



# NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
August 29, 2008

Release No. R4-0815

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Agriculture Undersecretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, Mark Rey, in cooperation with the State of Idaho, today announced the availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Idaho Roadless Rule. The FEIS identifies a preferred alternative that will establish management direction for designated roadless areas in the State of Idaho. The preferred alternative designates 250 Roadless Areas and establishes five management themes that provide prohibitions and conditioned exceptions to control road construction, timber cutting and discretionary mineral development.

"The Idaho Roadless Rule represents the first time a state and its citizens had a direct voice in creating a plan for resolving an issue of national importance," said Lieutenant Governor Jim Risch. "I appreciate all of the hard work put forth by the State, County Commissioners, Forest Service, the Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee, the Tribes and the public. I believe the process we used can serve as a model for resolving these difficult natural resource issues in the future."

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“The preferred alternative takes a balanced approach recognizing both local and national interests for the management of National Forest Roadless Areas in Idaho,” said Undersecretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and the Environment, Mark Rey. “The Department and Forest Service are committed to the important challenge of protecting roadless characteristics. The preferred alternative does not authorize the building of a single road or the cutting of any trees. Instead, it establishes permissions and prohibitions that will govern what types of activities may occur in Roadless Areas in the State of Idaho.”

The preferred alternative of the Idaho Roadless Rule responds to the issues raised by the public, organizations and local, state and Tribal governments during the process. The preferred alternative provides for:

- Responsible stewardship and the ability to reduce wildland fire risk to communities;
- The maintenance of the integrity and natural characteristics of Idaho roadless areas;
- The establishment of five management themes that provide for a spectrum of prohibitions and permissions of activities such as road construction, timber harvesting and discretionary mineral development.

Roadless Area conservation has been the subject of unresolved debate for the past 40 years. Idaho’s petition to the Secretary of Agriculture in October 2006 under the Administrative Procedure Act was then-Governor Jim Risch’s endeavor to establish new management direction of Idaho’s inventoried roadless areas on national forests.

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To provide broad-based national level and third-party perspective, the Secretary of Agriculture's Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee (RACNAC) participated extensively in the rule making process. The RACNAC provided recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture about how to respond to the state's petition and gave specific comments concerning the proposed rule. "I am very grateful for the RACNAC's effort and work to develop their thoughtful recommendations," commented Rey. "In most cases, the Forest Service incorporated their recommendations into the preferred alternative."

"It has been a pleasure and honor to be part of this extraordinary effort between the State of Idaho and the Forest Service," said Dale Harris, Co-Chairman of the Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee. "Both parties are to be commended for listening to the balanced recommendations of the RACNAC members and working through their differences to reach consensus that is accountable to the public."

When a decision is made on which alternative will become the final rule, it will supersede the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule for National Forest System lands in the State of Idaho.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement is available at <http://roadless.fs.fed.us/idaho.shtml>.

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