



April 22, 2009

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Review of Colorado Roadless Rule Needed

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We the undersigned hunting and fishing conservation organizations have substantial concerns over the conservation of roadless national forest lands in Colorado. Consequently, we request that the proposed Colorado roadless rule be deferred until key officials are appointed at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Forest Service and a review of the Colorado roadless rule can be undertaken. We believe a high-level review is needed to ensure that Colorado's roadless areas are adequately conserved. Although the proposed rule does provide some benefits over existing forest plans, it does not sufficiently conserve Colorado's roadless areas and can be significantly improved and clarified.

Our undersigned organizations want to conserve roadless values in the places where Americans hunt and fish to ensure that American backcountry traditions are upheld for future generations to experience and enjoy. With 345 roadless areas comprising some 4.4 million acres, Colorado possesses backcountry hunting and fishing opportunities found nowhere else in the world. The sporting industry made possible by these public lands provides more than \$1 billion annually to the state's economy. Exceptions allowing road building and development in roadless areas must be narrowly and clearly defined in order to keep this economic engine servicing our rural communities, especially in these troubling financial times.

Organized sportsmen have been meeting with representatives from the state and U.S. Forest Service throughout the development of the Colorado roadless rule. We appreciate the consideration given to our concerns yet believe that the proposed Colorado roadless rule does not adequately conserve roadless areas and propagates undesirable management practices and paradigms. Specific examples of overly permissive language in the proposed rule include excessive discretion and allowances for timber cutting and road building, expanded utility and water conveyance allowances, and roadless coal mining provisions (especially in the Priest Mountain area). All of these exceptions as written could adversely affect public-lands hunting and fishing. To favorably resolve the Colorado rule, these and other issues must be addressed so that the rule conserves roadless area characteristics at a level comparable to the national roadless rule.

Prompt administrative action by you and agency staff is critical. Judicious revision of the proposed Colorado roadless rule is needed to ensure the conservation of vital backcountry fish and wildlife habitat.

We appreciate your attention to this important land conservation matter and hope you will review the Colorado roadless rule to ensure effective administration of roadless lands in the Centennial State. As hunters and anglers, we stand ready to assist in the effort by you and your staff to responsibly manage Colorado's world-class backcountry.

Respectfully,

Colorado Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Co-chairman
David Lien

Colorado Trout Unlimited
Executive Director
David Nickum

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Associate Director of Campaigns
Joel Webster

Trout Unlimited: Sportsmen's Conservation Project
Colorado Field Director
David Petersen

CC:
Colorado Governor Bill Ritter
Region 2 Forester Rick Cables
Colorado Congressional Delegation
White House Council on Environmental Quality