

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Forest Service Releases Proposal for Future Management of Roadless Areas

Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck today proposed ending road construction in nearly one quarter of the 192 million acre National Forest System. The proposal addresses more than 54 million acres of inventoried roadless areas and additional unroaded areas on national forests and grasslands. Also released today was a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) explaining the basis for the proposal.

The proposal:

- prohibits new roads in 43 million acres of inventoried roadless areas within the National Forest System;
- provides opportunities for additional protection for the inventoried areas and other smaller unroaded areas through local forest planning; and
- defers until 2004 the decision on providing additional protection for an additional 8.5 million acres on the Tongass National Forest.

“Rapid development and shrinking open space make our remaining roadless areas increasingly valuable to many people,” said Mike Dombeck, Chief of the Forest Service.

“New roads pose the most immediate threat to the many social and ecological values of these areas.”

The proposal “seeks to balance local needs with maintaining the values of our remaining roadless areas. At the same time, roadless areas would remain open for public use, access and recreation,” Dombeck said.

To help people review, understand and improve the proposal, more than 300 meetings are scheduled throughout the country. Every national forest and grassland will host two types of meetings.

Information-sharing meetings starting in late May are designed for people to review the proposal and ask questions. Public comment forums in late June will provide opportunity for people to verbally express their opinions for the record. A schedule of meetings is available on the website **roadless.fs.fed.us** and at all national forest and grassland offices.

Written public comment will also be accepted at both types of meetings and throughout the public involvement period. All comments must be received by July 17, 2000. Comments can also be faxed directly to 877-703-2494 or mailed to: USDA Forest Service-CAET; Attention: Roadless Area Proposed Rule, PO Box 221090, Salt Lake City, UT 84122. People can also comment directly at the roadless website, **roadless.fs.fed.us**.

The proposed rule, DEIS, a summary, maps and appendices are available at the **roadless.fs.fed.us** website. This

information will also be available for review at the public meetings, all Forest Service offices, and at major public libraries. People can also call the roadless toll-free information number, 1-800-384-7623 or locally, call 703-605-5299.

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