

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCARBOROUGH addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SHERMAN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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FOREST SERVICE RELEASES REFERRED PROPOSAL FOR ROADLESS AREA INITIATIVE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, in the brief time I have today, I would like to talk about what consumer advocates would call a case of bait and switch. The shameful deceit of which I speak was made clear on November 13, because, on that day, the Clinton administration's Forest Service released their, quote-unquote, referred proposal for a roadless area initiative that will close off 60 million acres of public land from the public itself. As we have learned just recently, the Forest Service may actually issue the final version of this plan as early as next week.

This plan bans road construction, timber harvesting, and even road reconstruction in these areas. This affects 69,000 acres of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in my district, and, as I said, millions of acres all across our Nation.

It locks away all of this land from economic opportunities as well as from the taxpayers who use the land for recreation. I call it a bait and switch because, throughout this process, while the administration was talking a good game about continued access to the forest during the public comment period, they obviously intended all along to institute this much more sweeping, much more restrictive proposal after the public's opportunity for comment had expired.

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Mr. Speaker, throughout this process, the people of northern Wisconsin have been assured and reassured that responsible timber harvesting would not be restricted under this plan. Now, the Forest Service drops this final proposal on the folks whose livelihoods are at stake and, to add insult to injury, offers them no chance whatsoever to comment, telling them that they have already had their chance to speak out.

This is an unbelievable act of arrogance by an outgoing administration, and it should outrage every Member of this body, no matter what their party,

no matter how they feel about the issue itself. Our forests should not be locked away from the public by Washington bureaucrats.

Keeping our forests open to multiple uses is essential to preserving the way of life in my district and in forests all across America. Entire communities and their economies rely on this access for their very survival. And what is not discussed nearly often enough, keeping these areas open to responsible multiple use is essential to preserving the forests themselves.

Let us go back some time, to 1924, when the Wisconsin legislature originally decided to release these lands to the Federal Government to create the national forests. The Federal Government said explicitly and on the public record that it was acquiring these lands to restore them to a condition of maximum productivity and to maintain public access. That was the reason for taking these forests, to maintain public access. But, of course, the new restrictions that I am talking of fly in the face of that agreement.

Obviously, if the Wisconsin legislature, if the Wisconsin citizens knew then what we know now, they never would have transferred these lands. In fact, some of my constituents are even exploring legal action to try to reclaim these lands.

I am outraged and I am disappointed that the Forest Service has brushed aside so cavalierly the economic impact this policy will have on communities and citizens all across northern Wisconsin. Perhaps if the Forest Service had listened or accepted further comment from the people in my district, they would have understood the real impact of this policy.

I am going to do everything I can, and I am sure some of my colleagues will follow suit, to make sure that the people in communities like those in northern Wisconsin have the chance to publicly comment and have their opinions recorded. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I am going to place these letters that I have right here from my constituents into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. These letters are but a very small representation, a handful of the hundreds of letters that I have received opposing this plan.

There are comments like this one, from my constituent, Brian Swearingen, in Appleton, Wisconsin. He writes, "While the Forest Service suggests that it has the public interest in mind when advocating this initiative, little thought appears to have been given to the impact this policy will have on Americans who enjoy using our country's public lands."

I will submit these for the RECORD. We can only hope that the powers that be will take them into account.

APPLETON, WI, November 17, 2000.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE MARK GREEN: As someone who enjoys visiting and using our public lands, I am writing you to express my grave concern over the various policy initiatives undertaken by the Clinton Administration to limit access to public lands. Of par-

ticular concern to me is the Roadless initiative sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service.

While the Forest Service suggests that it has the public interest in mind when advocating this initiative, little thought appears to have been given to the impact this policy will have on Americans who enjoy using our country's public lands. Of particular concern is the fact that senior citizens and those with disabilities will be locked out of our public lands if this initiative becomes effective.

It is important that the Congress begin to exercise oversight of the Forest Service especially since the agency seems to be forfeiting its responsibility to manage our national forests with a multiple use perspective. I believe that public lands can be utilized and kept environmentally safe all at the same time. Keeping people out of our public lands should not be an acceptable solution.

The U.S. Forest Service Roadless initiative must be stopped. Please become active on this issue.

Sincerely,

BRIAN SWEARINGEN.

FOREST SAWMILL, INC.,
Wabeno, WI, November 28, 2000.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE MARK GREEN: Thank you for your help in the fight against the Roadless area. Here are some of my thoughts on the subject. First I believe we should be allowed to make public comment on the final plan, since it is so different from what we were being told at many of the meetings. In Mike Dombek's opening letter he says that he wanted to thank all the people that participated in this rule making. The wealth of insight and experience improved the proposal and the analyses of social, economic, and environmental effects. In reading the summary, I get the feeling that none of our ideas were taken into account and that the meetings were just a smoke screen to make us believe we were getting input.

In looking at the job loss numbers, I believe they aren't accurate. I feel this because every job lost has a trickle down effect that travels through the whole community and the whole state.

The summary also states on page S-27 that timber production has been reduced from 12 Billion board feet in 1987 to 3 Billion board feet in 1999. This disturbs me because these areas are already greatly effected by the dramatic reduction already put in place through the last 12 years. Many of these areas are mere skeletons of what they were in the times of proper forest management. The western states are fine examples of this. The Forest Service's idea to fix the problem is to throw money at the problem. This is never a way to fix a problem. (The plan is described on page S-10.) The way to fix the problem, is to not create it in the first place. This could be done by properly managing the resources we are letting go to waste.

In closing I think we should give our forest back to foresters to manage. This means we should have foresters in every level of the Forest Service to help develop plans of action, instead of people with no idea of how properly managing a forest. During a meeting in Crandon, WI, one of the planners said, this was the best way to develop a plan with public input. I feel this job should be given to trained foresters, because to let the public decide is leaving the decision to people with no education on the subject. These people are ruled by whims, not any knowledge on proper management.

Sincerely,

EDWARD PIONTEK, JR.,
Vice President.