



# State of New Mexico

## *Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
*Governor*

For immediate release  
September 20, 2006

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## **Governor Bill Richardson Praises Monumental Federal Court Decision to Protect Roadless Areas**

*Governor Richardson First Western Governor to Join Bi-Partisan Effort to Protect America's Last Wild Forests*

(Santa Fe, NM) – New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson today praised the decision handed down by United States Magistrate Judge LaPorte of the Northern District of California to reinstate federal protections on roadless National Forest areas.

New Mexico Attorney General Patricia Madrid, California Attorney General Bill Lockyer, Washington Governor Christine O. Gregoire and Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski had filed a lawsuit in August 2005 against the Bush administration for dismantling restrictions on road building and logging in nearly 60 million acres of the country's remaining backcountry and undeveloped forests.

"This is a monumental victory for everyone who enjoys our wild forests," said Governor Richardson. "Our roadless forests areas are cherished by hunters, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts. Roadless areas support significant and complex wildlife communities, they create valuable recreation opportunities, and roadless areas help support rural economies. I want to praise Attorney General Madrid for her strong leadership on this issue. This will mean that forests both in New Mexico and across the country will remain protected and I will continue to fight to defend the pristine Valle Vidal from oil and gas development as well."

"This is a great victory for New Mexico and the nearly 1.6 million acres of Inventoried Roadless Area within our National Forests," Attorney General Madrid said. "We know that road building and timber harvesting result in decreased water quality, increased sediment and pollutants but this knowledge was not enough to convince the federal government that our state's few remaining pristine areas deserve protection. Not only did the federal government repeal the roadless rule but they refused to follow federal law that requires them to look at the impacts of their actions on the environment. For New Mexico there is no greater adverse environmental impact than decreasing our already limited supply of clean water. I am grateful to the court for recognizing the need to protect New Mexico's fragile and beautiful environment."

Under the Bush rule, Governor Richardson submitted a Roadless Petition on behalf of the State of New Mexico to the Secretary of Agriculture on May 31, 2006 to protect all inventoried roadless regions totaling 1,597,000

acres. He was the first western Governor to petition the Bush Administration for roadless area protection under a new rule established last year.

Included in the petition is a 101,285 acre area known as Valle Vidal in the Carson National Forest. The Valle Vidal, now at risk to oil and gas development, is home to the largest elk herd in New Mexico. It provides exceptional recreation opportunities and 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.

This court decision appears to reinstate the roadless area protections put in place by the Clinton Administration and makes further action under the Bush rule unnecessary. However, Governor Richardson will continue to advocate for having the Valle Vidal added to the roadless inventory to make sure these protections are extended to this area.

This action to protect the Valle Vidal builds upon Governor Richardson's other preservation efforts, including declaring all its world class trout streams as Outstanding National Resource Waters under the Clean Water Act.

For more information, including the state petition, go to: <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/>.

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