



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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File Code: 1230/1920

Date: June 7, 2001

Route To:

Subject: Delegation of Authority/Interim Protection of Roadless Areas

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, and WO Staff

As Secretary Veneman and I have made clear, the Forest Service is committed to protecting and managing roadless areas as an important component of the National Forest System. The best way to achieve this objective is to ensure that we protect and sustain roadless values until they can be appropriately considered through forest planning.

The Roadless Area Conservation Rule of January 12, 2001, is presently the subject of eight lawsuits involving seven states, in six federal districts, and four federal circuits. The District Court of Idaho has preliminarily enjoined implementation of the rule. That decision is now before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. At this point, it appears that the roadless rule may be embroiled in legal controversy and process for a very long time, with an ultimate outcome that is far from certain.

Thus, it is necessary for the agency to act decisively, proactively, and with common sense to ensure that our efforts to protect roadless values will not be confined to legal proceedings in courtrooms scattered throughout the country. It is important that we move forward in a manner that is fully compliant with the law, including the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Forest Management Act. Our efforts must also be consistent with the policy objectives identified by Secretary Veneman on May 4, 2001, and be responsive to the legitimate concerns raised by local communities, tribes, states, and others.

Therefore, I am taking the following three steps:

STEP 1. Effective immediately, I am reserving to myself, the decision authority for timber harvest and road construction in inventoried roadless areas (those areas mapped in Volume 2 of the Roadless Area Conservation Final Environmental Impact Statement). I will follow this letter with an Interim Directive in the Forest Service Manual adjusting the delegation of authorities to reflect this change. The Interim Directive will include exceptions similar in scope to those provided in 36 CFR 294.12 and 36 CFR 294.13.

STEP 2. I am instructing you to complete the ongoing effort to identify and properly map existing classified roads within each unit of the National Forest System. You should provide me, within 2 weeks of the date of this letter, a schedule for the completion of the mapping process in your region.

Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, and WO Staff

2

STEP 3. I am instructing you to ensure that forest plan amendments and revisions consider, as appropriate, the long-term protection and management of unroaded portions of inventoried roadless areas. This may include a determination that some roadless areas be recommended for permanent wilderness designation. Upon approval of a plan amendment or revision that has considered the protection and management of inventoried roadless areas, the reservation under Step 1 will no longer apply to the area considered.

The decision authority for all other management actions and proposals will continue as currently delegated. Decisions will continue to be made consistent with applicable forest plans, as provided by the National Forest Management Act, and with the involvement of local communities, tribes, states, regional and national interests, and others, in accordance with law and established Forest Service policy.

This direction will protect roadless values while meeting the requirements of the laws governing forest management. It will also provide full and fair public consideration of local conditions, cumulative effects, and other critical information and analysis affecting roadless values that are most appropriately obtained and conducted through the forest planning process.

The direction in this letter and the subsequent Interim Directive will be modified should circumstances change, or the need for more information arises, and will be subject to the outcome of any ongoing court proceeding over an individual forest plan revision or amendment.

/s/ Dale N. Bosworth

DALE N. BOSWORTH

Chief