

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 9, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave  
Washington, D.C., 20250

The Honorable Tom Schultz  
Chief  
U.S. Forest Service  
1400 Independence Ave  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins and Chief Schultz,

We write with concern that, in affording just 21 days for public comment, the U.S. Forest Service is not providing an adequate opportunity for meaningful public participation on its Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (NOI) for the proposed repeal of the Roadless Rule. We respectfully request that you extend the comment period by at least thirty days. We also encourage you to conduct more robust stakeholder engagement, including by holding public hearings in all states with Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) and consulting proactively with Tribal governments.

The Roadless Rule is a landmark public-lands rule that has ensured the responsible management of nearly 60 million acres of National Forest System land and the irreplaceable resources they provide since its inception. Its repeal represents a major shift in the longstanding management of lands in virtually all federal forests across the country – forests that our constituents care deeply about. This includes protections of over half of the 17 million-acre mature and old-growth Tongass National Forest in Alaska – America’s largest forest and last remaining temperate rainforest – which offers critical opportunities for Tribal subsistence, tourism, outdoor recreation, and carbon sequestration. Twenty-one days is simply not enough to provide the opportunity for meaningful participation that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires.

This is an issue with broad public interest from conservationists, recreationists, Tribal communities, and more. When the Roadless Rule was first adopted, more than 1.6 million comments were submitted in favor of the rule. Everyday Americans have a real stake in this issue, and twenty-one days is simply not enough time for individuals to take time out of their busy lives to research, prepare, and submit meaningful comments on such a complex and significant issue. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) held more than 400 public meetings across the country during the 2001 Roadless Rule rulemaking process and has a responsibility to similarly ensure adequate opportunity for the public to weigh in on the proposed repeal.

Additionally, it is the responsibility of the U.S. Government to hold robust and meaningful Tribal consultation with any impacted Tribal governments. Considering the breadth of the Roadless Rule’s purview, numerous Tribes will be impacted, and to our knowledge there has been virtually no Tribal consultation on this significant and sudden policy shift. This is contrary to the Forest Service’s protocol, which requires a minimum tribal consultation period of 120 days for national-level decisions.

Participation by Tribes, local governments and by the public, “in cooperation” with the federal government, is central to the democratic process, and execution of the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”)<sup>1</sup>. As the U.S. Supreme Court has explained, NEPA guarantees that “relevant information will be made available to the

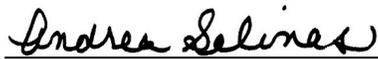
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<sup>1</sup> 42 U.S.C. 4331(a).

larger audience that may also play a role in both the decision-making process and the implementation of that decision.”<sup>2</sup> Allowing the public to participate early on addresses NEPA’s “manifest concern with preventing uninformed action,” because it is through the “broad dissemination of information” that “the public” can “react to the effects of a proposed action at a meaningful time.”<sup>3</sup>

Considering the complex nature of this proposal and the widespread local and national interests likely to be affected, we strongly urge you to provide a minimum of 45 days for the public to comment and participate in public hearings, and 120 days for Tribal consultation.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Andrea Salinas  
Member of Congress

  
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Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Yassamin Ansari  
Member of Congress

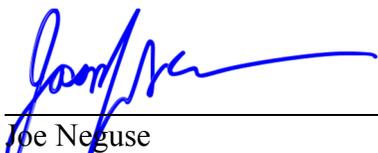
  
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Ruben Gallego  
United States Senator

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Adam Smith  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress

  
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Alex Padilla  
United States Senator

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress

  
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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

<sup>2</sup> *Robertson v. Methow Valley Citizens Council*, 490 U.S. 332, 349 (1989).

<sup>3</sup> *Marsh v. Or. Nat. Res. Council*, 490 U.S. 360, 371 (1989).



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Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress



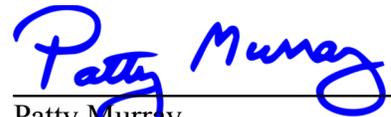
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Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



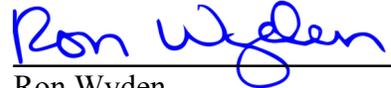
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Patty Murray  
United States Senator



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JM Tokuda  
Member of Congress



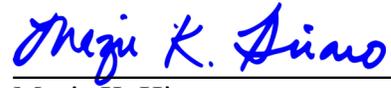
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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



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Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress



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Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



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Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress



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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



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Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress



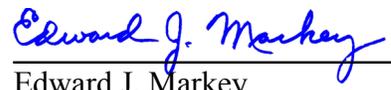
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Tina Smith  
United States Senator



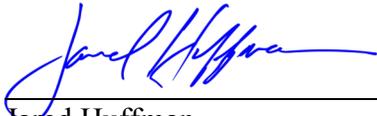
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Gabe Vasquez  
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United States Senator



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Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



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Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



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Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



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Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



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Adam B. Schiff  
United States Senator



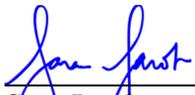
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Steve Cohen  
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United States Senator



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Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress



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Peter Welch  
United States Senator



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Lateefah Simon  
Member of Congress



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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



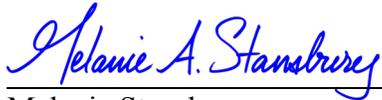
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Cleo Fields  
Member of Congress



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Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress



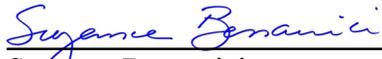
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Melanie Stansbury  
Member of Congress



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Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



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Suzanne Bonamici  
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Ted W. Lieu  
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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
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Diana DeGette  
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Paul D. Tonko  
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Sylvia R. Garcia  
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Maxine Waters  
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Emanuel Cleaver, II  
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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



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Teresa Leger Fernandez  
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Seth Magaziner  
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Angie Craig  
Member of Congress  
Ranking Member, Committee on  
Agriculture



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Sarah McBride  
Member of Congress