

ADVOCATES FOR SNAKE PRESERVATION * BIRD ALLIANCE OF
SOUTHWESTERN NEW MEXICO * CONSERVATION VOTERS NEW MEXICO * FRIENDS OF
THE ORGAN MOUNTAINS-DESERT PEAKS * GILA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY *
GILA RESOURCES INFORMATION PROJECT * GREAT OLD BROADS FOR WILDERNESS *
HEART OF THE GILA * NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO *
NEW MEXICO GEOTHERMAL LLC * NEW MEXICO WILD * NEW MEXICO
WILDLIFE FEDERATION * PECOS RIVER OPEN SPACES * PROGRESSNOW NEW MEXICO *
SIERRA CLUB RIO GRANDE CHAPTER * THE SEMILLA PROJECT *
THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY * UPPER GILA WATERSHED ALLIANCE

August 28, 2026

USDA Forest Service
Attn: Director, Ecosystem Management Coordination
201 14th Street SW, Mailstop 1108
Washington, DC 20250-1124

*Submitted via regulations.gov and by email to joshua.white@usda.gov and
roadless@usda.gov*

**Re: Request for Comment Period Extension and Public Meetings on Draft
Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Rule Regarding Rescission of 2001
Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Docket No. FS-2025-0001)**

Dear Joshua White,

The undersigned organizations hereby submit this request for the U.S. Forest Service to extend the period for written comment and host accessible public meetings throughout New Mexico concerning the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Proposed Rule that would rescind the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule). On August 20, 2026, your agency issued the DEIS and Proposed Rule and allowed the public only 30 days to submit comment on this significant federal action. Such a short comment period for an environmental analysis and proposed rule of this magnitude and significance is grossly inadequate and should promptly be extended. In addition, public meetings in affected locations should promptly be scheduled.

For 25 years, the Roadless Rule has safeguarded 1.6 million acres of National Forest System lands in New Mexico, protecting many of our state's most valued backcountry areas and providing clean water, clean air, vital wildlife habitat, and diverse recreation opportunities, while still allowing responsible forest management. The Roadless Rule's protections should be sustained for the benefit of present and future generations of New Mexicans. At minimum, before deciding whether to strip away the Rule's protections, the Forest Service must provide a reasonable opportunity for meaningful public engagement on the proposed rescission.

The Forest Service's allowance of only 30 days for public comment, without any public meetings, is woefully inadequate for this purpose. Meaningful engagement with the DEIS and Proposed Rule requires analysis of detailed factual and scientific information that cannot reasonably be completed, compiled, and presented to the agency in only 30 days. In addition, the 30-day comment period is starkly out of proportion with the comment process that preceded promulgation of the Roadless Rule. Before the Roadless Rule was originally adopted in 2001, the Forest Service provided a total of 129 days for the public to comment on the Notice of Intent and the Proposed Roadless Rule and held more than 400 public meetings across the country, including 16 public meetings in New Mexico. And even when the Bush administration unlawfully sought to rescind the Rule in 2005, the Forest Service ultimately offered over 120 days for public comment on the proposed rescission.

In the DEIS and Proposed Rule, USDA claims that rescission of the Roadless Rule is needed to facilitate "local control" over National Forest System lands. In doing so, USDA completely rejects public opinion and local sentiment. USDA concedes that 99% of the comments received during scoping were in support of retaining the Roadless Rule. USDA should respond to local communities by retaining the Roadless Rule and abandoning the proposed rescission. Further, USDA should ensure that local and regional forest service offices have adequate staffing and resources to properly manage our shared natural and cultural resources for current and future generations, and to finish local forest planning efforts such as the Gila Land Management Plan, which was almost done after many years of intensive local input.

Responsible management of our public lands demands an immediate extension of the period for public comment on the DEIS and Proposed Rule. We urge the Forest Service to extend the current comment period by a minimum of 90 days, to December 18, 2026, or later. In addition, the Forest Service should host accessible public meetings in affected areas across New Mexico and around the country concerning the DEIS and Proposed Rule, as the agency did when promulgating the Roadless Rule that it now seeks to rescind.

Sincerely,

Sally Paez
Staff Attorney
New Mexico Wild
P.O. Box 25464
Albuquerque, NM 87125
sally@nmwild.org
505-843-8696

Melissa Amarello
Executive Director
Advocates for Snake Preservation

Linda Moore
Board President
Bird Alliance of Southwestern New Mexico

Zoe Barker
Legislative Director
Conservation Voters New Mexico

Kyla Navarro
Policy and Community Coordinator
Friends of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks

Donna Stevens
President
Gila Native Plant Society

Carol Ann Fugagli
Executive Director
Upper Gila Watershed Alliance

Allyson Siwik
Executive Director
Gila Resources Information Project

Marcia Stout
**Great Old Broads for Wilderness,
Aldo's Silver City Chapter**

Patrice Mutchnick
Director
Heart of the Gila

Dr. Sylvan Kaufman
Conservation Committee Co-Chair
Native Plant Society of New Mexico

Dr. Kurt S. J. Anderson
New Mexico Geothermal LLC

Jesse Deubel
Executive Director
New Mexico Wildlife Federation

Susan Livermore
Director
Pecos River Open Spaces

Joe Cardillo
Deputy Director
ProgressNow New Mexico

Camilla Feibelman
Director
Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter

Elizabeth Cuna
Executive Director
The Semilla Project

Michael Casaus
New Mexico State Director
The Wilderness Society