



RESCINDING ROADLESS RULE RESTRICTIONS

OVERVIEW

The Forest Service has issued a proposed rule to rescind in its entirety the national 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, a one-size-fits-all restriction that has frustrated land managers and served as a barrier to wildfire risk reduction work across large swaths of America's national forests.

Myth: "The purpose for repealing the Roadless Rule is to enable the Forest Service to build more roads."

Fact: Today, 24.5 million acres of wildland-urban interface—where forests and communities intersect—lie in or within a mile of roadless areas, making access a major public safety issue. For 25 years, the Roadless Rule has restricted and limited the Forest Service's ability to carry out critical active forest and fire management work in areas adjacent to the homes and businesses of American citizens. The proposed rescission empowers local decision-making and aligns with Administration priorities to remove outdated regulatory barriers and restore tools that strengthen forest health, protect communities, and support jobs and rural prosperity.

Myth: "More roads mean more wildfires."

Fact: Most wildfire ignitions near roads come from public traffic, not the presence of roads themselves. Public traffic can easily be managed with gates and seasonal closures. When land managers and firefighters can reach these areas, they can apply treatments that Forest Service [research](#) has shown can reduce fire severity by 60–72 percent compared to untreated forests.

Myth: "Rescinding the rule creates a free-for-all to carve fresh roads into untouched wilderness."

Fact: Roadless areas are not congressionally designated wilderness, and they already contain 9,500 miles of existing roads. The proposed rescission does not authorize new roadbuilding or remove existing land-use designations. It simply lifts a Federal regulatory restriction and returns authority to local forest supervisors to manage these areas according to each forest's land management plan. This provides flexibility to review roads in need of maintenance and identify areas where limited road construction would enable forest managers, firefighters, and other first responders to access the lands they manage and protect.

ROADLESS AREA FACTS

- Of the 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands, 58 million acres are inventoried roadless areas, and another 36 million acres are congressionally designated wilderness, totaling 48 percent of National Forest System lands.
- Roadless area restrictions limit the ability of the Forest Service to actively manage these areas to a healthy, resilient state, thus increasing the likelihood of catastrophic wildfire.
- Consequently, these roadless areas have endangered many communities across the Nation, especially in the West.
- 40+ percent of roadless areas outside of Alaska have high wildfire hazard potential.
- Only 5 percent of roadless areas have received fuel-reduction treatments since 2014.
- 8+ million acres of roadless areas have burned since the rule's adoption.
- 3,800+ municipal watersheds are now at risk due to wildfire impacts.
- Burned landscapes produce 350 to 450 percent more sediment in reservoirs than responsibly managed forests, threatening drinking water for millions of Americans.
- The rule has limited opportunities for active forest management, cutting off access to family-supporting jobs and revenue streams for remote communities.
- 96 percent of inventoried roadless areas are in 12 Western States: AK, AZ, CA, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, and WY.
- The rescission applies to only 44 million of the 58 million acres of inventoried roadless areas because the proposed rule does not apply to national forests in CO and ID, which have state-specific roadless rules.

BOTTOM LINE

Returning roadless-area decisions to forest-level land management planning provides flexibility the national rule did not and gives local managers the tools needed to restore forest health and productivity. Future land management decisions would be based on natural resource conditions and needs and informed by States, Tribes, and communities. Rescinding the rule allows forest managers to address watershed, economic, and wildfire-risk conditions within the sideboards of existing laws, regulations, and policies. These decisions would be within the same planning framework that guides individual plans throughout the National Forest System.