



The Mountain Pact

New Proposed Rule Would Gut NEPA, Keep Public out of Decision Making-- COMMENT DEADLINE AUGUST 26

One of our nation's bedrock environmental laws is at risk. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that all proposed federal projects undergo a review that determines the potential impacts to the environment and provide an opportunity for public input. But now, the Forest Service has issued a [proposed rule](#) that would undermine NEPA's core principles of government transparency, accountability, public input, and science-based



decision-making by [weakening the triggers](#) for when a NEPA review is required and greatly expanding the list of "categorical exclusions," a list of actions that have been predetermined to not need a NEPA review. This proposed rule would keep the public out of the vast majority of decision-making regarding the management of the Forest Service's 193 million acres of land.

Specifically, the proposed changes would create loopholes to increase the speed and scale of resource extraction including logging and mining while eliminating public awareness and input on up to 93% of proposed projects. The Forest Service has proposed several new "[categorical exclusions](#)" that would allow the agency to move project planning behind closed doors by cutting the public out of the decision-making process and eliminating any science-based review of impacts to water, wildlife, and recreation.

Due to budget constraints, staff turnover, and inconsistent application of NEPA analyses, it is clear that the Forest Service could benefit from a slight improvements of NEPA. However, the proposed rule instead fundamentally undermines the purpose of NEPA, and prioritizes extraction on national forest lands.

In addition to cutting the public out of the decision-making process and eliminating science-based decisions, the proposal endangers all Americans by:

- **Putting clean drinking water at risk of pollution.** Millions of people in the U.S. depend on clean water that originates in our national forests. These forests serve as natural purifiers. Logging, mining, road building and related activities degrade streams and waterways and pollute water.
- **Giving extractive industries supremacy on public lands.** This proposed rule is a boon to extractive industries who would directly benefit from the lack of public input and elimination of science-based decisions.

- **Reducing backcountry recreation opportunities.** This rule would allow thousands of miles of new roads to be built into our last remaining wild places. Once these roads are built, they will forever change opportunities for backcountry recreation into our last remaining wild places.

The comment period to urge the Forest Service to **REJECT** the proposed changes closes **MONDAY, AUGUST 26th**. Submit your comment by e-mail [here](#) to stand up for public engagement and science-based decision-making on our national forest lands.

Please reach out to us at info@themountainpact.org with any questions or for additional talking points for drafting your comment letter.

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