

Washington, DC – Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) released the following statement in reaction to today's announcement by the Bush administration of its latest changes to the popular Roadless Area Conservation Rule, replacing the Rule with a process that requires governors to petition for protections for national forests in their states with no guarantee of protection:

“Despite its 2001 promise to 'uphold' the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, today the Bush administration has turned the rule on its head. Instead of having a uniform national standard for our forests, the administration has taken another step towards ceding responsibility for a national treasure to states. This is what we have come to expect from an administration that places former timber industry lobbyists in charge of overseeing federal forest policy.

“Sadly, in some states where there are complicated politics, governors may not be sympathetic to environmental protections. This is why there are federal environmental regulations like the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act. Under the administration's proposed changes, protection of roadless areas is not guaranteed even in environmentally motivated states like Oregon. We are already seeing how difficult this is in National Forest land damaged by the 2002 Biscuit fire, where the administration's “salvage” proposal goes far beyond salvage logging and allows an unprecedented amount of logging in roadless areas.

“I am extremely disappointed that the President has ignored a record-breaking 2.5 million comments overwhelmingly in favor of protecting America's roadless areas, including over 58,000 comments from Oregonians. Oregonians recognize that roadless areas provide essential habitat to threatened and endangered species, they are home to pristine watersheds on which our municipalities rely for clean drinking water, and many contain the last remnants of pristine old growth which is critical to forest health and resistance to wildfire.

“Because the administration knows that the roadless rule is one of the most popular administrative actions in history, it hasn't gone after the rule directly. Instead, the Bush Forest Service has refused to defend the rule against industry court challenges, has opened the Tongass National Forest roadless area to logging, and has proposed other loopholes such as allowing states to exempt themselves from the rule. But today, the administration has gone even further by replacing the Roadless Rule with a process that offers no guarantees of protection for roadless areas in our National Forests.”

Blumenauer Reacts to Roadless Rule Rollback

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