

# Huntsman's bogus roadless plan

The Clinton administration's "roadless rule" purported to provide lasting protection for all roadless areas on America's national forests. The 2001 roadless rule did provide restrictions on new roads and logging in roadless areas and was a step in the right direction.

However, some greens and anti-conservation interests claimed it created "de facto wilderness" and said it could not be undone. At this point in time, we know that wasn't true.

The original rule included loopholes that permitted logging inside roadless areas under the pretense of ecosystem maintenance/restoration, fire prevention and suppression, etc. Virtually every timber sale in Utah is dressed up disingenuously to meet one of these categories. Soon after approval of Clinton's roadless rule, the Manti-La Sal National Forest proposed logging old growth in a roadless area and noted the project cleared the rule's hoops.

The original rule also allowed roads and oil/gas and hard rock mining development for leased areas and did not address livestock grazing or motorized recreation.

Under Presidents Clinton and Bush, public input has been overwhelmingly in support of preserving all of America's national forest roadless areas. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the policy, while a Wyoming federal district court ruled it created "de facto wilderness" illegally.

The Wyoming decision was appealed to the 10th U.S. Circuit Court in Denver but the Bush administration rescinded Clinton's rule the same day that the court heard arguments. A mess was created that threatens our roadless areas while leaving the American public to believe they were preserved.

The new Bush rule replaced the prior rule's purpose of "lasting protection" with one to



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"address the management of" roadless areas. It also shifted roadless management to state governors, granting them unprecedented authority to determine the fate of America's roadless lands. There is one problem with this — it is illegal. States have no authority to dictate management of our national forests.

Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. is preparing a roadless petition. The people involved in it are from county and state government interests who desire removing restrictions inside roadless areas. There will be no public meetings or announcements soliciting your public input. The governor's Web page states, "we must have more access to minerals, oil, gas, coal and timber" on public lands and he wants a "new day" for America's public lands where state/county interests gain stronger management control.

So it's no surprise that coordinators of his roadless petition include high-profile staff such as Lynn Stevens, who recently served as the conservative San Juan County commissioner, and is co-chair of the State RS2477 project, a substantial county-rights litigation machine. Utah's approach is generally premised on using the Bush rule to prevent, or even undo, roadless protection measures in each national forest's

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Some greens are clamoring for a seat at the table, inadvertently providing "green wash" for this anti-roadless protection, states-rights policy. The Utah Environmental Congress firmly believes that while intentions may be good, this position is off the mark. Legitimizing an unlawful policy does more harm than good.

Occasionally, organizations and individuals differ on strategy and it is difficult to publicly disagree with one's peers, but this civic dialogue is requisite for a functional democracy. We want the public to know why we are not participating in

Huntsman's bogus county-rights<sup>o</sup> roadless area development petition. The harm we believe such participation will inflict on our forests, wildlife, federal authority, democracy and citizen rights is substantial.

UEC supports meaningful protection such as that embodied in the Act to Save America's Forests. Already in the U.S. House and the Senate, this act would preserve all remaining roadless areas and additional special areas that are just as important.

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