



FORESTS FOREVER

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Legislative battles loom on sequoias, wilderness

Important forest protection bills before this year's Congress

The session of Congress that begins this month (the Senate reconvened on Jan. 18, the House will open on Jan. 31) will take up several high-profile issues, from political corruption to the Endangered Species Act.

Less visible but no less important are two forest protection bills now in Congress that could help shield vast tracts of wild forest from industrial logging, road-building, and development— and from the U.S. Forest Service.

“These bills may not make the front pages,” said Paul Hughes, executive director of Forests Forever, an environmental organization in San Francisco dedicated to protecting the forests of California. “But everyone who wants to preserve our wild forests for future generations should be aware of them.”

The Act to Save America's Forests (S. 1897), introduced on Oct 19, 2005, by Sens. Jon Corzine (D-NJ) and Christopher Dodd (D-CT), would take Giant Sequoia National Monument out of the hands of the Forest Service and put it under the management of the National Park Service.

The measure also would require federal forest agencies to restore native biological diversity on the national forests, end clearcutting on all federal lands and stop logging and roadbuilding in roadless areas.

A companion bill soon will be introduced in the House by Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA).

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The National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2005 (H.R. 3563) was introduced by Reps. Jay Inslee (D-WA) and Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) in response to the May 5, 2005, repeal of the Clinton-era Roadless Area Conservation Rule by the Bush administration.

The Roadless Act would write the protections afforded by the original rule into federal law and keep logging, oil and gas drilling, mining, and other forms of development out of pristine, unroaded national forest lands.

One of the most popular environmental rules ever, the original Roadless Area Conservation Rule protected 58.5 million roadless acres of national forest from extractive uses.

By stripping away this protection, the Forest Service put at risk hundreds of plant, insect, and animal species, threatened drinking-water quality and left forests more vulnerable than before to invasive species.

“These bills give us an opportunity to ensure that wild, roadless forests will still be there to be wondered at and enjoyed by our children, by their children, and by everyone who comes after us,” said Hughes. “If we don’t save these last wild forests, we will be giving away an irreplaceable heritage.”

Forests Forever has campaigned for preserving the protections of the original roadless rule since 2003, and has been a strong supporter of the Act to Save America’s Forests since the bill’s introduction. The San Francisco-based group is urging people to write, email, FAX, or phone their congressional representatives and ask them to support these important forest protection measures.