

July 17, 2007

Honorable Maria Cantwell
United States Senate
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

Outdoor Alliance, a coalition of six national, member-based organizations devoted to conservation and stewardship of our nation's public lands and waters through responsible human-powered outdoor recreation, writes this letter in support of the National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2007, which you introduced earlier this year.

Representing the interests of 100 million Americans who hike, paddle, climb, mountain bike, ski and snowshoe on our nation's public lands and waters, we believe that protection of Roadless Areas is critical to resource protection on some of our nation's most highly valued landscapes for wildlife and recreation.

In addition to the manifest benefits to our nation's natural landscapes and habitats that your legislation would afford, we also support the effort to protect Roadless Areas for these additional reasons:

- **Roadless Areas provide high quality recreational opportunities:** Of the 192 million acres the Forest Service manages, 34.6 million is Wilderness and 58.5 million is Roadless. In many locations throughout the nation Roadless Areas provide the highest value recreational opportunities. Frequently located at lower elevations than Wilderness Areas, Roadless Areas include scenic landscapes, ancient forests, and wild rivers that are enjoyed by the public. Without Congressional action, these outstanding recreation areas are threatened by future potential development that will undermine the special qualities of the land enjoyed by the human-powered outdoor recreation community.
- **Roadless Areas provide a diverse array of recreational opportunities:** As recognized in your bill, these lands provide backcountry recreational opportunities that are accessible and can be enjoyed by millions of Americans and their families who hike, paddle, climb, mountain bike, ski and snowshoe.
- **Roadless Areas are important for quality of life:** The wild quality of Roadless Areas and the superb scenic and recreational opportunities they provide significantly add to high quality of life for communities in proximity to these areas. Trails, waterways, slopes, scenic vistas, and opportunities for solitude provide treasured opportunities to engage in activities that refresh the soul and body, and reinvigorate the mind. These lands are found across the country including the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the Smokey Mountains of the east, the rugged interior of Idaho, and many other areas across the country.

- There are already plenty of roads in the Forest System: Our National Forest road network includes more than 386,000 miles of roads. Only 21 percent of these roads meet adequate road maintenance standards and the maintenance backlog approaches \$10 billion. The Forest Service needs to focus attention on management and maintenance of the existing road network, including retiring redundant, obsolete, or unnecessary roads. The Forest Service should focus scarce resources on maintaining the roads that best serve the public and not on construct new roads in areas where the absence of roads is a defining resource value.

Our National Forests provide some of our nation's most highly valued recreational opportunities and Roadless Areas are a key component of the overall experiences available on public lands that bring people together and leave visitors enriched. The National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2007 will protect these opportunities and the landscapes that define them.

Best regards,



Adam Cramer

Outdoor Alliance General Counsel and Policy Architect

cc: Pamela Dillon, *Executive Director, American Canoe Association*
 Jason Keith, *Policy Director, Access Fund*
 Mark Menlove, *Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance*
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