



NEWS RELEASE

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AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK ANNOUNCES INTERIM DIRECTIVE COVERING ROADLESS AREAS IN NATIONAL FORESTS

WASHINGTON, May 28, 2009 - Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced today that he is signing an interim directive regarding inventoried roadless areas within our National Forests and Grasslands.

"This interim directive will provide consistency and clarity that will help protect our national forests until a long-term roadless policy reflecting President Obama's commitment is developed," said Vilsack.

The directive provides decision-making authority to the Secretary over proposed forest management or road construction projects in inventoried roadless areas.

The U.S. Forest Service, with jurisdiction over the National Forests and Grasslands, makes decisions about what projects can take place on those lands. In simultaneously upholding and overturning the 2001 Clinton roadless rule, the courts have created confusion and made it difficult for the U.S. Forest Service to do its job. The directive will ensure that USDA can carefully consider activities in these inventoried roadless areas while long term roadless policy is developed and relevant court cases move forward.

This interim directive changes procedural requirements for Forest Service projects in inventoried roadless areas. It does not prevent the Secretary from either approving projects that he believes are in the interest of forest stewardship or prohibiting projects he believes are not. The Secretary will work closely with the US Forest Service to implement this interim directive.

This interim directive does not affect roadless areas on National Forest System lands in Idaho - Idaho is exempt from this interim directive. Idaho developed its own roadless rule through the Administrative Procedures Act. That rule already prescribes how decisions with respect to forest management and road building in roadless areas in Idaho are to be made.

This interim directive will last for one year and can be renewed for an additional year.

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