



Heritage Forests Campaign

1200 18th Street, NW Washington, D.C. 20036

March 2, 2006

Secretary Mike Johanns
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns:

We, the undersigned conservation organizations from across the nation, are writing to express our profound disappointment with USDA's decision to abandon its pledge to protect our nation's last remaining roadless areas.

The American public has made clear time and time again its desire to protect what remains of our country's last intact national forests. Most notably, they made this known during the 2004 comment period conducted by your Department, where 1.7 million citizens — 97.5% of those who submitted comments — made plain their opposition to the Department's proposal to replace the protections of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule with an expensive, laborious, and uncertain state petition process.

Sadly, without so much as a single public hearing — in contrast to the hundreds held during the promulgation of the 2001 Roadless Rule — the Department dismissed the comments and repealed the Rule last year. That action has prompted us to take the extraordinary step of working with America's citizenry to formally petition the federal government for the reinstatement of the 2001 Roadless Rule.

Consistent with the provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), the attached petition, signed by nearly 300,000 Americans, formally requests reinstatement of the Roadless Rule. Section 555(e) of the APA requires a prompt response from the USDA. America's roadless national forests belong to all Americans, and their request to reinstate the most popular rule in U.S. history should be honored.

The undersigned organizations do not find the USDA's oft-repeated rationale for repealing the 2001 Roadless Rule to be valid. The administration incorrectly alleges the 2001 protections were revoked because of court rulings in Idaho and Wyoming. Neither

The Heritage Forests Campaign is an alliance of conservationists, wildlife advocates, clergy, educators, scientists, and other Americans who are working together to uphold protection of our National Forests

of these cases remains on the books: the Idaho decision was overturned, and the Wyoming decision was vacated, both by higher courts.

Our petition asks the USDA to fulfill its duty as caretaker of these public lands, in trust for the American people, who have repeatedly made clear their desire that the USDA honor the Roadless Rule and protect these irreplaceable wild forests. We urge you to hold the Forest Service to its noble mission of "caring for the land and serving people." Once these natural treasures are gone, they are gone forever.

Sincerely,

Alabama Environmental Council
Alaska Center for the Environment
Alaska Rainforest Campaign
American Lands Alliance
American Wildlands
Arizona PIRG
Arizona Wilderness Coalition
Audubon Society of Portland
BARK
Biodiversity Conservation Alliance
Black Warrior Riverkeeper
Buckeye Forest Council
California Wilderness Coalition
Californian's for Western Wilderness
Cascadia Wildlands Project
Center for Biological Diversity
Citizens for Better Forestry
Coastal Conservation League
ConnPIRG
Conservation Northwest
Deerlodge Forest Defense Fund
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Environment Colorado
Environment Maine
Environment Texas
Environment California
Environmental Protection Information Center
Florida PIRG
Forest Ecology Network
Forest Guardians
Forest Inholders Guarding Habitat Together
Forest Watch
Forests Forever

Friends of Living Oregon Waters
Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness
Friends of the Clearwater
Friends of the Inyo
Friends of the Red Desert
Georgia ForestWatch
Grant County Conservationists
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Greenpeace USA
Habitat Education Center
Headwaters
Heartwood
Idaho Conservation League
Illinois PIRG
Indiana PIRG
Iowa PIRG
John Muir Project
Kentucky Heartwood
Klamath Forest Alliance
Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center
Leavenworth Audubon Adopt-a-Forest
Los Padres Forest Watch
Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper
Maricopa Audubon Society
MaryPIRG
MASSPIRG
Missouri Forest Alliance
MontPIRG
MOPIRG
National Forest Protection Alliance
Native Forest Network
Natural Resources Defense Council
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
NHPIRG
NJPIRG
NMPIRG
Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Alliance Network
Northwoods Wilderness Recovery
Olympic Forest Coalition
Oregon Natural Resources Council
OSPIRG
PennEnvironment
Pilchuck Audubon Society
PIRGIM (PIRG in Michigan)
Portland Audubon
RESTORE:The North Woods

RIPIRG
Save Our Canyons
Selkirk Conservation Alliance
Sequoia ForestKeeper
Sierra Club
Sitka Conservation Society
Society for Natural Resources Conservation
Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project
Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition
Southern Environmental Law Center
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Southwest Montana Wildlands Alliance
Spirit of Utah Wilderness
The Alaska Coalition
The Center for Biological Diversity
The Clinch Coalition
The Lands Council
The Mountaineers
The Wilderness Society
US PIRG
Ventana Wilderness Alliance
Virginia Forest Watch
Washington Wilderness Coalition
WashPIRG
West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
Western North Carolina Alliance
Wild South
Wild Utah Project
Wild Virginia
Wilderness Workshop
Wildlands CPR
WISPIRG
Wyoming Outdoor Council
Wyoming Wilderness Association

CC:

Mark Rey

Undersecretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources & Environment.

Dale Bosworth

Chief of the US Forest Service