



JAMES E. RISCH

United States Senator for Idaho

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Brad Hoaglund (Risch)
208-870-8237
John Foster (Minnick)
208-888-3188

RISCH, MINNICK RESPOND TO ROADLESS LAWSUIT

Washington, D.C. – Idaho Senator Jim Risch and Congressman Walt Minnick responded to a lawsuit filed by environmental groups today, attempting to block the Idaho Roadless Rule developed by Risch when he served as Idaho’s Governor in 2006.

“I am very disappointed that these groups decided to go to court. Our process began at the local level with input from a variety of wildland users. We crafted higher levels of protection for some lands that truly deserved it, and allowed multiple use of other lands where it fit. We provided for a collaborative process so all voices could be heard. To see these groups file because they didn’t get exactly what they wanted is a disservice to the collaborative process and a step backward in resolving conflict in public lands management,” said Risch.

“Over the last several years, Idaho has been at the forefront of the collaborative, local-focused approach to management of public lands. The west needs more of that, and fewer lawsuits,” Idaho Congressman Walt Minnick said. “Senator Risch’s carefully crafted roadless plan is yet another fine example of what can be done when leaders bring people to the table in an effort to find common ground, and I hope today’s news does not hamper future collaboration between sportsmen, businesses, leaders such as Governor Otter, Senator Risch and the rest of our delegation, and the many other people who care about Idaho’s public lands.”

In 2006 then-Governor Risch created five management themes for the roadless areas based on local and statewide input. Nearly 1.5 million acres of land received the “wild land recreation” designation, prohibiting roadbuilding, mining and timber harvest in those areas. Approximately 1.8 million acres were designated as “primitive,” which allow some timber harvesting only for forest health or species habitat improvement.

Over 48,000 acres were set aside for historic or tribal significance and 5.3 million acres were classed as “backcountry/restoration” areas. On these lands temporary roads could be built for improvement to species habitat or to reduce fuels in areas near at-risk communities. The “general forest, rangeland and grassland” category had 406,000 acres and would allow for timber

harvest and road building if the area met requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The U.S. Forest Service then began the rulemaking process, which included a 90-day comment period on the proposal. Based on comments received the Forest Service modified the plan to prohibit commercial logging in some areas, a move supported by Risch and a variety of user groups. In late 2008 the rule was published in the *Federal Register*.

“I believe our process can be a model for other states to follow,” Risch said. “The “one size fits all” approach to management of our public lands that was tried under the 2001 rule doesn’t work. What does work is individuals and interest groups rolling up their sleeves and working together to come up with the best plan possible.”

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