

California Central Coast Caucus

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Anna M. Caballero
Henry I. Stern

September 30, 2026

Joshua White
Director, Ecosystem Management Coordination
201 14th Street SW, Mailstop 1108
Washington, DC 20250-1124

SUBJECT: California Legislative Central Coast Caucus Opposition to the Rollback of the Roadless Rule

Dear Acting Director White:

The California Legislative Central Coast Caucus (CLCCC) writes in opposition to the proposal to rescind the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule ("Roadless Rule") that prohibits new road construction and timber harvesting in inventoried roadless areas.

The CLCCC consists of eleven California state legislators representing Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties. We are committed to protecting the Central Coast's natural landscape, communities, and economy, and understand that preserving our wild spaces, coastlines, and working lands is crucial to maintaining our region's identity.

For over two decades, the Roadless Rule has protected over 60 million acres across the United States from road construction and timber harvesting in some of our nation's most pristine and environmentally significant areas. In California, the U.S. Forest Service manages 20 million acres of national forests, including over 3.9 million acres of inventoried roadless areas ("roadless areas"). One of these forests, the Los Padres National Forest, is located on the Central Coast and contains approximately 635,000 acres of roadless areas.

In the Los Padres National Forest, the roadless areas are essential to maintaining and supporting the outdoor recreation economy that draws people from around the world to the Central Coast. Close to a million people visit the forest annually, creating over \$75 million in revenue every year. The forest also generates more than 1,500 jobs and \$103.4 million in yearly income for wage earners and local businesses. Removing these protections for the Los Padres National Forest would be detrimental to our communities' economic and environmental health.

Roadless areas are important for mitigating the effects of extreme weather. Our national forests serve as important carbon sinks, helping remove millions of tons of carbon

emissions that would otherwise contribute to extreme heat, atmospheric rivers, and ocean acidification. Opening these ecologically and environmentally important areas up for road development, mining, and logging will not only release the carbon stored, it will also leave our communities vulnerable to the devastating impacts of extreme weather, polluted waterways, fragmented ecosystems, and increased wildfire risks.

One of the proposed reasonings for rescinding the rule is that it will allow temporary or permanent roads to be built in these areas to aid in reducing wildfire risk. Given the Plaskett Fire which recently ignited near the Los Padres National Forest, we are especially concerned about increased wildfire risk. However, a 2026 peer-reviewed study by the Wilderness Society determined that wildfires are four times more likely to ignite near roads. In fact, from 1992 to 2024, designated wilderness areas experienced the fewest wildfire starts, with roadless areas coming in at a close second. Areas within 50 meters of roads saw the highest number of wildfire ignitions. The data clearly shows that opening these environmentally sensitive areas to development and logging will only increase the threat of devastating fires.

At a time when the Central Coast is already grappling with extreme heat, floods, and rising sea levels, defending the Roadless Rule is not just a matter of environmental stewardship, it is also one of public health and fiscal responsibility. Our region, like many others across the nation, cannot afford to expose our forests to the serious consequences that will come with the loss of the Roadless Rule. Rescinding this rule will only lead to more wildfires

For these reasons, the California Legislative Central Coast Caucus strongly opposes the rollback or weakening of any kind of the Roadless Rule. We urge you to choose the “no action” alternative to uphold the Roadless Rule and preserve these irreplaceable public lands for the health, safety, and prosperity of our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dawn Addis".

DAWN ADDIS
Co-Chair, Central Coast Caucus
Assemblymember, 30th District

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gregg Hart".

GREGG HART
Co-Chair, Central Coast Caucus
Assemblymember, 37th District