



# *Friends of the Clearwater*

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## **BRING INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREAS IN IDAHO BACK UNDER THE SAME PROTECTION AS INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREAS NATIONWIDE**

**National inventoried roadless areas in Idaho are managed under the Idaho Roadless Rule (Idaho Rule), which is based on logging rather than science.** The Idaho Rule permits cutting, selling, and removing timber from Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) purportedly to reduce “uncharacteristic wildland fire effects” or reduce “hazardous fuel conditions” near a community. Scientific findings demonstrate the following:

- \* Severe forest fires have been part of the Rocky Mountain fire regime for the last several hundred years; severe, stand-replacing fires are not “uncharacteristic” to national forests in Idaho, and are primarily driven by climate and weather, not fuels.<sup>1</sup>
- \* Cutting, selling, and removing trees in some cases can increase severe fire risk.<sup>2</sup>
- \* Protecting private property from wildfire loss means treating the 130 feet immediately surrounding the structure; ignitable structures can be lost in even low-severity wildfires.<sup>3</sup>
- \* Cutting and removing trees contributes far more carbon emissions than wildfire, thus contributing to global warming and the climate that drive severe fires.<sup>4</sup>
- \* To effectively mitigate worse impacts of climate change, a growing scientific consensus observes that we must “substantially *increase* protection our native forests in order to absorb more CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and store more, not less, carbon in our forests.”<sup>5</sup>

**The Idaho Rule has permissive exceptions for cutting, selling, and removing timber in federal inventoried roadless areas.** The Idaho Rule permits expansive and discretionary logging in over seven million acres of national-forest IRAs, not limited to tree size or amount. The Idaho Rule has *absolutely no restrictions* for logging 405,900 acres of the nation’s IRAs.<sup>6</sup>

**The logging impacts of the Idaho Roadless Rule have far exceeded Forest Service projections.** In the 2008 environmental impact statement for the Idaho Rule, the Forest Service projected the Idaho Rule would allow approximately 15,000 acres of logging in national-forest IRAs over the next 15 years. In 2020, the rule had been in place for 12 years, and the Forest Service’s own records total **86,000 acres** of national IRAs in Idaho where the agency has already approved or is considering logging projects.<sup>7</sup>

### **References:**

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<sup>1</sup> “Fuel reduction also has been overpromised to be effective, using questionable logic and unvalidated models.” DellaSala et al. 2015, Ch. 13, p. 383 in [The Ecological Importance of Mixed Severity Fires: Nature’s Phoenix](#).

<sup>2</sup> Bradley et al. 2016. Does increased forest protection correspond to higher fire severity in frequent-fire forests of the western United States? *Ecosphere* 7(10) e 01492: pp. 1-13.

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<sup>3</sup> Cohen, J.D. 2000. Preventing Disaster: Home Ignitability in the Wildland-Urban Interface, *Journal of Forestry*, pp. 15-21.

<sup>4</sup> Campbell et al. 2012. Can fuel-reduction treatments really increase forest carbon storage in the western US by reducing future fire emissions? *Front Ecol. Environ* 2012; 10(2): 83–90. Harris et al. 2016. Attribution of net carbon change by disturbance type across forest lands of the coterminous United States. *Carbon Balance Manage* (2016) 11:24, DOI 10.1186/s13021-016-0066-5

<sup>5</sup> Letter to Congress from Scientists concerned about climate and biodiversity impact of logging (May 13, 2020)

<sup>6</sup> 73 Fed. Reg. 61456, 61479; 36 C.F.R. § 294.24(b), (c), (d); *see also* [Bilodeau & Macfarlane, The Roadless Report: Analyzing the Impacts of Two Roadless Rules on Forested Wildlands](#), pp. 14-20.

<sup>7</sup> USDA Forest Service 2008. Roadless Area Conservation National Forest System Lands in Idaho Final Environmental Impact Statement (Vol. 1) Summary, p. 10; [USDA Forest Service 2020 Region 1 Idaho IRA project spreadsheet](#).