ROADLESS WILDLANDS FAQ SHEET

Q: What are 'roadless areas?

A: Roadless areas, also known as "inventoried roadless areas" are unique places in America's National Forests. Roadless areas are parcels of land generally 5,000 acres or larger and are generally free of roads (oddly enough, some roadless areas do in fact have roads in them, although the roads are often primitive).

Because of their roadless character, roadless areas tend be wild and unspoiled lands. Roadless forests are known for their stunning beauty, wildlife, healthy streams, and for providing superb areas to fish, hunt, and recreate.

Q: Why are roadless areas important?
A: Roadless areas are important for several reasons. Perhaps most important to Americans is their role in providing millions of people with clean drinking water.

To understand the connection between roadless forests and drinking water, consider the Central Oregon city of Bend, which gets most of its drinking water from Tumalo Creek. Tumalo Creek is contained primarily within the Bend Watershed Roadless Area. The unspoiled and intact forests within the Bend Watershed Roadless Area protects Tumalo Creek from unnatural erosion, land slides, and other threats to water quality that are commonly associated with road building and development. In short, the unspoiled forests of the Bend Watershed Roadless Area ensure a clean and safe supply of drinking water for 65,000 inhabitants. This type of relationship between roadless forests and municipal drinking water supplies is common throughout the country.

Roadless forests are important for other reasons, too. They provide habitat to a significant number of endangered, threatened, and at-risk species of fishes and wildlife and are popular to the ever-growing number of people participating in outdoor recreation, people who seek the solitude, scenery, and adventure that pristine roadless backcountry offer.

Q: How much land is roadless in our National Forests?

A: There are 58.5 million acres of "inventoried roadless areas" in America's National Forests. Roadless areas range from Alaska to Maine, but most occur in western states. Oregon, for example, has 1,965,000 million acres of roadless areas. Tennessee by contrast, has 85,000 acres.

Q: What is the Roadless Rule?
A: The Roadless Rule, also known as the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, protected 58.5 million acres of roadless areas in America's National Forest from road building and most types of commercial and industrial development, like logging and drilling. The Roadless Rule was widely supported by the public, and during the rulemaking process an unprecedented 1.6 million public comments were submitted, nearly all in favor of roadless area protection. While safeguarding roadless areas, the rule kept these lands open to recreational use. The Roadless Rule also offered common sense flexibility by allowing road building in special circumstances, like fighting wildfires and to protect human life.

Q: What is the 2005 Roadless Repeal Rule and why is it harmful?
A: In May of 2005, the Bush administration repealed the 2001 Roadless Rule and replaced it with a new policy that allows for development, like industrial logging, within roadless areas. The Bush administration rule gave individual states, under final approval from the US Forest Service, discretion over roadless area management via a petitioning process.

By allowing development, the Bush administration rule posed a threat to wildlife and water quality: road building, clear-cutting, drilling, and mining increase sedimentation to streams, fragment wildlife habitat, increase pollution, and in some cases, increase the risk of forest fire, poaching, and littering. Also, degradation of scenic properties, solitude, and loss of public access due to commercial and industrial operations would have a significant negative impact on outdoor recreation participants and the businesses and jobs that depend on them.

On September 20, 2006, a federal judge struck down the 2005 Roadless Repeal Rule, finding that it violated the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act. The timber industry is appealing the court's decision.

Q: Why are outdoor businesses getting involved in roadless area conservation?
A: Simply put, many businesses are getting involved because it's good for business. Roadless forests are important public lands that offer people an opportunity for outdoor adventures. Without public access to pristine backcountry lands, opportunities to partake in outdoor recreation are severely restricted, and in turn, so are business opportunities.

Companies also like to reflect the values of their customers. Since a large majority of American's support roadless forests protection, companies feel compelled to advocate for these shared values.

Q: Does the outdoor recreation industry deserve to have a voice in the debate over roadless areas?
A: Outdoor retail – the selling and purchasing of outdoor related goods – is a $289 billion a year industry. When you factor in the amount of money spent by outdoor recreationists on transportation, lodging, guides, food, and other services, that figure rises to approximately $730 billion. It's clear that the outdoor industry is a major stakeholder in roadless area management.

Q: Do we need more roads?
A: No. Our National Forests already have approximately 382,000 miles of roads, and the US Forest Service, which manages National Forests, has an **$8.4 billion backlog on road maintenance** (more than **$10 billion** if you factor in administrative costs)**.** Clearly, we cannot afford to pay for the roads we have, so why build more?

Building more roads is also a burden shouldered by taxpayers. Who do you think pays for the roads that are used by companies who are clear-cutting *your* forests? You guessed it, YOU!

Q: Do we need to build more roads to prevent/fight wildfires?
A: No. Roadless forests have been found to have a reduced likelihood of having catastrophic wildfires. This is partially a result of 1) there are less roads and thus less opportunity for human caused fires (which account for a significant amount of all fires), 2) roadless areas are more likely to have a natural cycle of fire and do not suffer as badly from past management errors relating to fire suppression and the subsequent fuel load build up, and 3) often contain large, old growth trees that are more resistant to fire.