



U.S. Forest Service 2026 Rulemaking Actions

A Quick Reference for BCHA States and Chapters | August 2026

Active Rulemakings at a Glance

Roadless Area Conservation Rule Revision

Docket: FS-2025-0001

Stage: Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)
Released

DEIS Released: August 20, 2026

The Roadless Rule (officially the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule) is a federal regulation that protects roughly 58.5 million acres of inventoried roadless areas on National Forest lands across the U.S. Here's what it does:

🌲 Core Protections

- Prohibits road construction and reconstruction in designated roadless areas — no new roads can be built
- Bans most commercial timber harvesting in those areas
- Applies to about one-third of all National Forest land — the largest land protection action in U.S. history at the time

📁 What It Does NOT Restrict

- Non-motorized recreation — hiking, horseback riding, and pack/saddle stock use are generally allowed
- Existing roads and trails — only new construction of permanent is regulated
- Grazing, hunting, and fishing generally continue

🔗 DEIS / Comment Portal:

regulations.gov/docket/FS-2025-0001/document

Travel Management Rule Revision (36 CFR 212)

Notice of Intent (NOI) Published: August 21, 2026

Stage: Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS (NEPA initiation)

Comment Window: 30 days from Aug 21, 2026

Proposed amendment to 36 CFR 212

36 CFR 212 is the Forest Service's regulation governing **administration of the forest transportation system**— including roads, trails, and motor. It establishes how the agency **plans, designates, manages, and maintains** the transportation network and how it decides **where motor vehicles are allowed**.

- **Transportation Planning:** Requires each national forest to identify the minimum road system needed for safe, efficient management while protecting natural resources. It covers road maintenance, decommissioning, and access rights (including private easements).
- **Travel Management (Motor Vehicle Use):** Requires forests to designate **specific roads, trails, and areas** where motor vehicles are allowed. These designations must be shown on a **Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM)**. All other areas are closed to public motorized use unless specifically designated.

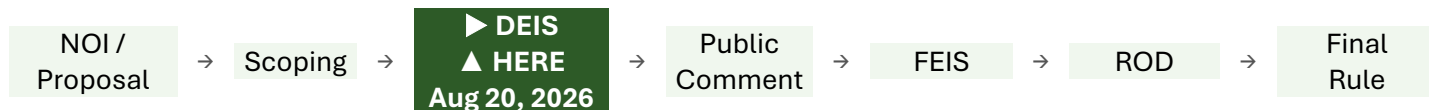
Overall, **36 CFR 212 is the legal backbone** for how the Forest Service manages motorized access, ensures environmental protection, and provides consistent, enforceable travel rules across all national forests.

🔗 Federal Register PDF:

public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2026-17211.pdf

NEPA Rulemaking Process — Where We Are Now

ROADLESS RULE:



TRAVEL MANAGEMENT RULE:



Official Links & Resources

Resource	URL
Roadless Rule DEIS Documents	https://www.regulations.gov/docket/FS-2025-0001/document
Proposed Rule Draft EIS Volume I	https://www.regulations.gov/document/FS-2025-0001-224064
Maps for each of the alternatives	https://www.regulations.gov/document/FS-2025-0001-224065
Federal Register – Travel Management Rule Revision NOI for a future Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (FR 2026-17211)	https://public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2026-17211.pdf
TRAVEL MANAGEMENT – Code of Federal regulations Existing Rule	eCFR :: 36 CFR Part 212 -- Travel Management

Roadless Rule Sections of the Draft EIS Volume I of importances

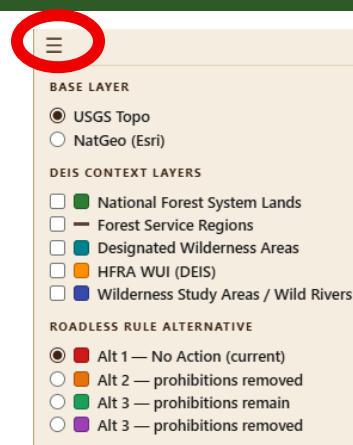
Proposed Action and Alternatives([FS-2025-0001-224064_content.pdf](#))

- **Alternative 1:** No Action (keep 2001 Roadless Rule): Page 13
- **Alternative 2:** Full rescission (no national rule): Page 15
- **Alternative 3:** Modified rule with boundary adjustments: Page 15
- Common elements: Page 18
- Comparison tables: Page 21
- Table 3. Comparison of effects: Page 23

Environmental Impacts: Starting on Page 35

Maps for each of the alternatives <https://www.regulations.gov/document/FS-2025-0001-224065>

- Review maps and comments on alternatives specifically Alternative 3
- **Interactive Map for reference and zooming in on Roadless Areas Explore**



Quality comments on a Roadless Rule Draft EIS

Effective comments focus on **substance**, not volume. Agencies are required to consider comments that raise **specific issues**, provide **new information**, or identify **gaps** in the analysis. Strong comments typically:

- **Identify specific sections** of the Draft EIS and explain what is missing, unclear, or inaccurate.
- **Provide facts, data, or local knowledge** that the agency may not have included. Personal experience with roadless areas is considered valuable information.
- **Explain environmental, cultural, economic, or recreational impacts** of the proposed action, using concrete examples.
- **Suggest reasonable alternatives or modifications**, including mitigation measures.
- **Avoid form-letter language** unique comments carry more weight in the record.



Travel Regulations Scoping Overview

The Forest Service is rewriting **national access and travel regulations** for all National Forests and Grasslands. This rule will replace the 2005 Travel Management Rule and reshape how roads, trails, closures, motorized use, over-snow vehicles, airfields, and access decisions are made for decades.

This notice officially **starts the rulemaking process** and announces a full **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)**. What the public says now will determine what issues and alternatives the agency is legally required to analyze.

Travel Regulations Scoping

- **Scoping** is the first—and most influential—stage of the NEPA process. It tells the Forest Service:
- **What issues must be analyzed** (access, safety, wildlife, water, recreation conflicts, mapping accuracy, etc.)
- **What alternatives must be considered**
- **What data, studies, and evidence must be used**
- **What impacts matter to the public** If an issue is **not raised during scoping**, the agency can legally ignore it later.

Scoping shapes the entire EIS and ultimately the final national rule.

Why You Should Comment Now

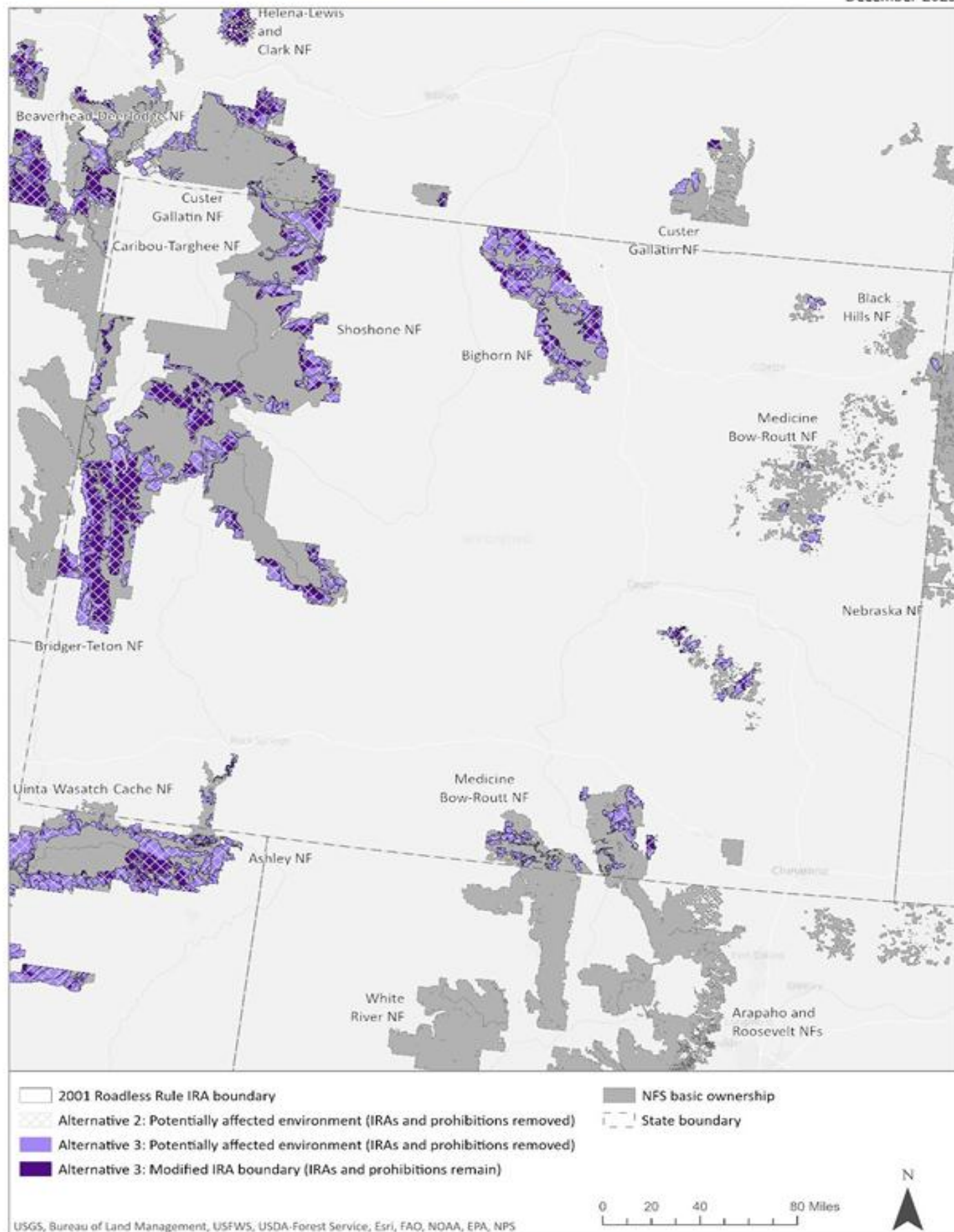
- This rule will determine **where people can drive, ride, hike, bike, or use stock** on National Forests.
- It changes how forests justify **closures, restrictions, and designations**.
- It affects **volunteer access**, trail maintenance, safety, and recreation planning.
- It sets national policy for **motorized and non-motorized use** for the next 20+ years.
- Early comments have the **highest impact** on the final rule.

Key Terms

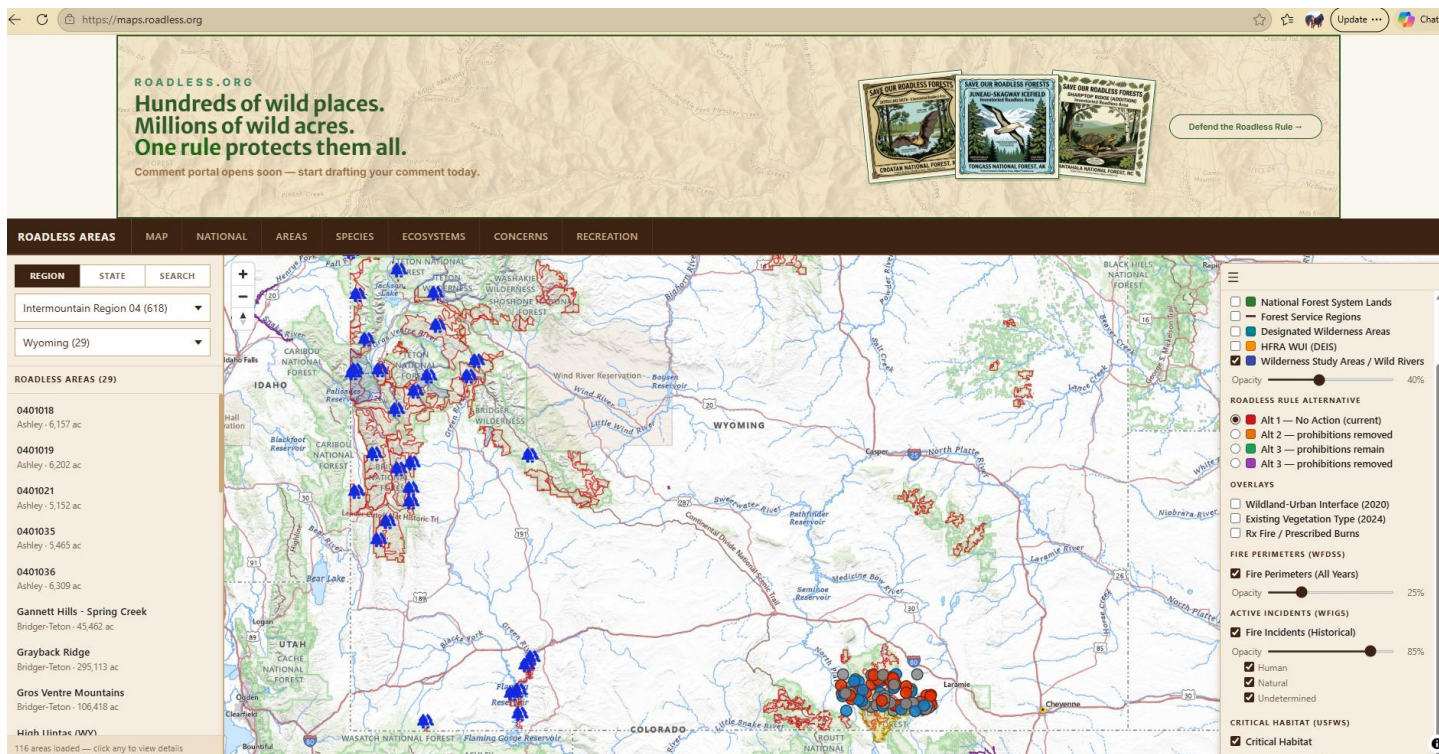
Term	Definition
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act - requires federal agencies to assess environmental effects
NOI	Notice of Intent — announces agency's plan to prepare an EIS; opens scoping period
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement — detailed analysis of alternatives released for public comment
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement — revised EIS responding to public comments
ROD	Record of Decision — agency's final decision selecting an alternative; can be challenged
Scoping	Early public input phase to identify issues and alternatives to study in the EIS
36 CFR 212	Code of Federal Regulations title governing FS travel management
EO	Executive Order — presidential directive; two prior EOs on ORVs (11644, 11989) rescinded May 2026

Figure 37. Roadless Rule affected environments in Wyoming

December 2025



<https://maps.roadless.org/>



Example Comments for the Roadless Rule DEIS

- **Clarify local-level decision-making.** The DEIS notes that the Forest Service provides consent to BLM for leasing, but the proposed action does not identify the **specific stipulations or requirements** that would ensure future development decisions occur at the **local level**, as stated in the Federal Register Notice. These stipulations must be included in the alternatives to make the objective enforceable and transparent.
- **Correct description of nationwide prohibitions (DEIS p. 15).** The DEIS states that Alternative 2 “eliminates nation-wide prohibitions on road construction and timber harvest,” but **existing exceptions already allow both activities**. The description should be revised to accurately reflect current policy.
- **Alternative 2 bullet 2 is based on an incorrect premise (DEIS p. 15).** Bullet 2 assumes road construction is categorically prohibited under current rules. This is incorrect, and the resulting impacts analysis is therefore flawed. The DEIS must correct the baseline in order to analyzing effects.
- **Correct leasable minerals analysis (DEIS p. 59).** The DEIS states that “no surface occupancy may still be applied,” but this stipulation is **not part of Alternative 2** and should not be analyzed unless it is explicitly included. Impacts must reflect only the measures proposed in the alternative.
- **Disclose mineral potential.** The DEIS should include mineral potential for areas where a change to the roadless designation would change. Without this information, the magnitude and distribution of impacts cannot be accurately assessed.
- For the **Sheep Mountain area on the Medicine Bow–Routt National Forest** in Southeast Wyoming, the boundary in Alternative 3 should follow the toe of the slope off of the topographic rim rather than an arbitrary buffer around existing roads, because a road-distance buffer does not reflect resource values, landscape function, or future management needs. The area above the toe of the slope should remain designated as roadless. Setting the boundary at the rim provides a more defensible and ecologically meaningful division by aligning with natural terrain, supporting more realistic future road-construction decisions, reducing erosion and watershed impacts tied to slope and landform, and better representing the area’s resource values and likely development patterns. Boundaries should be based on topography and resource conditions, not arbitrary road buffers that lack ecological or management justification.