



Virginia's roadless areas are under threat.

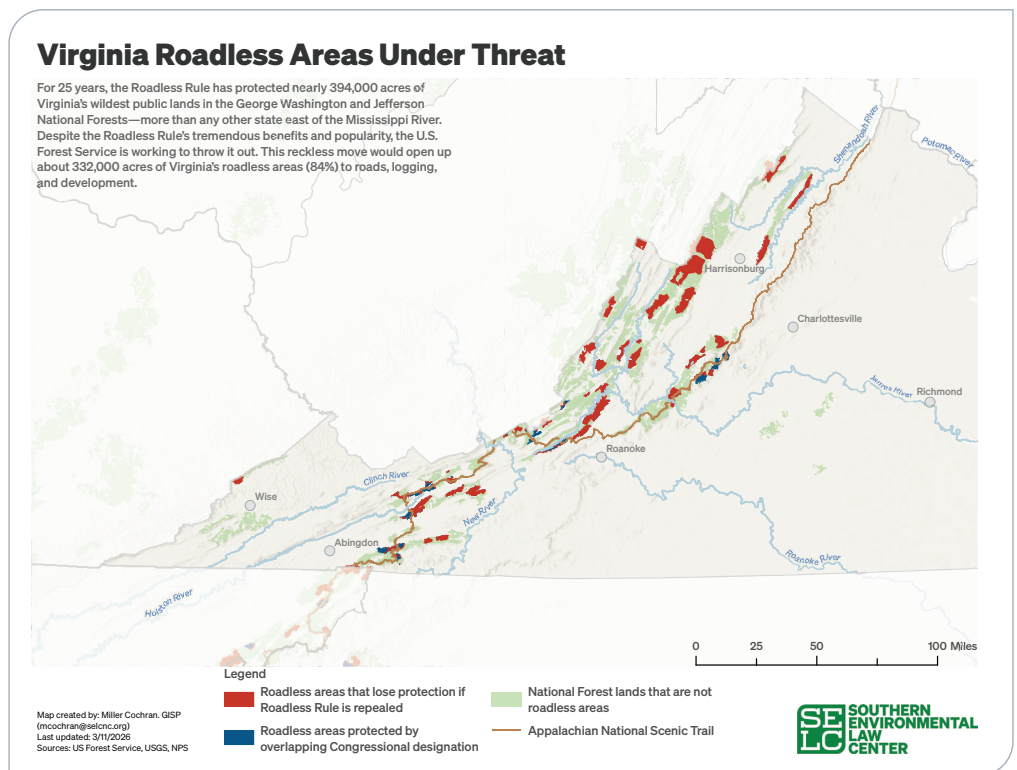
What is the Roadless Rule?

Since 2001, the Roadless Rule has protected nearly 45 million acres of America's wildest public lands from unnecessary roadbuilding, harmful development, and destructive logging projects. It is one of America's most important bipartisan conservation achievements and the result of record-breaking public support.

Threats to Virginia's Roadless Areas

Virginia has always had a strong connection to the Roadless Rule, going back to the rule's announcement from atop beautiful Reddish Knob in Augusta County. The George Washington and Jefferson National Forests boast nearly 394,000 roadless acres in the mountains of Western Virginia — more than any other state east of the Mississippi River. Roadless areas provide irreplaceable benefits, including clean drinking water, access to wild places, vital support for local economies, and essential wildlife habitat.

Despite the Roadless Rule's tremendous benefits and broad, bipartisan support, the U.S. Forest Service is working to throw it out. This reckless and unnecessary move would open up nearly 332,000 roadless acres in Virginia (84%) to logging and development — putting Virginia's roadless areas at risk, as well as the millions of Virginians who rely on them.



Virginia's Roadless Areas by the Numbers

- Nearly 332,000 acres (84%) of Virginia's roadless areas are at risk if the Roadless Rule is rescinded
- More than 310,000 of these at-risk roadless acres are in the Chesapeake Bay watershed
- Over 2.5 million Virginians — and millions more in D.C. — get at least some of their drinking water from sources downstream of roadless area watersheds
- 43 at-risk species with habitat in Virginia's roadless areas

How the Roadless Rule Benefits Virginia Communities

- Virginia's robust outdoor recreation economy — over \$14.4 billion in 2024 — depends on the state's roadless areas, which are world-class destinations for hikers, mountain bikers, anglers, birdwatchers, and other visitors.
- Virginia's national forests are powerful economic drivers for local communities. In 2019, the forests' recreation program contributed over \$33 million to local economies — 43% of the forests' total contributions and more than twice the contributions of forest products, minerals, and energy.
- Roadless areas are crucial for backcountry hunters and anglers. Hunting and fishing are not only a part of Virginia's heritage — they're a major contributor to Virginia's economy, with a combined \$4.6 billion impact.
- Virginia's roadless areas contain headwaters for the Shenandoah, Potomac, James, and Roanoke River watersheds. These roadless watersheds contribute to the drinking water for over 2.5 million Virginians, including those in nearby communities like Harrisonburg and Staunton, as well as those in downstream cities like Richmond, Fairfax, and Newport News.
- Virginia's roadless areas are a haven for wildlife such as black bear, deer, wild turkey, grouse, and hundreds of bird species. They also provide the clean, cold water that native brook trout require, and Virginia is reported to have the largest populations of brook trout south of the Mason-Dixon line.
- Roadless areas are also critical to Virginia's biodiversity, containing habitat for 43 at-risk species, including bats, pollinators, freshwater mussels, and rare plants. They also host species that exist nowhere else on earth, like the Cow Knob salamander.



- The Roadless Rule is fire smart. It permits the Forest Service to both reduce wildfire risk and fight wildfires in roadless areas. Since most wildfires start within 50 yards of a road, building roads into new areas would increase fire risk.
- Rescinding the Roadless Rule in order to build more roads is an irresponsible use of taxpayer dollars. The Forest Service already has a staggering \$9 billion maintenance backlog on its sprawling road network, which is double the size of the U.S. highway system.

What are Virginians saying about the Roadless Rule?

“As someone who regularly hikes deep into these wild areas with nothing but a pack and a fly rod, I can say without hesitation that roadless lands are irreplaceable... The Roadless Rule strikes the right balance — it protects wild places while still allowing responsible access and use. It ensures that future generations of hikers, anglers, hunters, and nature lovers can experience the same deep connection to these lands that I’ve been fortunate enough to have.”

— MONTGOMERY COUNTY

“I’m a conservative and opposed to the roadless rules rollback. I don’t believe it is beneficial to cut new roads into the heart of our country’s remaining wild areas.”

— VIRGINIA BEACH



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