



# WILD VIRGINIA

Protecting your favorite wild places

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **HIKERS HIT ENDANGERED ROADLESS AREAS ON NATIONAL TRAILS DAY**

### ***New Maps Document Virginia trails at Risk***

**Charlottesville** – National Trails Day will be commemorated on June 5, 2004 in Virginia with several organized and unofficial hikes planned, some of which will draw outdoor enthusiasts to settings in some of the Commonwealth's most precious wild national forests. Environmental advocates are concerned that these trails could vanish under proposals sought by the logging industry that would change current Federal regulations and open portions of national forests known as "roadless areas" to logging, mining and drilling. To underscore this threat, Wild Virginia and the Heritage Forests Campaign today released maps and figures showing that many premier hiking trails run through these threatened stretches of national forest.

The maps reveal that because 60.5 miles of the Appalachian Trail wind through 16 different roadless areas on our national forest in the state\*, changes to the Roadless Rule would threaten permanent damage to this historic trail. High-resolution downloadable maps of this and other at-risk trails and additional information have been posted on the Internet at [www.ourforests.org/trails](http://www.ourforests.org/trails). Other national historic trails that would be threatened under anticipated regulatory changes by the Bush Administration are the Lewis and Clark Trail, the Pony Express Trail, the Pacific Crest Trail, the California Trail, and many others.

"These maps make clear that many miles of trail, both the Appalachian Trail and other state trails, would be endangered under changes the Bush Administration is preparing to the Roadless Rule in Virginia," said Jen Creasy, President of Wild Virginia. "We wouldn't sell The Great Smoky Mountains National Park or the Adirondacks on eBay, and the Bush Administration should not let the timber industry run roughshod over these pristine roadless areas in our state."

Recreation enthusiasts are planning a plethora of events around the state to celebrate National Trails Day. For a complete list of activities, please visit the American Hiking Society website at [www.americanhiking.org](http://www.americanhiking.org).

"A hike on the Appalachian Trail is a simple, yet majestic pleasure," said Steve Krichbaum, Conservation Director of Wild Virginia. "Washington, DC politics should not deny future generations the opportunity we have today to enjoy these forests in Virginia."

Recreational enthusiasts are unlikely to support changes to the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Their numbers could be decisive in exerting pressure on this Administration. According to the American Hiking Society, hiking is one of America's fastest growing recreational activities. Almost one-third of Americans went hiking in 2002. Because outdoor recreation is a booming business; Nike, Adidas and other major gear companies recently declared their strong support for the Roadless Rule. In 2001, sales of outdoor gear, clothing, footwear, and other accessories for 2001 amounted to more than \$18 billion.

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The Roadless Rule is a landmark conservation initiative enacted in 2001 to protect 58.5 million acres of roadless areas in our National Forests from most logging and road-building. The Roadless Rule enjoys widespread support, garnering 10 times more public comments than any federal rule in history and proving popular in state polls.

\* This information was provided by the US Forest Service and the US Parks Service

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