

Action Alert

Wild Connections & Central CO Wilderness Coalition

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Dear Michael,

Please take a moment to help Wild Connections and the Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition protect Colorado's 4.4 million acres of undeveloped Forest Service lands. The public comment deadline is approaching fast. Comments must be **received by Monday, February 25, 2008**.

For those who have already asked the Forest Service to protect our Roadless backcountry lands, thank you, if you have not taken action yet please read on...

Colorado's Roadless Areas at Risk - Again Your comments needed by February 25th

On December 26th, directed by the Bush administration, the U.S. Forest Service announced the start of a Colorado specific rulemaking process. Colorado will become one of only two states in the nation that will have weaker protections for these precious backcountry lands! Speak out now to protect Colorado's 4.4 million acres of undeveloped Forest Service lands.



Mt. Elbert Roadless Area. Photo by Rob Koran.

The U.S. Forest Service is accepting comments on this proposal **until February 25, 2008**.

[Click to Take Action Now!](#)

The Value of Protecting Backcountry Lands

We all fundamentally know that wild, undeveloped and unspoiled lands are essential providers of natural services such as clean drinking water and clean air. They are also critical for wildlife as they allow undisturbed birthing areas, protected winter habitats when animals are at their most vulnerable, and key migration corridors. Roadless lands offer opportunities for scientific research on natural ecosystems, providing important baseline data to evaluate our changing world.

But these peaceful lands also provide people with invaluable experiences and unique opportunities for quiet recreation such as hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hunting and fishing.

Here are a just a few of the roadless areas that may be adversely impacted by the new rule:

- **Mt. Elbert Roadless Area** - home of our highest 14'er;
- **Burning Bear Roadless Area** - find solitude within an hour and a half drive from Denver;
- **Chipeta Roadless Area** - critical lynx habitat and heart of a top-tier lynx migration corridor as defined by the Southern Rockies Ecosystem Project;
- **Scraggy Peaks** - open for explorers young and old alike while visiting the Mountain Park Environmental Center;
- **Pikes Peak Roadless Area** - a tourist destination coupled with key water storage facilities (all compatible with the 2001 rule);
- **Browns Canyon Roadless Area** - currently awaiting Wilderness designation, protecting the scenic backdrop for the most popular rafting river in America.

Colorado is only one of two states in the nation being subjected to weaker protections of our valuable roadless areas! Colorado's roadless areas are currently protected under the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, but the current proposal would greatly weaken this legal protection, opening the door to mining, logging, and road construction in our roadless backcountry. Add your voice to help Wild Connections protect these lands for the people, for the wildlife, for the future.

How You Can Help

Please tell the Forest Service that you want **all of Colorado's roadless areas protected by the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule.**

Inform the U.S. Forest Service that Colorado's lands deserve no less protection than roadless areas in other states!

Your letter or email **must be received by February 25th.**

Please customize and sign the letter below and email it to the Forest Service at the address provided. We encourage you to include your own personal comments as emails are much more effective when you add your personal experiences or beliefs. Be sure to include your full name and postal address. Your letter must be received by February 25th

Sample Comment Letter

Roadless Area Conservation - Colorado
P.O. Box 162909
Sacramento, CA 95816-2909

Email: COcomments@fsroadless.org
Fax: 916-456-6724

Subject: Keep the 2001 Roadless Rule for Colorado

Dear Kathy Kurtz and Colorado Roadless Team:

One-third of Colorado's National Forests are roadless backcountry. These lands are the heart of the wild areas left in the Rockies and provide vital habitats for fish and wildlife and watersheds that supply clean drinking water. They are valuable for hunters, hikers, anglers and everyone who wants to keep Colorado special. These pristine areas represent our western and our national heritage and it is our duty to protect them so that future generations may enjoy them as well.

Time and again, the citizens of Colorado have repeated their strong support for the protection of Colorado's roadless areas, and roadless areas throughout the nation, embodied in the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. They have said so both during the initial public hearings that led to adoption of the 2001 national rule and again during public meetings in 2005-06 held by the state's Roadless Areas Task Force. We are asking that you allow these protections to remain in place in Colorado as well as the rest of the country.

The proposed Colorado-specific rule does not reflect the overwhelming public desire to protect these irreplaceable wild lands. We ask that you not approve any state-specific rulemaking that would create less protection for Colorado's roadless areas than that currently enjoyed by roadless areas throughout the nation under the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

If you can, please customize your letter here for additional impact by adding your personal comments and experiences or by including any of the points below...

Sincerely,
YOUR NAME
CITY, STATE

Additional Points of Impact for Letters:

- The Roadless Area Conservation Rule of 2001 was the result of the most extensive public process in the history of federal rulemaking — one that generated approximately 1.6 million comments, more than 90% of those in favor of protecting our Roadless heritage.

- The federal courts have upheld the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule which is now in effect nationally. Colorado's roadless backcountry lands deserve no less protection!
- The 2001 Roadless Rule is the national status quo. It maintains current access for hunting, camping, fishing, hiking. Please do not jeopardize our valued recreation opportunities.
- The 2001 Roadless Rule is already flexible enough where it needs to be. Changing the 2001 Rule provisions threatens to weaken and thus void the intended protection of these critical lands.
- In 2006, the Colorado Division of Wildlife fully supported protection of Colorado's roadless backcountry under the 2001 Roadless Rule to protect critical habitat for big game and other wildlife.
- Road construction should not be allowed in roadless areas, except for emergencies. The 2001 rule already provides an adequate exception for emergency access to protect life and public safety.
- The 2001 rule already allows adequate flexibility for fuel treatment projects to protect life and property. Any broader authority places these valuable lands at risk for inappropriate logging projects.
- The first primitive area inventory on national forests was conducted in the mid-1920s by inventorying 74 tracts larger than 200,300 acres. By the 1970s, fifty years of road building left the Forest Service to consider areas larger than 5,000 acres to be primitive backcountry lands and eligible for inventory. If we don't conserve these lands now, what will we have left to inventory in another 50 years?
- Roadless backcountry lands provide vital migration corridors, key habitat such as birthing areas, and other ecosystem benefits such as clean water for Coloradoans.
- Remote backcountry lands areas provide the opportunity for solitude, a commodity ever increasing in value in our society. This is cherished by hikers seeking solace from the daily grind; anglers seeking the best trout fishing in pristine, cold waters; hunters wanting to connect with their prey in the way humans have done for millennia; or the birder wanting to hear the distant warbler. Coloradoans need the 2001 Rule to maintain this quality of life.

For more information on the history of the roadless rule including the current Colorado petition process, visit Colorado's Forest Legacy at: www.roadless.net.

Thank you for your passion for Colorado's public lands! If you have comments or questions, please email Michael Rogers, *Executive Director* at: Michael@WildConnections.org.

Sincerely,

Michael Rogers & John Stansfield

Executive Director *Coordinator*
Wild Connections Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition

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.