

June 05, 2002- Rep. Sanchez Calls on Bush Administration to Protect National Forests

June 5, 2002REP. SANCHEZ CALLS ON BUSH ADMINISTRATION TO PROTECT NATIONAL FORESTS

On June 5, 2002, Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez added voice to the growing bipartisan chorus of Members of Congress calling on the Bush administration to protect the 58.5 million acres of national forest lands from most commercial logging and road building by becoming a co-sponsor of National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act.

"Like many of my constituents, I am frustrated with the Forest Service's failure to protect our national forests," said Sanchez. "It is time for the Congress to act on behalf of future generations who deserve the opportunity to enjoy these precious lands."

National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act codifies the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, on the most sweeping land conservation measures in a generation. The rule was approved the following years of scientific study and more than 600 public meetings across the country. To date the Forest Service has received more than 2.2 million comments favoring roadless protection. This outpouring of public response is almost ten times greater than that of any other rule in history.

The new legislation would protect our last pristine wild forests by reinforcing the roadless rule and prohibiting new road construction and reconstruction. It would not, however, completely ban road building, road reconstruction and economic utilization.

The legislation allows new roads to be constructed in specific circumstances, such as to fight fires or when other natural disasters threaten public safety. The bill does not close any existing roads or trails and allows full access for recreational activities.

In addition, the National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act does not affect the right of access to property owned by states or individuals, allowing logging of certain timber to reduce wildfire risk, and allows for the expansion of existing oil and gas operations.