President's roadless plan protested

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By The Associated Press

HELENA -- Montana's future generations should not be left with a place indistinguishable from Detroit or Los Angeles, said a woman who joined other people in a weekend protest of President Bush's stance on roadless areas in national forests.

Kathy Hadley of the Montana Wildlife Federation said her new grandson deserves a better legacy.

Hadley was among some 50 people who walked almost seven miles on Saturday to convey their concerns to Gov. Brian Schweitzer. He met them at the Capitol.

At issue is Bush's repeal of the Clinton administration's 2001 ban on roads and development in roadless areas of national forests. Bush has given the states until November to submit statements explaining how they would like the government to deal with those areas.

Several groups have coalesced as the Montana Hunters and Anglers Roadless Working Group to urge that counties and, in turn, Schweitzer, ask that Montana's 6.4 million roadless acres be left alone.

Saturday's 6.7-mile walk that began on the edge of the Black Mountain roadless area outside of Helena included people from Great Falls, Lewistown, Billings and Anaconda.

Schweitzer said members of the group are committed to the conservation ideals of President Theodore Roosevelt.

"To conserve is not a Democratic value. It's not a Republican value. It's an American value," Schweitzer told the gathering. "The days of polarizing wild places are gone. We are the Treasure State and there's no greater treasure than our wild lands."

Schweitzer has asked officials of Montana counties to provide comment for him to consider in communicating with federal officials by the November deadline.

Said the governor, "The question at hand is this: We have lands that do not have roads. Do you believe we need more roads? And, if so, where? And who will maintain them?"'