

August 06, 2004

Department of Homeland Security
Environmental Planning, Office of Safety and Environment
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Ridge and Homeland Security staff,

I oppose the Department of Homeland Security's current proposal for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act. There is no viable reason why any government entity should be allowed to skirt established laws.

The current proposal to expand categorical exclusions appears to be an attempt to get around the law. The fact that logging and hazardous waste are included among the proposed exclusions are proof.

Additionally, the public review of agency actions is imperative. Transparency is key for the government to be trusted, especially when it comes to our natural resources. This is not a call to release classified material, but rather to leave the rest alone. There is no justifiable reason to remove additional activities from the public view if those activities are lawful and ethical.

The proposal goes well beyond what is necessary to protect national security, and risks destroying the very democratic ideals that the Department of Homeland Security was created to protect. I urge you to limit the use of categorical exclusions and the withholding of information as narrowly as possible.

Sincerely,

Katie McCarthy