



# State of New Mexico

*Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
*Governor*

**News Release**

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## **Governor Bill Richardson Acts to Protect New Mexico Wilderness**

*Governor Richardson becomes first western governor to join bi-partisan effort  
to protect America's last wild forests*

(Santa Fe, NM) – Today, Governor Bill Richardson filed a petition for complete protection of 1.7 million acres of New Mexico wilderness – 1.6 million acres of roadless national forests in New Mexico, as well as 100,000 acres at the Valle Vidal. Governor Richardson today became the first western governor to petition the Bush administration for roadless area protection under a new rule established last year.

“Our roadless wilderness areas are truly cherished by the people of New Mexico as well as people who come here to fish and hunt,” said New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson. “I am very proud today to help protect all 1.6 million acres of roadless territory in New Mexico’s national forests as well as the Valle Vidal, an outdoor jewel in Northern New Mexico. Roadless areas support significant and complex wildlife communities, they create valuable recreation opportunities, and roadless areas help support natural fire resistance.”

Included in the petition is a 100,000 acre area known as Valle Vidal in the Carson National Forest. The Valle Vidal, now at risk to oil and gas development, is prime habitat for elk and trout, which brings hunters, fisherman and tourists from all around the region to this place of rare beauty. The Valle Vidal was added to the National Forest System after the original roadless inventories were conducted and, to this day, lacks permanent protection.

“We commend Governor Richardson for using every tool at his disposal to protect New Mexico's roadless areas,” said Robert Vandermark, director of the Heritage Forests

Campaign. "His efforts, as well as those of the governors of North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia, will help keep much of our nation's last wild forests intact until we can return to a national policy that protects all roadless areas, throughout the country, as so many citizens have demanded."

A Federal Advisory Committee appointed by the Bush administration will now review the petition and make recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture, who will decide whether to initiate a federal rulemaking process. At the end of that process, the administration may enact, modify, or reject the petition entirely. The committee met earlier this month to review petitions from Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, all of which also seek full roadless area protection. The committee passed these petitions on to the Secretary with approval for the rule-making process.

New Mexico's petition was submitted on the same day as a new statewide poll was released showing broad public support for protecting roadless areas. In total, 71 percent of voters say they either strongly support (50 percent) or somewhat support (21 percent) the state's petition to protect more than 1.6 million acres of roadless forest lands. Support cuts across party lines as the majority of both Democrats (79 percent) and Republicans (60 percent) support the petition.

For more information, including state petitions or polling details please go to: [www.ourforests.org](http://www.ourforests.org) and/or [www.wildlife.state.nm.us](http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us).