

PRAIRIE HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY — ACTION ALERT
Last Chance: Defend the Roadless Rule by Tuesday Night

USDA proposes to erase road-building and logging protections on roughly 45 million acres of national forest and grassland, including inventoried roadless areas in the Black Hills and on the grasslands around us. **The comment deadline has been extended, but only to Tuesday.**

NEW DEADLINE: Tuesday, October 6, 2026, 9:59 pm Mountain (11:59 pm Eastern)
Comment here: <https://www.regulations.gov/commenton/FS-2025-0001-223869>
91 Fed. Reg. 53,827 (Aug. 20, 2026) · RIN 0596-AD66 · Docket FS-2025-0001
Read the proposal (Federal Register notice):
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/08/20/2026-16965/special-areas-roadless-area-conservation>
Draft EIS and supporting documents (Draft EIS Volumes I–III, economic analysis, Tribal summary): <https://www.regulations.gov/docket/FS-2025-0001/document>
By mail (must arrive by the deadline): Director, Ecosystem Management Coordination, USDA Forest Service, 201 14th Street SW, Mailstop 1108, Washington, DC 20250-1124. Reference RIN 0596-AD66.

What the proposal would do

- Repeal the entire 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 C.F.R. part 294, subpart B), which has barred road construction and most logging in inventoried roadless areas since 2001.
- Leave roadless areas to individual forest and grassland plans, which a supervisor or regional forester could later amend to allow roads and logging.
- By the agency's own numbers, about 4.8 million acres would become newly available for timber harvest. Its own preliminary biological assessment says the preferred alternative is **likely to adversely affect 327 threatened and endangered species and 71 designated critical habitats**.

Our roadless areas

- **Black Hills National Forest:** Beaver Park in South Dakota, and Sand Creek and Inyan Kara on the Wyoming side.
- **Buffalo Gap National Grassland:** several areas, including Indian Creek and Red Shirt, the two the Forest Service recommended for wilderness in the grassland plan, and First Black Canyon, a 4,965-acre area next to the Pine Ridge Reservation.
- **Grand River National Grassland** (Perkins and Corson counties) and **Thunder Basin National Grassland** in northeastern Wyoming also have inventoried roadless areas.

Maps: the Forest Service's interactive map lets you find the roadless areas nearest you:
experience.arcgis.com/experience/c6122042b4ae46c9b323306912e8b40e

Six weeks to undo an 18-month public process

The 2001 Roadless Rule was adopted with overwhelming public support after an 18-month public process: 129 days of comment, more than 400 public meetings, and over 1.6 million comments. This time USDA allowed about six weeks, held no public hearings outside Alaska, and, instead of the 120 days that Earthjustice and a dozen conservation groups requested, extended the deadline only to October 6. **Say in your comment that this process is inadequate.**

USDA's own Tribal consultation summary reports that most Tribal governments consulted oppose the repeal and said the government failed its trust responsibilities.

Every comment counts. Make yours count twice.

Big numbers matter, so **please comment even if all you have time for is a ready-made letter.** The national groups below make it a two-minute job. But take one more minute to **personalize it**: add a sentence or two at the top in your own words. Personalized comments are counted *and* must be individually considered by the agency, which makes them far harder to ignore.

Option 1: Personalize a ready-made letter. No time to write from scratch? Use one of these, and add a sentence or two of your own at the top.

Ready-made comment letters you can personalize:

- **National Audubon Society:** act.audubon.org/a/save-roadless-areas-2026
- **Sierra Club:** sierraclub.org/save-roadless-rule-protect-our-forests
- **NRDC:** action.nrdc.org/letter/5017-roadless-rule-052826
- **Defenders of Wildlife:** defenders.org/roadless-rule
- **National Wildlife Federation:** support.nwfactionfund.org/page/101819/action/1
- **Roadless.org:** roadless.org, a comment-drafting tool plus citable peer-reviewed studies

Option 2: Write your own comment from scratch. A comment entirely in your own words carries the most weight. Here is how:

1. Go to the Forest Service comment form: <https://www.regulations.gov/commenton/FS-2025-0001-223869>
2. Start by saying who you are and why you care: where you live, how you use public lands, and a place you know.
3. State plainly that you **oppose rescinding the 2001 Roadless Rule** (RIN 0596-AD66).
4. Give one to three reasons (or more) in your own words. Use the ideas below, or your own experience. Specific, accurate facts about real places count most.
5. Say what you want: keep the Roadless Rule, consider stronger protection, and extend the comment period with public hearings.
6. For a more substantive comment, skim the Federal Register notice and the Draft EIS Volume I (links in the box on page 1). Quoting the agency's own words back to it is very effective.
7. Type it in the comment box, or write it in a word processor, paste it in, or attach it as a file. Add your name, then click Submit and save the confirmation number.

Ideas for your comment, whichever way you write it:

- Name a roadless area you know, such as Beaver Park, Sand Creek, Inyan Kara in the Black Hills, or Indian Creek or Red Shirt on the Buffalo Gap Grassland. Say why it matters to you: clean water, wildlife, hiking, birding, quiet, spiritual renewal etc.
- Point out that the agency's own Draft EIS admits roads bring **more** human-caused fires and invasive weeds (DEIS p. 24). Building roads into roadless areas will not reduce wildfire risk.

- Ask USDA to keep the Roadless Rule and to consider **stronger** protection instead: close the logging loopholes and protect the roadless areas identified in forest plans. PHAS signed on today to a national group letter (organized by the John Muir Project) making exactly this case.
- Ask for a longer comment period with public hearings in the West.

After you comment

- **Call your delegation:** ask Senators Thune and Rounds and Representative Johnson to support the Roadless Area Conservation Act (H.R. 3930 / S. 2042), which would put the 2001 rule into law as it stands, including its existing exceptions, such as allowing some cutting of small trees to reduce fire risk. The bill would make today's protections permanent, but it will not close those exceptions, unless amended or new bill is introduced. Capitol switchboard: 202-224-3121.
- **Wednesday, October 7, 6:30–8:30 pm:** Sierra Club and Izaak Walton League meeting on the attack on the Roadless Rule. Details on the PHAS calendar: phas-wsd.org/events-alerts/

Prairie Hills Audubon Society · P.O. Box 788, Black Hawk, SD 57718 · 605-787-6466 · phas.wsd@rapidnet.com · phas-wsd.org

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