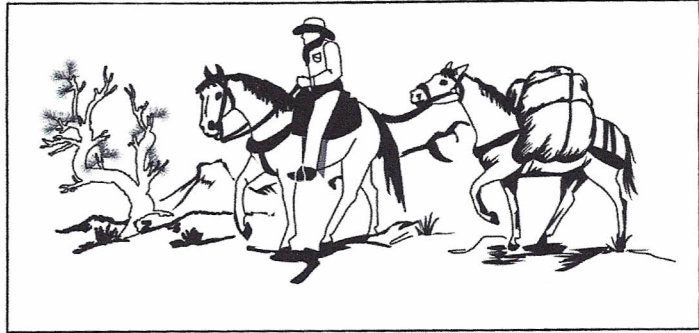


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April 2, 2012

Tom Tidwell, Chief
USDA Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief Tidwell,

We are writing in support of a position taken by The Wilderness Society regarding the management of agency-recommended wilderness areas. We believe that it is imperative that the agency provide proper direction to ensure that potential wilderness areas are properly inventoried and evaluated, and that agency-recommended wilderness areas are adequately safeguarded until Congress can establish their permanent protection as wilderness.


The planning directives provide an excellent opportunity to ensure that agency wilderness inventories and evaluation procedures fairly consider all unroaded lands with wilderness character, and adhere firmly to the criteria in the Wilderness Act. The agency should take this opportunity to finally eliminate the so-called "sights and sounds" doctrine, and similar approaches, which have long been disavowed by Congress, but are still used in some regions to improperly eliminate lands from wilderness inventories and evaluations.

Further, it is essential that the agency develop meaningful direction for the management of recommended wilderness. This direction should eliminate non-conforming uses—including the use of motorized vehicles—within agency recommended wilderness areas until Congress acts.

For too long, agency management of its own recommended wilderness areas has led to the degradation or elimination of the wilderness values and potential of those very areas. The wilderness values of these crown jewels must be adequately protected.

Again, thank you for your leadership in safeguarding the future of our nation's forests. We stand ready to help you ensure that America's potential wilderness lands are properly protected for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Sincerely,



Michael K. McGlenn
BCHA Chairman