



# NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Office of Communications • 1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250-1300 • Voice: (202) 720-4623 • Email: [oc.news@usda.gov](mailto:oc.news@usda.gov) • Web: <http://www.usda.gov>

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Contact:  
Ed Loyd (202)720-4623  
Dan Jiron (202)205-0896

## **USDA FOREST SERVICE PROVIDES FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO STATE OF COLORADO FOR PROTECTING ROADLESS AREAS**

### ***\$115,000 Awarded to State to Develop Petition to USDA***

WASHINGTON, Sept. 8, 2005 - U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service today announced \$115,000 in assistance to the State of Colorado for developing a petition to the Secretary of Agriculture to protect inventoried roadless areas in the state.

"We are pleased to provide assistance to Governor Owens in order to facilitate our cooperative conservation efforts with Colorado," said Agriculture Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Mark Rey. "USDA is committed to working closely with the nation's governors in developing regulations that meet state needs in the conservation and management of roadless areas within national forests."

Under the State Petitions Inventoried Roadless Area Management Rule adopted by USDA in May, the Forest Service may provide, if requested, financial support for the petitioning process. On July 14, Governor Bill Owens submitted a request for \$115,000 to Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth for help in developing a petition to USDA as well as to implement Colorado Senate Bill 05-243, Concerning the Creation of a Roadless Areas Review Task Force.

Petitions will identify areas for inclusion, and may also include ways to protect public health and safety, reduce wildfire risks to communities and critical wildlife habitat, maintain critical infrastructure, such as dams and utilities, and assure citizens access to private property.

Once a state has finished its petition process, submitted its petition, and had the petition accepted by the Secretary, the Forest Service will work with the state to develop and publish a subsequent state-specific rulemaking for inventoried roadless areas that addresses management requirements proposed by the petitioning state. Each state-specific rulemaking will include the required National Environmental Policy Act analysis and public input during the notice and comment period. USDA will accept state petitions from governors until Nov. 13, 2006.

Colorado has approximately 4.4 million acres of inventoried roadless areas in eight national forests and grasslands. For more information, visit <http://www.roadless.fs.fed.us>.

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