



WHY CONGRESS SHOULD OPPOSE USDA'S PROPOSED ROLLBACK OF THE ROADLESS RULE

ROADLESS AREAS PROVIDE:

11,337
CLIMBING
ROUTES



43,826 MILES OF
TRAIL



20,298
MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS



1,000
WHITewater
PADDLING RUNS



IRREPLACEABLE
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
SOLITUDE AND
BACKCOUNTRY EXPERIENCES



The proposed rescission of the 2001 Roadless Rule jeopardizes 44.7 million acres of undeveloped backcountry forestland across the U.S. This accounts for approximately one-third of all national forest lands. For nearly 25 years, the Roadless Rule has protected these landscapes from the onrush of cars and development and the increased fire risk that comes with vehicles in the backcountry.

Why Roadless Protections Matter

- **Broad Public Support.** Roadless areas are cherished by people from all walks of life—hunters, anglers, hikers, climbers, bikers, and families. Groups including Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and Trout Unlimited have expressed strong opposition to this proposed rescission.
- **Wildfire Risks.** New roads don't reduce wildfire threats—they increase them. Studies show that more the vast majority of fires start near roads (upwards of 80-90%) ([NPS](#); [NIFC](#); [Syphard et al. 2008](#); [Parisien et al. 2016](#)), and a recent study by 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.
- **Cost to Taxpayers.** The Forest Service currently manages 370,000 miles of roads, which is double the mileage managed by the Federal Highway Administration, and it faces a multi-billion-dollar maintenance backlog. Adding more roads only worsens the deficit and puts taxpayers further on the hook.
- **Habitat Integrity.** Roadless areas protect migration corridors for elk, mule deer, and other game species, while providing critical habitat for imperiled fish and wildlife. Roads fragment and degrade these ecosystems.

The Problem with USDA's Process

The rescission process has **lacked meaningful public input** and is framed as a wildfire solution when, in fact, it will likely make fire problems worse while draining budgets.

What Members of Congress Can Do

- **Submit an opposition letter** to USDA (best before March).
- **Join a congressional sign-on letter** opposing the rollback.
- **Use congressional influence** to push back or narrow the scope—for example, confining any changes to WUI-adjacent areas rather than sweeping rollbacks.

Bottom Line

Rescinding the Roadless Rule will cost taxpayers, fragment wildlife habitat, increase wildfire risk, and take away the outdoor opportunities that millions of Americans enjoy. Opposition is fiscally responsible, scientifically justified, and politically popular across constituencies.



*Roadless Areas provide habitat to wide-ranging wildlife species prized by hunters.
Photo by Joel Webster.*



*Roadless Areas provide access to a range of backcountry recreation activities.
Photo courtesy of Trout Unlimited.*



*Research shows that the presence of roads increases wildfire risks.
Photo by Matthew Irvin.*