From Will Craven from ForestEthics addressing our two questions:

1) Has Forest Ethics had any dialogue with the USPS or does Forest Ethics have any thoughts about how this will affect the USPS?

2) What will be the criteria to determine what is considered "junk mail"?

To the question of whether or not we can refer them to any dialogue between us and the USPS, the answer is that we have had conversations with local letter carriers in the San Francisco Bay, but have not had productive discussions with the higher-ups at the USPS.

The US Postal clearly needs to reinvent itself to meet the communications needs of citizens in the 21st century. Their customers are telling them that they're no longer willing to accept the junk mail status quo. Like any other business, the USPS will only alienate customers by continuing to force upon them precisely what they don't want.

The USPS will likely face a reckoning on its business plan before there is any Do Not Mail Registry in existence. Since 2005, junk mail has been the majority of what they're delivering, and they've been struggling since. The way things are going — the institution lost a whopping $3.8 billion last year – major changes will have to be instituted before we ever see a state-level Do Not Mail Registry. The USPS lost $5.1 billion in 2007, $2.8 billion in 2008, and $3.8 billion in 2009. Is a non-existent Do Not Mail Registry really their greatest threat?

What would we be helpful as we begin to figure out how to rescue and reform the Postal Service, is to hear from citizens what they find unsatisfying about the mail experience. Junk mail is at the top of the list. So let's pass this resolution to further incentivize reform that doesn't perpetuate the nonsensical circulation of paper waste, from production to taxpayer-funded disposal.

One idea we've floated frequently is that the USPS should own and operate a national Do Not Mail Registry. Americans would likely trust them to safeguard consumer choice, and the USPS could generate revenue by selling lists of people who want direct mail to businesses, as well as by penalizing mailers who mail those on the Do Not Mail list.

As for question #2, we're open to a variety of viewpoints on the scope of a registry. We've wanted to remain open regarding the contours of any actual bill so as to include all interested parties in the negotiation. For example, a certain place might want to exempt local businesses with an X mile radius. Likewise, mail from a business with which a resident has an active business relationship (defined perhaps as having purchased something within the last, for example, 36 months) might be exempt. There are a lot of ways this could work.

What we want to give Americans is some measure of control over something which they currently have no control over. This likely means that "junk mail" would end up being defined as unsolicited commercial mail.

What a resolution would do now is start the conversation on these contours, and on what a registry would actually look like. This resolution states the citizen demand for a solution, and from there, a solution can be devised.

For better or for worse, political, religious, and nonprofit speech would most likely be exempt, as they have stronger First Amendment protections than commercial speech. Many efforts to restrict mail in the past have been struck down by courts for trying to restrict these types of speech.