

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/27/2021 1:10:51 AM

First name: Jesse

Last name: Dudley

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To the GMUG Forest Planning Team:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I am a local hunter, fisherman, forager, skier, rafter, mountain biker, firefighter, forest wanderer, landscape appreciator, father. My family is nourished by the elk, deer, turkey, grouse, fish and mushrooms harvested from the wild corners of the GMUG, and we are kept warm in the winter by firewood cut from GMUG lands. I have lived in the midst of GMUG lands for 8 years, and it has been my office as a wildland firefighter for the last 3 years. I am both a trails advocate and a trailless/roadless and wilderness area advocate, a pragmatist and a lover of wild places. Most of my weekends are spent exploring a new part of the GMUG. I am a member of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and Great Old Broads for Wilderness. But as I watch the demographic trends in the GMUG and the explosion of recreation this draft plan must address, I am most concerned for the wild places, the wild habitats so necessary to regional wildlife populations and those of us who appreciate solitude and foot travel.

Once these places are changed due to trail development, they are changed for the long-term. And as our existing trails and roads see more intensive use, they have more and more of an impact on our wildlife's ability to use available habitat. Habitat fragmentation and disturbance from trail building is a hard problem for the general public to appreciate, but one that is well documented in the scientific literature and already affecting our deer and elk populations. High trail densities cause good habitat to go unused, thereby reducing the carrying capacity of the landscape. As this is my chief concern for this coming Forest Plan period, I strongly support the inclusion of the Wildlife Management Areas identified in Alternative B. It is critical that forest managers listen to CPW biologists and their expertise in this field and use this information to manage recreation strategically in order to have the minimum impact on our wildlife populations. What is good for deer and elk is also good for all other "non-game" wildlife. To this end, I also support the limiting of permanent routes in WMAs to less than 1 linear mile per square mile, the decommissioning of redundant and unneeded routes, and the protection of big game migration routes, winter range, and security habitat. These WMAs will make good management by forest officials much more straightforward and consistent in the future by identifying areas with the highest priority wildlife values on the front end. Habitat connectivity and bighorn sheep protection should also be a high priority in the final plan.

I support all of the official comments from the Colorado Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers as well as Great Old Broads for Wilderness and will not repeat all of them here.

Additionally, I would like to see the Goat Creek area of the Lone Cone included in the WMAs there, as it is very high quality elk habitat, as I can attest from personal experience. I am not sure why it was excluded.

Thank you for all your hard work on this plan, I believe it has the potential to be a great road map to a future GMUG that conserves its qualities that we most love and value as it sees more use, and to make sure that we do not "love it to death".

Respectfully,

Jesse Dudley