



Meeting Summary

Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Roadless Area Conservation

December 3-4, 2002

Arlington, VA

I. INTRODUCTION and OPENING REMARKS

On December 3-4, 2002, at the request of the Forest Roads Working Group (FRWG), the Meridian Institute convened and facilitated a Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Roadless Area Conservation. The FRWG is comprised of organizations that represent conservationists, sportsmen and women, a forest policy organization, wildlife management professional society, a major forest products company, and an association of outdoor recreation businesses that have come together to ensure progress can be made to conserve roadless area values and characteristics in the National Forest System. Members of the FRWG include: the Izaak Walton League of America, International Paper, Outdoor Industry Association, Pinchot Institute for Conservation, The Wildlife Society, Trout Unlimited, Wildlife Forever, and the Wildlife Management Institute. The Meridian Institute is a non-for-profit organization that serves as a neutral convenor and facilitator of dialogues and negotiations on environmental, sustainable development and other public policy issues. For more information on Meridian see www.merid.org.

The December 3-4, 2002 meeting was attended by 43 people representing a wide range of views regarding roadless area conservation. A list of participants can be found in Appendix A.

Jim Range, Forest Roads Working Group Member – Mr. Range, a principal organizer and member of the FRWG welcomed and thanked attendees for participating in the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Roadless Area Conservation. Mr. Range explained the history of the Forest Roads Working Group and the reasons for the dialogue, stating that the FRWG believes there exists an acceptable solution that can be identified and supported by stakeholders through an open and constructive dialogue. He stressed that the FRWG paper is meant to be a starting point and that the FRWG recognizes they do not have a monopoly on good ideas.

Tim Mealey, Meridian Institute – Mr. Mealey of the Meridian Institute explained Meridian's role as a non-profit organization that assists multiple parties to solve problems and resolve conflicts on natural resource and sustainable forest management issues. He then provided background regarding the process leading up to the convening of this dialogue, explaining that Meridian's original recommendation was for the FRWG to engage in multiple one-on-one consultations with a variety of stakeholder groups, and to potentially follow these with a multi-

stakeholder meeting. However, funding was not available for this level of interaction, and so Meridian and the FRWG decided to invite a balanced and broad array of stakeholders to participate in a dialogue and to try to time the event at a point in time that would be least threatening to all interests (e.g. between the November mid-term elections and the start of the 108th Congress). Mr. Mealey also explained that several people who were invited to participate had indicated their desire to attend but they were unable to due to other obligations. He stated that representatives of several but not all of the national and regional environmental non-profit organizations had responded to the invitations by indicating they were not willing to participate because they felt their participation might signal a willingness to accept something less than the provisions of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Bob Irvin later stated for clarification purposes that his presence on behalf of the World Wildlife Federation should not be construed as a willingness to accept something less than the existing Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Mr. Mealey then stressed the objective of the dialogue is not to achieve consensus, but rather to listen and learn from each other about underlying concerns and interests and, in so doing, to try dig deeper and go beyond previously publicly stated positions. He concluded by proposing the following groundrules, which were agreed to by the group:

- (1) Participants are encouraged to share their thoughts and views in an open and frank manner and to be respectful of other points of view;
- (2) The discussions will be guided by the FRWG paper, but not be limited by the content of the paper, additional points of view are welcome;
- (3) Participants will have an opportunity to review and comment on the draft meeting summary which will be prepared by Meridian;
- (4) Invitees and participants are encouraged to submit letters that can be incorporated and become a part of the “record” Meridian will compile, rather than relying only on the summary to ensure the accuracy of all points of view; and
- (5) All participants, including but not limited to the FRWG, will be free to use ideas and outcomes generated by the dialogue.

Dale Bosworth, USDA, Chief, Forest Service – Mr. Bosworth stated his appreciation for the opportunity to participate, his interest in the FRWG effort, and his belief that dialogue among interested parties produces positive results even if a final solution is not arrived at. Mr. Bosworth stated that there are currently 35 million acres of wilderness on the NFS, 58.5 million acres of roadless, and together these comprise nearly half of all national forest lands (192 million acres). He noted the importance of the recreation opportunities provided by roadless areas, and explained that from his perspective roadless areas provide an important category of use that is between wilderness and multiple use, and that the worst outcome would be for these lands to become completely developed or completely off-limits. Mr. Bosworth concluded that enduring decisions require satisfaction of multiple viewpoints and dialogues like this one are a means to achieve that goal.

Mark Rey, USDA, Undersecretary for Natural Resources – Mr. Rey thanked the FRWG and Meridian for convening the dialogue and expressed his hope that the results of the meeting would provide assistance to the USDA Forest Service in their decisions regarding management of inventoried roadless areas (IRAs). He went on to state that the disposition of roadless areas in the National Forest System (NFS) has been discussed for the better part of a century, and that since the 1980s (the modern era of land and resource planning), Congress has designated, upon forest plan recommendations, roughly 10 million acres of wilderness. Since 1994, there have

been no new wilderness designations to speak of, but there are currently 4 million acres of wilderness area recommendations from forest plans pending. Since 1982, 2.8 million acres of inventoried roadless areas have been roaded. Current forest plans establish a ban on road construction in 24.2 million acres of IRAs, and, absent the protections afforded by the RACR, could allow road construction in the remaining 34.3 million acres. Mr. Rey reminded participants that the Bush Administration has expressed its support for the basic goals of the RACR and has published a set of principles in an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that they intend to use to guide any future amendments to the rule. He concluded by once again thanking the meeting organizers and encouraging participants to work hard to find new and creative solutions to the longstanding challenge of finding a reasonable approach to conserving roadless area values.

II. AGENDA REVIEW

Tim Mealey reviewed the agenda and asked if participants had any questions. In response to a question from one participant, Mr. Mealey confirmed that there is no intent for this dialogue to venture into or be perceived in any way as settlement negotiations for parties who are engaged in litigation on the RACR.

III. OVERVIEW OF FRWG WORKING PAPER

Jim Banks, FRWG Member – Mr. Banks reviewed key points of the working paper developed by the FRWG, which is attached hereto as Attachment B. Mr. Banks stated the FRWG belief that roadless areas constitute a significant national resource and that a program is needed to protect this resource. Mr. Banks highlighted the values and characteristics of IRAs identified as important by the FRWG, the activities the FRWG believes pose a threat to the important values and characteristics of roadless areas, the need for a national policy to protect these values and address these threats, and the FRWG’s recommendations for doing so through a management by exception approach complemented with related policies for management of lands outside of IRAs. *(Mr. Banks presentation of the content of the Discussion Paper was quite detailed. This summary is not intended to provide the level of detail of his presentation. Readers of this summary who were not in attendance who wish to understand the content of the FRWG Discussion Paper are encouraged to read the paper.)*

IV. DIALOGUE

The remaining sections of this summary of the discussions that took place at the *Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Roadless Area Conservation* are organized by categories reflective of the meeting agenda and of the FRWG working paper, rather than the precise chronological order in which comments were made at the meeting. Unless specifically noted otherwise, the summary of the discussion points does not represent a consensus of the group, but rather a record of the various points made during the dialogue. The discussion began with clarifying questions on the FRWG working paper. Subsequent discussion focused on values associated with roadless areas, activities impacting roadless areas, determination of lands to be included in roadless area designation, components of a national roadless area policy, and benefits and shortcomings of a national rule versus local land management planning.

A. Clarifying Questions

One participant raised the question of how the term “road” is defined, especially as it relates to prohibitions on motorized access to roadless areas. Mr. Banks and others responded that the definition used by the FRWG was the same as that used in the RACR. Upon further discussion it was clarified that the width of a what constitutes a road is of concern to the motorized recreational community in that the more narrow the definition the more severely it would limit what they consider to be legitimate use. Another participant suggested that sources for the FRWG paper be cited so that readers could better understand the context of the facts stated in the paper.

B. Values

Participants discussed the values associated with roadless areas, including those identified in the FRWG paper as well as additional values not specifically called out in the paper. There appeared to be general agreement that roadless area values articulated in the paper are important. Several participants suggested they should be broadened to include other values. However, it was also recognized that while there may be agreement about the values associated with roadless areas, it is not always possible to simultaneously protect all of those values, and not all roadless areas possess those values to the same degree.

1. The Value of Undisturbed Ecosystems – The discussion of values began with a question about the definition of the term “undisturbed ecosystem” as used in the FRWG paper. Is it the historic range of variability or something else? Also, how does the use of this term relate to the risk of catastrophic fire in roadless areas? Some participants maintained that some active management may be necessary in roadless areas in order to protect the associated values from the threat of catastrophic fire.

2. Recreation Values – Some felt the articulation of the “semi-primitive dispersed recreation value” was too limiting and excluded values associated with motorized recreation (e.g., ease of access by all age groups). Conversely it was noted that motorized recreation could have adverse impacts on non-motorized use.

3. Economic/Social Values – Several participants from diverse perspectives noted the importance of a range of economic and social values associated with roadless areas and suggested that the FRWG paper would be strengthened by including explicit reference to the economic benefits derived from:

- uses of roadless areas such as recreation, tourism and non-timber forest products,
- ecosystem services such as public water supplies,
- community stability/livelihoods derived from fuels reduction and in a limited number of specific cases from mining, and
- protection of assets of private forestlands that are commingled in checkerboard pattern with public lands especially as its relates to the threat of catastrophic fire.

4. Cultural and Religious Values – One participant noted that the description of cultural values associated with roadless areas should be expanded to encompass the importance of subsistence use (e.g. fishing, etc.) in roadless areas for meeting nutritional, cultural and

commercial needs, especially of Native Americans, and the use of cultural plants from roadless areas for medicines and other uses.

5. Democratic Process Values – While it is not a value directly associated with roadless areas per se, there was some discussion of the value of the democratic process associated with local input (also discussed later as part of national rule versus local land management planning, see Section IV.F. below). It was also pointed out that the current draft of the FRWG paper fails to mention the value of the democratic process associated with all of the public input that led up to the promulgation of the RACR, and the fact that the number of public meetings and comments received was the largest of its kind in history and overwhelmingly in favor of the rule. Another perspective expressed was that the public process associated with RACR, while generating a large number of comments, did not facilitate meaningful public participation and disregarded previous local/state processes that addressed the disposition of roadless and wilderness areas within the NFS.

6. Protecting the Values versus Protecting Certain Areas – It was suggested that if the values described in the FRWG paper are to be protected, one approach to doing so would be to first identify where on the landscape the values are found and then determine the best way to protect these values wherever they are located – whether in IRAs or in roaded areas. Also, multiple participants stressed that in addition to protecting values on roadless areas for the sake of protecting roadless areas, if left unmanaged, roadless areas pose a threat to ecological, economic and other values on private lands adjacent to IRAs. Specifically, the risk to private lands of fire and disease that spread from roadless areas was raised.

C. Threats

The discussion of activities impacting roadless areas and threats to roadless area values focused on the threat of catastrophic wildfire, distinctions regarding the impact of motorized and other uses, and comments about the backlog of road maintenance.

1. Catastrophic Wildfire – Several participants viewed catastrophic wildfire as a significant threat to the ecological values associated with roadless areas. The potential for catastrophic fire to modify soil productivity was mentioned as an example of this threat. This topic received a significant amount of attention during the course of the meeting and was further addressed in a number of the “information bin” items described in Section V.

2. Motorized Recreation – It was stated that some of the threats to roadless area values attributed to motorized recreation are not exclusive to this use. For example, horses, dogs, mountain bikes, and hikers all assist in the spread of noxious weeds and all can contribute to erosion. Regarding air pollution, it was noted that new emissions standards for OHVs have recently been adopted.

3. Road Construction and Maintenance – It was clarified that the term road construction is intended to include reconstruction as well as construction. In addition, there was much discussion over the course of the meeting about the \$8.4 billion backlog of road maintenance in roaded areas that reinforced the importance of the linkages between roadless area conservation and road maintenance. A member of the FRWG asked why should roads be permitted in the inventoried roadless areas when there is already a huge backlog in road maintenance in the

roaded areas. There appeared to be widespread agreement that this is a critically important issue that needs to be addressed. However, one participant suggested, that the fact that the Forest Service needs to better manage its roads system neither supports the Roadless Policy nor renders it inappropriate. He suggested that no matter how inventoried roadless areas are managed, the agency must still manage its roads. A representative from the recreation industry recommended that conservation interests lobby Congress to support the Forest Service's recreation and road maintenance budgetary needs. At one point in the meeting, however, one participant suggested that given the makeup and chairmanship of the appropriating and authorizing committees in the Senate, it is unrealistic to expect support from Congress for funding to address the backlog in road maintenance unless concessions are made regarding timber extraction in roadless areas in the Tongass National Forest.

4. Timber Extraction – On day two, the facilitator noted that timber extraction from IRAs had not arisen as a topic of conversation, except as it relates to reducing fuel loads, and questioned why this was so. Representatives of the small forest products operators acknowledged that while many small operators and communities depend on fiber from public lands, they were not calling for additional timber extraction from roadless areas because the RACR and the last two fire seasons had shifted perspectives and resulted in a recognition that their need for timber could be met simultaneously with the needs to reduce fire risk and preserve the ecological values of these lands. One participant did say there probably are some specific cases of independent operators or communities that rely on federal timber that would like to gain access to IRAs for timber extraction beyond fuels reduction.

D. Determination of Lands to be Included in the Designation of Roadless Areas

It was observed by more than one participant that variability exists in the values and characteristics among IRAs. For instance, it was stated that IRAs include lands that have become roaded since RARE II, as well as lands that most observers would recognize are not consistent with the values associated with roadless areas because of land uses that occurred before or since RARE II. One specific example of this was raised in a question about whether public lands found in a co-mingled checkerboard pattern with roaded private and state lands meet the values associated with roadless areas and, therefore, whether they should be included in the prohibitions and management-by-exception approach. Several of the forest products companies represented in the meeting described instances where fires or disease spread from IRAs to private forest lands found in such a checkerboard pattern of ownership. Another participant noted that checkerboard patterns of land ownership occur at both the surface and subsurface levels. A suggestion was made to establish criteria that could be used to “ground-truth” the determination of which land should be included in the roadless area designation (see information bin item which suggests that the USDA-FS might wish to gather more information and examples to illustrate the need for such “ground-truthing”).

E. Components of a National Roadless Area Policy

The group discussed the various components of the “management by exception” approach outlined in the FRWG Discussion Paper. Specific components of a national roadless area policy that were discussed or suggested include: prescriptions or exceptions regarding fire, motorized recreation, temporary roads, procedural safeguards, and local decision making (which is summarized in Section F).

1. Catastrophic Wildfire – Differing points of view were expressed about the scientific basis of claims regarding the relative risk of fire due to excessive fuel loading in roaded vs. roadless areas. It was recognized that these differences could not be settled in the context of the meeting, and requests for additional data and information on this topic were added to the information bin. It was suggested that the management system for IRAs should include the ability to address the threat of catastrophic wildfire. Related questions included whether it is technically possible to address this threat without new roads. Several participants stated that low impact techniques to reduce fuel loads are available, but questioned whether there was a willingness to pay for them. It was suggested that there is a direct tradeoff between the cost to prevent fires and the cost to fight fires, and that where it is appropriate to do so, the least intrusive and least impactful approaches to fuel reduction should be implemented, with the implication being that this would still represent a cost savings to the current costs of fighting fires. It was also suggested that in some cases road construction in an IRA for fire prevention purposes might be the best option to reduce the threat of catastrophic fire.

On a related topic, concern was expressed over the FRWG's proposed "let burn" policy for roadless areas, both because of the potential ecological impacts of high intensity burns, and the risk this policy poses for adjacent private lands. It was stated that more information would be needed on the percentage of roadless areas that have been subjected to what other participants were referring to as "catastrophic wildfire" before a decision is made to abandon the FRWG recommendation to allow fires to burn in roadless areas.

It was also stated that the ecological impacts associated with fire depend more on the forest type than on the land use designation. In another related point, a request was made for the timber industry's views on prescribed burning as a tool to manage fire risk. In response, it was stated that prescribed burning might be appropriate in "condition class 1" forests, but that due to the interruption of the natural burn cycle as a result of past fire suppression efforts, introduction of prescribed burns at this time would be too risky in many parts of the forest.

2. Motorized Recreation – Some participants expressed opposition to the FRWG's presumptive standard that "trails are closed unless posted open." One participant pointed out that banning OHV use in roadless areas would further concentrate motorized use in already heavily used parts of the National Forest System. Another emphasized that Wilderness Areas already provide sections of the forest for hikers only. It was suggested that a rule making is not the appropriate place to address law enforcement issues such as those associated with unauthorized and irresponsible OHV use. Later it was pointed out that while some roadless areas currently permit "open use" by OHVs, the Forest Service is moving in the direction of a designated route management scheme for these areas. Motorized user groups are not necessarily against this approach as long as local OHV groups have an opportunity to provide input and a fair process is employed for establishing designated routes. A desire was expressed for greater acknowledgement of the positive contribution the OHV community makes in terms of trail maintenance, education programs, and voluntary enforcement of designated routes. Conversely, concerns were expressed about the impacts associated with OHV use, which are seen as a threat to roadless area values. A suggestion was made to focus on managing this type of recreational use, rather than on prohibiting it.

3. Temporary Roads – Initially, this part of the discussion centered on the FRWG’s recommendation to permit temporary roads under certain conditions and safeguards. A participant questioned if temporary roads would really be temporary and if adequate restoration could occur. It was suggested that it is counter intuitive that temporary roads could be used to enhance roadless values. It was also suggested that securing funding for removal be a pre-condition for any temporary road construction. The Surface Mine Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 was put forth as a potential model for bonding and road closures. A suggestion was made to more clearly specify time and spatial limits “not to exceed…” for temporary roads, as well as other exceptions. With regard to the road maintenance backlog that exists, it was proposed that some of the roads in need of repair be converted to trails for OHVs instead. In addition, one representative of recreation groups offered to support Forest Service efforts to seek transportation funding to address maintenance needs.

4. Commodity Use - Overall, it was stated that forest product-dependent communities’ need for timber could be met simultaneously with the needs to reduce fire risk and preserve the ecological values of these lands. Exceptions discussed included existing agreements, such as the Central Idaho Wilderness Act, that designate portions of some roadless areas for commodity use for local communities, and a limited number of site-specific cases related to energy development.

5. Procedural Safeguards – A question was raised about whether exceptions will be granted on a case-by-case basis or a categorical basis, followed by the suggestion that case-by-case approach would offer the better safeguard. Another question was whether the Chief is the appropriate level of decision-making on whether to grant an exception. It was noted that this is a higher level of decision making than is required for use exceptions in Wilderness Areas.

F. National Rule Versus Local Land Management Planning

In addition to the discussion about specific components of a national policy summarized above, a significant amount of discussion took place over the course of the dialogue about whether a national policy is warranted, whether the local forest planning process is better suited to address the management of roadless areas, and about what specifically people favor or oppose about these two different approaches. The following points were made in this regard:

1. Why a national rule? – In response to this question, members of the FRWG and others expressed concern about incremental loss of roadless areas through the local land management process; stated the benefits of the efficiency, finality and certainty of decision making at the national vs. the local level; reiterated a conviction that roadless area protection is a national problem that deserves a national solution; suggested the need to protect against bad actors; and indicated a need to protect the resource in the face of political and legal uncertainties. Also in response to this question about the rationale for a national rule, an FRWG member asked why new roads should be allowed in roadless areas when there is a huge backlog and insufficient funding to repair and maintain existing roads. Later in the discussion the view was expressed that a national rule is valuable in that it provides consistent sideboards for every part of the country and a mechanism for dispute resolution via the courts, whereas with simple guidance this option is not available.

Related questions were raised by dialogue participants about the level of threat to IRAs and whether the National Forest planning process is failing to protect them. Some participants said

they did not hear a persuasive case for a national rule, and that while a national rule may be efficient, it tends to be too prescriptive and therefore rejected at the local level.

On day two of the dialogue, this subject was explored further. Specifically, a request was made to articulate more precisely what is meant when individuals speak of a national rule and local planning, and what participants favor or oppose about these two approaches. Several participants expressed a dislike for the prescriptive nature of a national rule. More than one participant mentioned dissatisfaction with the process by which the RACR was promulgated, stressing a need to respect local/state processes and agreements, particularly those developed through extensive deliberation and public involvement and authorized by Congress. Concern was expressed about the fact that a national rule fails to acknowledge certain site-specific circumstances. Questions were raised about whether a national rule could address the fact that some IRAs feature less of the desired values than others or the reality that the degree of threat to roadless areas varies across the nation. Several participants expressed concern about the lack of information at the national level necessary for designing a rule. One response to this was to apply an adaptive management approach to managing roadless areas/values. Some participants took issue with this, stating that the problem was not simply a lack of information, but rather a matter of the decision-making being assigned to the appropriate level, since much of the information in question exists at the local level.

2. Not all roadless areas are created equal – The idea was put forth that if the assumption is made that all 58.5 million acres equally reflect roadless values, a management-by-exception approach is necessary. Some people see this as a political trap and suggested that this trap can be avoided by using a criteria-driven approach that defines the desired characteristics of roadless areas, and then allows land managers the flexibility to achieve those goals.

3. National Guidance, Local Discretion – Enabling framework, standard, sideboards, criteria, values, principles, goals... all were terms used to describe an approach that would provide clear guidance and parameters at the national level for implementation at the local level while not becoming overly prescriptive. The Endangered Species Act, Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act were offered as models in federal law that provide guidance but also allow an acceptable degree of latitude at the local level. The Refuge Act was proposed as another potential model for providing guidance that focuses on key issues rather than on details. A more specific proposal was made that Congress require, by a date certain and with funds allocated, each National Forest unit to review and make a determination of which IRAs should be permanently protected and which should not. Others indicated interest in and support for this idea. Another suggestion made was to provide guidance through the Forest Service as an alternative to a rule, establishing an associated Advisory Committee to oversee its implementation. This Advisory Committee could provide an avenue to resolve questions of interpretation and a vehicle to track cumulative impacts of decisions at the local level.

4. An Overarching Alternative Proposal – Building on these ideas one participant suggested that the following steps may warrant further consideration:

- a. Develop an agreed upon set of values and principles regarding management of roadless areas that stakeholders would commit to supporting as a partnership and as individual organizations. Such principles could become the foundation for

consideration within the national forest planning process for currently designated roadless areas.

- b. Seek Congressional designation of the approximately 20 million acres of USFS lands currently identified as candidates for wilderness protection in forest plans.
- c. Seek revision to the National Fire Plan to reduce the fuel load in all USFS lands in condition class 2 and 3 that are within one mile of non-federal ownerships, to condition class 1. Set a goal to contain 95% of all wildfires before they reach 10 acres in size in these “buffer zones.”
- d. Call on Congress to provide funding to address the backlog of road maintenance on USFS lands over a period of ten years.
- e. Develop a set of criteria for identifying USFS lands suitable for commercial uses.

While several people expressed interest in various parts of this proposal, others questioned the figure of 20 million acres pending wilderness designation, for example. Still others made it clear they would not support additional wilderness designation unless an agreement was reached to release remaining roadless areas for other uses. Several participants expressed an interest in the concept of reducing fuel loading in a one-mile buffer zone so as to protect non-federal forestlands from the risk of fire spreading from federal lands. Some additional discussion of this idea occurred during the course of the meeting, including questions about whether access to roadless areas for fuel reduction could occur through the non-federal lands.

As part of the discussion of these ideas, one participant asked whether it might be helpful if Congress required and provided adequate funding for each National Forest unit to review and make a determination by a definitive date certain which IRAs should be permanently protected and which should not.

G. Complementary Policies Outside Roadless Areas

Although several individuals expressed a desire to discuss the ideas outlined in this section of the FRWG paper, time did not allow for in-depth attention to all of the items covered. A comment was made that the suggestions in the FRWG paper for complementary policies outside roadless areas to reduce pressure on roadless areas and protect forest health were a positive contribution to the debate on how to resolve the roadless area conservation issue. Regarding the proposal to contract for thinning services rather than selling timber, it was stated that without subsidies this is not economically viable in practice due to the lack of a market for the product. In addition, it was suggested that the incentive to over cut would simply be shifted to wood marketers who would pressure the agency to allow more cuts. The experiments conducted by State of Washington Department of Natural Resources’ were offered as evidence of this. A suggestion was made to reference the work being done at the field level to address overall ecosystem health through provisions of the National Fire Plan in the FRWG’s recommendations on complementary policies.

V. INFORMATION BIN ITEMS

During the course of the dialogue, several requests for information were made and/or there were offers to provide information. Some concern was expressed about the fact that some of this information might not readily available and, in some cases, it might be costly and time consuming to gather the requested information. At the same time, Bush Administration officials

present at the meeting encouraged the FRWG to clearly identify any information the Forest Service should consider in any further administrative proceedings pertaining to roadless areas. An unevaluated and unfiltered compilation of the information items requested or volunteered at the meeting includes:

- What is the “burn-intensity” of fires that have occurred in roadless areas compared to roaded areas? (One participant posited that framing the question this way misses the point that high intensity burns have detrimental effects on water and soil quality, and suggested that the more important question is are these effects occurring in IRAs and, if so, should they be considered acceptable?)
- What percentage of roadless areas have been subjected to catastrophic fire?
- What are the economic benefits associated with protection of roadless areas? (A study conducted by the World Wildlife Fund was offered to address this question.)
- In addition to 2.8 million acres where roads have been built in IRAs since RARE II, are there uses that have occurred that ought to exclude certain lands from being included in the policy? One participant volunteered to provide specific examples of IRAs that are no longer suitable for roadless area protection.
- What is currently known at the national level about what portions of the 58.5m acres of roadless areas exist in a “checkerboard” land ownership pattern? Can this be clearly defined and, if so, where are they located? Is some of this information available only at the local level?
- What is the status of USFS efforts to map out “designated routes” for motorized recreational use?
- What steps is the motorized recreation community taking to address concerns regarding impacts on other recreation users?
- What is the rate of growth of OHV use on public lands?

VI. CONCLUSION

By many accounts, the discussion that took place at the *Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Roadless Area Conservation* was a constructive, high quality exchange of ideas and perspectives on the disposition of inventoried roadless areas in the National Forest System. While the goal of the meeting was not to achieve consensus, some areas of general agreement did become apparent over the course of the dialogue. For example, the idea that roadless area values are worthy of protection appeared to be a commonly held belief. In addition, there seemed to be agreement about how those values are defined in a broad sense, while there were several suggestions for values that should be added to those identified by the FRWG. Still, there was no agreement on what protection should be provided, that the values discussed were limited to roadless areas, or that they are present merely because an area is inventoried as roadless.

The discussions evidenced differing views about the impacts associated with motorized recreation on roadless area values, and a commitment was made by the FRWG to learn more about this subject.

As noted above, during most of the meeting, no one expressed the view that IRAs should be opened up for timber extraction, aside from viewing this as a side benefit of reducing fuel loads in area where the risk of fire is considered high. When probed about this, representatives of smaller forest products operators acknowledged that while many small operators and

communities are highly dependent on timber from public lands, they believe this need can be met simultaneously and in a complimentary manner with the need to reduce fire risk and preserve the ecological values of roadless areas.

There also appeared to be widespread agreement that the backlog of road maintenance in roaded areas is a critically important issue that requires attention.

The fact that IRAs include lands that have become roaded since RARE II, as well as lands that may no longer be consistent with the values associated with roadless areas led to a suggestion to establish criteria for determining which lands truly merit the designation of roadless. A separate suggestion was if the roadless area values described in the FRWG paper are to be protected, it will be important to identify where on the landscape those values are manifest and identify the best options for protecting them wherever they are found – whether they are in IRAs or in roaded areas. Such a “landscape” approach to management could result in protection of roaded areas that contain values typically associated with roadless areas and perhaps less protection to roadless areas that no longer reflect those values.

Further illumination of the interests of private landowners was provided when it was explained that fire and disease in adjacent to IRAs, if left unmanaged, may spread to neighboring private land, threatening the ecological, economic and other values on those lands. Differing views regarding the potential threat of catastrophic wildfires to the ecological values of roadless areas surfaced a need for further data about this topic.

An exploration of the underlying concerns several parties have with the notion of a national rule for the management of roadless areas brought forth some creative ideas regarding how to protect the generally agreed upon values without infringing upon needs and concerns that are often construed as being in opposition to those values. For example, several participants suggested national guidance that articulates agreed upon values and sets goals, while refraining from prescriptive prohibitions, and providing local land managers with flexibility to determine the best way to achieve the stated goals. A related suggestion was made to complement national guidance with an Advisory Committee to oversee its implementation and provide an avenue for resolving differences of interpretation and for tracking cumulative impacts of decisions at the local level.

Appendix A – Participant List
Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Roadless Area Conservation
December 3-4, 2002 | Arlington, Virginia

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