

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To provide lasting protection for inventoried roadless areas within the
National Forest System.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Ms. CANTWELL (for herself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. DURBIN,
Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. HEINRICH, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. MARKEY, Mr.
MENENDEZ, Mr. MERKLEY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. REED, Mr.
SANDERS, Ms. WARREN, Mr. WELCH, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr.
WYDEN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred
to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To provide lasting protection for inventoried roadless areas
within the National Forest System.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Roadless Area Con-
5 servation Act of 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Congress finds that—

1 (1) there is a compelling need to establish na-
2 tional protection for inventoried roadless areas of the
3 National Forest System in order to protect the
4 unique social and ecological values of those irreplace-
5 able resources;

6 (2) roadless areas protect healthy watersheds
7 and the numerous benefits of healthy watersheds,
8 which include—

9 (A) providing the setting for many forms
10 of outdoor recreation;

11 (B) ensuring a supply of clean water for
12 domestic, agricultural, and industrial uses;

13 (C) providing drinking water to tens of
14 millions of citizens of the United States; and

15 (D) helping maintain abundant and
16 healthy fish and wildlife populations and habi-
17 tats;

18 (3) maintaining roadless areas in a relatively
19 undisturbed condition—

20 (A) saves downstream communities mil-
21 lions of dollars in water filtration costs; and

22 (B) is crucial to preserve the flow of af-
23 fordable, clean water to a growing population;

24 (4) the protection of roadless areas can main-
25 tain biological strongholds and refuges for many im-

1 periled species by halting the ongoing fragmentation
2 of the landscape into smaller and smaller parcels of
3 land divided by road corridors;

4 (5) roadless areas conserve native biodiversity
5 by serving as a bulwark against the spread of non-
6 native invasive species;

7 (6) roadless areas provide important back-
8 country fish and game habitat, creating opportuni-
9 ties for hunting and commercial and sport fishing;

10 (7) roadless areas provide unparalleled opportu-
11 nities for outdoor recreation, including hiking, camp-
12 ing, picnicking, wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing,
13 cross-country skiing, canoeing, mountain-biking, and
14 similar activities;

15 (8) while roadless areas may have many wilder-
16 ness-like attributes, unlike wilderness areas, the use
17 of mechanized means of travel is allowed in many
18 roadless areas;

19 (9) roadless areas contain many sites sacred to
20 Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and other groups
21 that use roadless areas for spiritual and religious
22 practices and access, including customary and tradi-
23 tional uses and activities;

24 (10) from the inception of Federal land man-
25 agement, the mission of the Forest Service has been

1 to manage the National Forest System for multiple
2 uses, including resource utilization, conservation,
3 and other uses;

4 (11) consistent with the multiple-use mission
5 described in paragraph (10), this Act—

6 (A) ensures the continued protection of so-
7 cial and ecological values, while allowing for
8 many multiple uses of inventoried roadless
9 areas; and

10 (B) does not impose any new limitations
11 on—

12 (i) inventoried roadless areas; or

13 (ii) the use of, or access to, National
14 Forest System, State, or private land out-
15 side inventoried roadless areas;

16 (12) enacting a law for the protection of inven-
17 toried roadless areas—

18 (A) provides additional reliability to areas
19 with recreation-based economies that depend on
20 public land without roads for jobs, revenue, and
21 consumer spending; and

22 (B) encourages forest managers to con-
23 tinue giving priority to conducting fuel reduc-
24 tion treatments in the areas in which the treat-
25 ments will have the most impact;

1 (13) wildfires are almost twice as likely to occur
2 in roaded areas as in roadless areas, because
3 roadless areas are generally located further away
4 from communities and are harder to access;

5 (14) the Forest Service has an enormous back-
6 log of maintenance needs for the existing 371,581-
7 mile road system of the Forest Service that will cost
8 \$3,200,000,000 to eliminate; and

9 (15) continued protection of roadless areas will
10 continue to allow for the development of hydropower
11 projects.

12 (b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to provide,
13 within the context of multiple-use management, lasting
14 protection for inventoried roadless areas within the Na-
15 tional Forest System.

16 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

17 In this Act:

18 (1) INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREA.—The term
19 “inventoried roadless area” means any area in which
20 road construction, road reconstruction, or logging is
21 subject to regulation under the Roadless Rule.

22 (2) ROADLESS RULE.—The term “Roadless
23 Rule” means part 294 of title 36, Code of Federal
24 Regulations, as adopted on January 12, 2001, and

1 modified for Idaho on October 16, 2008, and for
2 Colorado on July 3, 2012, and December 19, 2016.

3 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
4 the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the
5 Chief of the Forest Service.

6 **SEC. 4. PROTECTION OF INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREAS.**

7 The Secretary shall not allow road construction, road
8 reconstruction, or logging in an inventoried roadless area
9 where those activities are prohibited by the Roadless Rule.