]").
 - b. **First Paragraph:** State your main point and why you're writing.
 - c. **Short Sentences and Paragraphs:** Use clear, simple language, avoiding jargon or overly technical terms.
 - d. **Focus on One Issue:** Don't try to address multiple complex issues in one letter.
2. Supporting Evidence and Examples:
 - a. **Facts and Figures:** If possible, include relevant data or statistics to strengthen your argument.
 - b. **Personal Anecdotes:** If appropriate, share a brief, relevant personal experience to illustrate the impact of the issue.
3. Call to Action:
 - a. **Be Specific:** Clearly state what action you want. (e.g., "We urge you oppose climate change," or "We ask you to support [Specific Initiative]"). If you are reaching out about a piece of legislation, be sure to reference the bill number in both the subject line and body of text or when speaking to your elected official's office.
 - b. **Express Urgency:** If there's a timeline for action, mention it to convey the importance of timely response.
4. Tone and Style:
 - a. **Polite and Respectful:** Even when expressing strong disagreement, maintain a respectful tone.
 - b. **Avoid Emotional Language:** Focus on facts and reasoned arguments rather than emotional appeals.
 - c. **Proofread:** Carefully check for any errors in grammar or spelling before sending.

5. Additional Tips:

- a. **Research:** Before writing, familiarize yourself with the topic.
- b. **Contact Information:** Include your name, address, email address, and potentially your phone number.
- c. **Spread the word:** recruit friends, family and loved ones to write letters too!
There's strength in numbers.

6. Link to our [Earthjustice Action Guide](#)

How to look up your elected officials

- Find your U.S. House Representatives: <https://www.house.gov/representatives>
- Find your U.S. Senators: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>
- Find all your elected officials including your governors and local elected leaders: <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>

Phone numbers

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Talking points

- **What's at Stake:** The proposed rollback of the 2001 Roadless Rule jeopardizes nearly 45 million acres of undeveloped backcountry forestland managed by the U.S. Forest Service, comprising around a third of the territory in our national forest system. These forests have only remained intact because of the Forest Service's nearly 25-year-old commitment not to build roads in these areas for harmful activities like major logging operations or oil-and-gas drilling.
- **Recreation Spots at Risk:** Since 2001, protected roadless areas have offered abundant outdoor recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, camping or other activities. Every year, millions of people take advantage of the free (or extremely affordable) access to these public lands. According to maps from Outdoor Alliance's GIS Lab, roadless areas protect 11,337 climbing routes and boulder problems, more than 1,000 whitewater paddling runs, 43,826 miles of trail, and 20,298 mountain biking trails. Large sections of the Continental Divide, Pacific Crest, and Appalachian National Trails traverse protected roadless areas.

- **More Roads Means More Wildfires:** Although proponents of rolling back the Roadless Rule have suggested that this is somehow being done in response to wildfire, the reality is that this “solution” will only lead to more wildfires. New [research](#) from The Wilderness Society, now in peer review, shows that from 1992-2024, wildfires were four times as likely to start in areas with roads than in roadless forest tracts. Another [study](#) showed that more than 90 percent of all wildfires nationwide occurred within half a mile of a road.
- **Vital Habitat for Imperiled Species:** The lands in question include lower-elevation forests, wetlands, canyons and other undeveloped lands that are critical to our nation's ecological health. Because they are not fragmented by roads, these Roadless Areas provide habitat for many imperiled species such as California condors, grizzly bears and wolves in the Yellowstone area, native salmon and trout in the Pacific Northwest, migratory songbirds in the Appalachian hardwoods and more. They also sustain wild salmon, especially in Alaska where they are the lifeblood for both the fishing industry and traditional subsistence practices of Indigenous communities.
- **Rollback Paves the Way for Logging:** The real reason a rollback of the Roadless Rule is being proposed is to re-open these forests to logging and other industrial development. This proposal follows on the heels of other administrative actions that have called for a dramatic increase in logging and oil and gas drilling on federal lands. An increase in these industrial activities would worsen climate change, destroy recreation areas, put the lands at greater risk of wildfire, destroy wildlife habitat, and threaten drinking water sources. Logging most often targets bigger, older trees, which are natural carbon sinks that store carbon dioxide and provide shade for cooler temperatures – yet all of these benefits are lost if trees are removed. Further, logging and logging roads can have devastating impacts to drinking water quality and fish habitat. The cost will fall to communities, who will face threats to their supply of clean water and will need to clean up polluted water before sending it to households and local economies – and will suffer from the damage to commercial and recreational fisheries.
- **Vital for America’s Drinking Water:** The US National Forests are the headwaters of our great rivers and the [largest source of municipal water supply in the nation](#), serving over 60 million people in 3,400 communities in 33 states. Roads are a major cause of water pollution. Because it protects these headwaters, the 2001 Roadless Rule is vital for maintaining clean drinking water for communities across the country. Major U.S. cities including Los Angeles, Portland, Denver, and Atlanta receive a significant portion of their water supply from national forests.

- **Taxpayers on the Hook:** Building more roads in national forests would be a drain on taxpayers. Even with the Roadless Rule in place, the Forest Service [already has a 380,000-mile road system](#) – twice as long as the nation’s highway system – crisscrossing national forests. This forest road infrastructure is already so big that the Forest Service can’t afford to properly maintain it, triggering a maintenance backlog that has ballooned to billions in needed repairs. Taxpayers have subsidized this already unwieldy road network and would be stuck footing the bill for any new roads built in backcountry forest areas following this rollback.
- **Subsistence and Cultural Values at Risk:** Increased industrial activity in roadless areas would also jeopardize culturally-important sites and subsistence use areas. These spaces are critical to food security for many indigenous communities as well as for sustaining cultural practices, including hunting, fishing, and gathering forest plants for food, medicine, and traditional arts.
- **Important for Protecting Migration Corridors and Game Habitat:** Roads fragment habitat and degrade migration corridors that game species like elk and mule deer rely on. Protected roadless areas help ensure these migratory game corridors remain intact and protected from roads and the industrial development roads enable.
- **Millions Support the Roadless Rule:** The Roadless Rule is a highly popular policy that is often celebrated as one of America’s most successful conservation measures. Prior to its enactment, more than 600 public hearings were held nationwide, and 1.6 million Americans weighed in to call for protection of these forestlands. More recently, more than 45 members of the House and Senate have signed onto legislation that would codify the Roadless Rule so that in the future, it could not be rolled back without an act of Congress.
- **Policy Has Built-In Exceptions:** The Roadless Rule is extremely flexible and allows for necessary forest management and the construction of roads as needed to address fires, floods, or other catastrophic events, and other circumstances like the need to connect communities. National forest managers routinely conduct forest stewardship activities within roadless areas such as prescribed burning and wildlife habitat improvement activities.
- **As Bad as the Public Lands Selloff:** Anyone who loves our public lands should be concerned about attempts to reverse the Roadless Rule. First there was an attempt to sell off public lands, proposed by politicians out of touch with the values of everyday Americans. Now, this administration wants to sell out our nation’s public forests by opening remote, protected areas to logging, roadbuilding and other

development. This idea is just as bad as the sell-off that they tried, but failed, to pull off.

- **U.S. Forest Service Workforce Already Being Dismantled:** Americans' lives are already at risk with reckless, deep staff cuts that have left the Forest Service ill-prepared to respond to wildfire. And, the Forest Service [already has 380,000 miles of road](#) carving through national forests that it can't afford to maintain – the same distance as 146 cross-country road trips. With staff cuts at the Forest Service, who would maintain these new roads, in the first place? Nobody knows, but we do know who will be on the hook to pay for it: Taxpayers.
- **Will Create New Fire Hazards:** The proponents of this idea say it has something to do with preventing wildfire, but common sense tells you otherwise. Which seems like the bigger fire hazard?: An oil-and-gas drilling operation with machinery running all day and heavy-duty trucks constantly criss-crossing dry forestland? Or an old-growth stand of trees that is naturally more fire-resilient and provides shade for cooler temperatures? The answer is obvious. More roads will lead to heavy industrial zones that will create their own set of wildfire safety concerns. It's clear that the only goal here is to help wealthy corporations turn a profit off lands that belong to everyone.
- **Not a Partisan Issue:** It doesn't matter if you're a Democrat, or a Republican, or if you have \$10 or \$1 million in your bank account. You've got the right to explore tens of millions of acres of pristine backcountry lands where there are no roads, only open land, clean water and peace of mind. These lands are universally enjoyed and they belong to everyone – not wealthy corporations trying to turn a profit.
- **Colorado and Idaho May Still be At Risk:** Secretary Rollins says the CO and ID-specific Roadless Rules won't be rescinded – but this administration isn't really known for being transparent, honest, or reliable. Our hope is that these rules will be left alone but it's hard to take this Administration's word for it. We'll believe it when we see it.
- **No Less Concern in CO and ID:** Coloradoans and Idahoans have no less of a reason to oppose this rollback, even if their roadless areas will retain status quo protections – because these are national public lands that belong to all Americans. And of course, people living in these places may regularly cross state lines to enjoy the beauty of national forests in different locales.

Sample call script for the Fix Our Forests Act

If calling the Capitol Switchboard (202) 224-3121, ask for your Senator's or Representative's office. A staff member will pick up the phone. Ask to speak with the aide who handles the issues about which you wish to comment.

You don't have to say a lot, just tell them:

- Your name and where you live
- Say you oppose the the Fix our Forests Act (H.R.471 / S. 1462)
- This bill will weaken environmental protections for our forests and communities, handing the keys to the Trump administration to clearcut our public lands.
- Reference any of these talking points:
 - The Fix Our Forests Act would undermine protections for our forests and endangered species, NOT make communities safer from wildfires.
 - This bill would roll back critical environmental laws like the *National Environmental Policy Act* and the *Endangered Species Act*.
 - Despite its name and supposed attempt to mitigate wildfire risk, the bill is nothing more than a trojan horse to weaken environmental protections, expose our forests to logging, and perversely divert resources that could be used for wildfire defense and recovery away from the communities that need them the most, likely making wildfires worse.

*** if you are leaving a voicemail, please share your full address and zip code so your call can be tallied.*

Letter to Editor Guidance

Learn how to write a compelling letter to the editor with [this comprehensive memo](#).

Letter to the Editor sample template:

[share your personal story] As the United States' [tens of millions](#) of hunters, anglers, campers and other outdoors enthusiasts know, there's nothing like getting away from it all in a pristine, remote location. Some of the best places to unplug and recharge our internal batteries include the 58 million acres of U.S. Forest Service lands protected by the [2001 Roadless Rule](#). Now, the Agriculture Department [intends to rescind](#) this crucial rule.

Eliminating the Roadless Rule would destroy recreation areas, threaten drinking water sources, imperil wildlife and cost taxpayers money. Also, contrary to the Agriculture Department's rationale, [research](#) shows that rescinding the rule would increase the risk of wildfires.

We must defend this landmark land-conservation policy and protect our forests.

More ways to take action

We need to keep the drumbeat going. This comment period is called a Notice of Intent which is the beginning of this process, and in a few months, the Forest Service will take the comments received to craft the proposed rule. When the proposed rule is made public, that should kick off another comment period, including public hearings. In the meantime, we need your continued action. Your governors are important to reach out to. The announcement to rescind the RR happened at the Governors Association meeting – they are listening too. Give them a call and show them you are paying attention. Especially if you live in a western state. We need to harness the energy over nearly 25 years ago when 1.6 million comments were submitted. Let's keep speaking up and if there is a public hearing near you or online – attend and share your story.

- Call your state governors
 - Find your governors: <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>
- Share this action with your friends on social media and beyond!
 - Sample post: The #RoadlessRule has helped to safeguard some of America's last remaining wild and intact forests. These protected areas offer abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation and provide essential wildlife habitat. @SecRollins wants to open them up for logging. #SaveRoadless
https://earthjustice.org/action/protect-forests-from-massive-expansion-of-logging?ms=social_share

Stay Connected

- Reach out to action@earthjustice.org for any follow up questions.
- Text TOWNHALL to 43428