

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/19/2024 9:54:39 PM

First name: Kevin

Last name: Shea

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom it may concern,

One of my first memories is my mother showing me how to recognize a Doug fir cone by the little tails emerging from beneath the cone scales. I grew up in northwestern Montana. The child of a FS employee and a Stillwater State Forest employee I was raised in the woods near Columbia Falls Montana. It was a mill town during my childhood, and the surrounding territory was owned by Plum Creek and then Weyerhaeuser. My childhood memories are filled with rides in skidders, learning to mark plots the old school way with map and compass & watching my best friends' family move in with his grandparents after the mill closed and it seemed like the whole town lost their jobs.

The timber industry has supported both my family and the communities of Montana I've called home. I understand the industry and understand what is at stake. Yet I was raised in the forest, and it is there where I really feel at home. A stand of huge tamaracks with a carpet of fallen yellow needles during hunting season. The mist in the cedars and firs in the Lochsa- Selway making the world feel like a dream. Sun breaking through a thick spruce canopy lighting up an explosion of green bracken and moss. These are the places my parents brought me as a child to hunt, fish, and berry pick. These are the places I want to bring my children. We are surrounded by timber land here in northwest Montana that is privately owned and frequently harvested. Though Weyerhaeuser let's us hunt and hike on their land we usually don't. I always prefer the older more intact portions of forest with its huge trees and vast array of plants and animals at their feet and within their branches. It is because of these places I remain in Montana.

Please save old growth sections of forest and don't thin to the minimum allowable trees to keep it old growth. Please let mature sections remain unlogged so they can become old growth. Please stop giving contracts to those that log for fire mitigation in a way that leaves forests practically clear cut & with slash piles that, once burned, leave a dead spot for years. There are enough clear cuts and poorly managed timber plots on private lands. Please keep our public lands a place that we can take our children to hunt, hike and learn to recognize the little tails of a Douglas fir cone.

Thank you for your time and your work on the public lands I cherish,

Kevin Shea