

Administration proposing plan to open more forests to logging

By Bob Fick
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOISE, Idaho — The Bush administration Monday proposed lifting a national rule that closed remote areas of national forests to logging, instead saying states should decide whether to keep them on road-building in those areas. Environmentalists immediately criticized the change as the biggest timber industry giveaway in history. Under the proposal, governors would have to petition the federal government to block road-building in remote areas of national forests. Allowing roads to be built would open the areas to logging. The rule replaces one adopted by the Clinton administration and still under challenge in federal court. It cov-

ers about 58 million of the 191 million acres of national forest nationwide. The Bush administration heralded the plan as an end to the legal uncertainty overshadowing tens of millions of acres of America's backcountry. "Our actions today advance the Bush administration's commitment to cooperative conserving roadless areas," Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said in announcing the plan in the Idaho Capitol Rotunda. Trust President Philip Clapp called the administration proposal the biggest giveaway to the timber industry in history, arguing that many western states would likely press for development to help struggling rural economies. "The idea that many governors would want to jump head first into the

political snake pit of managing the national forests in their states is laughable," he said. "Besides, the timber industry has invested heavily for years in the campaigns of governors with the largest national and state forests, giving almost equally to Republicans and Democrats." Under the proposal, the 58.5 million acres designated as roadless among the 191 million acres of national forest will be protected from development for another 18 months. In 2006, each governor may submit a proposal either to continue protecting the roadless land or allow it opened to multiple use. The federal government would consider each state petition and then issue a regulation determining the extent of future roadless protection.

Sharon invites Labor Party into his coalition

By Gavin Rabinowitz
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jerusalem — Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Monday invited the moderate Labor Party into his shaky coalition, and warned rebels in his Likud Party that he'll call early elections if they try to block the partnership. An alliance with Labor would boost Sharon's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and four isolated West Bank settlements by 2005. Coalition hard-liners have been trying to sabotage a pullback. Some sticking points remain in coalition negotiations, including wrangling over senior portfolios, particularly the job of foreign minister for Labor chief Shimon Peres. Both sides said they expect a deal quickly.

The main threat to such a union appears to be coming from Likud hard-liners opposed to a Gaza withdrawal and senior Likud ministers who, fearing they'll lose their jobs, have threatened to stir a rebellion in the party. Sharon warned Likud legislators Monday that he'll call early elections if they make good on their threats. He told the legislators that he has no choice but to expand the coalition by bringing in Labor. "But if you don't want this or that, we can go to elections, that's the way it is," Sharon said. "I am saying

this in the clearest possible way: This situation cannot continue." The coalition talks were held as U.S. Mideast envoys were in the region to discuss the Gaza withdrawal plan. White House officials Elliot Abrams and Steve Hadley were to meet with Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia on Monday and with Sharon on Tuesday, a U.S. Embassy spokesman said. Sharon and Peres met privately for an hour Monday morning. Both sides said the

talks had gone well. "He gave me a formal invitation to enter into negotiations to create a government including the Labor Party," Peres said at a meeting of Labor lawmakers. The party was expected to accept the invitation on Tuesday, setting the stage for negotiations to begin. Sharon turned to Labor, which supports the Gaza withdrawal, after facing increasing opposition from far-right coalition partners and hard-liners in Likud. Defections have deprived him of his parliamentary majority. Many Likud hard-liners still oppose the union. "If the Labor Party enters the coalition it will bring a cancer into the Likud," said Uzi Cohen, a member of the party's powerful Central Committee.

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— Uzi Cohen
Likud party member

Hot pepper



EVAN O'CONNELL • THE BATTALION

Junior nutrition major **Kristen Anderson**, left, and her sister **Jenna Anderson** work in the Farm Patch Monday afternoon. The Farm Patch sells a variety of fresh flowers and produce.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Al-Yawer issues warning to insurgents

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — Iraq's interim president issued a warning Monday to guerrillas who have killed hundreds of Iraqis, promising to use a "very sharp sword" against anyone threatening the country's security. The new Iraqi government has been discussing offering a limited amnesty to militants to put down the insurgency. But it has also been talking increasingly tough about those who keep carrying out attacks. "Terrorism isn't just killing and blowing up bombs; whoever threatens the ordinary

life of the people is a terrorist," President Ghazi al-Yawer told reporters. "We have a very sharp sword ready for anyone who threatens the security of this country." Al-Yawer's words appeared carefully chosen, reflecting a classical Arab symbol of might in the sword and threatening militants, some of whom have beheaded hostages, with their own chosen weapon. In a crackdown Monday night, dozens of Iraqi police fanned out in the capital's Bab Alsheikh neighborhood, setting off small gunbattles in which one suspect was killed and two were wounded. Hundreds of people were detained.

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