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**COLORADO TO SEEK COMMENTS ON REVISIONS TO ROADLESS  
RULE**

Gov. Bill Ritter announced today that the state is proposing revisions to the draft Colorado roadless petition and will seek additional public comment and review later this summer.

The proposed Colorado roadless rule was published in July 2008. Since then, the state has been working with the U.S. Forest Service and stakeholders on a range of improvements to the draft state petition, which would create a permanent conservation framework for the 4.1 million acres of roadless lands within the 11 national forests in Colorado.

“From my first day in office, I have worked to provide lasting protections for Colorado’s backcountry and roadless heritage,” Gov. Ritter said today following a meeting with Rocky Mountain Regional Forester Rick Cables. “Colorado’s roadless rule process has been crucial to this effort, and over the past year my administration has been working closely with the Forest Service and numerous stakeholders to improve the 2008 proposal.

“I remain committed to crafting a roadless plan that addresses Colorado’s unique circumstances, including the need to respond to the bark beetle epidemic; to ensure that our recreation, tourism and natural resource industries are able to grow; and to help our local communities and economies on the Western Slope thrive,” Gov. Ritter said. “I look forward to continuing to work with the US Forest Service, Agriculture Secretary Vilsack and others in the Obama Administration on achieving the right solution for Colorado.

“Gathering additional input and review from the public and interested stakeholders will add to the transparency and accountability of this process,” Gov. Ritter added.

Later this month, Colorado will issue a revised draft of its recommendations and solicit further public input during a 60-day public comment period. Following the comment period, the state will consider additional suggestions before finalizing its

recommendations to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In the past 12 months, the state and the Forest Service have updated the roadless inventory to add approximately 160,000 acres of high-quality roadless forests. As a result, the state rule would now conserve 400,000 acres not included in the national 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule inventory.

The state has made additional recommendations to better balance the need to protect mountain communities and water infrastructure at the edge of roadless areas from fire risk with the overall goal of conserving roadless values.

The Colorado recommendations would also eliminate a loophole in the 2001 rule, the so-called “linear construction zone exemption,” that allows pipelines to bisect roadless areas. Additional revisions by the state also would eliminate new roads for grazing.

Cables said after the meeting that he supported giving the public an additional opportunity to review and comment on Colorado’s recommended changes to the petition.

“The very best solutions take time, deliberation and thinking together with all of the stakeholders,” Cables said. “It’s critical to maintain the collaborative spirit that has characterized this rule-making process thus far. Another round of public review will help us to build a durable solution that provides lasting protection for the roadless areas in the national forests in Colorado.”

In 2005, Colorado began the process of drafting a state-specific roadless rule under former Gov. Bill Owens. A draft rule was published in the Federal Register in July 2008.

“Roadless areas are important to our economy and they are irreplaceable sources of clean water and wildlife habitat,” Ritter said. “We are committed to continuing this process in a transparent way until we get it right.”

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