

T h e D a i l y **Evergreen**

Keep the wilderness wild
Enjoy nature and preserve it for the future

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The Daily Evergreen

Published: 07/08/2007 5:06pm

It is always refreshing to get away from civilization for a while. That's why, with a few extra days off work over the Fourth of July holiday, it was nice to go backpacking. Seeing as few people as possible was a definite goal, and if you're willing to hike a little, it isn't too difficult. Plus, getting outside to hike, swim, and relax was an excellent change from the normal weekend activities around Pullman.

My first Fourth without fireworks proved to be anything but lackluster. It might have been a day late, but nature provided her own show with a spectacular thunderstorm that moved in over the densely wooded river valley walls late in the evening. The lightning and thunder rolled out as quickly as it came, but nevertheless left me with an image I won't soon forget.

It sounds romantic, I know, but if more people experienced the natural world from which we evolved, we would not have the stresses and problems of today that come with working indoors and thus become detached from something so inherent in us all. Additionally, if more people had a passion for a certain spot of wilderness — a certain campsite, a certain natural wonder perhaps — more would be willing to fight to keep those areas wild.

As highlighted in an article in the July/August 2007 edition of Mother Jones magazine, those wild areas are increasingly coming under attack. Especially in the west, where urban sprawl and its box-like strip malls threaten to take over every inch of land within city limits, attacks on the development-free areas is a serious matter.

According to Mother Jones, proponents of opening up wilderness areas, national parks, and pristine areas of national forests are citing and attempting to revive an ancient statute, passed in 1866 during the Civil War to open up the west for settlement.

Revised Statute 2477 gives rights to people over public lands wherever there are "highways," which are now being broadly defined as any path, trail, or wagon track. Where there are roads, the public is permitted to go, so says the law.

But we don't have the right to go anywhere we damn well please, right? Certain areas of the country should remain pristine, free of development, roads, and ATVs. Certain areas should remain as the Wilderness Act 1964 stated, where "man is only a visitor..

Granted, it is difficult to keep areas untouched when the “manifest destiny” mentality that the United States was founded with still persists today. Unfortunately, we live in a time where we can no longer think solely about the present. We must realize the consequences of our actions for the future generations.

We will leave a lasting negative legacy and very little for our children if we try and manipulate the laws to allow roads into wilderness areas.