



# STATEMENT

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## STATEMENT FROM AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK ON COLORADO ROADLESS PETITION

WASHINGTON, April 6, 2010 - Below is a statement from Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on the state of Colorado's Roadless areas petition:

"The Obama Administration is committed to the protection of roadless areas on our National Forests as these areas are vital for conservation of water resources, for wildlife and for outdoor recreation -- an important driver of economic opportunity and jobs in rural communities.

"Governor Ritter deserves substantial praise for his leadership in protecting roadless areas on Colorado's National Forests. The Colorado petition that he has submitted today provides strong protections for roadless areas. To his credit, Governor Ritter solicited and incorporated additional input from the public and this has improved the petition. As the Governor points out, while the total amount of land protected under the state petition is similar to the amount under the 2001 rule, due to updated inventories of roadless areas, this petition provides protection for over 400,000 acres of roadless areas that were excluded from the 2001 rule. In addition, I want to commend the Governor for proposing that 250,000 acres be granted a higher level of protection under this petition than afforded under the 2001 rule.

"In the coming months, this petition will be put out for comment to allow for additional public input into protection of roadless areas on Colorado's National Forests. As the Forest Service prepares a draft environmental impact statement for this petition, I have asked that the agency analyze the potential of adding significantly to the number of acres receiving a higher level of protection than the 2001 rule. I'm confident that working with the Governor and with the public, we will craft a final rule that is, on balance, at least as protective of roadless areas -- and preferably more protective -- than the 2001 Roadless Rule."

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