

Senator Boxer's Congressional Sign-On Letter

February 14, 2000
The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On October 13, 1999, in the George Washington National Forest in Virginia, you announced plans to pursue a policy to permanently protect roadless areas in the National Forest System. We thank you for taking this bold step that could establish a much-needed balance among the various uses on these public lands.

While the announcement that you will be pursuing a roadless area protection policy is an excellent first step, your continued engagement is critical to ensuring a successful and effective final policy. In December 1997, 169 scientists from across the nation wrote to you saying the following: "In our view, a scientifically-based policy for roadless areas on public lands should, at a minimum, protect from development all roadless areas larger than 1,000 acres & middot; because of their contributions to regional landscapes." In November, 1998, 230 scientists wrote to Vice President Gore to express the same view. We join them in urging you to protect roadless areas in all national forests, including the Tongass National Forest, from logging, mining, and other destructive activities as well as from new roads.

With a mere 18 percent of national forest lands protected as wilderness and more than 50 percent already open to logging, road-building, and other activities, the pressure to log and develop the remaining roadless areas will only continue to increase.

As you stated in unveiling this policy initiative, roadless areas are sources of clean drinking water and healthy and viable wildlife habitat, and they provide unparalleled opportunities for recreational activities, including hiking, camping, hunting, and fishing. Roadless areas protect the watersheds of rural communities, protecting private property from flood damage, and providing and lower water treatment costs for local residents. Because roadless areas are among the least altered habitats in otherwise heavily disturbed landscapes, they typically have the highest ecological integrity and are the least in need of restoration.

We commend you for recognizing the values of these wild areas and for having the vision to begin a process to protect them. We look forward to working with you to ensure that this policy provides the maximum protection for our remaining roadless areas.

As President Theodore Roosevelt marked the opening of the 20th Century by creating the National Forests, your bold and decisive action is the first step toward ensuring that a true legacy of heritage forests is passed on to future generations of Americans.

Sincerely,
Barbara Boxer
Patrick Leahy
Richard Durbin
Frank Lautenberg
Christopher Dodd
Richard Bryan
Max Cleland
Tom Harkin
Joseph Lieberman
Jack Reed
Charles Schumer
Robert Torricelli
John Kerry
Daniel Patrick Moynihan
Paul Sarbanes
John Rockefeller
Joseph Biden
Edward Kennedy
Byron Dorgan
Daniel Akaka