

GLICKMAN PROPOSES NATIONAL STRATEGY TO PROTECT ROADLESS AREAS IN
NATIONAL
FORESTS

Release No. 0154.00

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WASHINGTON, May 9, 2000 -Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman today proposed banning new road building on more than 43 million acres of roadless areas in America's national forests. The proposal, which follows an extensive public input process, would also require local U.S. Forest Service managers to consider additional protections for roadless areas in the future. In October, President Clinton directed Secretary Glickman to formulate a plan to protect roadless areas.

Roadless areas on national forests represent some of the last large expanses of pristine wildlands in the United States. They are critical to preserving wildlife and clean drinking water supplies, and provide unparalleled recreational opportunities for hikers, campers, hunters, and others. Today's proposal would protect roadless areas and ensure continued public access to them.

"This proposal would safeguard some of America's last and best pristine land," said Secretary Glickman. "As we lose more and more open space to sprawl and development, Americans increasingly turn to our national forests to experience and enjoy our shared natural landscape. Preventing roadbuilding in these areas is an essential step toward preserving and protecting these wildlands for the future."

The ban on road building would apply to unroaded lands that the Forest Service has already inventoried and identified as roadless areas. These are typically large parcels of land that do not contain roads because of their rugged terrain or environmental sensitivity. The proposal would also require the Forest Service to consider additional protections for these areas and other smaller areas in the future through existing local forest planning procedures.

On the Tongass National Forest in Alaska, where a newly adopted management plan restricts or prohibits road construction on much of the land, today's proposal would postpone a decision on additional protection for roadless areas until 2004.

While a ban on new road building would significantly reduce future timber harvests in roadless areas, the impact on the nation's overall timber supply would be negligible. National forests provide approximately five percent of the nation's timber, and, under current plans, only five percent of projected timber harvests on national forests would come from roadless areas.

Today's proposal is contained in a draft environmental impact statement that also analyzes a range of alternative actions -- from no additional protection to a complete ban on road building and timber harvest in all inventoried roadless areas on all national forests.

Secretary Glickman's announcement continues an open and public process. Already, the Forest Service has conducted more than 180 public meetings and collected 365,000 public comments on this issue. Public comments on today's

proposal will be accepted until July 17, 2000. A final rule is expected by the end of the year.

"Forest Service employees and I are committed to continue working with the public and listening to their input on this historic proposal," said Glickman. "Public comments in the coming weeks will be absolutely critical as we craft a final policy that balances national and local interests and adequately protects roadless areas for present and future generations."

The Forest Service will conduct an aggressive public outreach campaign on the roadless proposal. There will be at least two public meetings on every national forest one to explain the proposal and other policy alternatives that under consideration and one to solicit additional comments from interested citizens. In addition, the proposal and related public documents will be accessible at every Forest Service office and most municipal and county libraries. The public can also access materials relating to the roadless proposal, including maps, on the web at <http://roadless.fs.fed.us>.

Glickman thanked Jim Lyons, USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, and Mike Dombeck, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, for their leadership in crafting the proposal announced today.