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## **BUSH FOREST REGS ‘SELL OUT’ NATIONAL FORESTS**

### ***New CPR White Paper Says Watered-Down Planning Rule Will Harm Nation’s Forests, and Recreational Opportunities They Provide***

**Washington, DC ----** With summer vacation season in full gear, the National Forests are again serving one of their most important purposes: providing Americans with inexpensive outdoor recreation opportunities. The National Forest Service reports that Americans make some 214 million visits to National Forests in a calendar year. But according to a new white paper published by the Center for Progressive Reform, they’d better enjoy it while they can. The CPR white paper concludes that the Bush Administration’s new initiative to undercut the forest-by-forest planning process that protects each national forest area will open the National Forest System to an increase in logging and resource extraction, harming the nation’s forests and the recreational opportunities they provide, for decades to come.

In January 2005, the Forest Service issued the final version of a new rule to replace the planning regulations required by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA). The Bush Administration’s version of the planning rule eliminates critical environmental protections, including species viability requirements established during the Reagan Administration. In addition, the rule ignores plain statutory mandates in the NFMA requiring implementation of specific environmental protections.

The revised planning rule is another regulatory step in the Bush Administration’s overall effort to open the National Forest System to resource extraction and development. In May 2005, the Administration issued the final version of a new rule to replace the Clinton-era “Roadless Rule,” which protected 58.5 million acres of land from most commercial logging and road-building. More than half of all national forests were already open to logging, as well as to extractive industries – mining and drilling, for example. The Roadless Rule would have preserved the last third of undeveloped forests. The Bush Administration scrapped it in favor of a process by which state governors must petition the Secretary of Agriculture to establish protected areas in the national forests within their state borders.

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“The reality is that the Administration is abdicating its statutory responsibility to protect our National Forests,” said white paper co-author Alyson Flournoy, a professor of law at the University of Florida in Gainesville, and a Board Member of the Center for Progressive Reform. “The Administration is inviting industry into national forests that have been preserved for decades, putting business ahead of the environment yet again. Here in Florida, the new, lax standards for monitoring and management mean less protection for the many species that depend on habitat in the Apalachicola, Osceola and Ocala National Forests.”

“The Administration would have us believe this rule will protect our national forests,” said white paper co-author and CPR Scholar Robert L. Glicksman, who holds the Robert W. Wagstaff Chair at the University of Kansas School of Law. “In fact, it all but guarantees that vast areas of forest land will be chopped down for logging and road-building, with little or no meaningful planning for long-term preservation.”

The white paper, “Regulations in Name Only: How the Bush Administration’s National Forest Planning Rule Frees the Forest Service from Mandatory Standards and Public Accountability,” argues that the new rule will:

- shift the focus of planning for the national forests from ecological to economic sustainability;
- vitiate safeguards to prevent excessive timber harvests;
- weaken the role of science in planning;
- constrain opportunities for public participation in plan development; and
- diminish the accountability of the Forest Service.

“Ultimately,” the authors write, “the Bush Administration’s forest planning rule effectively ignores the instructions Congress laid out in the NFMA, returns forest planning to the sole province of the Forest Service, and greatly increases the risk that the Forest Service will take actions that result in the waste or destruction of natural resources that constitute an important part of our national heritage.”

The white paper is available on CPR’s website at [www.progressivereform.org](http://www.progressivereform.org).

The Center for Progressive Reform is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research and educational organization dedicated to protecting health, safety, and the environment through analysis and commentary. For more information, contact Matthew Freeman at 301-762-8980 or at [mfreeman@progressivereform.org](mailto:mfreeman@progressivereform.org). Visit CPR on the web at [www.progressivereform.org](http://www.progressivereform.org).