

FOREST ROADS WORKING GROUP

**Wildlife Forever Wildlife Management Institute The Wildlife Society
Trout Unlimited Izaak Walton League of America International Paper
Outdoor Industry Association Pinchot Institute for Conservation**

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FOREST ROADS WORKING GROUP SUBMITS PROPOSAL TO THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION FOR PROTECTING ROADLESS AREA VALUES

Recommendations detail how to implement the rule and move the process forward

Washington, D.C. (March 26) – A coalition of conservationists, sportsmen and women, members of the forest products industry and outdoor recreation businesses that support protection of National Forest roadless areas and their important social and economic values has submitted a series of recommendations to the Bush Administration for moving the process related to the Roadless Rule forward.

The Forest Roads Working Group's (FRWG) recommendations, submitted to officials with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Forest Service on Tuesday, March 25, were the result of interaction with various forest interest groups over the last two years and, more recently, a two-day roadless area conservation dialog that took place among dozens of stakeholders on December 3-4, 2002.

Included in the submission to the Administration are recommendations for implementing the existing Roadless Rule while establishing a collaborative process over the next several years to consider whether improvements should be made to the rule and, if so, what should those improvements be.

"...the FRWG believes the existing [rule] provides an acceptable basis for national management of [roadless areas], but recognizes there are legitimate questions concerning the rule, and recommends that it be implemented while potential adjustments are considered through a structured process of information gathering and continued multi-stakeholder dialogue," the recommendation stated.

The members of the FRWG include Wildlife Forever, the Wildlife Management Institute, The Wildlife Society, Trout Unlimited, Izaak Walton League of America, International Paper, the Outdoor Industry Association and the Pinchot Institute for Conservation. The organizations came together in 2001 as a series of litigants began to challenge the Roadless Area Conservation Rule that affected 58.5 million acres in the National Forest System.

While FRWG members have varying views of the Roadless Rule, the coalition grew out of a general agreement that the unsettled nature of the Rule could end up threatening the conservation of roadless areas and their unique values. Working Group members also believe that despite the ongoing controversy involving the Roadless Rule's implementation, an acceptable solution can be identified and supported by the diverse array of interested stakeholders.

The Forest Roads Working Group's final recommendations can be obtained through the Meridian Institute's web site at www.merid.org/roadless. The Institute is the professional mediation group that conducted the dialogue.