

Suzy Foss

From: Abraham Whiting [whitabra@isu.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, September 25, 2012 6:12 PM
To: Suzy Foss
Subject: Logging in the Bitterroot.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Tim Whiting. I was born and raised in Stevensville.

I recently heard that there is some argument going on about logging in the bitterroot, and I wanted to include my opinion.

In 2005 I moved to Idaho for school. Now that I've finished my program, I would love to come back, but I can't trust the Montana, and especially the Bitterroot, economy.

Out of my graduating class, I believe only 5 or 10 were able to remain in the valley, with the rest of us having to leave just to find work.

Our family was directly supported by the logging industry, as my dad sold slab firewood that we obtained from the log home plants up and down the valley. I remember counting 23 of them when we were driving from Missoula to Darby one day. He also had an equipment rental and repair business.

After logging was taken out of the bitterroot, the log home plants started to close, and his supply for slab wood went with it.

You could also see the change in his equipment business. As logging related jobs dried up, his customers either had to tighten their belts and couldn't afford to have their tractors and related equipment repaired, or many left the area entirely.

Without a stable industry backing the local economy, the Bitterroot Valley has turned into an area entirely dependant on tourism and being a bedroom community for Missoula. Neither of these are healthy options. The Bitterroot Valley needs a strong, stable economy so that those that grew up there can afford to remain there, and so that our children aren't forced to leave, just to find work.

I am hoping you can do the right thing to once again strengthen the economy in the Bitterroot. I personally believe that responsibly run, sustainable logging, would be a positive way to do that. And then maybe I can have the confidence to be able to move back.

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