



November 19, 2001

Director, Lands Staff
4th Floor-South, Mail Stop 1104
Sidney R. Yates Federal Building
USDA Forest Service
P.O. Box 96090
Washington, DC 20090-6090

Dear Director:

On behalf of the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness, I am writing to express our strong opposition to the proposed "Categorical Exclusions" Directive. We believe that National Forest roadless areas, endangered and threatened species habitat, and other special wildlands require the strongest possible protections.

The Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness (Friends) is a nonprofit wilderness conservation organization with about 2,800 members from across the country. We appreciate the opportunity to share our concerns with you.

We oppose expanding the use of categorical exclusions because such an expansion eliminates public review and scientific analysis of activities affecting important National Forest resources. Without public comment, impact assessment, or discussion of mitigation, projects involving logging, road construction, and motorized trails will cause serious damage to some of our most sensitive and precious lands.

The Friends urges the Forest Service to continue its commitment to informing the public and protecting critical national resources. Guidelines for using categorical exclusions should not be changed.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our concerns.

Sincerely,
Sarah Strommen
Policy Director