

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 279

To provide lasting protection for inventoried roadless areas within the
National Forest System.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 12, 2021

Mr. GALLEG0 (for himself, Ms. DEGETTE, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Mr. WELCH, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mr. HUFFMAN, Ms. BONAMICI, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Mr. KILMER, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. PANNETTA, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. KHANNA, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Ms. STEVENS, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mr. COHEN, Mr. SIRES, Ms. BROWNLEY, Ms. JAYAPAL, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Mr. CASTEN, Mr. CLEAVER, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Ms. DELBENE, Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY, Mr. HASTINGS, Ms. PINGREE, Mr. CONNOLLY, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mrs. BEATTY, Mr. CASE, Ms. ESCOBAR, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. KIM of New Jersey, Mr. SCHIFF, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. PALLONE, Ms. ESHOO, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. CARBAJAL, Mr. QUIGLEY, Mrs. TRAHAN, Mr. TONKO, Ms. TLAIB, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. FOSTER, Mr. BEYER, Mr. POCAN, Mr. EVANS, Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. TAKANO, Ms. SCHRIER, Ms. CHU, Mr. SUOZZI, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. MALINOWSKI, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mr. NADLER, and Mrs. KIRKPATRICK) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committee on Natural Resources, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To provide lasting protection for inventoried roadless areas
within the National Forest System.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Roadless Area Con-
5 servation Act of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Congress finds that—

8 (1) there is a compelling need to establish na-
9 tional protection for inventoried roadless areas of the
10 National Forest System in order to protect the
11 unique social and ecological values of those irreplace-
12 able resources;

13 (2) roadless areas protect healthy watersheds
14 and the numerous benefits of healthy watersheds,
15 which include—

16 (A) providing the setting for many forms
17 of outdoor recreation;

18 (B) ensuring a supply of clean water for
19 domestic, agricultural, and industrial uses;

20 (C) providing drinking water to tens of
21 millions of citizens of the United States; and

22 (D) helping maintain abundant and
23 healthy fish and wildlife populations and habi-
24 tats;

1 (3) maintaining roadless areas in a relatively
2 undisturbed condition—

3 (A) saves downstream communities mil-
4 lions of dollars in water filtration costs; and

5 (B) is crucial to preserve the flow of af-
6 fordable, clean water to a growing population;

7 (4) the protection of roadless areas can main-
8 tain biological strongholds and refuges for many im-
9 periled species by halting the ongoing fragmentation
10 of the landscape into smaller and smaller parcels of
11 land divided by road corridors;

12 (5) roadless areas conserve native biodiversity
13 by serving as a bulwark against the spread of non-
14 native invasive species;

15 (6) roadless areas provide important backcoun-
16 try fish and game habitat, creating opportunities for
17 hunting and commercial and sport fishing;

18 (7) roadless areas provide unparalleled opportu-
19 nities for outdoor recreation, including hiking, camp-
20 ing, picnicking, wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing,
21 cross-country skiing, canoeing, mountain biking, and
22 similar activities;

23 (8) while roadless areas may have many wilder-
24 ness-like attributes, unlike wilderness areas, the use

1 of mechanized means of travel is allowed in many
2 roadless areas;

3 (9) roadless areas contain many sites sacred to
4 Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and other groups
5 that use roadless areas for spiritual and religious
6 practices and access, including customary and tradi-
7 tional uses and activities;

8 (10) from the inception of Federal land man-
9 agement, the mission of the Forest Service has been
10 to manage the National Forest System for multiple
11 uses, including resource utilization, conservation,
12 and other uses;

13 (11) consistent with the multiple-use mission
14 described in paragraph (10), this Act—

15 (A) ensures the continued protection of so-
16 cial and ecological values, while allowing for
17 many multiple uses of inventoried roadless
18 areas; and

19 (B) does not impose any new limitations
20 on—

21 (i) inventoried roadless areas; or

22 (ii) the use of, or access to, National
23 Forest System, State, or private land out-
24 side inventoried roadless areas;

1 (12) enacting a law for the protection of inven-
2 toried roadless areas—

3 (A) provides additional reliability to areas
4 with recreation-based economies that depend on
5 public land without roads for jobs, revenue, and
6 consumer spending; and

7 (B) encourages forest managers to con-
8 tinue giving priority to conducting fuel reduc-
9 tion treatments in the areas in which the treat-
10 ments will have the most impact;

11 (13) wildfires are almost twice as likely to occur
12 in roaded areas as in roadless areas, because road-
13 less areas are generally located further away from
14 communities and are harder to access;

15 (14) the Forest Service has an enormous back-
16 log of maintenance needs for the existing 371,581-
17 mile road system of the Forest Service that will cost
18 \$3,200,000,000 to eliminate; and

19 (15) continued protection of roadless areas will
20 continue to allow for the development of hydropower
21 projects.

22 (b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to provide,
23 within the context of multiple-use management, lasting
24 protection for inventoried roadless areas within the Na-
25 tional Forest System.

1 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

2 In this Act:

3 (1) INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREA.—The term
4 “inventoried roadless area” means any area in which
5 road construction, road reconstruction, or logging is
6 subject to regulation under the Roadless Rule.

7 (2) ROADLESS RULE.—The term “Roadless
8 Rule” means part 294 of title 36, Code of Federal
9 Regulations, as adopted on January 12, 2001, and
10 modified for Idaho on October 16, 2008, and for
11 Colorado on July 3, 2012, and December 19, 2016.

12 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
13 the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the
14 Chief of the Forest Service.

15 **SEC. 4. PROTECTION OF INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREAS.**

16 The Secretary shall not allow road construction, road
17 reconstruction, or logging in an inventoried roadless area
18 where those activities are prohibited by the Roadless Rule.

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