

## Synopsis

### **Draft Petition of the State of Utah to the Department of Agriculture Concerning Areas Identified as Roadless or Unroaded**

1. The State of Utah, and its political subdivisions, wish to become active partners with the Forest Service in the effort to restore and maintain the health and diversity of the National Forests, enhance recreational activities within the Forests, and help support state and local economies from the resources found in the National Forests.

2. There are numerous challenges facing the forests within Utah today. Utah's forest lands are not all healthy. Urbanization of private lands within the forests, the absence of active restoration and maintenance actions on most lands, prolonged drought, and major insect infestations, among other things, constitute the recipe for an ecological disaster. This will affect Utah's future because these high elevation forests are the source of much of the State's water, wildlife, recreational activities, and local economic growth potential.

3. Generally, the State of Utah believes that the solution to many of the issues facing the forests requires recognition that humans and human needs are part of each Forest's management process, and that cooperative efforts of many parties are required to find effective solutions. The State of Utah is committed to fostering cooperative efforts to restore and rehabilitate the lands of the National Forests, and other governmental and private lands in the state. These efforts require joint funding by and the work contribution of diverse interests, and require the various contributory parties to work on specific plans depending upon the local situation concerning vegetation, wildlife, livestock, recreation, and land ownership. The State also believes that predetermined restrictions on access or forest resource uses are far less effective than the ability to choose a solution using cooperative efforts and the best fit resource management tool.

4. As an example of a cooperative effort, Utah's Watershed Initiative is being lead by Utah's Department of Natural Resources and implemented through a cooperative conservation approach under the umbrella of the Utah Partners for Conservation & Development. This approach involves state and federal agencies working together with conservation organizations, landowners, local elected officials and industry to address statewide watershed issues that cross ownership and administrative boundaries. The success of this program is measured in ways that include: reducing the threats to our watersheds and the values they provide, effectiveness of developing partnerships to solve problems, and leverage of technical and financial resources with real on-the-ground results.

5. The State recognizes that decisions about the management of National Forest lands rest, of course, with the Authorized Forest Service Officer, and that existing decision-making processes and requirements, such as are found in the National Environmental Policy Act and the

National Forest Management Act, would not be altered.

6. As a fundamental matter, the State requests the Forest Service recognize and reaffirm that the inventory for the roadless or unroaded nature of National Forest lands is, pursuant to the Utah Wilderness Act of 1984, simply a portion of the review of lands for a possible recommendation for designation as wilderness.

7. Generally, the State requests that the Forest Service be required to conclude all decisions concerning the status and need for all roads on National Forest lands, as requested by state and local officials, prior to initiating any inventories for the roadless or unroaded nature of National Forest lands.

8. The State of Utah requests the Forest Service insure that any area identified as roadless, unroaded or any similar term, is an area which contains no roads, as resolved above, and meets all of the qualifications for wilderness as defined in the Wilderness Act of 1964.

9. The State requests that all previous inventories of roadless or unroaded lands in the National Forests be obsolete, moot and of no further legal effect.

10. In addition, the State requests that the Forest Service consult with state and local governments about decisions affecting the management of the land and natural resources within the National Forests, and make those decisions consistent with the laws, plans, programs and policies of the State of Utah, to the maximum extent consistent with federal law. The requirement of consistency will ensure that the two major multiple-use land management agencies managing federal lands in Utah - the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service - operate under parallel consultation requirements.

11. The State of Utah requests that National Forest lands be managed under a general management preference which allows active work to restore the forest and watershed health and provide for the social and economic well-being of the citizens of the State of Utah and the Nation. The preference for active management would include actions which

- a) restore forest health, restore the diversity of tree species, and reduce fuel loading;
- b) allow treatment of insect infestations and other diseases which may affect the forest;
- c) allow fire suppression activities;
- d) enhance recreational activities;
- e) enhance and protect watershed health and productivity;
- f) define the extent and economic feasibility of solid and fluid mineral resources;
- g) allow the reasonable development of mineral and energy resources;
- h) support local, state and national economic needs, including timber and grazing;
- I) enhance habitat for wildlife species, including those listed under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act;
- j) allow other similar and related activities; and
- k) allow reasonable access by temporary or permanent roads or trails sufficient to support

the above activities.

12. Finally, the State of Utah requests that the Forest Supervisor of each National Forest establish an Advisory Committee consisting of state and local governmental representatives to advise the supervisor on an ongoing basis about the management of these areas, including the preference for active management and consistency with state and local laws, plans, programs and policies.