



United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

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News Release

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Forest Service Releases Colorado Roadless Rule - North Fork Coal Mining Area SDEIS *45-day Public Comment Period Begins Friday, November 20*

GOLDEN, Colo., November 19, 2015 – Regional Forester Dan Jirón and Executive Director for the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Mike King announced the publication of the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) to reinstate the North Fork Coal Mining Area exception of the Colorado Roadless Rule.

The purpose of this rule is to provide management direction for conserving roadless area characteristics while facilitating exploration and development of federal coal resources. The proposed reinstatement of the North Fork Coal Mining exception addresses a state specific concern for managing roadless areas while providing opportunities for energy development and other benefits such as supporting local economies.

Two public open houses have been scheduled to facilitate information sharing:

- Paonia, Colorado:
 - Monday, December 7, 2015, from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Paonia Town Hall, 214 Grand Avenue, Paonia, CO 81428
- Denver, Colorado:
 - Wednesday, December 9, 2015, from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Forest Service Rocky Mountain Regional Office, 740 Simms St., Golden, CO 80401.

"The Colorado Roadless Rule was historic in its recognition of the state's interests in roadless conservation. In directing management of 4.2 million acres of roadless lands in Colorado, the rule gave heightened protection to 1.2 million acres of Upper Tier lands, provided the opportunity for defensible space around communities, and recognized important economic contributors to Colorado's communities and our nation. The North Fork Coal Mining Area exception was fundamental to this balance. It affects less than half of one percent of Colorado's protected roadless lands and allows us to protect both roadless values and coal-mining jobs in the North Fork valley. We support the Forest Service's actions announced today," said Executive Director for the Colorado Department of Natural Resources Mike King.

In July 2012, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced the Colorado Roadless Rule, a state-specific regulation for the management of Colorado Roadless Areas. One component of the Colorado Roadless Rule was an exception for temporary road construction for coal related mining activities in the area of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests known as the North Fork Coal Mining Area.

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The U.S. Forest Service will consider public input for the final supplemental EIS and the future proposed rule to provide management direction for conserving roadless characteristics within the area while addressing the State of Colorado's interest in facilitating exploration and development of the coal resources in the North Fork Coal Mining Area. The SDEIS is available for review and comment online at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/coroadlessrule>.

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