



# FORESTS FOREVER

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Governor will petition feds to protect California's roadless forests** *Schwarzenegger will also appeal Southern California forest plans*

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announced Tuesday that he will file a petition today with the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture seeking to protect all 4.4 million acres of federal roadless areas in the state.

"We have been critical of the governor in the past for not speaking up when California's forests were in jeopardy," said Paul Hughes, executive director of Forests Forever. "But this action represents a 180-degree reversal of Schwarzenegger's November 2004 revelation that he would not file a petition under the new, weakened Bush roadless rule."

California's 18 national forests contain about 4.4 million acres of roadless land. The governor's petition will reportedly request protection for all of it.

One of the most popular environmental rules ever, the original Clinton-era roadless rule protected 58.5 million roadless acres of national forest from extractive uses.

By stripping away this protection in May 2005, the Forest Service placed at risk hundreds of plant, insect, and animal species, threatened drinking-water quality and left forests more vulnerable than before to invasive species.

"Schwarzenegger's decision to actively seek protection for roadless areas sets a great example for governors in the West and around the country," Hughes said. "It appears that the governor is finally hearing the voices of Californians who want to see our forest heritage protected from excess logging, mining, and development.

"But, as always, the devil is in the details. We are concerned that firefighting provisions or fuels reductions projects might compromise the wilderness character

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of roadless areas. What ‘emergency’ roadbuilding or access provisions will allow these activities to go on?”

Forests Forever has campaigned for preserving the protections of the original roadless rule since 2003. It has spoken out against Bush's 2005 repeal of the Clinton rule, and in favor of the Roadless Area Conservation Act sponsored by Rep. Jay Inslee (D-WA), which would redesignate roadless areas as wilderness. At the state level, the group has supported passage of A.B. 715 by Assemblyman Lloyd Levine, which would prohibit the state from undercutting the Clinton rule. The Levine bill passed both Assembly and Senate in 2005, but languished prior to a final passage vote, partly due to a lack of active support by Schwarzenegger.

In 2005 Forests Forever joined a lawsuit filed by Earthjustice on behalf of 20 environmental organizations asking that the original Roadless Area Conservation Rule of 2001 be restored. The governor’s actions do not affect this lawsuit. The disposition of California’s petition is still uncertain, as a rulemaking process and final decision by the Bush administration must follow.

Nevertheless, the governors’ action is important for California and the West, and Forests Forever applauds his decision to protect the state’s roadless forests.

The decision by the Resources Department to appeal the recently drafted forest management plans for four Southern California national forests– Cleveland, Los Padres, Angeles and San Bernardino– is welcome news as well. The plans would allow expanded off-road vehicle use, electric transmission towers, toll roads and hydropower projects, while designating very little new wilderness.