STATEMENT OF MICHAEL DOMBECK, CHIEF, U.S. FOREST SERVICE;
ACCOMPANIED BY CHRIS RISBRUDT, DIRECTOR, ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT
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FOREST SERVICE; JIM LYONS, UNDER SECRETARY, NATURAL RESOURCES
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STATEMENT OF MICHAEL DOMBECK

Mr. DOMBECK. Thank you, Madame Chairman. Mr. Stupak and
Radonovich and Mr. Sherwood, it is good to see you again to
talk about an issue I know that is very, very important to
you and it is very important to us and all Americans. You
know this roads and roadless issue that we are talking about
is not new, it has been around for a long, long time with the
380,000 miles of roads and maintenance backlog of over eight
billion dollars. It is an issue that has been around for
decades and of much debate here in Congress.

And when we get to the roadless side of this issue, John
Maguire was Chief in the '70's and he tried to resolve this
through a wilderness inventory that evolved into Road 2 that
was completed under Chief Max Peterson. It didn't resolve the
issue. The first round of forest planning was completed under
Chief Dale Robertson, it didn't resolve the issue. Jack Ward
Thomas asked that roadless areas be removed from the timber
base if managers didn't plan on entering them. That didn't
resolve the issue.

And I have got to say the issue hasn’t gotten any easier. In fact, it is an exceedingly costly issue for the Forest Service in terms of the controversy appeal and litigation. And if there is an issue that begs for leadership and resolution, it is certainly this one. And I think the interest in this hearing is an indicator of how important these roadless areas are to people.

Well, why are they important? What is it that people are so interested in these areas? They have tremendous values. Clean water, open space, hunting and fishing opportunities, wildlife habitat, reference areas for research, particularly as the U.S. gets more developed, anchors for sensitive endangered species, areas of high bio-diversity, opportunities for dispersed recreation. And all this is occurring while the fragmentation and development in the United States is occurring at an unprecedented level.

From 1992 to 1997, 16 million acres of forest, farms, open space were developed. That is a rate of 3.2 million acres a year, or 8.8700 acres per day. And that was an increase from the rate of development from 1982 to 1992, which was about 1.4 million acres a year as opposed to 3.2 million acres a year in these past five years. Now the President has asked us to develop a proposal to protect roadless areas and I just want to go through a little bit of
the process that we have been through and Mr. Lyons will go through more of it.

We have been through a scoping process. We are planning an unprecedented level of public involvement, a first round of meetings that will provide your constituents and all those interested, with the data, the maps, the specific information needed to provide their analysis and input into this process. A second round of meetings, one on every national forest plus national meetings will be then conducted to allow people to put that input forward after they have had some time to digest what is going on.

We have got unprecedented amount of information on the web. Cds rms will be distributed. The Draft Environmental Impact Statements will be at every Forest Service office in the country. Over 10,000 libraries will house copies of these. We are planning on distributing some 50,000 copies of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, plus another 100,000 copies of the summary. Now I want to reassure Mr. Stupak and others that I know are concerned about the issue of access, that the owners of the national forest will have access to the remaining open space.

And we have currently thousands of miles of roads, 133,000 miles of trails, 23,000 developed recreation sites. Eighty percent of the elk and bighorn sheep habitat in the United States is on our national forests. One-half of the
blue ribbon trout streams in the United States. World-class
hunting and fishing opportunities that generate 21 billion
dollars to local economies. World-class rock climbing,
mountain biking, hiking opportunities and the list goes on
and on of opportunities available on our national forests.

Over 4,000 miles of wild and scenic rivers, 7,700 miles
of scenic by-ways, 860 million recreation visitor days with
visitation on the national forests growing. This is not an
issue about wilderness designation, it is about the future of
our remaining large tracts of land. This is not an issue
about blocking access. This is about opportunities for future
generations and I believe it is time that we provide
leadership on the merits of this issue to get on with the
debate that has been in front of us for well over 30 years.
And I am pleased to be part of this debate and will be happy
to answer any questions at the appropriate time.