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United States Forest Service

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| 2250 South Main Street | 970-874-6600 |
| Delta, CO 81416-2485 |  |

Re: Forest Plan Revision/Dark Sky Designation

To Whom It May Concern:

Because of light pollution, it is estimated that 80% of the North American population cannot witness the Milky Way galaxy. We are very fortunate in this area to have the incredible night skies of the Gunnison and Uncompahgre National Forests where we can view not only the Milky Way but so many other wonders of our universe.

I wish to propose that the Forest Service take measures to preserve this natural (and national) treasure. **The International Dark Sky Association provides a way to preserve and protect the night time environment and our heritage of dark skies. The options of designation by the International Dark Sky Association are a dark sky park, a dark sky sanctuary, or a dark sky reserve.**

**I am currently with others from Lake City, Creede, and South Fork to have our region receive dark sky designation. Obviously, since most of land around is National Forest, having the Forest Service’s support and cooperation on this endeavor would be critical to make this designation a reality.**

**For your reference, the Sawtooth National Forest in central Idaho is currently working on a Dark Sky Reserve designation. An example of their proposal is:**

**“A Dark Sky Reserve is essentially an area that possesses an outstanding and protected nighttime skyscape.  More information can be found at** [**http://darksky.org**](http://darksky.org)**.  Proponents of the Dark Sky Reserve are initiating the project to promote stargazing tourism and to protect the well-being of nocturnal wildlife species.  While the designation of the reserve would not impose any regulations on property or land owners, it does strongly encourage those within the reserve to follow lighting guidelines as highlighted on darksky.org.”**

**I am available to visit further with Forest Service representatives on this idea. In the meantime, I hope that the Forest Service will include this proposal for dark sky designation in the upcoming Forest Plan Revision.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Phillip H. Virden**