

National forests: Places of healing

Dec. 13, 2019 at 2:49 pm

As a retired Iraq war veteran who served my country for 24 years in the Navy, I was concerned to read the recent Op-Ed [“Save the rare wild beauty of the Tongass National Forest from renewed logging”](#) [Dec. 8, Opinion].

Those who serve our country fought to preserve our American freedoms and lifestyles. The 2001 national forest Roadless Rule protected nearly 60 million acres of our last remaining old-growth forests, intact watersheds and wild rivers. These are quintessential American landscapes that provide strength and healing for many veterans who've returned from deployments marked by desperation and violent conflict.

The ability to connect with our public lands, including roadless areas, is essential to the American experience and provides important values to veterans. Like so many Americans, veterans count on our national, roadless areas for fishing, hiking, camping and hunting. Some veterans turn to the outdoors to heal from the trauma of war and renew bonds with family members after long deployments.

Protecting these lands is one way that America can give back to its heroes who have paid such a high price for our freedoms.

Rick Hegdahl, Bellevue

[View](#)