

Wild Connections Action Alert

August 11, 2008

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Dear Wild Connections Supporter,

Today, 4.4 million acres of Colorado's quiet, undeveloped national forests are protected by the landmark 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. But tomorrow, these last serene backcountry lands will be opened to human manipulation and industrial development **unless Coloradoans speak out loud** against the newly proposed "Colorado 'Road-the' Roadless Area Rule.

The proposed "Colorado Rule" in no way reflects, nor respects, what Coloradoans have repeatedly asked for over the last decade - strong protections for our last undeveloped lands.

Please see the articles below for details on how you can help preserve our public land heritage - for people, for wildlife, for our economy, for our future.

Public Open Houses Scheduled for Next Week! Only 2 meetings in our area - Pueblo & Denver

The US Forest Service is holding open-houses to present the proposed rule, a rule that threatens our backcountry heritage, to the public. **Your voice is critical** to defend these areas.

Unfortunately, the Forest Service decided to not take verbal comments at this meeting. This is woefully inadequate, as Coloradoans must have the opportunity to ensure that our traditions, our concerns, and our love for these lands are truly heard. Concerned citizens need to tell the Forest Service that the open-house format clearly diminishes the public's ability to work with the Forest Service to help shape how **our** public lands are managed for the benefit of all.

Even though the Forest Service will not be accepting verbal comments at these meetings, we urge you to attend to learn more about the proposed Colorado-specific Roadless Rule.

Wild Connections will also be arranging car-pools from Colorado Springs, and we'll host a pre-meeting on site to provide additional details, resources and to answer questions. Please contact Michael@WildConnections.org or Ellen@WildConnections.org for additional details on the open-houses.

Please attend one of the Roadless open houses, locations and times are:

Pueblo Public Open House

Monday, August 18th
Pueblo, Colorado (CSU-Pueblo campus)
2200 Bonforte Boulevard
Pueblo, CO 81001

5:00 - 8:30 p.m. *



Mt. Elbert Roadless Area. Help us ensure its future!

Denver Public Open House

Thursday, August 21, 2008
Denver, Colorado (Marriot Denver West in Golden)
1717 Denver West Boulevard
Golden, CO 80401
5:00 - 8:30 p.m. *

* If you can attend anytime between 5-6:30 p.m., it would be most beneficial. Attendees are not expected to stay the duration of the time.

For more background on how we got to this current rule, check out our [issue archives](#) and www.roadless.net.

Take Action Now!!

Please ask Governor Ritter to protect Colorado's roadless heritage

It is **vital to contact and urge Governor Ritter** to slow down this effort which will drastically undermine Colorado's current Roadless Area protections. The Governor has the power to tell the Forest Service that they need to listen to Colorado's public, and that the public has already spoken for strong protections. Roadless lands are too critical to have a rushed process that bulldozes public opinion, and even worse bulldozes new roads into our backcountry.

Please Take Action Now - [Click here for a suggested letter to Governor Ritter.](#)

Submitting Comments to the Forest Service

Wild Connections will provide suggested talking points and information to help you provide written comments to the US Forest Service. However, it **is more important to contact Governor Ritter now**, time is of the essence.

Proposed "Colorado Specific Rule" Strips Protection

Why is this rule bad, and what can YOU do?

Currently, the balanced 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule is the law of the land. The proposed Colorado-specific rule seeks to replace the national rule with weaker provisions. Why is this rule bad for Colorado, and how does it specifically strip the current protections afforded to Colorado's Roadless lands?

This proposed rule is bad for Colorado - Colorado's Roadless Areas **deserve no less protection** than currently afforded under the 2001 Rule.

- **The Rule is Vague:** The language in the proposed rule is extremely vague. This sets up the dangerous potential of individual interpretations by agency and stakeholder groups as to what can, and cannot occur, in Roadless Areas. This will create future conflict and tension on most projects that the Forest Service proposes within Roadless Areas. The agency is already underfunded and understaffed, thus fueling future tension over Roadless Area management, when the need for their protection is clearly already agreed upon, is irresponsible. There are far more pressing issues that we, the public, and the agency need to address.
- **"Long-Term Temporary Roads:"** The proposed rule would create a new agency definition, the "long-term temporary road." The agency states these roads could remain on the landscape for up to 30 years. These "roads" would be carved into lands now protected as Roadless with the goal to facilitate greater logging, mining and drilling in the backcountry. Most

dangerous, the agency is not truly treating these roads as what they are, roads! Therefore, the agency says the presence of a "long-term temporary road" will not have an impact on the area being Roadless! The agency manipulation of definitions cannot be allowed, for as soon as any road, temporary or permanent is built, the damage to the ecosystem and habitat is done.

- **Handout to Industry:** The proposed rule blatantly hands-out currently protected Roadless acreage to both the ski and coal mining industries. Further, the proposed rule seeks to allow oil and gas leases to go forward for extractive development within these undeveloped areas.
- **Increased Logging of our backcountry:** The proposed rule has vague language that would allow "logging for wildlife." This oxymoronic rationale flies in the face of accepted science. Further, logging is encouraged under the guise of reducing fuel loads. While general forest health and reducing fire risk is a concern that needs to be addressed, this rule's vague allowances in no way offers a solution. In fact, it is increasing the problem and further endangering local communities. This is because, as Forest Service research shows, the best protection for communities and private property is achieved by making structures fire resistant and by reducing fuels within a maximum distance of about 40 meters (~120 feet) from the structure. The rule's proposed language will increase the risk to communities by diluting agency resources into treating the backcountry, not directly adjacent to private property where the treatments must occur.

The 2001 Roadless Rule, the national standard, offers strong protection in a balanced manner. The proposed Colorado-specific rule is **not** what Colorado needs, or wants. The public needs more time to ensure our public backcountry lands are protected in a way that offers solutions to public needs that are appropriate, based on solid science, and economical.

Please contact Governor Ritter today! We will ask you to also submit letters to the US Forest Service soon.

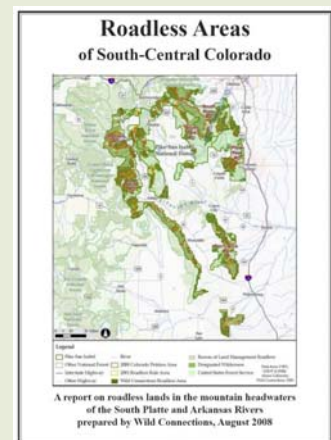
The Value and Benefits of Roadless Areas

A new Wild Connections Report is available

Are you curious what ecological and economic benefits Roadless Areas provide? Do you want to know more about the wonderful recreational opportunities afforded by preserving natural, undeveloped public lands? Do you want to learn more about any one of the 82 Roadless Areas in our backyard?

Wild Connections has just released a new report, "The Roadless Areas of South-Central Colorado." This report compiles both citizen and expert data to provide the public, political leaders, and agency staff up-to-date and accurate information on Roadless Areas in south-central Colorado.

To view the report, [please click here...](#)



"Roadless Areas of South-Central Colorado" - A new Wild Connections Report!

A Brief History of the Roadless Debate

It's time to stop stop debating and start protecting

In order to understand how this rule is stripping the current, well-balanced protections which Coloradoans have asked for in the past, a little history is needed.

The idea of preserving and protecting natural, undeveloped public lands via Forest Service Roadless management standards started in the 1920's. After many iterations of Forest Service rules, including public and Congressional involvement, the landmark 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule finally created strong and well-balanced protections for our last, unroaded lands. While the 2001 Rule should have ended the almost 80 year debate, it was still subjected to countless lawsuits from different special interest and commodity access groups.

Regardless of all this debate, time and time again Coloradoans have repeated their strong support for the protection of Colorado's Roadless Areas.

- **2001 Roadless Rule:** The Roadless Rule was the product of more than three years of deliberation and the most extensive federal rulemaking in history, with more than 600 public hearings and more than 1.6 million comments in favor of its protections (over 90% in favor). Since it was issued in 2001, Americans have submitted more than 3 million public comments to voice their support for this conservation policy, which provides balanced management of these public lands.
- **2004/2005:** The Bush Administration up-ended the 2001 Rule, and replaced it instead with an unfunded mandate, a process that required individual states to create individual rules.
- **2005:** Then Governor Owen's complied with the new Bush process, and initiated a process for developing a Colorado-specific Roadless Rule. Again, tens of thousands of Coloradoans asked for strong protections for our backcountry Roadless lands. While leading conservation, recreation, hunting and angling, and wildlife enthusiasts participated in the 2005 Colorado petition process, we never supported the administration's individual state rule process. This process both threatened to break national unity for Roadless protections leading to poor landscape scale conservation practices, but also setup Colorado's Roadless lands to be second-class compared to other states.
- **2007:** Governor Ritter presented a petition to the Forest Service requesting protection for Roadless Areas in Colorado as an "insurance policy" in the event that current legal cases should void the 2001 Roadless Rule.
- **Current:** Shortly after Colorado created it's state rule petition, the courts reinstated the 2001 Rule nationally. However, the Colorado rule is still being pushed forward, and will replace the current 2001 national rule that protects Colorado's backcountry lands.
- **August 12th, 2008:** A new ruling just issued has enjoined the 2001 Roadless Rule. However, this does **not affect** Colorado's State-specific process!

Only Governor Ritter can stop this rollback! This proposed rule is not what Colorado asked for! The proposed new rule **will strip most protections** currently in place. The 2001 Roadless Rule was balanced and the result of a detailed public involvement process. The proposed Colorado-specific Rule must be stopped – Colorado's Roadless lands deserve no less protection!

Please urge Governor Ritter to speak up on behalf of Colorado!

For more history, including summaries of the legal rulings, please go to www.roadless.net.

What Happened With?

Delegation of Colorado's Conservation Leadership Travels to Washington

Wild Connections, along with key leadership from conservation, recreation, hunting and angling groups, and outdoor industry representatives went to Washington DC to personally submit comments to the Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee (RACNAC).



Michael takes time to chat with Smokey on Roadless.

The RACNAC is a citizen advisory committee charged with advising the Forest Service on Roadless Area conservation management and policy.

Wild connections attended the two-day citizen advisory panel meeting to offer substantive comments so that our critical Roadless lands are preserved for future use of all our local citizens, tourists, and wildlife.

To read Wild Connections' verbal comments presented on July 29th, 2008, [please click here](#).

Upcoming Hikes & Events Come Join Us!

We are working on our fall hike schedule, but ***right now we must protect our Roadless lands*** so there are undeveloped lands to go explore in the future!

In Closing:

Thank you for your passion for Colorado's public lands! If you have comments or questions about our new *E-News* or the topics above, please email Michael Rogers at Michael@WildConnections.org.

Sincerely,

Michael Rogers

*Director of Policy, Programs & Outreach
Wild Connections*

UASPP, d.b.a. Wild Connections, is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Our mission is to identify, protect and restore lands of the Upper Arkansas and South Platte watersheds to ensure the survival of native species and ecological richness.