

LETTERS

Protecting Our Wilderness, From the President

Readers protest President Trump's decision to open the Tongass National Forest in Alaska to logging. Also: Don't lump all extremists together; friendships across generations.

Sept. 9, 2019

More from our inbox:

- [A False Equivalence: All Extremists Aren't Equal](#)
- [Friends Keep Me Young](#)

To the Editor:

Re "This Land Is Their Land" (editorial, Sept. 1):

President Trump's directive to wipe out protections for the Tongass National Forest in Alaska threatens to drag us back to a time when the federal government was in the business of subsidizing the degradation of one of our greatest natural treasures, with timber sales that cost taxpayers more than \$20 million a year.

Throughout the 1980s, the Forest Service lost anywhere from 91 to 99 cents for every dollar it spent sending 450 million board feet of old-growth timber — trees that predated the signing of the Constitution — to countries in the Pacific Rim. Each tree was sold for less than the price of a McDonald's Big Mac.

In 1990, I wrote the Tongass Timber Reform Act to stop the Forest Service's reckless practices and move toward a future that makes sense economically and ecologically.

President Trump's latest boondoggle would undo hard-fought progress to preserve the

world's largest remaining temperate rainforest, at a time when the future of our planet depends on it more than ever.

Robert Mrazek

Ithaca, N.Y.

The writer, a Democrat, is a former New York congressman and is honorary chairman of the Alaska Wilderness League.

To the Editor:

Your editorial should prompt all of us to stand up and declare, "This land is *our* land." The public lands belong to us, the people.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, which recommended protecting wilderness areas; the Wilderness Act of 1964 followed.

But some wild lands still lack adequate protection despite increasing awareness of wilderness values. Wilderness areas provide habitat for wildlife (flora as well as fauna), serve as migration corridors for many species, protect watersheds and store carbon. Just the idea of wilderness soothes our souls.

Likewise, near where I live, there are wild lands lacking protection in the Gallatin Range and elsewhere in the Northern Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, so I am a founding member of the Gallatin Yellowstone Wilderness Alliance.

Anne Millbrooke

Bozeman, Mont.