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Comments:

To whom it may concern,

I write this letter today, on Memorial Day. A day of remembrance of the countless fallen heroes who gave everything to allow future generations of Americans to enjoy freedom from oppressive regimes, and liberty and the pursuit of happiness. While these ideas may (unfortunately) seem trite in this day and age, we should all realize that the exceeding push for Congressionally-recognized Wilderness (with a capital W), is progressively being used to eliminate the freedoms and liberties that so many brave men and women died to protect. The Wilderness Act of 1964 was not created to remove humanity from the land. It was designed to regulate commercial industry in a way that would protect the lands from unfettered private industrial extraction. Unfortunately the institution of Wilderness has now been expanded to function as an exclusionary means to keep EVERYONE except the healthiest and wealthiest citizens of this country off the land. I say this with confidence because Wilderness excludes families with young children, elderly, and disabled. We can't just keep pushing motorized access off the lands that we have come to rely on for hunting, fishing, camping and other forms of recreation that allow families to get away from civilization to rest and relax and immerse themselves deep into nature by means of motorized access. Furthermore, the more you close people from historically acceptable areas allowing motorized access, the more you concentrate and funnel greater use to smaller corridors, thus damaging the remaining motorized areas exponentially more. Please think longer term, about the value of these lands to ALL people. Not just the rich who can buy private acres, or the healthy and privileged who can afford to take enough time off of work to venture deep into the forests on foot. The motto of the US Forest Service is to serve the greater good, for the longest term. Not to serve the interests of the healthiest and wealthiest few, to serve an agenda that excludes the rest of humanity.

If the goal is to protect the environment from being trampled by extractive industry, can't that be done in a way that doesn't exclude the public from THEIR lands? Furthermore, we know that when we stop managing our forests, we end up with catastrophic wildfire conditions which when combined with climate change, promotes wildfires on a scale like we've never seen in history. So I ask you this, if climate change is the most important crisis to pay attention to, then why would we promote an agenda that stands to emit exponentially more carbon into the atmosphere than most other sources of atmospheric pollution combined?

There are truly so many ways to look at the consequences of progressive public land closures under the banner of Wilderness. But the biggest cautionary idea that I have come to understand, is the idea that if we continue to exclude humanity from nature, do you believe that anyone will care to protect it in future generations? When our connection to nature is something only experienced on National Geographic, the real tangible nature that the general population once experienced first-hand will be long forgotten. We must find a better way to balance these ideas.

Thank you for considering these ideas.

We appreciate the US Forest Service for all you do.

With respect,

Jon Miller