



Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

July 07, 2009

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The sportsmen of Colorado sincerely thank you for issuing a nationwide “timeout” on road building and development in national forest inventoried roadless areas. This will allow adequate time to assess the complex aspects of this process to conserve America’s best remaining unprotected wild lands. We look forward to working with you to reinstate a strong national roadless rule.

Toward this end, we, the undersigned hunting and fishing organizations, request that you instruct the U.S. Forest Service to forestall finalizing the state roadless rule in Colorado until the Colorado roadless rule can be measured against a national roadless rule. Only then can we ensure that Colorado’s roadless areas are provided the long-term protection they deserve and our state’s economically and socially valuable hunting and fishing traditions are preserved for the long term.

By deferring completion of the Colorado rule, we can take time to further address and attempt to fix the proposed rule’s many problems. This process should include continued negotiations with sportsmen, conservationists and the state Division of Wildlife to ensure that Colorado roadless areas are afforded the same level of protections as those provided by a national roadless rule.

As Colorado hunters and anglers know from boots-on-the-ground experience, roadless areas provide crucially important mid-elevation habitat

security and linkage zones for Colorado's fish and wildlife. These unprotected yet largely natural wild areas act as buffers to wilderness and are critical to watershed health, assuring the continued downstream flow of cold, clean water necessary to maintain robust aquatic ecologies and fisheries. Likewise, roadless areas are the beating heart of habitat for elk and other ecologically, socially and economically significant big game species. With private-lands hunting and fishing access rapidly disappearing due to population growth and associated development, our public-lands backcountry has become the last bastion of the American outdoor tradition, offering equitable access to high-quality hunting and fishing.

Roadless area conservation enjoys strong public support. More than 95 percent of 1.7 million public comments favored the strong roadless protections afforded by the national roadless rule. Among the thousands of public comments specific to the Colorado roadless rule process, a similarly overwhelming majority of the public requested the strongest possible conservation measures in the Colorado roadless rule. Despite strong public support for meaningful roadless conservation, the proposed Colorado rule does not adequately conserve backcountry fish and wildlife habitat and needs refinement and clarification.

We thank you for considering our request to take a strong leadership role in the Colorado roadless rule-making process, and we ask that you continue to involve the hunting and fishing community in this important process. Colorado's roadless areas should be conserved at a level as or more protective than the national roadless rule. Your help in this matter, Mr. Secretary, not only will be openly and loudly applauded, but is the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

Colorado Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
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David Lien

Colorado Trout Unlimited
Vice President
Sinjin Eberle

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