



Empowering all to enjoy, share, and preserve the hiking experience

October 6, 2026

To: U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service
From: American Hiking Society

Submitted electronically via Regulations.Gov ([FS-2025-0001/RIN 0596-AD66](https://www.regulations.gov/document/FS-2025-0001/RIN_0596-AD66))

Re: Reject the repeal of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule)

On behalf of American Hiking Society and the 63-million-strong hiking community, we urge the USDA Forest Service to reject the repeal of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule).

The proposed elimination of the 2001 Roadless Rule jeopardizes nearly 45 million acres of undeveloped backcountry forestland managed by the U.S. Forest Service, comprising around a third of the territory in our National Forest System. These forests have only remained intact because of the Forest Service's nearly 25-year-old commitment not to build roads in these areas for harmful activities like major logging operations or oil-and-gas drilling.

Based on data provided by [AllTrails](#) and [Outdoor Alliance](#), over 25,000 miles of trails and 5,651 trail routes across 37 states would be at risk with the rescission of the Roadless Rule.¹ These are heavily recreated trails that generate significant economic output. In the last year alone, nearly three million hours were spent recreating on these trails contributing to rural economic development.

Protected roadless areas have offered abundant outdoor recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, camping and other activities. Large sections of the Continental Divide, Pacific Crest, Arizona, and Appalachian National Trails traverse protected roadless areas.

American Hiking Society supporters have submitted twenty individual comments calling for the rejection of the repeal of the Roadless Rule.²

American Hiking Society Supports Comments Submitted by Partner Organizations

American Hiking Society is proud to join with partner organizations including Partnership for the National Trails System, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and Pacific Crest Trail Association in opposing the rescission. American Hiking Society's comments incorporate by reference the

¹All Trails, *The Roadless Rule protects thousands of popular trails. The USDA wants to repeal it.* (Aug. 19, 2026), available at <https://www.alltrails.com/press/the-roadless-rule-explained>; see also Outdoor Alliance, *Defend America's Backcountry Forests: Protect the Roadless Rule* (last accessed Oct. 6, 2026), <https://www.outdooralliance.org/roadless>.

² Search result for "American Hiking Society" on [Regulations.Gov](#) comment docket, <https://www.regulations.gov/document/FS-2025-0001-223869/comment>.

content of those organization's comments, including the key highlights below that are of particular importance to hikers:

- **Rescission Could Undermine Recreation and Local Economic Benefits**
(*Appalachian Trail Conservancy Comments*)³
 - “Roadless areas can provide opportunities for hiking, backpacking, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and other forms of recreation that depend on relatively quiet and undeveloped settings. The [Draft Environmental Impact Statement] DEIS recognizes that increased road construction and timber harvest could reduce primitive and semi-primitive recreational settings and result in economic losses associated with recreation and other non-commodity values of roadless areas.”
- **Recreation and Scenery** (Pacific Crest Trail Association)⁴
 - “The DEIS acknowledges that rescinding the Rule and opening areas up to commercial timber production and road building will most likely impact areas that provide more primitive and non- motorized recreation settings and opportunities...negative effects to scenery and undeveloped recreation settings would have a particularly adverse effect on hikers, horseback riders, and other slower moving travelers. These impacts will have an outsized effect on the very people who travel to IRAs to experience undeveloped landscapes and recreation opportunities.”
- **Direct Impact on the National Trails System** (Partnership for the National Trails System)⁵
 - “Of the 32 Congressionally designated National Trails, almost 1,500 miles of 19 National Trails would be impacted directly by this ruling with another several hundred miles of connecting and adjacent trails and hundreds of acres of land impacted. For example, this will impact 12.5% of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail and 11% of the Pacific Crest Trail. These trails were specifically designated by Congress for their scenic value, and should be kept intact not only for the enjoyment of the hiking public but also for their safety.”

Additionally, American Hiking Society is proud to join 207 groups and businesses to collectively oppose the proposed rescission of the and urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture to adopt Alternative 1, the "No Action" alternative.⁶

Respectfully submitted,



Tyler Ray
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American Hiking Society

³ Comments submitted by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (Sept. 22, 2026)
<https://www.regulations.gov/comment/FS-2025-0001-469321>.

⁴ Comments submitted by the Pacific Crest Trails Association (Sept. 4, 2026).

⁵ Comments submitted by Partnership for the National Trails System (Sept. 2, 2026).

⁶ <https://www.regulations.gov/comment/FS-2025-0001-539902>.