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First name: William

Last name: Leavenworth

Organization: retired environmental historian

Title:

Comments: I am entirely against any mining or commercial cutting in the Tongass area of Alaska. I panned gold downstream from an old mine in Alaska's Willow Creek district in the summer of 1963 I have a Ph.D. in environmental history, have fished (briefly) for a living, and have worked a few winters in the woods in my younger days, harvesting timber from my co-owned Maine woodlot. In my teens I spent much time hiking in some of New Mexico's abandoned mining areas. I know very well what mining, foresting and overfishing can do to a natural resource. Old growth forests contain genetic material that has evolved over millennia. The New England forests once contained pines that scaled from 9,000 to 12,000 board feet to the tree. My old property in Maine, called "The Pines" since the mid-19th century, had pines that scaled over 6,000 board feet to the tree--I knew the brothers (long since dead) who cut the last one for their sawmill a mile down the road. Once these trees are gone, they cannot come back in less than several thousand years, because they are the product of millennia of genetic competition, (aided by millennia of marine isotopes brought into the woods in anadromous fish killed by predators such as bears, and excreted onto forest soils) and they take their genetic makeup to the sawmill with them. Once the mines have poisoned their downstream waters, those fish are gone forever. They won't come back when the mine is exhausted, because their genes are gone with them. Those people who wish to harvest old-growth timber and mine toxic metal compounds anywhere in the watershed of a productive salmonid spawning ground are either criminals or idiots, or both.

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