

BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS

The Tennessee Chapter Newsletter



A Fall Note from the Chairman

Fellow BHA Members,

Fall has arrived in Tennessee, bringing cooler mornings, changing leaves, and some of the year's best opportunities to enjoy our public lands and waters. For many of us, this season means watching the sunrise from a deer stand, following a bird dog through the woods, calling fall turkeys, preparing for waterfowl season, or casting for trout and bass as cooler temperatures bring renewed activity to our rivers and lakes.

These experiences are about more than the harvest or the catch. They connect us to the land, strengthen friendships, create family traditions, and remind us why the conservation of public lands, waters, and wildlife matters so deeply.

As hunting seasons unfold, I encourage everyone to lead by example. Practice ethical hunting and angling, respect other public-land users, follow all regulations, and leave every place better than you found it. If you have the opportunity, invite someone new into the field or onto the water. Introducing a new hunter or angler to these traditions is one of the most meaningful ways we can help preserve them.

Fall is also an important time for conservation. Increased use of our public lands highlights the need for responsible stewardship, healthy wildlife habitat, clean water, and continued public access. Tennessee BHA remains committed to advocating for these priorities, but our strength comes from members who volunteer, participate in habitat projects, attend chapter events, contact elected officials, and speak up for the places we all value.

Whether your fall plans include pursuing whitetails in the hardwoods, chasing squirrels or grouse, waiting on the first flights of waterfowl, searching for feeding bass, or enjoying a quiet day on a Tennessee trout stream, I hope you take time to appreciate the remarkable outdoor opportunities available to us.

Thank you for your membership, your advocacy, and your commitment to Tennessee's public lands and waters. Have a safe and successful season, and I look forward to seeing many of you in the field, on the water, or at an upcoming chapter event.

Yours in conservation,

Matt Lewis

Chairman, Tennessee Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

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USFS Moves to Rescind the Roadless Rule - Make Your Voice Heard

On August 18, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins announced that the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) had filed a proposed rule to fully rescind the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, alongside a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). In addition to full rescission, the DEIS evaluates alternatives that would either leave the rule in place or modify protections across millions of acres of currently inventoried roadless areas.

The proposed rule was published on August 20, opening a public comment period through October 6. Hunters and anglers have just 45 days to make our voices heard.

For 25 years, the Roadless Rule has conserved some of our nation's most intact fish and wildlife habitat, protected clean water and sustained outstanding backcountry hunting and fishing opportunities. And roadless does not mean unmanaged. The rule allows important management activities, including hazardous fuels reduction and habitat restoration, while keeping these lands open to hunting, fishing, grazing and recreation.

Claims that wholesale rescission is necessary to address wildfire risk aren't true. The Roadless Rule already provides flexibility for fuels treatments and other management activities without requiring permanent new roads. And recent [research](#) found that wildfire ignitions were roughly four times more likely to occur near roads than in roadless forests, underscoring that more roads are not necessarily the answer to wildfire risk.

The Roadless Rule also makes fiscal sense. The Forest Service already manages roughly 370,000 miles of roads and faces approximately \$10.8 billion in deferred maintenance, with more than half attributable to roads alone. Adding new roads and long-term maintenance obligations won't solve that problem.

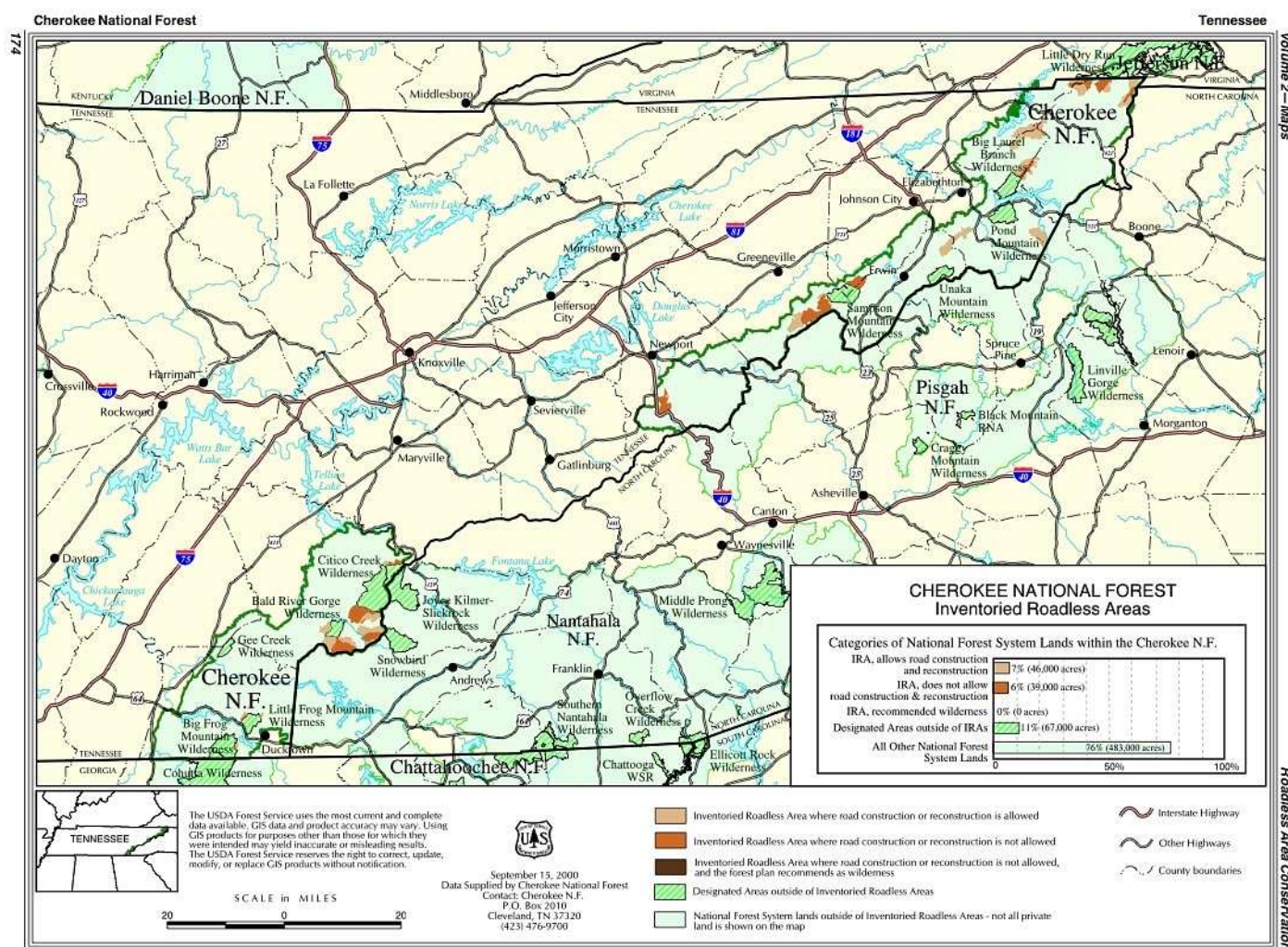
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers supports active, science-based forest management to address wildfire, forest health and responsible access. But wholesale elimination of the Roadless Rule is not the answer – it would remove longstanding protections from more than 44 million acres of national forest backcountry across 37 states.

Hunters and anglers need to speak up. Tell the Forest Service to keep our roadless areas wild, productive and accessible for generations to come and support the No Action Alternative. Submit your comments by October 6.

While this Action Alert responds directly to USDA's proposed rule, BHA also believes it is important that Congress hear from hunters and anglers. By taking action below, your message will be delivered to your members of Congress, and you will be included as a signer on BHA's public comment opposing this proposed rule (below). We also strongly encourage you to submit a personalized comment through the [Federal eRulemaking Portal](#) by searching RIN 0596-AD66 or docket FS-2025-0001. Personalized comments that describe your experiences hunting, fishing, or recreating in roadless areas can help demonstrate why these landscapes matter.

Take Action

Tennessee Roadless Areas



Cherokee National Forest inventory of roadless areas. Map: U.S. Forest Service, September 2000.

Roadless Protection Here in Tennessee

The Forest Service's original inventory identified approximately 85,000 acres of Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) in Tennessee's Cherokee National Forest. The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule established protections for these lands, and some portions later received separate congressional wilderness protection.

The rule generally prohibits new road construction, road reconstruction, and timber harvesting, with specific exceptions for public safety, habitat improvement, and ecosystem restoration. Keeping these backcountry landscapes intact helps protect wildlife habitat, forested watersheds, and opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, and quiet recreation.

Inventoried roadless areas are distinct from congressionally designated wilderness. Some areas shown in this historical inventory later received separate wilderness protection.

Sources: USDA Forest Service roadless inventory; Forest Service Roadless Rule questions and answers.

Around the State

First West Tennessee Pint Night



Sawyer Eggleston, Director, Western TN District (far left), with fellow members at the first West Tennessee Pint Night.

TN NC SC Fishing Trip to Cataloochee

Members from Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina came together in Cataloochee for camping, fishing, elk viewing, new friendships, and stories shared around the campfire. It felt like the kind of gathering that gave rise to BHA—and keeps that tradition alive.



On the water, in the mountains, and among the elk at Cataloochee.

Memories from Cataloochee



Stories shared around the campfire at Cataloochee.

Public Lands Day at Nashville North Archery

September 26 • Middle Tennessee

What a great day in Middle Tennessee! Around 30 people joined us at Nashville North Archery for a Public Lands Day event and raffle. We feasted on wild boar and cowboy beans with venison sausage, played MeatEater trivia, and enjoyed great fellowship. Thanks to everyone who helped put the event together and joined us to celebrate!



Photos from the Nashville gathering: community, conversation, BHA outreach, and wild boar.

Thank You to Our Sponsors

Special thanks to **Nashville North Archery** for hosting us, and to our sponsors **Ridge'd Outdoors**, **Nashville Predators**, **Harpeth River Outfitters**, and **Mountain Music Game Calls** for supporting our Public Lands Day event.

Why Do We Love Deer Hunting

By Charlie Christopherson

I think most deer hunters would have a hard time explaining exactly why they love deer hunting.

Sure, we can talk about the deer. The anticipation of seeing a good buck. The excitement of watching a deer work its way toward us. The satisfaction of putting venison in the freezer.

But if that's all deer hunting was about, I don't think we'd get up at 4:00 in the morning to do it.

We wouldn't spend our evenings studying maps, checking the weather, sharpening broadheads, sighting in rifles, or walking through the woods looking for sign. We wouldn't hike into a Tennessee hollow carrying far more gear than we probably need, knowing there's a pretty good chance we'll sit there all morning and never see a deer.

There has to be something more. And I think there is.

It Starts Before Deer Season

For me, deer season starts well before opening day.

It starts with those first cool mornings when you can finally tell that summer won't last forever. It starts when you pull out your hunting gear and realize you probably should have put it away a little better last year.

It starts with looking at a map and wondering what's around the next ridge.

Then opening morning finally arrives.

The alarm goes off way too early. You drink coffee that isn't nearly as good as you think it is because you're half asleep. You walk into the woods in the dark, trying not to make too much noise, and eventually settle into your stand.

For a while, nothing happens. And that's okay. Because you're there.

Public Land Makes It Worth the Effort

Tennessee has some incredible public land—from the Cherokee National Forest and Cumberland Plateau to wildlife management areas and public ground across Middle and West Tennessee.

But public land isn't always easy.

Sometimes the parking area is already full. Sometimes the spot you found on a map has three other hunters sitting nearby. Sometimes the best-looking piece of ground requires a long hike, a steep climb, and a pack that somehow gets heavier with every step.

And sometimes, after all that work, you don't see a single deer.

I've never understood why that makes us want to go back—but it does. Maybe it's because public land makes you earn it.

You have to scout. You have to learn the terrain. You have to understand the wind. You have to be willing to walk past the easy places and keep going.

And when you finally find a spot that feels like yours, even though you don't actually own it, there's a special satisfaction in knowing you found it yourself.

That's one of the things I love about public land. It belongs to all of us.

For someone who doesn't own hundreds of acres or have access to private property, public land can be the difference between being able to hunt and not hunting at all.

Access isn't always easy. Sometimes it can be downright frustrating. But it is worth it. And that's why we have to care about keeping those places accessible.

The Woods Slow You Down

Most of us spend the rest of the year moving pretty fast.

Work. Family. Phones. Emails. Bills. Traffic. Somewhere to be and something that needs to get done.

Then you sit in a deer stand. Suddenly, none of that seems quite as important.

You notice a squirrel running through the leaves. The wind changing directions. A woodpecker somewhere behind you. Turkeys moving through the timber. Fog settling into a hollow. The sky slowly changing from black to gray to orange.

You can sit there for three hours without saying a word and somehow feel like you've accomplished something.

Maybe that's because we aren't very good at being still anymore. The woods remind us how.

Something Bigger

There are mornings in the deer woods when I can't help but feel like there's something bigger going on.

You're sitting on a ridge before daylight. Everything is quiet. Then the sun starts coming up and suddenly you can see for miles.

Or you're sitting beneath an old oak that was there long before you were born.

Or you watch a deer step out of the timber, completely unaware that you're sitting nearby.

It's hard not to feel humbled by moments like that.

For many of us, the outdoors is a reminder that there is a higher power—that creation is bigger than us and that we are only a small part of it.

That's one of the things I appreciate most about hunting. It gives us a place to be quiet enough to notice.

The Deer Aren't Always the Best Part

Ask a deer hunter about his favorite hunt and there's a good chance the story won't end with a deer on the ground.

It might be about the morning a dad took his kid hunting for the first time. A buddy getting turned around in the dark. Seeing a bear, turkey, bobcat, or coyote when you least expected it. Or the biggest buck you ever saw—and never got a shot at.

Some of the best hunting memories are the ones that didn't go according to plan.

That's because hunting isn't just about the outcome. It's about the experience. The people. The stories. And, yes, the food.

There is something pretty satisfying about opening the freezer and seeing packages of venison you put there yourself. You know where that meat came from, the work that went into getting it, and that the animal deserves to be respected and used well.

Why BHA Matters

This is why I think deer hunting and Backcountry Hunters & Anglers fit together so well.

If we love hunting, we have to care about the places that make hunting possible. If we love public-land deer hunting, we have to care about public-land access. If we love watching a sunrise from a ridge, we have to care about keeping that ridge wild.

The public lands we hunt aren't just places where we go to kill deer. They're places where we find peace, teach our kids, reconnect with friends, gather food, and remember that the world is a whole lot bigger than our daily problems.

Those places are worth protecting.

So Why Do We Love Deer Hunting?

I don't think there's one answer.

We love the anticipation. We love the challenge. We love the solitude. We love the people. We love the food. We love the stories. We love walking into a place we've never been and wondering what's over the next ridge.

And maybe most of all, we love the way hunting makes us feel connected—to the land, to wildlife, to the people who taught us, to the people we'll eventually teach, and to something greater than ourselves.

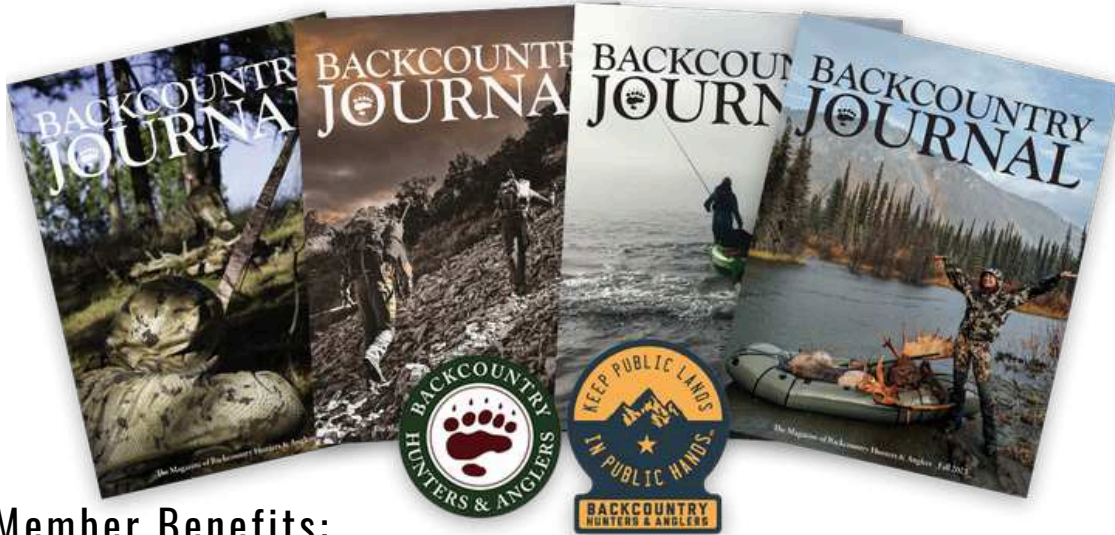
Sometimes we come home with a deer. Sometimes we come home empty-handed.

But if we've spent the morning watching the woods wake up, breathing cold Tennessee air, and remembering why these places matter, I'm not sure we really came home empty-handed.

That's why we love deer hunting. Not just because of the deer. Because of everything that happens before, during, and after the hunt—and because every time we walk into the woods, we're reminded of something worth protecting.

JOIN TODAY

When you become an Individual Member of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, you're not just joining an organization—you're joining a community dedicated to preserving North America's outdoor heritage. For just \$35 annually, you'll receive exclusive benefits and make a real difference.



Exclusive Member Benefits:

- **Backcountry Journal Subscription:** Our magazine is packed with inspiring stories on conservation, hunting, fishing, and fair chase ethics.
- **BHA Decals:** Show your BHA pride with our distinctive decals.
- **Event Invitations:** Get access to local chapter events where you can connect with fellow outdoor enthusiasts and experience the boots-on-the-ground impact of BHA's work.
- **Monthly eNewsletter:** Stay updated with the Backcountry Beat, featuring the latest news on BHA's efforts to fight for your outdoor passions.
- **Feel Good:** Experience the satisfaction of actively contributing to the protection of the backcountry and the traditions you cherish.
- **Special Discounts:** Enjoy exclusive savings from our corporate partners like First Lite, Vortex, Weston, onX, Waltons, XOP, Grayl, Work Sharp, and more!

Additional Membership Options

- Family Membership
- Military Membership
- Student Membership
- Three Year Membership
- Lifetime Membership

[Click To Join Today.](#)

VOLUNTEER WITH BHA

OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE



Habitat Projects

Join other volunteers in partnering with state biologists on projects to help clean up or improve the habitat of public lands or waters.



Events

Join other volunteers & board members in hosting BHA events like habitat projects, social gatherings, fund raisers, hunt & fish camps, and more.



Chapter Sponsor

Become a chapter sponsor and support the Tennessee chapter financially. As a non-profit your support is critical. Talk to a board member about the benefits of becoming a chapter sponsor.



Leadership

The state chapter offers various leadership opportunities, from event coordinators to board of directors, officers, and more.



SIGN UP TODAY

[Click Here](#)

