

December 17, 2003

The Honorable Mark E. Rey
Office of the Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Mr. Rey:

Please accept this letter on behalf of the outdoor business community in Washington – a thriving and influential community in our state. We are deeply concerned about the protection of roadless areas and the fate of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Roadless lands support our businesses and provide outdoor consumers with outstanding places to play. We believe that the existing Roadless Rule would ensure that America's 58.5 million acres of roadless lands are protected for outdoor enthusiasts, outdoor businesses and Americans a like.

Washington boasts 2,015,000 acres of roadless areas which provide exceptional opportunities for hiking, backpacking, climbing, horseback riding, camping, paddling and cross country skiing. More than 3.3 million Washingtonians recreate outdoor each year. The Wenatchee National Forest houses two major roadless areas – Icicle Creek and Devils Gulch. People flock to Icicle Creek to climb the areas numerous rock climbing crags. The Devils Gulch area offers premiere mountain biking amongst large old growth Ponderosa pines and dramatic sandstone outcrops. Logging is a major threat to these areas. Implementation of the Roadless Rule would protect these outstanding recreation destinations so that all Americans can enjoy them in perpetuity.

Recreation is a viable and sustainable use of roadless areas, contributing to our state's economy through tourism and recreation dollars. In 2002, Washingtonians estimated spending \$209 million dollars on outdoor merchandise alone. The outdoor recreation industry as a whole is an \$18 billion industry and continues to grow each year. Protecting roadless areas is good for the economy as well as Washington's public lands.

Washington is a mecca for outdoor businesses, both big and small. Outdoor businesses like ours choose to locate in Washington in large part because of the state's natural and recreational assets. We believe that implementation of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule is the best tool for protecting these assets. In particular, we believe that a national rule, establishing a consistent framework for the management of federal public lands is imperative. The original Roadless Rule provides such a framework. We believe that it would be a mistake to abandon the original Roadless Rule for a state by state approach and to allow states to seek exemptions. If a new rule is adopted we ask that you preserve the integrity and intent of the original Roadless Rule.

We support and stand behind the 2.6 million individuals who sent in comments in favor of the Roadless Rule and ask that you heed the voice of the American public and the outdoor business community in protecting roadless areas.

Sincerely,

Alta Group Inc.
American Alpine Institute
Bite Footwear
Canoe and Kayak Magazine
Cascade Crags
Cascade Designs, Inc.
Egan & Associates, LLC
Ex Officio
Functional Design
Hilleberg the Tentmaker
MacPherson & Associates, Inc
Moonstone Mountain Equipment
Montrail

Mountain Gear
Nordkyn Outfitters
Ortlieb USA
Pacific Trail
Polar Fusion
REI
Seattle Garment Exchange
Shuksan Trading
Sportworks NW, Inc.
Superfeet Worldwide, LLP
Summit Sales
The Alpine Experience
Trails.com

cc. Governor Gary Locke

