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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Born in the Adirondacks, I grew up among a mixture of "forever wild" tracts and privately owned tracts of forest land. How I thrived amongst the former, growing up hiking camping, and ruminating upon the wonder of forest getting old recovering from nineteenth-century depredations, and fostering a wonder of plants, mosses, small animals, birds, and flowers. And the magnificent trees. Through my early years and even now I return to the Adirondacks for sustenance after a life seeing so much forest devastation.

My father and his family had been in the Adirondacks for generations. His father's father came as a logger, married the daughter of a family who came as tannery workers using hemlock bark in the terribly destructive tanning process of those days. My father's father's parents both died in their twenties of consumption in a logging camp on West River in Hamilton County. With the German discovery of chemical tanning agents, the hemlock bark harvests ended and the tanneries closed. Family members became Adirondack guides (one being famously murdered after guiding a NYC sport of great fame - Gene Tunney - into the wilderness with robbers assuming he had been given a healthy tip), livery stable owners, and stagecoach drivers as the economy turned towards tourism.

Almost fifty years ago I moved to Sharon and Beaver Meadow, Vermont. Vermont seemed cramped and mostly pasture-recovering brushland, but there were also spots of wonder among the old-growth patches of the Green Mountain National Forest and a few state lands. I treasured these places of great beauty and biodiversity. By this time I had become a water resources engineer and worked for many state, regional, national, and international agencies and a number of foreign governments promoting sustainable development and designing projects for water conservation, reforestation, renewable energy, and small-scale irrigation and flood mitigation. I viewed over the decades forests in Sumatra, Congo, the Amazon, Guyana, East Africa, Mozambique, Nepal, the Philippines, etc. and I saw the changes, the devastation wrought by deforestation, and the consequences for peasants and urban dwellers alike of the new hydrologic regimes.

I always returned to the Adirondacks and to Vermont for reinvigoration and emotional sustenance, and I recollected often the warning that I had passed on to students in an undergraduate science course at Harvard University in 1969 about the possible consequences of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere and the role of forests and the oceans in mitigating the impacts of those emissions.

Now I am in my 83rd year. I've been through a typhoon with the roof of my shelter blown off, I've seen war and its devastation I've witnessed unimaginable poverty and deprivation, I've protested and been arrested for opposing war and environmental destruction, I've seen the forests of Nepal and Uganda nearly disappear, I've ridden through the taiga and pondered its future, I've seen Lake Chad nearly dry up and leave irrigation infrastructure high and dry, I've seen the devastation caused by the Bangladesh cyclone of 1970, and I've questioned my meager efforts to try to slow all this destruction.

I was encouraged by President Biden's executive order to the USDA/USFS to protect old growth forests. They were national treasures, jewels of biodiversity, reservoirs of undiscovered species of possible incalculable future value, efficient agents of carbon capture and sequestration, hydrologic lynchpins, and havens of human nurture and sustenance during these times of cynicism and nihilism.

You cannot begin to imagine the horror and anger elicited by the decision to clear cut, log, manage, destroy one of Vermont's natural wonders - the Telephone Gap region of the GMNF. How can you even consider this? I guess I should not be surprised in an era of mass shooting nearly every day, of indiscriminate bombing of civilians in wars fed by our industry's greed, by the language and dishonesty of politicians, but I am surprised still.

I ask "have we truly come to this?" and I answer "no, we can and shall pull back from the brink and leave this inheritance to my great-grandchildren." This is not a hope; this is a truth born of the greatness of the Adirondack forever wild legacy and the basic goodness I have found everywhere I have ventured in my travels.