

Addressing Inventoried Roadless Areas in Plan Revision

The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule) establishes prohibitions and restrictions on road construction, road reconstruction, and timber harvesting on 58.5 million acres of National Forest System Lands. This includes 758,424 acres of inventoried roadless areas on the Lolo National Forest. The intent of the Roadless Rule is to provide lasting protection for inventoried roadless areas within the National Forest System in the context of multiple-use management.

Can we make changes to inventoried roadless areas in the plan revision process?

No. The Roadless Rule states, “The prohibitions and restrictions established in this subpart are not subject to reconsideration, revision, or rescission in subsequent project decisions or land and resource management plan amendments or revisions undertaken pursuant to 36 CFR part 219” (36 CFR 294.14(e)).”

There is no provision in the Roadless Rule for adjusting boundaries. The Roadless Rule provides national direction for management of inventoried roadless areas. As explained in the preamble to the Roadless Rule:

“At the national level, Forest Service officials have the responsibility to consider the ‘whole picture’ regarding the management of the National Forest System, including inventoried roadless areas. Local land management planning efforts may not always recognize the national significance of inventoried roadless areas and the values they represent in an increasingly developed landscape. If management decisions for these areas were made on a case-by-case basis at a forest or regional level, inventoried roadless areas and their ecological characteristics and social values could be incrementally reduced through road construction and certain forms of timber harvest. Added together, the nation-wide results of these reductions could be a

substantial loss of quality and quantity of roadless area values and characteristics over time.”



Figure 1—Mountain stream with wildflowers

How will inventoried roadless areas be considered during Plan Revision?

The roadless areas established by the 2001 Roadless Rule are administratively designated areas. Responsible officials shall ensure that plan components applicable to such areas are compatible with the restrictions of the Roadless Rule. For example, inventoried roadless areas are not included in the lands that may be suitable for timber production. The responsible official does not have the authority to modify the boundaries of roadless areas covered by such rules. Agency management direction for inventoried roadless areas is found at 36 CFR part 294—Special Areas.

Additionally, we will complete a thorough, forest-wide wilderness recommendation process as part of plan revision. The forest supervisor is required to complete this process and include in the plan’s record of decision whether to recommend lands within the plan area to Congress for wilderness designation (36 CFR 219.7 (c)(2)(v)).

Inventoried roadless areas, as well as other areas that meet size and development level criteria, will be included in the inventory of lands that may be suitable for wilderness recommendation. Inclusion in this inventory is not intended to, nor does it create an obligation to manage an area of the inventory in any particular way. These areas will be further evaluated for wilderness characteristics and analyzed through the plan's environmental impact statement.

Are there other avenues outside of plan revision through which changes to inventoried roadless areas can be made?

The Roadless Rule can only be modified through a subsequent rulemaking process by the Department of Agriculture or by legislation from Congress.

How about larger changes such as additions or deletions or changes to the boundaries of inventoried roadless areas due to new or better technical information?

Generally, the 2001 Roadless Rule does not allow for the boundaries of an inventoried roadless area to be moved, or for additions or deletions to inventoried roadless areas. However, in the event that modifications are needed to correct any clerical, typographical, or technical error, the change will be made at the national level and corrected copies of the maps will be provided to other administrative units. One example of a correction would be an overlap in an inventoried roadless area and congressionally designated wilderness area. Very few proposals to address these errors have been requested across the agency. The process for requesting changes to fix these types of errors is completed outside plan revision efforts.

Can we create buffers along roads that we know will always be open and available to the public that either border or go through inventoried roadless areas?

The boundaries of an inventoried roadless area may not be moved to buffer roads. Any existing road going through or along the border of an inventoried roadless area may be used. The Roadless Rule does not close or otherwise block access to existing roads. Classified roads within an inventoried roadless area may be maintained to the maintenance level for which they are designated (36 CFR 294.12(c)).