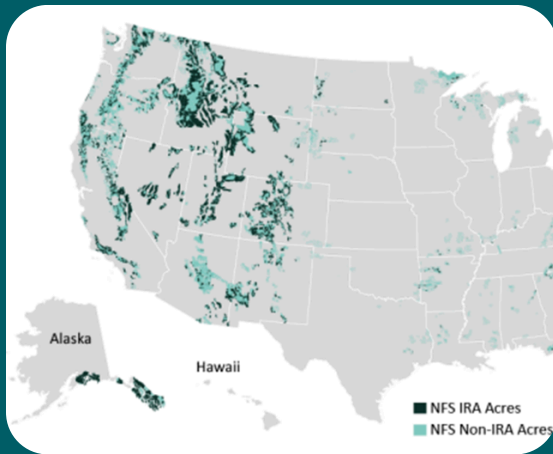




# Roadless Rule in Wyoming

Bighorn National Forest IRA

## What is the Roadless Area Conservation Rule?



Credit: Congressional Review Service 8/28/2020

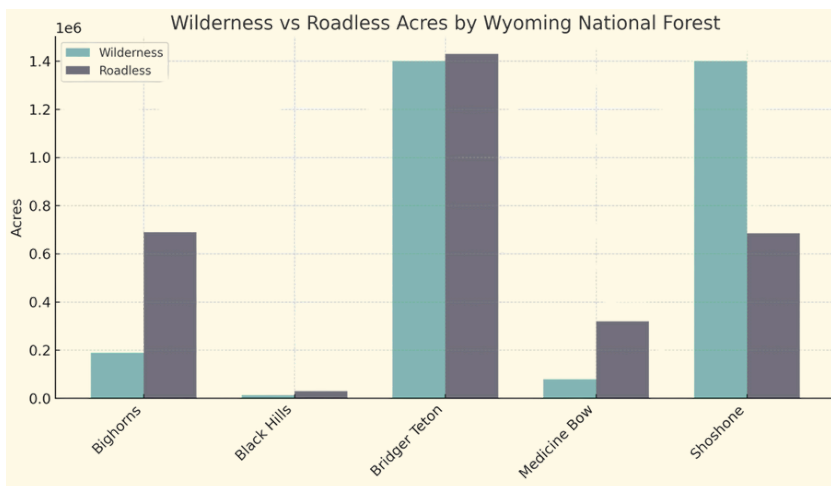
In 2001, the USFS issued the Roadless Rule to protect the nation's collective roadless area resources from the impacts of roads and timber harvesting with the goal of controlling federal costs of road maintenance and litigation.

Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) generally have characteristics of undeveloped land (e.g. high-quality / undisturbed soil & water, plant & animal diversity). The Rule prohibits road construction & timber harvesting except under specified circumstances.

Wyoming filed suit in Federal Court in 2001 & 2007. The cases concluded in 2012 after the Supreme Court denied certiorari.

### Deciphering the Roadless Rule Riddle:

Wyoming has numerous areas with poor or incorrect roadless inventory (i.e. IRAs with state highways or county roads). In areas with better inventories, the Rule does not give forest managers much flexibility to address timber management needs, protect critical watersheds, proactive fire and noxious/invasive management, or resolving challenges to achieving multiple use and sustained yield objectives.



### Seeing the Forest for the Roads

Forest managers need tools to administer forest resources – regardless of specific designations or commercial timber value. WY has over 3-million acres within IRAs. While not all acres are feasible to build roads, addressing IRA accuracy will help managers achieve plan objectives. IRAs do not follow existing forest management plan direction (suitable timber base overlap), nor can IRAs be addressed with plan revisions.

# Resolving issues with IRAs in WY



WCCA NEPA Training 5/1/2025

## Continue management under the 2001 Roadless Rule:

Wyoming could continue to work with forest managers on creative solutions to address issues that have resulted from roadless designations. These range from Cooperating Agencies working with the USFS on forest revisions, proposing site-specific activities that comply with the "limited exceptions" listed in the Rule, to seeking expedited review and approval for forest health or emergency projects (including Good Neighbor Authority).

## Support local technical corrections:

In 2021, the Bridger-Teton made a technical correction to the 2001 IRA boundary removing 13,092 acres "to align boundaries with the reality on the ground." Additionally, the Bighorn has been working for years through a roadless collaborative to address technical corrections to its IRA boundaries. Similar efforts could be initiated by individual forests across Wyoming.



Chelsea Coli, Sheridan Press 1/20/2017



## Develop a Wyoming-specific roadless rule:

If the date restriction in 36 CFR § 294.12 is amended, Wyoming, through the Governor, could petition the USFS to develop a Wyoming-specific roadless rule like Idaho & Colorado. Idaho's rule (2008) ultimately reduced IRAs by 300,000 acres, and Colorado's rule (2012) reduced IRAs by 57,000 acres.

## Encourage a federal rule amendment or repeal:

The Roadless Rule was created by the USFS and could be amended or repealed by the agency. Newly crafted NEPA regulations could also impact how projects are carried out in IRAs. Finally, Congress could legislate amendments or alter the direction of the Roadless Rule through its oversight of the USFS's budget and policy priorities.



WCCA & Senator Barrasso 2/27/2025