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Hello,

Growing up in Michigan all I could talk about was Montana. My parents would say "you don't even know where that's at" toy musket in hand and coon skin cap upon my head I would reply through a toothless grin "It doesn't matter there are mountains there" Sure, Michigan has some remote and beautiful places but nothing could compare to the Wild West I thought. This would be my opinion of Montana throughout the years as I grew up as I traded my coon skin cap for many different hats.

In 2011 I started a new job and my employer was looking for volunteers to head to Montana and start up a new operation. My hand shot up so fast that my manager could barely get out the word "Monta-" and so it was I secured my ticket west.

From 2011-2015 I explored only a small fraction of what Montana had to offer from the rolling grasslands of Glasgow MT to the rugged peaks of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. It's a strange feeling living a quarter of your life and never feeling like you had a home, but in Montana I had found my home. In 2015 I was notified that I would be transferred to Washington D.C. I distinctly remember sitting in a Arby's in Bozeman staring at the Bridger mountains out of the corner booth window. "I'll be back" I vowed.

Between 2015-2017 I would spend all of my vacation time in Montana, from backpacking trips in the Beartooth, to hunting trips in the crazies. I couldn't stay away. I would dream about the distinct smell of the river bottoms or the feeling of the rising sun on my face as I emerged from my tent at some undisclosed alpine lake. It wasn't until 2017 that I finally made my way back to Montana and picked the town of Bozeman to reside. I was shocked by how much the town had grown since my absence. I guess the secret is out and the city is continuing to grow at an amazing rate.

Now that I have taken enough of your time setting up my story I would like to discuss the importance of keeping Montana what Montana was for me as a child. I can't help but be bothered by all of the development in this state. Montana's greatest gift to the people of this country isn't all the land available for houses, it's all the land and water that's available for young men and women to explore, fish, hike, and hunt. I always said there is no greater babysitter than Montana, we need wild places to inspire and nurture future generations. The wildlife that inhabit these amazing places also need this resource. If we continue to take we won't get it back! Why not set these projects in motion and secure these amazing places, so future generations will know the feeling of wrestling a cutthroat where the only sound to be heard is not of busting traffic but the "wizzz" as drag is taken on a fly rod, so that they know the diminutive feeling of being on a backpacking trip and not seeing a single soul, and the feeling of reward when they make it back safely to the truck.

I came across a quote from an unknown author the other day and I would like to share it with you. "We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children." Hopefully this resonates with you as much as it did with me.

In closing: I would like to thank you for all your hard work and dedication you do and continue to do to keep OUR forests wild.

"Leave it as it is. You cannot improve on it. The ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it." - Theodore Roosevelt

Respectively,

-Dustin