



Presentation to the Colorado Roadless Areas Review Task Force  
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#### **Introduction:**

Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) is a national trade association whose mission is to ensure the growth and success of the outdoor industry.

A wide spectrum of leading manufacturers, distributors, suppliers and retailers of outdoor recreation equipment and services, as well as other related business entities, make up OIA's membership. The outdoor industry is made up of over 4000 businesses with 500,000 employees in all 50 states, generating \$33 billion in sales every year.

Last year, 159 million Americans participated in outdoor recreation, with the greatest numbers in the gateway sports of hiking, biking, camping and paddlesports.

In 2002, Colorado residents spent an estimated \$200 million on outdoor merchandise. However, residents and visitors will continue to contribute to the Colorado economy only if Colorado continues to offer high quality recreation destinations.

#### **The Roadless Rule:**

The outdoor industry was a strong proponent of the Roadless Rule.

Outdoor industry businesses and participants sent more than 20,000 comments in favor of roadless area protection to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

More than 100 outdoor businesses, many of those in Colorado, wrote to USDA in support of protection of roadless areas. You can find that letter and a list of those Colorado businesses in the packet I have distributed.

OIA was also an active participant in the Forest Roads Working Group – an advisory committee formed to seek common ground about the uses of roadless lands and provide guidance to the Administration on forest health issues.

Several members of the Forest Roads Working Group are now members of the Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee, which will be tasked with reviewing petitions submitted by the governors and making recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture.

The Outdoor Industry Foundation also researched and published a report named "Protect Today, Play Tomorrow." I have distributed copies for your review. This report gives an overview of roadless areas in the U.S. and highlights just a few.

The report also found that:

- The 58.5 million roadless acres in the U.S. generate \$600 million in recreational benefits each year and provide 24,000 jobs.
- Roadless lands also provide habitat for more than 220 wildlife species whose existence is currently threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

### Colorado:

OIA's Outdoor Recreation Participation Study found that 76% of Coloradans participate in human-powered outdoor recreation. And a recent survey conducted by Colorado State Parks concluded that a Colorado residents' first choice for an outdoor destination are wilderness and undeveloped areas.

Colorado's 4.4 million acres of roadless areas provide outstanding recreation opportunities for these active residents such as hiking, camping, fishing, climbing, backcountry skiing, paddling and wildlife viewing.

A high-profile example is Colorado's Mt. Elbert, the second highest mountain in the 48 states at 14,433 feet, which stands on roadless forest land.

And while roadless areas may have many wilderness-like attributes, unlike wilderness the use of mountain bikes and other means of travel, including motorized recreation, are allowed. OIA supports the expanded means of recreation allowed in roadless areas and believes this increases the value and appeal of roadless areas for citizens.

In addition, the recreation offerings and unmatched scenery endemic to many roadless areas contribute directly to the tourism-based economies and real estate values in nearby communities.

More and more, Colorado's economy is dependent on the educated workforce which chooses to live here for the high quality of life, including the scenery and outdoor recreation opportunities public lands provide.

Last month, OIA issued our State of the Industry Report. This report had two important findings relevant to Roadless lands in Colorado.

One: Recreation opportunities are more important than ever as Americans battle the inactivity crisis and the resulting health care costs. According to the Centers for

Disease Control, more than 50 percent of U.S. adults don't get enough physical activity to recognize health benefits and 26 percent are not active at all.

Two: Study after study suggests that the best way to get people active is to make recreation accessible. Outdoor enthusiasts increasingly seek activities that can be done before dinner, making close to home recreation opportunities more important than ever. Colorado is unique in that we have National Forests which provide these sought-after opportunities for solitude and recreation, yet are accessible because of their proximity to urban areas.

For instance, the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest's Cherokee Park Roadless Area, just north of Fort Collins, provides a great getaway and recreation destination for the nearly 2 million people living in that area. The area offers Front Range residents a rare opportunity to visit some of the last remaining wildlands near Colorado's urban centers.

The Arapaho-Roosevelt is also a big draw for residents in the Denver Metro area and features popular hikes such as Herman Gulch in the Clear Creek Ranger District

The Pike-San Isabel National Forest Roadless area is a short drive from Denver and is a major draw for hikers, anglers and campers. It is noted as home of the majority of Colorado's 14,000 foot peaks and features one of Colorado's most diverse landscapes, ranging from grasslands to alpine tundra.

The Dome Peak Roadless Area in the White River National Forest is easily accessible from the Yampa Valley south of Steamboat Springs. The area provides for many hiking, hunting, fishing, horseback riding and wildlife watching opportunities.

The White River National Forest also contains the Basalt Mountain, Red Table Mountain, and Gypsum Creek Roadless Areas, featuring hunting, hiking, and mountain biking.

The San Miguel roadless area in the San Juan National Forest offers residents of Southwest Colorado unparalleled beauty and solitude. The San Miguel Area is a mountaineer and backpacker's paradise with more than a dozen summits over 13,000 feet in elevation. The area contains many spectacular backcountry trails, including a 20-mile segment of the Colorado Trail.

The areas I mentioned are just a few of the many recreation destinations within roadless areas in Colorado. As a national organization, OIA is a supporter of the protection of roadless areas across the nation.

We encourage you to seek input from local user groups who specifically represent recreationists in Colorado. Groups such as the Colorado Mountain Club and local chapters of the Access Fund, International Mountain Biking Association and the American Alpine Club will have invaluable, recreation site-specific input.

#### **Conclusion:**

During the past 50 years, recreation has clearly emerged as the greatest use of Forest Service lands and the primary driver of the National Forest economy. These

destinations are also integral contributors to a healthy American. By ensuring that all Americans have places to play, we are creating a healthier nation.

Roadless areas are a fundamental component of the overall protection of open space and public lands in Colorado. The benefits and values we derive from them – clean air and water; habitat for fish and wildlife; recreation and renewal -- are critical to the overall health and well being of our forests and the people who enjoy them.

The areas I highlighted are just a few of the many currently Roadless Areas that offer Colorado residents, families and our state's many visitors a chance to get some fresh air, get some exercise and perhaps get a much needed break from the demands of urban living.

OIA strongly supports the continued protection of all of Colorado's Roadless lands.