

Changes to Idaho roadless rule protects more forests

The Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee has recommended more protection for national forests contained in Idaho.

The committee in a May 30 letter to U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Edward Schafer suggested that only temporary roads in national forests in Idaho be allowed in narrow buffer areas.

Idaho officials submitted a plan for national forest land within in the state in 2006 after the Bush administration in 2005 allowed states to opt out of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule developed by the Clinton administration.

Idaho has 9.3 million acres of roadless areas.

Paul Spitler of the Center for Biological Diversity says he doubts the Bush administration will consider any of the changes proposed by the committee.

He says lawsuits are likely once Idaho's plan is approved later this year or early next year.