



# FORESTS FOREVER

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**October 11, 2005**

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### **Citizen petition drive launched to reinstate roadless protections** *Asks Bush to stop logging, development on wild forests*

SAN FRANCISCO—Forests Forever announced today that it is joining 74 other conservation groups to ask Californians and Americans across the nation to petition the U.S. government to reinstate the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule that limited logging and roadbuilding on nearly 60 million acres of national forests.

The petition will be filed under the Administrative Procedures Act, which allows citizens to request that the government issue, amend or revoke federal rules.

The announcement comes as pressure mounts on the federal government to protect wild forests from logging, mining and other destructive activities. The petition will seek to reinstate protections for 4.4 million acres of national forests in California, and in roadless forests across the country.

In May, the Bush administration reversed its own pledge to uphold the 2001 rule, substituting a new regulation favoring logging and mining interests. Viewed by conservationists and many elected officials as one of the most sweeping environmental rollbacks of the Bush administration, the new rule has drawn blunt criticism and challenges.

Opponents of the Bush policy say it is sparking increased logging, mining and oil-drilling in the ever-shrinking portion of the national forests that remains wild. Budget hawks have also complained that road-building and maintenance costs increase the deficit with no benefit to taxpayers.

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On Oct. 6, twenty conservation groups including Forests Forever filed a lawsuit in federal district court in San Francisco seeking to invalidate the Bush administration decision targeting the last, large untouched tracts of our national forests for industrial development. The suit asks the court to reinstate the original roadless rule that protected these key areas.

In addition, on Aug. 30 state attorneys general from three western states—California, New Mexico and Oregon— filed a legal challenge to the administration’s repeal of protections for America’s last pristine roadless forests.

The suit was filed on the grounds that repeal of the roadless rule violates federal law because the government failed to meet its responsibility to make a complete analysis of the new regulation’s environmental impact. Other state attorneys general and governors are expected to join the lawsuit in the coming weeks.

On July 28, U.S. Reps. Jay Inslee (D-WA) and Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) re-introduced the National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2005, a forest protection bill with 143 bipartisan co-sponsors.

Inslee and Boehlert did so in response to the recent U.S. Forest Service repeal of the Roadless Rule. Preparations are also underway for introduction of a Senate companion bill.

“National forests belong to everyone, but the new, Bush-instituted process shuts out too many voices and provides virtually no protections for the roadless national forests in our state,” said Paul Hughes, executive director of Forests Forever. “The petition gives state residents a chance to be heard directly, and before unwise decisions are made that could permanently affect California’s environment.”

Groups supporting the petition include Forests Forever, Defenders of Wildlife, National Environmental Trust, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society and U.S. Public Interest Research Group. Combined, they will draw on a base of millions of members.

Chapters in all 50 states representing the groups will mobilize their members, civic leaders and the general public via internet and traditional grassroots methods to submit petitions. An online petition submission form is posted at <http://www.net.org/petition.php?partner=FF>