

Roadless: OUR LAST WILDLANDS

Roadless areas are remote, natural, and undisturbed areas of our National Forests. Generally speaking, these areas do not have logging or other types of roads or have very low road density (less than 1/2 mile road per 1,000 acres). While not officially protected from logging and road building activities, the Forest Service makes an official inventory of these areas from time to time including whenever the individual management plan for each forest is updated.

The National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2001 would have protected 726,600 acres of Southern Appalachian inventoried roadless areas from commercial logging and road building, while still allowing appropriate management for fire, existing leases, wildlife habitat, and public safety. Most of America's National Forests are already open to logging, mining, and drilling. That's why in 2001, after more than two years of public debate, 600 public hearings, and 1.6 million written comments, the Secretary of Agriculture signed the rule that set aside our last roadless areas for wildlife and recreation.



Just as the new rule was scheduled to take effect, the Bush administration moved to block it. Again and again since taking office, the Bush Administration has effectively tried to gut roadless protection. **Americans' strong desire for roadless protection has kept this critical issue alive.**

STATE	INVENTORIED ROADLESS ACRES	PERCENT OF STATE ROADLESS	PERCENT OF ROADLESS AREAS AT RISK	FOREST SERVICE ROAD MAINTENANCE BACKLOG
Alabama	12,437	0.04	91	\$17,580,889
Georgia	63,661	0.17	87	\$53,036,303
North Carolina	172,000	0.51	83	\$41,293,752
South Carolina	8,000	0.04	67	\$39,109,685
Tennessee	84,715	0.31	31	\$35,722,830
Virginia	387,674	1.43	81	\$19,376,183

Roadless Talking Points

- Over the last 20 years, the nation as a whole has lost 2.8 million acres of roadless areas under localized Forest Service management that considers each forest separately, and that focuses on extractive development such as logging and mining.
- Many of the native trout streams in our region suffer from excessive sedimentation caused by erosion from road construction and logging. Roadless areas provide crucial protection for watersheds allowing degraded streams to recover while preserving the purity of less disturbed areas.



- Some wildlife species, like black bear, need large tracts of undisturbed habitat to thrive. Studies show that black bears tend to avoid areas with high road density. Roads are also associated with higher incidents of illegal bear poaching.
- Roadless areas provide crucial interior forest habitat for many migratory songbirds such as the Cerulean warbler. Many of these songbirds are experiencing population declines associated with disappearance of large, undisturbed forested tracts.
- Currently, there are 9,500 miles of logging roads dissecting the Southern Appalachian National Forests -- double the length of interstate highway miles in Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.
- The Forest Service estimates that \$8.4 billion is needed to address the backlog of maintenance on existing roads. Curbing the agency's ability to build more roads is sound conservation and taxpayer policy.
- The effect of the Roadless Protection Act on oil and gas development will be minimal. Less than 1% of domestic oil and gas is produced on National Forest lands. Furthermore, the policy exempts development activities, including road construction, on all existing oil and gas leases.