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Maine Woods National Park Would Help Protect Our Future as a Species

We often place emphasis on plants and wildlife, but we need this preserve more than they do.

WHITEFIELD - With all the recent news about the proposed Maine Woods National Park there remains one aspect that has yet to be discussed thoroughly and is literally the heart and soul of the proposed park: the ecological impact.

The proposed 3.2 million-acre park is situated in the 10 million-acre heart of Maine's Great North Woods, which stands as the greatest undeveloped, unprotected and delicate ecosystem east of the Rockies.

Evidence of the fragility of this ecosystem and the urgency for preserving it is emphasized in a report by the Endangered Species Coalition. The group, which highlights ecosystems that are "hotspots" for threatened and endangered species, mentions Maine's Great North Woods. The proposed Maine Woods National Park would provide wildlife habitat for moose, black bear, brook trout and a number of endangered species such as the Canada lynx.

People are fearful of change; it's inherent. Fear often is a result of simply not understanding the facts, the scope and benefits of a situation.

There are several things we should truly fear as it relates to the proposed Maine Woods National Park, including: the loss of our state's abundant beauty, which would negatively impact the tourism industry; subdivision, sprawl and real-estate development that will result in the loss of land access; and the spraying of toxic herbicides and pesticides that would pollute clean waters and threaten life.

There remains one more fear that should scare the heck out of all of us, more than any other fear stated herein. This fear dismisses all the other fears, because they won't even matter. We, as a species should fear for our lives.

We need to remember that we, too, are a species. We live alongside wildlife. If other species are suffering -- and we know they are from all the reports, statistics and studies that are done -- then we are suffering too.

So, fear for your life, the lives of your children and grandchildren and the lives of all species if we don't protect land, habitat, waterways and more.

PPH Opinion

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thomas Mark Szelog of Whitefield is co-founder of the Maine Woods National Park Photo-Documentation Project and a recipient of the Philip-Hyde Award, presented annually to a photographer who is working to improve the condition of the natural environment through photography. (www.mainewoodsnationalpark.com)

We deserve a healthy planet and the future of all species, human and otherwise, depends on it. We simply cannot afford not to preserve and protect vast ecosystems that still exist in areas such as Maine's Great North Woods.

Like any good business person and successful company, we must be visionaries and think about what's best long term for our earth and all species.

We need to remember that progress is not always about building the newest, most high-tech building, equipment, or device. Sometimes progress means preserving those things that don't need to be improved, such as nature, wildlife and the Earth itself.

Creating the Maine Woods National Park is about our future as humans, in Maine, New England, the nation and worldwide. We are not the only creatures living on this planet.

It's our obligation as the superior species to have the foresight, compassion and passion to protect what we have left of our natural world, of which we are a part. Otherwise it will result in our own destruction.

Roxanne Quimby has graciously and generously offered 70,000 acres of her own land for the establishment of the Maine Woods National Park. This gift is a start to what can be an even greater gift.

Large mammals such as bear, moose and Canada lynx need wide, expansive areas in which to survive and thrive, so we need to be steadfast to a long-term vision and goal of protecting the additional 3.1 million acres that remain after Roxanne's contribution.

It is a goal that can be achieved, thanks to the start Quimby is willing to give it. As a society we need the courage, acumen and selflessness to make it a reality. Do we want Maine's Great North Woods to live or die at the hands of man?

Our environment needs to be saved one ecosystem at a time. As Maine residents, we have an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate true leadership and contribute to saving our Earth, its precious resources, and all species by working together and setting forth a long-term vision and plan through the creation of the 3.2 million-acre Maine Woods National Park.

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