



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA FOREST SERVICE PROVIDES FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO IDAHO FOR ADDRESSING MANAGEMENT OF ROADLESS AREAS IN STATE

\$150,000 Awarded to State to Develop Petition to USDA

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20, 2005 - U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service today announced \$150,000 in financial assistance to the State of Idaho for developing a petition to the Secretary of Agriculture regarding the management of inventoried roadless areas in the state.

"We are pleased to be able to provide assistance to Governor Kempthorne to participate in the rulemaking process for these important areas," said Agriculture Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Mark Rey. "USDA is committed to working closely with the nation's governors as cooperating agencies in developing regulations specific to the needs and requirements of each state."

Under the State Petitions for Inventoried Roadless Area Management Rule adopted by USDA in May, the Forest Service may provide, if requested, financial support for the petitioning process. On Sept. 21, Governor Dirk Kempthorne submitted a request to Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns for help in developing a petition to USDA.

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 developed and submitted its petition, and the petition is 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 is accepting state petitions from governors until Nov. 13, 2006.

Idaho has approximately 9.3 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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