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| Forestry --  Roadless Areas |
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| **Protecting Our National Forests: The Roadless Area Conservation Rule** Roadless areas in America's national forests contain irreplaceable reserves of wildlife habitat and plant life, and they provide valuable goods and services used by all Americans. These wild areas also play an esteemed role in our national identity and history, as interest in their protection dates back more than 30 years. Despite their importance, national forest roadless areas are threatened by misguided management. Since the 1970s, about 1 million acres of roadless areas have been logged each year. On January 12, 2001, the U.S. Forest Service adopted the Roadless Area Conservation Rule to protect the 58.5 million acres of roadless areas in the U.S., an area roughly the size of New York and Pennsylvania combined. The rule was intended to carefully regulate road construction in roadless areas. The rule was enacted after a lengthy public comment period and 600 open meetings across the country. More than 1.6 million Americans provided formal comments on the rule, the vast majority in favor of it. **A Positive Change in Roadless Area Management** The Roadless Rule was developed after more than a decade of battles between environmentalists and the timber industry over the protection of roadless areas in each national forest. This turmoil and a lack of central oversight on roadless areas resulted in poor decision making and compromises in many areas that harmed the environment. By the time the roadless rule was adopted, the Forest Service was facing an $8.4 billion backlog for road maintenance. The rule, as originally written, allows for efficient reconstruction and maintenance of Forest Service roads; construction of new roads necessary for national forest system resource management; and future construction, restoration, and maintenance of roads with minimal long-term adverse environmental impacts. In May of 2005, the Bush administration repealed the 2001 Roadless Rule and replaced it with a new policy that allows for development, like industrial logging, within roadless areas.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. |

**Scientific Basis for Roadless Area Conservation**
National Forest roadless areas contain irreplaceable reserves of wildlife and plant diversity, performing many valuable ecosystem functions that benefit all Americans. These wild areas play an important role in our national identity and history, with interest in their protection dating back to the early 1970s.

National forest roadless areas are threatened by inappropriate management that has resulted in the degradation of, on average, about 1 million roadless acres annually, Despite overwhelming public support for the rule that was expressed in 600 public meetings, and over 2 million written comments in favor of it.

The Conservation Biology Institute have completed the most comprehensive assessment of roadless areas to date, drawing primarily on peer-reviewed science and nearly a decade of satellite imagery and computer mapping assessments. This study illustrates the need for protection for roadless areas throughout the nation, but particularly for forests in northern California, Oregon, Washington, and southeast Alaska (Tongass National Forest), which include some of the most biologically diverse and intact forests remaining in the nation.

Their findings demonstrate that lasting protections for roadless areas would contribute to the conservation of:

1. key watersheds for salmon survival;

2. habitat for numerous threatened and endangered species;

3. mature and old-growth forests;

4. elevation representation (more than "rock and ice" high-elevation parks);

5. a diverse array of important plant and wildlife habitats; and

6. quality drinking water.

Roadless areas also provide social benefits. Previous research has shown that counties across the West with higher levels of protection tend to have more robust and stronger economies than those having lower levels of protection. Moreover, roadless areas, because of difficulties in access and lack of fire suppression and logging impacts, generally have lower fire risks and fewer insect epidemics than heavily logged and roaded landscapes.

Finally, a commitment to lasting roadless area protection, while important ecologically and socially, would add just 2 percent to the nation's protected area network. Nationwide just 5 percent of our lands have been protected as National Parks, Wilderness, and National Monuments.

October 21, 2011 - More than ten years after President Clinton banned roads and logging on the last roadless areas on our nation’s forests, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals has the final say — 49 million acres of America’s national forests will remain wild under the Roadless Rule.

**Answer the following questions:**

1. What are roadless areas?
2. What is the Roadless Rule?
3. Why are roadless areas important?
4. How much land area does the act involve?
5. What is the 2005 Roadless Repeal Rule and why is it harmful?