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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I appreciate all the work FSDA has undertaken to prepare the Draft Plan and I offer my comments for your review.

I have lived in Paonia, CO since 2002 and enjoy weekly outings in the GMUG area. I support the efforts of Western Slope Conservation Center and other organizations which work to protect our public lands. I am an avid downhill skier at Powderhorn Ski Resort and I also snowshoe on Grand Mesa. I hike in the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison area Spring through Fall. Some of my favorite hiking trails are Crag Crest, West Bench, Rim View, Lake of the Woods, Erickson Springs-Dark Canyon, Lost Lake, Beckwith Pass, Throughline #860, and Crater Lake. I enjoy seeing birds and other wildlife on these hikes. I was especially excited to see a Three-toed Woodpecker on the Rim View Trail last summer and a family of moose (male, female and calf) near Crater Lake on September 7 of this year. I love driving through the forests of the GMUG areas, especially Grand Mesa, Kebler Pass and Stevens Gulch. Being in these areas rejuvenates my spirit for work, community and personal relationships.

TIMBER-SUITABILITY: The Draft Plan's analysis of timber-suitability is unacceptable. The GMUG is much more valuable for conserving biological diversity and recreation than it could ever be for timber production. I ask FSDA remove areas greater than 40 percent slope from the suitable timber base to protect watershed. All critical habitats for Gunnison Sage Grouse should be removed from the timber-suitable lands.

AT RISK SPECIES: The Forest Service needs to protect at-risk species, notably the Bighorn Sheep which are vulnerable to disease passed from livestock and habitat fragmentation. Disease transmission from domestic sheep to bighorns is considered one of the biggest threats to continued health of Colorado's bighorn sheep herds.

CLIMATE CHANGE: This is an area of extreme concern to me. Even though I have reached an age where I may never personally be greatly affected by climate change, I have grave concerns for our future generations. The Draft Plan's objective to identify climate change refugia over a 10-year timeline is not soon enough given the speed at which the Earth is warming and the climate is changing. The Plan needs to protect these areas, not just monitor them.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS: I strongly support Wildlife Management Areas and Special Management Areas in Alternative DE with additional protections for wildlife. I ask FSDA to protect wildlife in the GMUG area.

WATERSHEDS: I ask FSDA to prioritize additional protection to watersheds and water resources that supply municipal or agricultural water, habitat for aquatic species, and wetlands. The Plan should include specific plan components to reduce road density and should limit road density in Riparian Management Zones.

OBJECTIONS TO ALTERNATIVE B: I am opposed to this alternative because it contains too much emphasis on timber production and too little protection of wilderness with no Special Management Areas recommendations.

SUPPORT FOR ALTERNATIVE D: I strongly support Alternative D with additions from the Community Conservation proposal. I support the recommended 261,000 acres for wilderness which includes all of Gunnison County-recommended areas and areas the GMUG evaluated as highly-qualified for wilderness.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments for the GMUG Plan Revision.