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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Our Northwest forests are more than just trees-they are living, breathing treasures that define this place we call home. They give us beauty, oxygen, shelter, serenity. They fight climate change, cradle wildlife, and hold the stories of generations. Everyone who has walked beneath their towering canopies has felt their magic in some way. I know I have-many times.

When each of our grandchildren turned two, we began taking them to the woods-camping, hiking, exploring, as much as their little legs could carry them. I watched their faces light up with wonder. One listened, wide-eyed, as we talked about how storms can send mighty trees crashing down-BOOM!-only for them to become nurse logs, cradling new saplings and giving life again. Another was mesmerized by the delicate, silken webs of spiders, spun so perfectly to catch their food. And another, standing on a small wooden bridge, giggled as we dropped leaves into the stream and raced to the other side to watch them float away. These are not just passing moments. They are the quiet, powerful lessons of the forest-the lessons that teach our children about resilience, connection, and the magic of the natural world.

Every child deserves to walk among the giants, to listen to the hush of the wind through ancient branches, to stand in awe of something bigger than themselves. But places like these are vanishing. And once they're gone, they're gone. We are incredibly fortunate to have them still. We must protect them-not as an afterthought, but as if they are our family. Because in so many ways, they are. They give us life.

And then, there's this-one of my favorite (and funniest) memories. Years ago, I had the bright idea to cycle the McKenzie River Trail. On the way up, our shuttle-mates swapped stories about how "technical" the trail could get. My husband shot me a look, but I was undeterred. The woods were calling. The morning light filtered through the firs, the trail started soft and welcoming. Perfect. Then-miles in-the path narrowed. The terrain turned ruthless. Pine needles gave way to roots and rocks and sheer drop-offs. An hour later, exasperated and humbled, I threw my bike into a clearing, arms crossed, pride bruised. My husband? Oh, he was laughing-kindly, of course. We bike-packed out, rode down the tree-lined highway, and found ourselves at Belknap, sipping the best lemonade on Earth.

These forests have given us everything-wonder, adventure, resilience, laughter. They have nurtured our children and grandchildren, tested our limits, and gifted us moments we'll tell for years. But they cannot protect themselves. If we do not fight for them, they will disappear. And with them, the stories, the lessons, the quiet miracles of old-growth giants.

Please, do not make it easier to deplete these habitats-these climate warriors, these oxygen-makers, these storytellers. Once they're gone, we don't get them back.