

Heritage Forests



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More than half of America's national forests remain open to logging, mining and drilling.

PRESERVING ROADLESS NATIONAL FORESTS

For decades, hundreds of thousands of acres of pristine forests in the United States were lost annually to logging and other industrial development. In 1997, the Pew Environment Group established the Heritage Forests Campaign (www.OurForests.org), an alliance of conservationists, wildlife advocates, scientists, clergy and business leaders, to reverse that destructive trend and save these valuable woodlands.

In 2001, following the most extensive rulemaking in history, the federal government adopted the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, a federal regulation that protected 58.6 million acres of national forests from most commercial logging and road building. More than one-half of America's national

forests are already open to logging, mining and drilling. This landmark measure was intended to preserve the remaining third of the nation's undeveloped forests as a home for wildlife, a haven for recreation and a heritage for future generations.

Nearly seven tumultuous years later, the rule has proven resilient, weathering multiple lawsuits, a series of regulatory maneuvers to undo its safeguards and an attempt to repeal it. The Heritage Forests Campaign led the defense by generating public support and ringing endorsements in editorial pages around the country.

In the coming year, the Pew Environment Group hopes to translate this outpouring of public support into an enthusiastic embrace

of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule by the new administration that takes office in 2009. At the same time, in order to ensure its longevity, Pew will encourage Congress to codify its protections through bipartisan legislation that would better insulate the measure from political pressure and protect these last wild forests permanently.

Because once they're gone, they're gone forever.