

Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee

Committee Members

December 23, 2008

Darin Bird
*Utah Department of
Natural Resources*

President-elect Obama Administration USDA Transition Team
1400 Independence Ave. St
Jamie L. Whitten Building
Washington, DC 20250

Adena Cook
*Blue Ribbon
Coalition*

Richard Cook
*Designated Federal
Official*

Robert Cope
*Lemhi County
Commissioner, Idaho*

Jeff Eisenberg
*National Cattleman's
Beef Association*

Paul Hansen
*The Nature
Conservancy*

Dale Harris
*Co-Chair
Montana Wilderness
Association*

Geraldine Link
*National Ski Areas
Association*

Jim Riley
*Intermountain Forest
Association*

Greg Schaefer
*Co-Chair
National Mining
Association*

Todd Schulke
*Center for Biological
Diversity*

Denny Scott
*United Brotherhood
of Carpenters*

Ray Vaughan
WildLaw

Chris Wood
Trout Unlimited

Dear President-elect Obama Administration USDA Transition Team,

We are contacting you in our capacity as the co-chairs of the Roadless Area National Advisory Committee (RACNAC) formed to provide multi-sector advice on the policies for management of national forest roadless lands. Our purpose is to bring to your attention the unique nature and work of our committee, particularly because we believe it fits well with President-elect Obama's approach to open, participatory government. Further, we wish to offer our Committee's service to the Transition Team and to the Obama Administration as it is appointed.

As you know, the Forest Service faces a suite of challenges in the years ahead, from limited budgets and increasing fire costs to continued conflict over issues such as roadless area management. As members of the Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee (RACNAC) we encourage you to continue to use the RACNAC, or a process modeled after the RACNAC, to address these challenges. Just as we helped to build a successful compromise on the seemingly intractable issues of roadless area management in Idaho, we hope we can work with the new Administration to continue to bring effective problem-solving to the many challenges facing the Forest Service.

The Secretary of Agriculture established the RACNAC in May of 2005 to bring a balanced, national perspective to state-specific rulemaking for roadless area management. The Committee is made up of 13 members representing a broad spectrum of interests in the management of inventoried roadless areas, including the cattle, timber, mining, and ski industry; recreation and trails groups; labor unions; environmental groups; counties and states¹. Since its inception, the RACNAC has offered consensus advice on five state petitions and two federal rules on roadless area management.

The Committee has been nationally recognized for its collaborative efforts in building broad support for the 2008 Idaho Roadless Rule. As stated in a September 3, 2008 Seattle Times editorial, the Idaho Roadless Rule is "a

¹Note that Chris Wood has suspended himself from the RACNAC due to his involvement with the Obama Administration Transition Team. Mr. Wood was therefore not involved in crafting this letter.

1400 Independence Ave., SW, Mail Stop Code: 1104
Washington, DC 20250-1104
314.308.4195
406.240.2809

triumph of pragmatism, which is another way of saying that thoughtful negotiations can produce good results. Winner take-all litigation is exhausting, dispiriting and risky. Congress and other states have Idaho's constructive example to ponder.”

We believe that our committee has been quite successful in helping evolve policy and reduce conflict on controversial issues surrounding roadless area management. Frankly, we have surprised even ourselves on the common ground we were able to identify and articulate. Fundamentally, our successes were a result of the following:

- 1) Broad and balanced representation on the RACNAC of points of view and interests on the issue.
- 2) A commitment on the part of each committee member to work together to reach recommendations that accommodated everyone's interests, and where we could not, respectfully inform the process by openly discussing and describing our differences.
- 3) The confidence we enjoyed from the Secretary of Agriculture, Chief of the Forest Service, and State officials seeking our advice, to actually incorporate our recommendations in their decisions.
- 4) The fact that the presence of a third party panel of experts like the RACNAC appears to increase the public trust in the Forest Service's policies and actions.
- 5) Rigorously conduct our business in the light of day as prescribed by FACA.

The RACNAC has expressed interest in addressing issues beyond roadless area management, from overall road management to the possible interplay of forest restoration, biofuels and climate change. The current RACNAC charter says that the purpose of the committee includes, but is not limited to, advice on roadless area management. The flexibility therefore exists for the RACNAC to expand its work beyond state specific rulemaking for roadless areas.

The Committee's charter expires April 3, 2009 while committee members' terms expire in September 2009. At this time of uncertainty, we ask that you consider continuing and possibly expanding the responsibilities of the RACNAC.

As a Committee we've been honored to participate in policy formation for the Forest Service, and we hope that the RACNAC model can continue to be of use in the Obama Administration.

On behalf of the RACNAC,



Dale Harris
RACNAC Co-Chair



Greg Schaefer
RACNAC Co-Chair

Cc: Mark Rey, Under Secretary USDA
Melissa Simpson, Deputy Under Secretary USDA
Abigail Kimbell, Chief USFS
Richard Cook, Designated Federal Official
All RACNAC Committee Members