



Position Statement on Proposed Changes to the Forest Service Roadless Conservation Rule August 2004

The Arizona Wildlife Federation recognizes the critical need for public land protection measures across the United States to protect and maintain our national forest legacy. The AWF opposes the proposed rule changes to the Forest Service Roadless Conservation Rule due to its failure to protect and maintain the undeveloped character of the most pristine areas of our National Forest System.

AWF's main points of opposition are:

- 1) "Conservation" language used to describe harmful management practices is, at best, confusing to the Public, and at worst deliberately misleading.
- 2) The last and best wildlife, fish, and plant habitat on public land is in national forest roadless areas.
- 3) Roadless areas contain critical undisturbed habitat for endangered wildlife, fish and plant species.
- 4) The proposed changes would facilitate logging, gas and mineral development in currently roadless areas.
- 5) Road construction activities/vehicle usage introduces invasive plant species to pristine native plant habitat.
- 6) Road construction activities/vehicle usage increases flood risk, landslides, and sediment flow into streams and rivers.
- 7) Governors in states which have budget shortfalls may be unable to complete the process of petitioning for Roadless Area Protection due to lack of personnel or funding which would leave previously protected roadless areas unprotected.
- 8) The American People should make important decisions as to their Public Lands, not state governors, who by the very nature of their jobs, may not be representative of what the Public wants.

As the oldest non-profit conservation organization in Arizona, the Arizona Wildlife Federation is dedicated to the protection and well-being of Arizona's wildlife, wildlife habitat, fish and natural resources. We are unable to support far-reaching changes to forest management regulations which threaten the sustainability of these resources.