Gunnison

Public Lands Initiative

Working Group for Public Lands Initial Report

June 2017

Table of Contents

Photo: Tony Prendergast

Photo: Hilary Henry

Photo: Ben Breslauer

Acknowledgements

Working Group Members

Kevin Alexander, Trout Unlimited
Email: mountainsintorivers@gmail.com
Ben Breslauer, Gunnison O.H.V. Alliance of Trailriders (GOATS)
Email: gunnycbgoats@gmail.com
Bruce Allen, Gunnison County Stockgrowers Association
Email: brucecurtisallen@gmail.com
Dave Wiens/John Chandler, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association
Email: dave@cbmba.org
Hilary Henry/Maddie Rehn, Gunnison Public Lands Initiative
Email: maddie@gunnisonpubliclands.com
Frank Kugel, Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District
Email: fkugel@ugrwcd.org
Terry Peterson, Gunnison County Sno Trackers
Email: doveoffice@dovegraphics.net
Tony Prendergast, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Email: tony.prendergast@me.com
Matt Reed, High Country Conservation Advocates
Email: matt@hccacb.org
Jeff Widen/Scott Miller, The Wilderness Society
Email: jeff_widen@tws.org
Email: scott_miller@tws.org
Dave Wiens/Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails
Email: info@gunnisontrails.org

Ex-Officio

Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Commissioner
Email: jhouck@gunnisoncounty.org
John Whitney, Office of Senator Michael Bennet
Email: john_whitne@bennet.senate.gov

Facilitator

Marsha Porter-Norton

Note taking

Maddie Rehn - WSCU Masters of Environmental Management Program

Coordinator

Hilary Henry and Maddie Rehn - Gunnison Public Lands Initiative

Fiscal Management

Western State Colorado University Masters of Environmental Management

Funding

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association, Gunnison Trails, High Country Conservation Advocates, The Wilderness Society, Trout Unlimited, Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District

Meeting Space

Gunnison County

Gunnison Working Group for Public Lands

Top row (l-r): Dave Wiens, Gunnison Trails; Bruce Allen, Gunnison Stockgrowers Association; Sandy Shea, High Country Conservation Advocates; Terry Peterson, Gunnison Sno-Trackers; Ben Breslauer, Gunnison O.H.V. Alliance of Trailriders (GOATs); Tim Kugler (sitting in for John Chandler), Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association; John Whitney, Office of Senator Michael Bennet; Frank Kugel, Upper Gunnison River Watershed Conservancy District

Bottom row (l-r): Tony Prendergast, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers; Maddie Rehn, Gunnison Public Lands Initiative; Jeff Widen, The Wilderness Society; Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Commissioner; Marsha Porter-Norton, Facilitator; Kevin Alexander, Trout Unlimited; Hilary Henry, Gunnison Public Lands Initiative

Report written by Hilary Henry and Maddie Rehn with editing from Marsha Porter-Norton and all members of the Working Group. Released June 2017.

Cover Photos: (Clockwise from top): Mason Cummings - The Wilderness Society, Hilary Henry, Ben Breslauer, Hilary Henry.

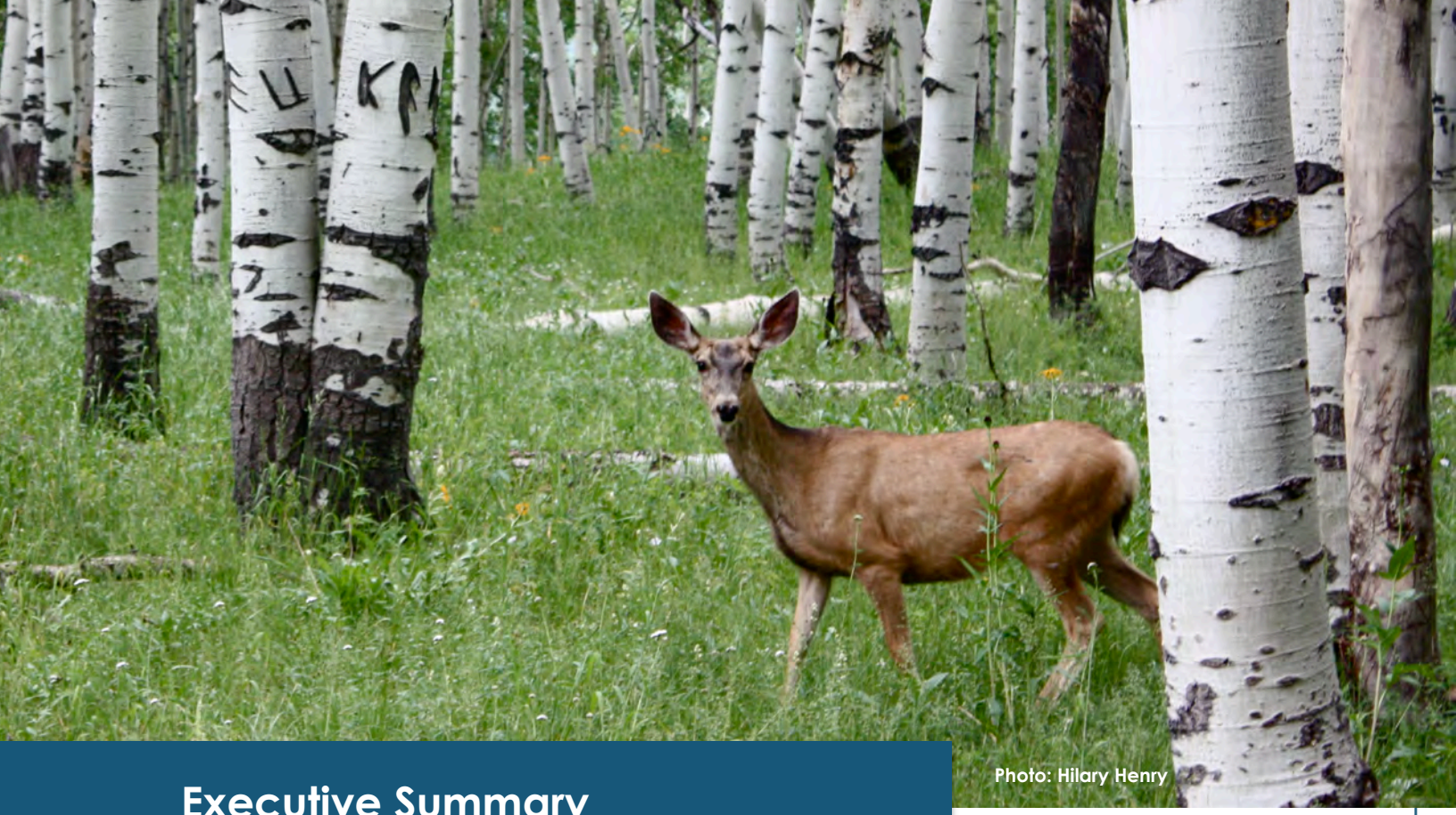


Photo: Hilary Henry

Executive Summary

The Gunnison Working Group for Public Lands ('the Working Group') is a coalition of stakeholders that spent seventeen months, from February 2016 to June 2017, working to find common ground on public land protection measures in portions of Gunnison County. Its recommendations seek to best serve our community's economy, environment, and quality-of-life into the future.

The Working Group is made of stakeholders from eleven community groups, the Gunnison Board of County Commissioners, and Senator Michael Bennet's office. Interests represented on the Working Group include ranching, water resources, motorized use, conservation, mountain biking, hunting and angling.

The Working Group's proposal is the culmination of conversations that have been occurring in the county over the past five years. We have met monthly for over a year, with the help of a professional facilitator, to discuss how best to protect important public land values in Gunnison County. The Working Group, now called the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative, is presenting an initial proposal to the communities of Gunnison County for discussion and vetting.

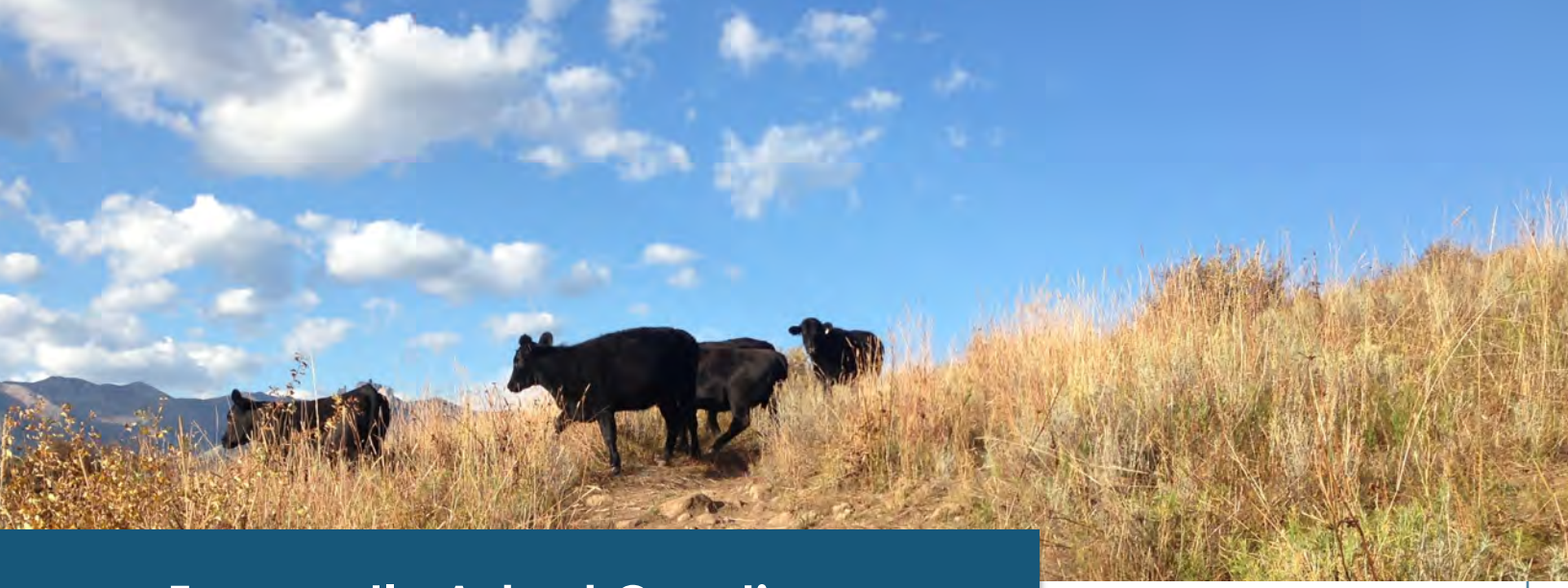
Our initial proposal represents many hours of work understanding current on-the-ground uses of our public lands and extensive collaboration to find solutions that could be supported by all group members.

Every organization participating in the process made compromises to craft a proposal

that could be supported by this diverse member group. The goal of the coalition is to protect public lands, enhance a strong and sustainable economy, and support historic uses of public lands. To accomplish this goal the GPLI aims to create a successful designation that enjoys broad support, is technically sound, and best serves the community. This community proposal reflects the common ground among all of the working group members.

The GPLI has proposed that key public lands in Gunnison County be protected as wilderness or special management areas. By using a range of designations, they were able to conserve a broad set of lands for recreation, water, grazing, science, wildlife, and other values.

Photo: Mitch Warnick



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Gunnison Working Group for Public Lands?

The Gunnison Working Group for Public Lands ('the Working Group') is a coalition of stakeholders that is proactively considering how to help guide the management of key public lands in portions of Gunnison County for our economy, environment, and quality of life into the future.

Why did it form?

The Working Group formed in response to ongoing efforts to protect and manage public lands in Gunnison County. The goal of the Working Group is to create a long-term vision for the future of the Gunnison County landscape.

The stakeholders of the Gunnison Working Group for Public Lands recognized the need for a robust community conversation that included a broad range of voices about the future of public lands in Gunnison County.

Who are the members of the Working Group?

The Working Group included stakeholders from eleven community groups, the Gunnison Board of County Commissioners, and Senator Michael Bennet's office. Now known as the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI), interests represented include ranching, water resources, motorized use, conservation, mountain biking, hunting and angling. Specific organizations with representatives on the GPLI coalition are Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association, Gunnison County Stockgrowers, Gunnison County Sno Trackers, Gunnison Public Lands Initiative, Gunnison Trails, Gunnison Valley O.H.V. Alliance of Trailriders (GOATs), High Country Conservation Advocates, The Wilderness Society, Trout Unlimited, and Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District.

When joining the Working Group these representatives agreed to reach out to other organizations and individuals to ensure that their feedback was included in the process.

Members were tasked with thinking about public lands holistically, and from a community perspective, while also ensuring that their user groups were represented.

What was the Working Group's goal?

The goal of the Working Group was to create a successful legislative proposal for public land designation that enjoys broad support, is technically sound, and best serves the community and the general public into the future.

How did they make decisions?

The Working Group made all its recommendations and decisions by consensus, meaning that all members of the group support the work in this proposal and the overall package of recommendations made. The Working Group meetings took place monthly for more than a year, and each meeting was open to the public.

What are the proposal recommendations?

The Working Group recommends that key public lands Gunnison County with exceptional recreational, wildlife, natural, grazing, scenic, scientific and water values be permanently protected. They use multiple types of permanent public land protection tools, including wilderness and special management areas.

The proposal:

- Does not close any roads or trails that are currently open, existing trail uses would remain essentially the same.
- Allows future trail projects to be considered for construction through agency review from the BLM and Forest Service.
- Does not affect popular over the snow riding areas.
- Protects quiet use in areas with high ecological value.
- Ensures that current ranching operations and water use can continue.
- Protects critical habitat for species such as mule deer and elk, while providing flexibility for habitat restoration projects for species such as bighorn sheep and Gunnison sage-grouse.

What is a special management area? What is wilderness?

Special management areas (SMAs) provide permanent legislative direction for special management of public lands to protect and provide for important conservation, recreation, and scientific values and uses. For example, SMAs can be designated to provide outstanding opportunities for a particular suite of recreational activities that helps to

avoid conflicts between users. SMAs can also focus on the conservation of rare species or critical habitat, for example.

Wilderness is the most protective designation of national public lands, ensuring that certain public lands will remain undeveloped and natural. Wilderness provides outstanding habitat for wildlife, some of the best opportunities for hunting and fishing, strong watershed protections, and excellent backcountry recreation. Motorized, mechanized, and industrial uses are restricted in wilderness. Detailed information regarding wilderness law and policy is available at: www.wilderness.net.

By using special management areas and wilderness, the Working Group was able to protect a greater variety of lands for water, wildlife, recreation, and other important values and uses.

What are some reasons to protect public lands?

Gunnison County is growing and changing. Healthy public lands are critical for sustaining our strong economy, high-quality of life, ranching heritage, excellent recreational opportunities, abundant wildlife, clean air and water, incredible views, and intact landscapes.

How will this proposal impact recreation on public lands? Will any roads or trails be closed?

No roads or trails will be closed by the GPLI proposal. Existing trail use will remain essentially the same, and proposed trails will still have the opportunity to be built if approved by the land management agencies. Popular over-the-snow recreation areas will remain open, and quiet use will be preserved in areas that have high natural values.

How will this proposal impact water and ranching?

The Working Group recognizes the value of our water resources and local ranches in Gunnison County. The areas proposed for protection in the GPLI, including wilderness and special management areas, will be subject to all valid existing rights. All aspects of the proposal honor existing grazing permits, water rights and supporting facilities such as stock ponds, ditches and other permitted special uses, valid mining rights, outfitter and guide permits, and other existing infrastructure.

The Working Group intends that any future legislation stemming from this proposal would include the Congressional Grazing Guidelines, which clearly state that "there shall be no curtailment of grazing permits or privileges in an area simply because it is designated as wilderness." These guidelines assure ranchers that their ability to graze and maintain their supporting facilities (e.g., head gates, ditches, stock tanks, and fences) will be protected – including water rights. The Working Group supports local ranching operations and has been careful to protect this use in the proposal.

How will this proposal address issues like overuse, trail and travel management, grazing management, or permitting for outfitters?

While these are important management issues for public lands, the Working Group focused specifically on the permanent protection of key public lands in Gunnison County. The proposed designations will help focus management on key public lands for important recreational, cultural, natural, scientific, grazing and other values, but issues such as overuse, trail and travel management, grazing management, permitting for outfitters, and other land management decisions will continue to be addressed through the agencies' land management planning processes based on public participation and appropriate analyses.

Grazing, outfitting permits, trail maintenance, and many other activities will continue in all of the areas proposed for designation.

What does "Considered for Special Management Area and/or Wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities" mean?

There are several potential areas for designation identified in the report as "Considered for Special Management Area and/or Wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities". These areas were recognized as key public lands in Gunnison County, but the Working Group acknowledges the need to have a more in-depth conversation with regional stakeholders to fully understand on-the-ground conditions, appropriate boundaries and suitable designations.

How can I get involved in the GPLI or submit comment on the initial proposal?

The GPLI has released this proposal after months of discussion, hard-won compromises, and extensive research into Gunnison County public lands. This initial proposal is a reflection of that work, but also an invitation to the community to provide the GPLI with feedback.

If you want to get involved or have feedback on this proposal, please reach out to any member of the coalition or email your thoughts to info@gunnisonpubliclands.org, or visit www.gunnisonpubliclands.org/provide-feedback.

What are the next steps for this proposal?

The GPLI plans to collect feedback on this proposal from community members, local organizations, and state legislators throughout the summer of 2017. They will discuss any proposed revisions to the proposal in the fall. Eventually, the GPLI hopes to pass legislation, reflective of this proposal and the community's wishes.

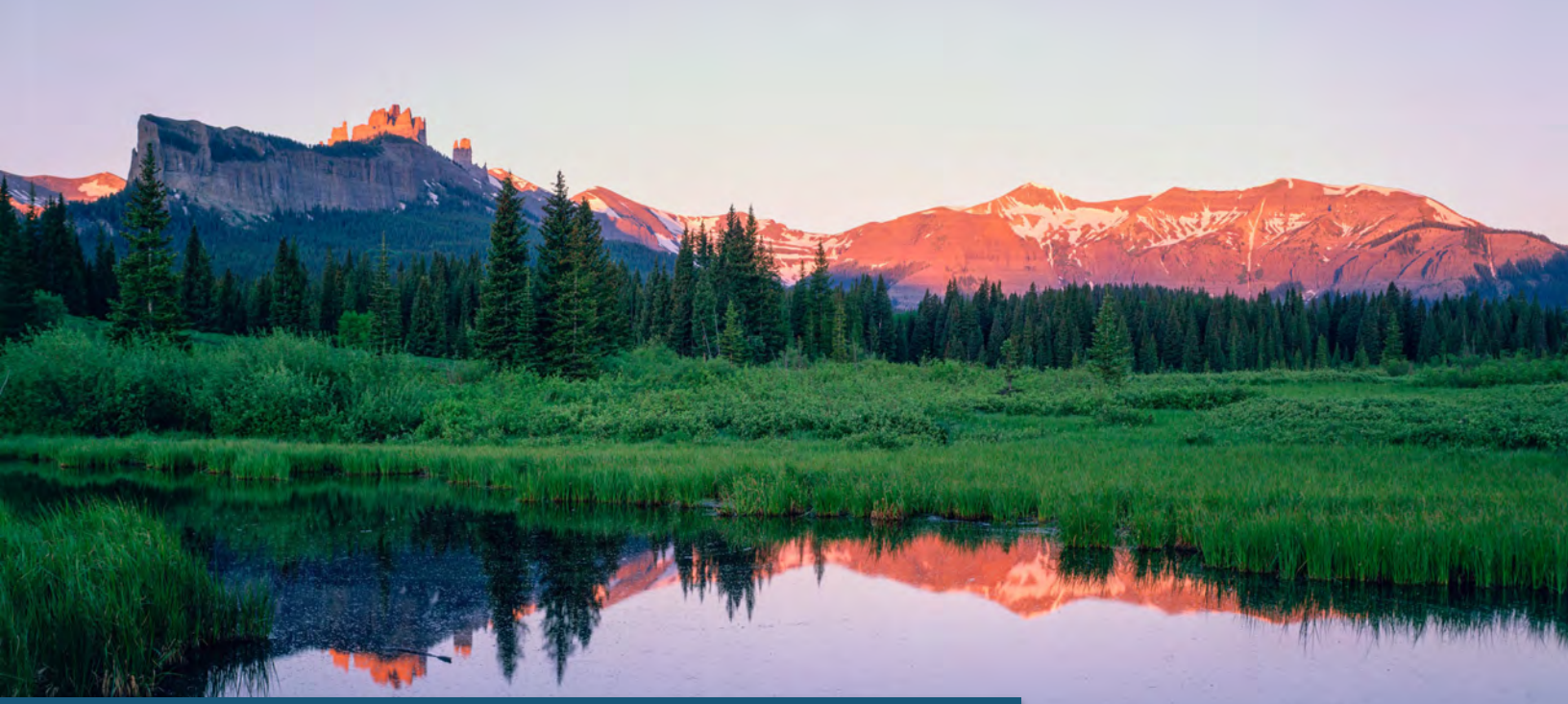


Photo: John Fielder

About Gunnison County

Located in the Central Rocky Mountains on the Western Slope of Colorado, Gunnison County is home to over 15,000 people. With a several municipalities ranging in size from 1,000 to 6,000 residents, Gunnison County is a true Western landscape.[1] Snow packed mountains give way to the rushing waters, including the Gunnison River – one of the major tributaries of the Colorado River. These rivers supply water for drinking, environmental, commercial, cultural, and recreational uses.[2] Elevations range from 7,500 feet to 14,000 feet, with the landscape changing from sagebrush scrublands to high alpine tundra.

Image: http://www.worldatlas.com/na/us/co/c-gunnison-county-colorado.html

[1] The United States Census Bureau. Gunnison Colorado. Available at: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/08051

[2] Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District. "The Gunnison River Basin – A Handbook for Inhabitants" Available at: http://ugrwcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/GB-Handbook-2013.pdf

Gunnison County covers 2.1 million acres, and of that 1.7 million are federal public lands owned by all Americans. The United States Forest Service manages 1.3 million acres of this public land and the Bureau of Land Management manages an additional 353,454 acres. In addition, the National Park Service holds over 32,000 acres of land.[3] Collectively these federal public lands account for 82% of the land ownership in Gunnison County.

The County has three major hubs, Mt. Crested Butte, Crested Butte, and Gunnison – which is the County seat. Gunnison County is also home to the smaller towns of Marble, Pitkin, Ohio City, and Somerset. Residents and visitors value maintaining open space for the protection of scenery, wildlife habitat, the areas' rich ranching heritage, and world-class recreation opportunities.[4]

About the Working Group

The Gunnison Working Group for Public Lands met seventeen times between February 2016 and June 2017 to craft a proposal, based on consensus, for public lands in Gunnison County. Recognizing the need for a robust, collaborative conversation about public lands protection, the Gunnison Board of County Commissioners convened the Gunnison Working Group for Public Lands ("the Working Group"). The Working Group met monthly to discuss a public lands proposal that would protect community values, take into account the various needs of user groups, and provide long-lasting stability to important public lands in the Gunnison County landscape. This report is the product of those conversations.

The Working Group is the outgrowth of conversations that have been occurring for the past five years about concerns about the future of public lands in Gunnison County. In 2012, Senator Bennet listened to local groups' interests in the future of public lands. The Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI) — a collaborative initially comprising the Crested Butte Mountain Biking Association, Gunnison Trails, High Country Conservation Advocates, the International Mountain Biking Association, and The Wilderness Society — Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, and Trout Unlimited submitted proposals for potential public lands protections to Senator Bennet's office in 2014. The Gunnison County Sno Trackers and the Gunnison O.H.V. Alliance of Trailriders (GOATs) submitted feedback on the GPLI proposal.
The Gunnison Board of County Commissioners, along with Senator Michael Bennet's

---

[3] The One Valley Prosperity Project. "State of Valley Report" Available at: http://www.onevalleyprosperity.com/document/state-valley-report

[4] Gunnison County. "Gunnison County Economic Indicators Report". August 2014: Available at: http://www.gunnisoncounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/3453

Office, recognized the value in encouraging the community to work together to create a single proposal that would be representative of the entire community's vision for the future of the County's public lands. To expand the community conversation, the Working Group formed and was tasked with creating a single, consensus proposal that combined and found compromise between the three original proposals and previously submitted comments. This report is the result of the Working Group's efforts over the past sixteen months to find consensus on a unified community proposal.

While there are many forms of protections for public lands, the Working Group was solely focused on congressional-level designations for key public lands in portions of the Gunnison County landscape. There are two primary types of congressional designations: Wilderness and Special Management Areas (SMAs). Wilderness is a congressional designation that permanently protects the 'untrammeled' nature of undeveloped public lands. Wilderness designation is the highest form of protection and prohibits new mining and oil and gas drilling, while restricting commercial timber harvest (except when needed for insect or fire management, e.g.) and motorized and mechanized use. SMAs permanently protect public lands for a variety of uses and values, but also typically prevent new road building and mineral development. They can be tailored to allow a wider variety of recreational uses, or to focus management on particular uses or values, such as wildlife or watershed protection. More information about wilderness and special management areas can be found in the 'Frequently Asked Questions' section.

Both wilderness and SMAs require an Act of Congress and serve as permanent guidelines for land use. The group discussed these two tools in the context of all values, including economic, traditional, ecological, scientific, and the full range of recreational uses. The Working Group felt it was important to discuss these high-level protections, because they give the community an opportunity to envision what they want for the future of Gunnison public lands. These are broad-scale designations that are best for establishing the baseline conditions necessary to preserve the integrity of the landscape for generations to come, based on the interests of many different user groups. The Working Group considered questions like: Are there areas on our landscape that are unsuitable for industrial uses? Are there places that should be preserved without roads? Are there locations that have outstanding habitat or rare species that should be managed for wildlife? Should some places be restricted to future development of some forms of recreation? How can we best protect our public lands while also protecting grazing, water development, and other traditional uses of our public lands?

The Working Group did not address travel management, overuse, dispersed camping, grazing allotments, trail and campsite maintenance, or permitting issues. These are complex and ever-changing issues that require a level of detail that is beyond the scope of Wilderness and special management area designations and is best left to the federal land management agencies' processes. Citizens interested in these issues should consider reaching out to the BLM and Forest Service to see how they can participate in the upcoming Grand Mesa- Uncompahgre- Gunnison Forest Plan (USFS) and the Gunnison Office Resource Management Plan (BLM) revisions.

Ground Rules and Decision-Making

The Gunnison Working Group for Public Lands was convened by the Gunnison Board of County Commissioners, with the help of Senator Michael Bennet's Office. These two bodies invited select Gunnison County community members to attend based on their leadership with public lands interest groups. Many more public lands leaders and interest groups are present in the Gunnison Valley than were part of the Working Group. The Working Group was designed to be a small forum, representative of public lands interests, including recreation, grazing, water, environmental, and economic interests. Working Group members were asked to speak to the larger interest they represented, not solely their own user group. The Working Group realizes that its work is a start to a larger community conversation about public lands.

The Working Group hired a professional facilitator from Durango, Colorado, to coordinate meetings and ensure that all voices were heard.

At its first meeting, the Working Group agreed to the following ground rules for all of its discussions:

- Only one person speaks at a time.
- Respect all opinions even if you do not agree with them; do express your opinions.
- Focus on solutions, not positions.
- Be prepared and show up ready to go.
- Be punctual.
- Maintain strong communication with group members and organizations/community members outside of the Working Group.

They also agreed that they would operate on consensus. The group abided by the following principles of consensus:

- All voices are heard and considered.
- Differences of opinion are natural and expected.
- The group works in good faith to reach a decision that they can support.
- Group members do not have to like every aspect of every decision, but they must support the overall decisions of the group.

Roles of the Working Group

In its first few meetings, the Working Group approved the following group roles.

Member of the Group

Responsible for attending meetings preparing ahead of time, participating in good faith, and reporting back to their groups/constituencies. Members will agree to participate in respectful dialogue following the ground rules set by the group and will seek to find solutions that meet the needs of a diversity of interests. Members can contribute funding at any level but that is a not a requirement to participate.

Ex Officio Members

This role is reserved for any Government entity that participates who may choose to be an advisor in an "Ex Officio" role. This is a non-voting role.

Community Stakeholders

Groups and citizens throughout the community and broader publics will be consulted and included in this process. The public lands bill will need widespread community support from all affected stakeholders to be successful.

Convener of the Process

The convener of the process is Gunnison County. This does not obligate the County to any position. The County is in a role of bringing the interests together and calling the meeting(s).

Funds Administrator

The Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI) is responsible for raising the funding and finalizing the contract with the facilitator and note taker, for handling logistics, and reviewing invoices and paying bills. GPLI is also a Member of the Group.

Fiscal Agent

Western State Colorado University (WSCU): The GPLI utilizes Western State Colorado University as their fiscal agent and has an agreement in place with GPLI for this project. WSCU is the actual place where the funds are housed. Western will have no influence in the outcomes of the group.

Policy

US Senator Michael Bennet. The role of Senator Bennet is to carry forward the community's wishes if and when it is appropriate.

Facilitator

Marsha Porter-Norton. Her role is to moderate the process, be neutral, provide consultation and assistance about group process steps, and to help the group with the discussion(s). Ms. Porter-Norton will also help secure information the Work Group requests with help from members and others, and working within the budget.

Goal of the Working Group

After an initial discussion of the issues at stake with a public lands proposal, the Working Group approved a goals statement to guide their decision-making. The goals statement reads as follows:

Knowing that Gunnison County is growing and changing rapidly, the Gunnison Working Group for Public Lands (the 'Working Group') is proactively considering how to protect public lands in order to sustain our economy, environment, and quality of life in Gunnison County into the future.

The goal of the Working Group is to create a successful legislative proposal for public land designation that enjoys broad support, is technically sound, and best serves the community and the general public into the future.

The Working Group is guided by the following principles:

- Appropriate balance between the wilderness, recreational, wildlife, ecological, economic, cultural, and scenic values of public lands
- Support for a strong, sustainable economy in Gunnison County
- Respect for historic uses of public lands
- Use of the best available science and all relevant information
- Desire to find workable solutions for all interests

Working Group Process

The Working Group used a process with three phases to reach the recommendations reached in this report.

Phase One - The Sweep and Research

The Working Group reviewed all of the areas that had been originally proposed by Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Trout Unlimited, and the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative. They compared the areas and designation recommendations made in each proposal.

The Working Group paid particular attention to discuss the issues, desires, and concerns each member saw with areas proposed for designation. As not all Working Group members submitted proposals prior to the start of the working group, particular attention

was paid to ensure that the entire group understood their ideas for the proposal areas, as well as the Gunnison County landscape as a whole. These discussions were recorded in the meeting minutes and in a "Discussion Tracking" document.

During this process, the Working Group used digital maps with various 'layers', including topography, roads, water structures, and existing and proposed trails amongst others. The Working Group also discussed information about the location of wildlife and sensitive species, and reviewed scientific articles on wildlife/recreation interactions.

At the end of the sweep, the Working Group crafted the goals statement.

Phase Two – Consensus Building on Individual Areas

After identifying the primary issues, opportunities, desires, and concerns in the sweep, the Working Group began to make decisions about what they would recommend for designation for each area that had been initially proposed. Options they discussed for recommendation included no designation, a designation as originally proposed by BHA, TU, or GPLI, or a designation with changes from the original proposal. In several cases, the Working Group discussed proposal areas that were not included in the original proposal.

Using consensus-decision making, the Working Group made a recommendation for each proposal area, using the following process steps.

1. Quick review of the area including the map.
2. Review information requests from the 'sweep' and discuss any new information.
3. Review everyone's interests.
4. Brainstorm proposals and compromises. List them. Discuss them.
5. Review a list of goals or desired aims for each area. Examples could be: protect big game habitat; ensure winter recreation; keep opportunity open for a specific trail; retain Gold Medal Trout fishery; ensure grazers have access to their allotments, etc.

Knowing that some proposal areas would have a greater level of agreement than others, the Working Group categorized potential proposals according to the level of agreement amongst the groups. Three categorizes were used to gauge and record the group's thoughts on various proposals. The categories were:

> *Category 1*: We have full consensus on this proposal.
> *Category 2:* We have achieved a relative high level of agreement but minor adjustments need to be made.
> *Category 3:* We were not able to reach any agreement on this area. We suggest a next step as being [X].

This system was used to gauge and record the group's thoughts on various proposals. Oftentimes, the process described above and categories were used iteratively, with pro-

posal areas being put in Category 3 the first time they were discussed and slowly moving up to Category 1, as changes were made and they were discussed again at subsequent meetings.

Phase Three - Initial Recommendation Package

After discussing each area individually, making a recommendation, and ensuring the group agreed that all areas in the proposal - beyond the identified areas in the 'to be vetted' category - had consensus, the Working Group spent several meetings discussing its recommendations as a final package.

The Working Group addressed outstanding concerns, looked at the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal as a whole, and finalized its recommendation. During this time, each group talked to their membership, with maps. With the support of their membership, each of the Working Group members agreed to the proposal package.

The Working Group also agreed that moving forward all organizations would collaborate and together be a coalition under the name Gunnison Public Lands Initiative.

The initial recommendations for the package are on page 39.

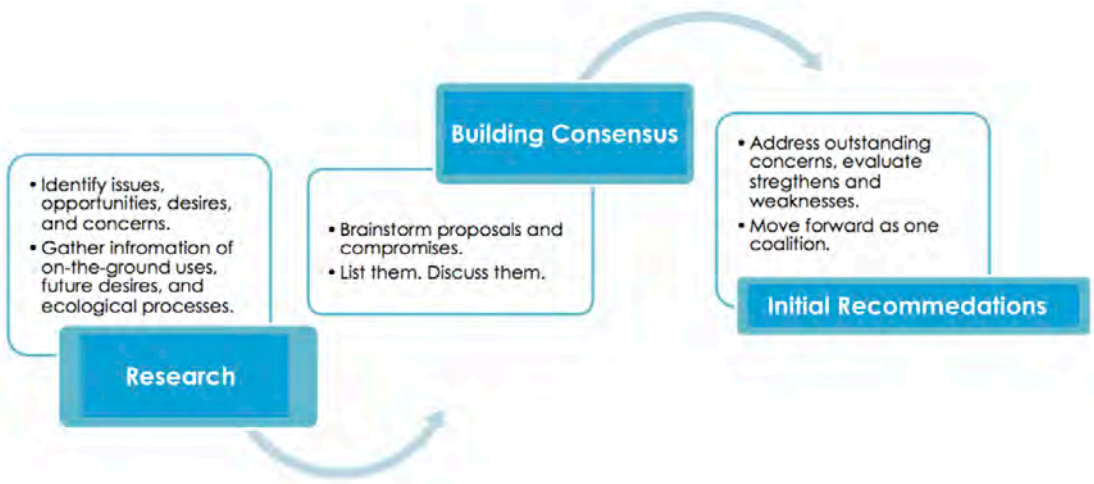



Photo: Hilary Henry

Reasons for Protection

The Gunnison Working Group for Public Lands formed to discuss the future of key public lands in Gunnison County. Gunnison County is the fifth largest county in Colorado, and more than 80% of the lands within county lines are publicly owned. The United States Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and National Park Service (NPS) manage lands in Gunnison County.

Gunnison County is growing and changing. By the year 2050, the State Demographer predicts our population will have grown to over 23,000, an almost 50% increase from the 2015 population. The State of Colorado's population will increase even more greatly in the same time period, growing almost 70% to over 8.5 million.[5]

This increase in population in Colorado will likely correspond with greater tourist visitation and greater variety of users coming to recreate in Gunnison County. While the Town of Crested Butte only has a year-round population of only 1,500, a popular trailhead outside of town receives approximately 50,000 visits between May 15th and September 15th.[6] This can be an economic boost, but can have unintended consequences to the land. We are already starting this shift.

---

[5] Colorado Department of Local Affairs. 'Population Totals for Colorado Counties'. Available online: https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/population/population-totals-counties/#population-totals-for-colorado-counties

[6] U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Gunnison Field Office. 'Oh-Be-Joyful Campground Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act Site Business Plan'. Available online: https://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/co/field_offices/gunnison_field_office/homepage.Par.31211.File.dat/Oh%20Be%20Joyful%20REA%20-%20%20Fee%20Demo%20Site%20Business%20Plan_WO_Final_2_16.pdf

The Gunnison Basin has been identified as one of the state's largest and most important potential conservation areas, in part because it hosts the world's largest remaining habitat and population of Gunnison sage-grouse. We also have exceptional habitat for big game and some of the state's most productive game units.[7] The streams in Gunnison County are habitat for the globally rare Colorado River cutthroat trout.[8] For these and many other species, it is important to protect habitat, especially in the face of a changing climate.

Ranching, an early industry of the Gunnison Valley, continues to play an important role in the local economy, culture, and landscape. With the industry's close ties to public lands, there needs to be thoughtful consideration to ensure ranching remains viable and feasible. Extractive uses, including timber, natural gas, and coal exist on some lands within the County, and protecting sensitive lands from development helps to protect clean air, water, recreation, and other values.

The Working Group was tasked with thinking about a long-term vision for public lands. They discussed what they value about our natural landscape currently and what they hope for the future. While the Working Group members had different priorities on public lands, particularly for the type, location, and amount of recreational use, they also found areas of common ground.

Generally, the Working Group agreed that they valued the backcountry feel of our landscape. The Working Group also felt that some lands should remain undeveloped — without roads, natural gas, commercial timber cutting, or mining. Protecting existing ranching and water use were also priorities for the Working Group.

In cases where Working Group members felt that there were conflicting values on public lands (such as the desire to retain unfragmented wildlife habitat and the desire to build trails), they did their best to balance these values. Attempts to balance uses included making protections for some areas more stringent, while providing more relaxed guidelines on others, and making allowances in the proposed legislation so that the land management agencies could make decisions about use at a later date.

Some of the reasons the Working Group discussed for protecting public lands are listed in the following pages.

---

[7] Colorado Parks and Wildlife. "Herd Management Plan". Available online: http://cpw.state.co.us/thingstodo/Pages/HerdManagementPlans.aspx

[8] Colorado State University, Colorado Natural Heritage Program. " CNHP Potential Conservation Areas and Reports Page'. Available online: http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/download/gis/pca_reports.asp

Recreation

Gunnison County is known for its highly accessible and world-class recreation. The landscape supports a broad variety of recreational uses including horseback riding, dirt biking, mountain biking, hiking, backcountry skiing, snowmobiling, and many more. Motorized, mechanized, and quiet recreation all attract large numbers of local users and visitors to the valley.

Outdoor recreation, and the health and quality-of-life benefits it provides, are often a primary reason why people choose to live in Gunnison County. Gunnison County residents have lower rates of hypertension and obesity than the state of Colorado as a whole. Ninety-five percent (95%) of Gunnison County residents have opportunities to exercise.[9]

Recreation also fuels our economy, with outdoor recreation businesses lining the downtowns of Gunnison and Crested Butte, and tourists choosing to visit our county for the opportunity to explore our public lands. On a statewide level, outdoor recreation is a significant economic driver. Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) recreation was estimated to generate $914 million in direct sales in 2014-2015.[10] Commercial river rafting accounted for a statewide economic impact of $160 million in 2014.[11] Biking at Colorado ski areas brings in revenue between $141 and $913 million during the summer season.[12]

According to new report released in February 2017, Gunnison has the highest fishing economic impact - including retail sales, salaries, jobs and tax revenues - of any Congressional district in the state.[13] On BLM lands alone in Colorado, $275 million in total direct spending is produced from quiet recreation visits within 50 miles of recreation sites. And Colorado is the leading state in the nation with a ski industry that generates $4.8 billion in annual economic impact to the state economy.[14]

---

[9] Gunnison County 'State of the Valley Report". Available online: http://www.onevalleyprosperity.com/document/state-valley-report

[10] Pinyon Environmental. 'Economic Contribution of Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation in Colorado'. Available online: http://www.coloradotpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/2014-15Season-OHV_Study-ExecSummary.pdf

[11] Colorado River Outfitters Association. 'Commericial River Use in the State of Colorado 1988-2014, Year End Report. Available online: http://www.croa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/2014-Commercial-Rafting-Use-Report.pdf

[12] Colorado Department of Transportation. "Economic Impact of Bicycling in Colorado". Available online: https://www.codot.gov/programs/bikeped/building-a-bike-ped-friendly-community/bike-walk-study/executive-summary/execsum2.pdf/view

[13] Southwick Associates. "Economic Contributions of Recreational Fishing: U.S. Congressional Districts:. Available online: http://asafishing.org/wp-content/uploads/ASA-Congressional-District-Fishing-Impacts-Report-115th-Congress.pdf

[14] Colorado Ski Country USA. 'Economic Study Reveals Ski Industry's $4.8 Billion Annual Impact to Colorado'. Available online: http://coloradoski.com/media_manager/mm_collections/view/183

Most of this outdoor recreation takes place on public lands and waters.

Figure 1: Outdoor Industry Association calculations for the economic contributions from outdoor recreation in the state of Colorado. [15]

In 2014, over 70% of Coloradans said that long-term management and planning was a high or essential priority for public recreation lands.[16]

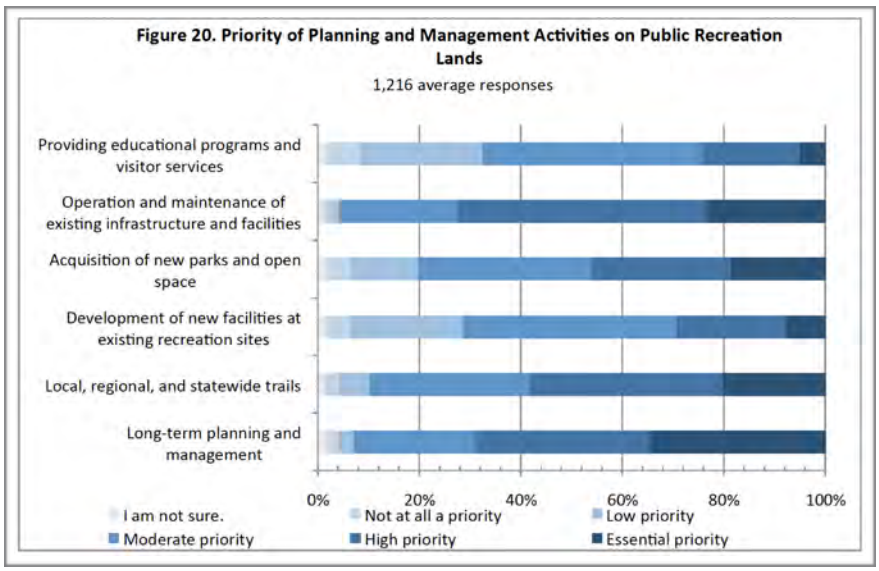


Figure 2: Data from the 2014 Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan - a statewide partnership led by Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

[15] Outdoor Industry Association. Colorado Outdoor Recreation Economy Report. Available online: https://outdoorindustry.org/state/colorado/

[16] Colorado Parks and Wildlife. "The 2014 Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan". Available online: http://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/Trails/SCORP/SCORPOnlineReport.pdf

No matter the user group, Gunnison County's outdoor recreation is unique, not only because its large extent and variety, but also because of our immediate access to intact, backcountry terrain.

Working group members with a primary interest of biking desired these goals in the recommendations:

- Utilize local groups' trail master plans in planning the Working Group's proposal.
- Strengthen the local economy through trail use by many types of trail users, including hiking and mechanized uses.
- Honor critical seasonal areas for wildlife, recognizing that outside of these seasons, the need to protect an area with more restrictive tools likely diminishes.
- Encourage responsible trail development and work to ensure priority future trail opportunities.

Working Group members with a primary interest of motorized use desired these goals in the recommendations:

- Ensure areas are kept open for motorized use.
- Relieve congestion at trailheads and in other heavily used areas of the county.
- Strengthen the local economy through motorized recreation uses.

Working Group members with a primary interest of quiet use desired these goals in the recommendations:

- Protect areas that currently experience primarily quiet use.
- Ensure that future recreation growth does not threaten current quiet use.
- Protect the public lands that have wilderness characteristics: natural, undeveloped, outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.
- Provide for future human psychological needs that include preserving opportunities for solitude and for connection with natural landscapes.

Local information on recreation used by the Working Group:

- Existing roads and trails and their uses, according to the 2010 Travel Management Plan.
- Proposed trails from Gunnison Trails and the Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association.
- Locations of over-the-snow use from the Sno-Trackers and GOATS.
- Information on quiet use from the Friends Hut and Silent Tracks.
- Best available science on wildlife/recreation interactions.

Hunting and Angling

Big-game thrives in Gunnison County with some of the most productive Game Management Units (GMUs) in the state.[17] Gunnison County has been called a sportsman's paradise, with extensive, intact backcountry habitat and gold-medal waters on the Taylor and Gunnison River.

The quantity and quality of wintering habitat is the primary limitation to productive and sustainable populations of mule deer and elk. Mule deer populations, especially, are currently below population objectives. While natural winter die-offs in 1999, 2008, and 2017 are the driving factor behind the low population, unfragmented winter habitat is critical to the long-term resiliency of big game populations.[16] The Working Group has proposed protecting some of these lands, particularly as winter range in Gunnison County tends to be near roads and towns, making it more susceptible to development pressures.

The cold, clean streams of Gunnison County are also home to numerous populations of native Colorado River cutthroat trout, including ten conservation populations. Keeping streams remote and free from development is critical to the future health of these trout.

Hunters and anglers provide significant economic contributions to Gunnison County. In 2014, fishing and hunting combined contributed $6.1 billion to the Colorado economy.[18]

Working Group members with a primary interest in hunting and angling desired these goals in the recommendations:

- Protect productive and intact public lands that support stream and terrestrial wildlife populations - both game and non-game species including Gunnison sage-grouse.
- Conserve quality habitat for all species in both winter and summer ranges.
- Promote quiet uses.
- Strengthen the local economy through angling and hunting uses and activities.
- Consider wildlife as an existing use of the land.

Local information on hunting and angling used by the Working Group:

- Habitat maps for elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, and Colorado River cutthroat trout.
- Best available science on wildlife/recreation interactions.
- Information on proposed habitat improvement and restoration projects from the BLM, USFS, and CPW.

---

[17] Colorado Parks and Wildlife. "Herd Management Plan". Available online: http://cpw.state.co.us/thingstodo/Pages/HerdManagementPlans.aspx

[18] Colorado Parks and Wildlife. '2016 Fact Sheet'. Available online: https://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/About/Reports/StatewideFactSheet.pdf

Ranching

Ranching has a rich heritage in Gunnison County, with the first cattlemen arriving in the late 1800s shortly after the first miners. Some of those early ranching families still work the land in Gunnison County, with five generations or more having raised cattle here.

About two-thirds of Gunnison County's private land – 200,000 acres – is currently used for ranching operations.[19] The County is home to 244 ranches that in 2012 supported a market value $11 million in livestock sales and $1.7 million in crop sales.[20] Surrounding public lands provide additional grazing areas for cattle, helping to keep stockgrowing economically viable. Many of Gunnison County's ranching families have chosen to permanently protect their private lands with conservation easements. In many cases, the Working Group's proposed protections for public lands are adjacent to these conserved lands – creating an opportunity to protect lands from the valley floors to the mountain tops in Gunnison County.

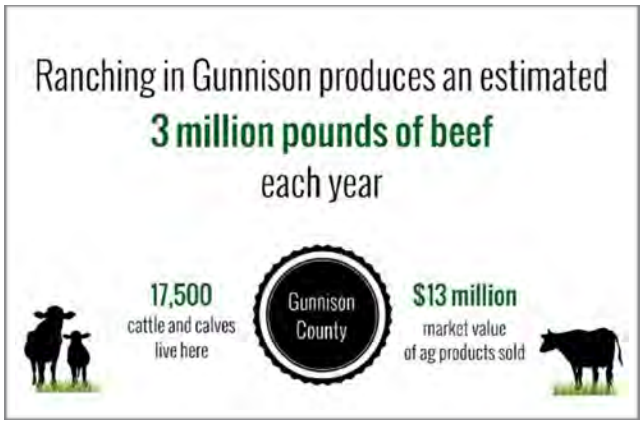


Figure 3: Statistics from Gunnison Valley Ranching.[16]

Sustainable ranching practices can provide significant ecological benefits, including groundwater recharge, watershed filtration, and carbon sequestration. The benefits help provide cleaner air and water for Gunnison County residents.[21] Through best management practices and holistic management, cattle can serve as biological accelerators, kickstarting and keeping biological processes, such as the carbon cycle, in motion. This is important for taking excess carbon out of the atmosphere and storing it in the soil as a

[19] Gunnison Valley Ranching. "Ranching Basics – statistics'. Available online: http://gunnisonvalleyranching.org/statistics.php

[20] U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agriculture Statistics Service. 'County Profile – Gunnison County, Colorado'. Available online: https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Colorado/cp08051.pdf

[21] U.S Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative. 'Sustainable Grazing Lands: Providing a Healthy Environment'. Available online: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1043496.pdf

way to help mitigate climate change. With more carbon in soil, vegetation has better conditions to grow, which helps to keep water in the soil and insulate the land to be more drought resistant.[22]

Ranching in Gunnison County continues to be an important economic and cultural driver.

Working Group members with a primary interest of ranching desired these goals in the recommendations:

- Respect and protect the ranches and the legacy of the industry.
- Ensure that areas can continue to be used for grazing and historical ranching activities.
- Relieve increasing pressure on ranching operations from climate change and increased recreational use.

Local information on ranching used by the Working Group:

- Location of ditches, stock ponds, and reservoirs from the Colorado Division of Natural Resources (DNR) Decision Support Systems.
- The Working Group plans to reach out to the Forest Service and individual ranchers to determine the location of fences or other grazing resources in proposed protected areas to ensure continued access.

[22] National Public Radio. "Cows Save the Planet: Soil Secrets for Saving the Earth'. June 17, 2003. Available at: http://www.npr.org/2013/06/17/191670717/cows-to-the-rescue-soils-secrets-for-saving-the-earth

Habitat

Gunnison County is home to a wide variety of ecosystems – communities of animals and plants that work together. In our county, you can find rolling seas of sagebrush, one of the largest aspen forests in the world, rich forests of spruce and fir trees, and alpine tundra. Continuing to protect the integrity of Colorado's natural landscape is critical to maintain healthy habitats that can support sustainable wildlife populations and ecosystems.

Plants and animals need large tracks of habitat to forage for food, disperse their young, and find mates to breed. Large areas of habitat that are connected across the landscape are much more likely to sustain healthy plant and animal populations than small habitat areas, or habitats that are isolated.[23]

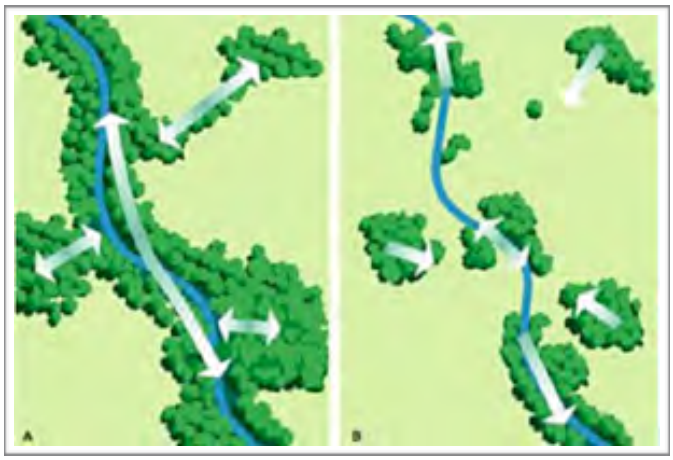


Figure 4: More connectivity means fewer barriers to dispersal or migration.[24]

Gunnison County falls within the greater Southern Rockies Ecoregion stretching roughly 500 miles from southern Wyoming to Northern New Mexico, and extends 250 miles from east to west at its widest point. These landscapes provide habitat for herds of elk, mule deer, mountain lion and black bear. More illusive are the wolverine and lynx, but they also are found in this ecoregion.

By designating areas for no new road development, commercial timber projects or mineral extraction on federal lands in our region we can prevent habitat fragmentation on federal lands. Breaking habitat into small fragments leaves smaller areas that can only support small populations, so large undeveloped lands are critical to ensure healthy populations of wildlife. The GPLI wants to leave a lasting legacy that ensures Colorado's natural resources and critical habitat is protected.

---

[23] Saura, Santiago. "Connectivity as the Amount of Reachable Habitat: Conservation Priorities and the Roles of Habitat Patches in Landscape Networks". Learning Landscape Ecology. April 2017.

[24] Conservation Corridors. "The Science of Corridors". Image from: http://conservationcorridor.org/the-science-of-corridors/

Scientists have high confidence that in the coming two decades a warming climate will affect Gunnison County in numerous ways, including a longer growing season, increased fire frequency and intensity, decrease runoff, snowlines moving up in elevation, and an average annual temperature increase of 2-5 F° warmer.[25] Ecosystems that have formed over hundreds or thousands of years in specific geographic locations will either have to adapt to the new climate in place or move across the landscape as the climate changes.

Best climate change adaptation practices, however, show that protecting large tracts of intact habitat, across elevational gradients, will help our ecosystems adapt to a warming world.[26] Plants and animals, already stressed by climate change, will have a lower likelihood of survival if barriers like roads or industrial development impede their movement across the landscape.[27]

Safeguarding a broad variety of habitats and ecosystems at differing levels of protection improves the likelihood that we will have the conservation measures in place for the ecosystems that need them the most. A portfolio of protected areas increases the chances that wildlife, plants, and communities can adapt and withstand a changing climate.

Working Group members with a primary interest in habitats and ecosystem health desired these goals in the recommendations:

- Utilize the best available science to guide decisions to preserve overall ecosystem health.
- Plan for climate change by incorporating concepts of ecosystem resiliency and precautionary land planning.
- Protect intact habitat and corridors.
- Balance recreation with the protection of intact ecosystems.

Local information on ecology used by the Working Group:

- Maps from the Wilderness Society showing the rate of climate change, wildness, and potential migration corridors in Gunnison County.
- Climate models and best adaptation practices from The Nature Conservancy.

---

[25] Southwest Climate Change Initiative. 'Gunnison Basin Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment for the Gunnison Climate Working Group'. Available online: http://wwa.colorado.edu/publications/reports/TNC-CNHP-WWA-UAF_GunnisonClimChangeVulnAssess_Report_2012.pdf

[26] Groves, et al. "Incorporating climate change into systematic conservation planning". 2011. Biodiversity Conservation. Available online: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10531-012-0269-3

[27] Nunez,et al. "Connectivity Planning to Address Climate Change". 2013. Conservation Biology. Available Online: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cobi.12014/abstract

Sensitive Species

Over two dozen globally and statewide threatened plant and animal species can be found in Gunnison County.[28] These species include the Colorado River cutthroat trout, Gunnison milkvetch, the willow carr, the boreal toad, and the Canada lynx. Gunnison County is also home to the Gunnison sage-grouse, which is listed as 'Threatened' under the Endangered Species Act. For species with small populations, the remaining individual plant and animals become increasingly important. Permanently protecting critical habitat for sensitive species is the best way to ensure their future longevity and the possibility that these species could someday rebound to their former vitality.

Most of the protected lands in Gunnison County, like most of the protected lands in the United States, are located at high elevations. While high elevations often have breathtaking views, they are usually 'rock and ice' habitats with very little species' diversity. Broadening the elevational range of protected lands ensures that a greater number of species are conserved. In Gunnison County, some of our most vulnerable species and habitat are found in the sage-brush ecosystem, an ecosystem that is very poorly protected nationally.[29] Big-game is also found at lower elevations, so protecting mid-elevation habits like sagebrush and aspen, benefits not only our most threatened plants and animals, but also our hunting resources.

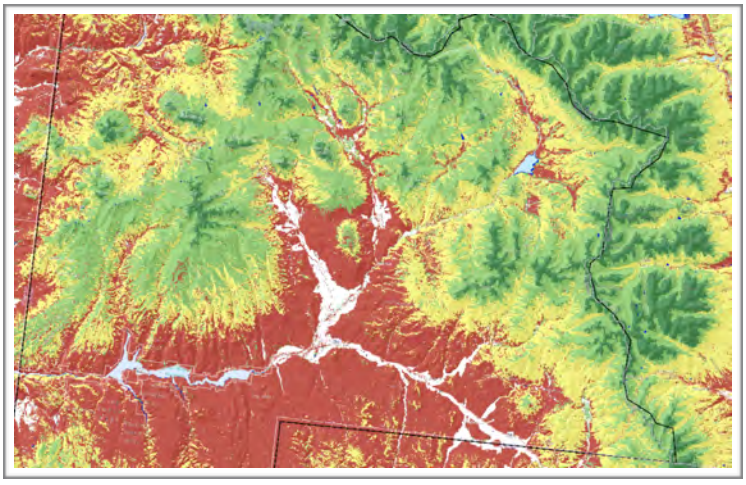


Figure 5: Image from 2015 study "The world's largest wilderness protection network after 50 years: An assessment of ecological system representation in the U.S. National Wilderness Preservation System". [28]

Areas in red are the least represented in the U.S. National Wilderness Preservation System. Areas in Green are the most represented in the United States' National Parks and Wilderness Areas.

---

[28] Colorado State University Natural Heritage Program. "Documents and Reports". Available online: http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/download/reports.aspx

[29] Dietz, et al. "The world's largest wilderness protection network after 50 years: An assessment of ecological system representation in the U.S. National Wilderness Preservation System". 2015. Biological Conservation. Available online: http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320715000944

Working Group members with a primary interest of sensitive species desired these goals in the recommendations:

- Limit development in areas with sensitive species.
- Ensure that a broad range of ecosystems is protected.
- Provide permanent protection for the Gunnison sage-grouse.

Local information on sensitive species used by the Working Group:

- Sensitive species and Potential Conservation Areas (PCAs) from the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP).
- Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA) for the Gunnison sage-grouse.

Scientific Research

Gunnison County's public lands play a critical role in the advancement of science. Through the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory, and in collaboration with Western State Colorado University, local, state, and national agencies, Gunnison County hosts one of the largest gatherings of field biologists. Approximately 150 students and scientists visit from colleges and universities around the world to conduct field research and receive scientific training, most of which occurs on public lands in the Gunnison Basin.

Summer Science Tour – photo from RMBL Archives

A range of federal agencies, including the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, and the National Institutes of Health, collectively spend more than $10 million annually for research that depends at least in part on fieldwork on and around public lands in Gunnison County.

Collectively this research represents one of the nation's largest financial investments in field research conducted in a single region. Because of the infrastructure support for this research, and the value of past research to future research, the importance of Gunnison County to the nation's scientific portfolio is likely to increase.

In addition serving as a platform for discovering biological, hydrological, and geological processes, this research informs our understanding of food security, water quality and quantity, human disease, and air quality. Examples of the impacts of Gunnison Basin research includes informing national policy (e.g., the revision of the Clean Air Act), providing insights into management of natural systems (e.g., national and international pollinator initiatives), sparking the creation of instream flow rights in the State of Colorado, and, as host to the largest collection of long-term studies, providing understanding of a changing world.

While this research is important at the national level, it directly benefits the local com-

munities. Scientists from WSCU and RMBL are involved throughout the county in ensuring that decision-making is informed by the best available science. Scientists are actively involved in discovery and management of endangered species such as the Gunnison sage-grouse and the Uncompahgre Fritillary Butterfly, identification and management of critical and sensitive habitats, water management, and general planning. This research also provides opportunities for the public to engage with the science, including learning about the outdoors. Both RMBL and WSCU provide opportunities for learners at all levels to learn about the outdoors and science.

The value of research in the Gunnison Basin depends upon a portfolio of ecosystem types and land access that ranges from sites that are owned/managed primarily for long-term security of research sites, to sites owned privately by individuals willing to provide access, to research sites on public lands. Research on public lands is managed within the context of multiple use, and depends on thoughtful land management that includes long-term protections for research sites and the landscapes on which they often depend. For these and many other reasons, access to and protection of public lands for scientific research should remain a critical part of of public land management in Gunnison County.

Research site below Gothic Mountain. Photo by Laurel Runcie

All of the Working Group members were interested in ensuring access and protections for scientific research on public lands. They desired these goals in the recommendations:

- Support our local scientific institutions.
- Protect access and long-term protections to research sites.

Water

The Working Group discussed how to best protect both water quality and quantity in its proposal.

For water quantity, the Working Group ensured that all existing water rights structures, such as ditches, stock ponds, and reservoirs, would remain protected and available for use within proposed designations. The Working Group does not intend to impede the existing access of water right holders. By limiting development in certain areas, the Working Group also sought to lessen the potential for any future transmountain diversions from Gunnison County.

Water quality is closely correlated with land use. Intact natural landscapes filter water and slow runoff, cleaning water resources. Industrial activities, like road building, mining, or oil and gas development, can increase pollution, runoff speed, and sedimentation in streams and rivers.[30] Even small roads or trails can drastically change how water spreads across the landscape, and in turn, the health of a region's wetlands. A study from The Wilderness Society in 2012 shows that watersheds in wilderness are about 40% more likely to be highly functioning than watersheds found on other Forest Service lands.[31]

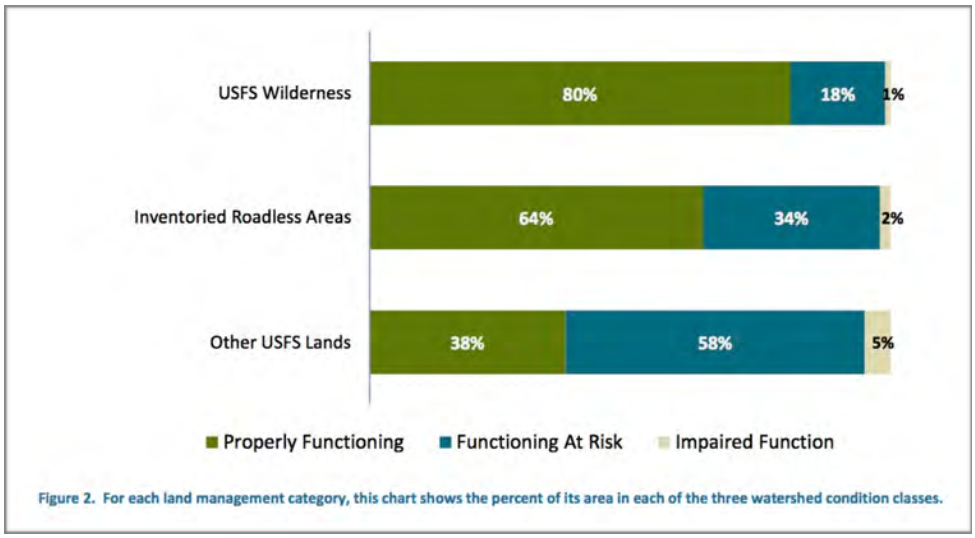


Figure 6: Data from The Wilderness Society white paper "Watershed Health in Wilderness, Roadless, and Roaded Areas of the National Forest System".[24]

[30] The Wilderness Society, 'Watershed Health in Wilderness, Roadless, and Roaded Areas of the National Forest System'. Available here: http://wilderness.org/sites/default/files/wilderness_newsroom_tools-factsheets_forestsandpubliclands_AI_060512_factsheet1.pdf

[31] Ibid.

Gunnison County residents and agricultural operations rely on clean water. A significant portion of the Coal Creek watershed, Crested Butte's source of drinking water, lies within the Working Group's proposal. Gunnison County's headwaters are also critical for downstream ranches. The North Fork Valley, located in Delta County, is one of Colorado's largest producer of organic agriculture and the primary supplier of fresh produce for Gunnison and Crested Butte.

Working Group members with a primary interest of water desired these goals in the recommendations:

- Allow for valid existing rights.
- Consider and honor historic uses.
- Protect access to water and water infrastructure.
- Limit development in sensitive watersheds.

Local information on water resources used by the Working Group:

- Location of ditches, stock ponds, and reservoirs from the Colorado Division of Natural Resources (DNR) Decision Support Systems.
- Information on the Wet Meadows Restoration Project from the USFS, BLM, and Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District.

Economy

A growing body of research shows that protected public lands are good for the economy. Protected public lands provide a high-quality of life through recreation amenities, scenic vistas, and clean air and water. This quality of life allows companies to attract more qualified employees, brings entrepreneurs to the region, and sustains a higher rate of job growth.

In 2011, the Sonoran Institute reported that tourism generates more than $10.9 billion annually for Colorado's economy and supports more than 140,000 jobs. More than 65% of tourists come to Colorado primarily for activities that involve the natural environment.[32]

Headwaters Economics, a non-partisan research group, found that counties with more protected public lands had higher per-capita incomes and job growth than counties without protected public lands. [33]

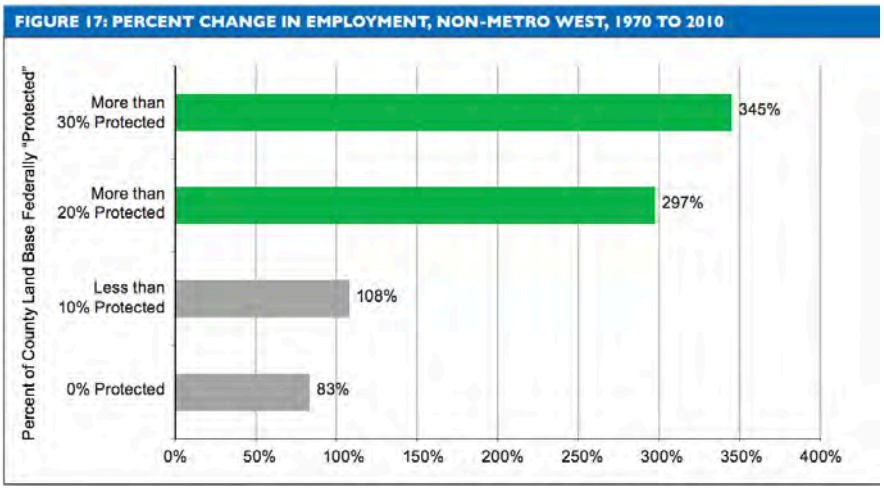


Figure 7: Data from Headwaters Economics "West is Best – How Public Lands in the West Create and Competitive Economic Advantage".[33]

---

32 Sonoran Institute. 'Fact Sheet: Economic Impacts of Land Conservation in Colorado'. Available online: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53973ed8e4b0ac2dcfe3932c/t/5436d09de4b069a3cabb5132/1412878493795/Sonoran+Institute+2011.pdf

33 Headwaters Economics. 'West is Best – How Public Lands in the West Create and Competitive Economic Advantage'. Available online: http://headwaterseconomics.org/wp-content/uploads/West_Is_Best_Full_Report.pdf

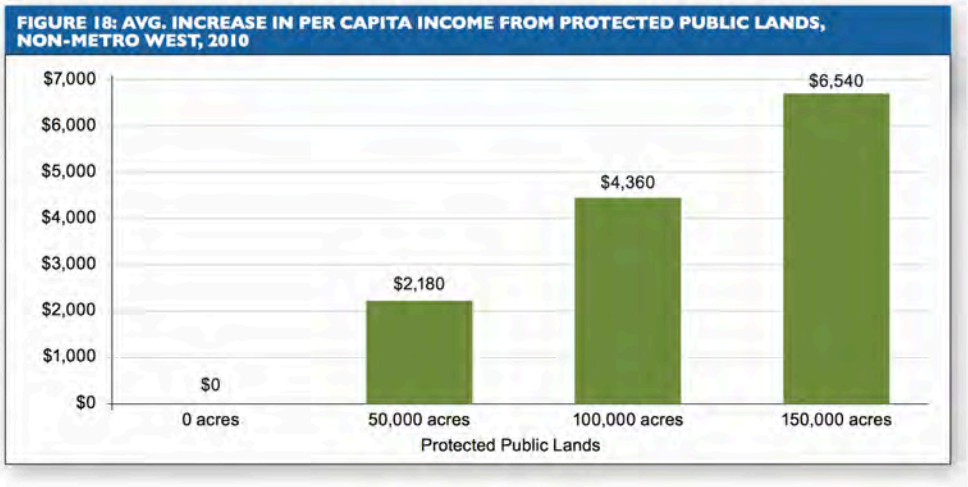


Figure 8: Data from Headwaters Economics "West is Best – How Public Lands in the West Create and Competitive Economic Advantage".[33]

All of the Working Group members were interested in ensuring that Gunnison County's economy remained vibrant for future generations. They desired these goals in the recommendations:

- Support a thriving business culture.
- Protect the natural resources and amenities that draw high-quality businesses and workers to our county.
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of Gunnison County's outdoor recreation economy.

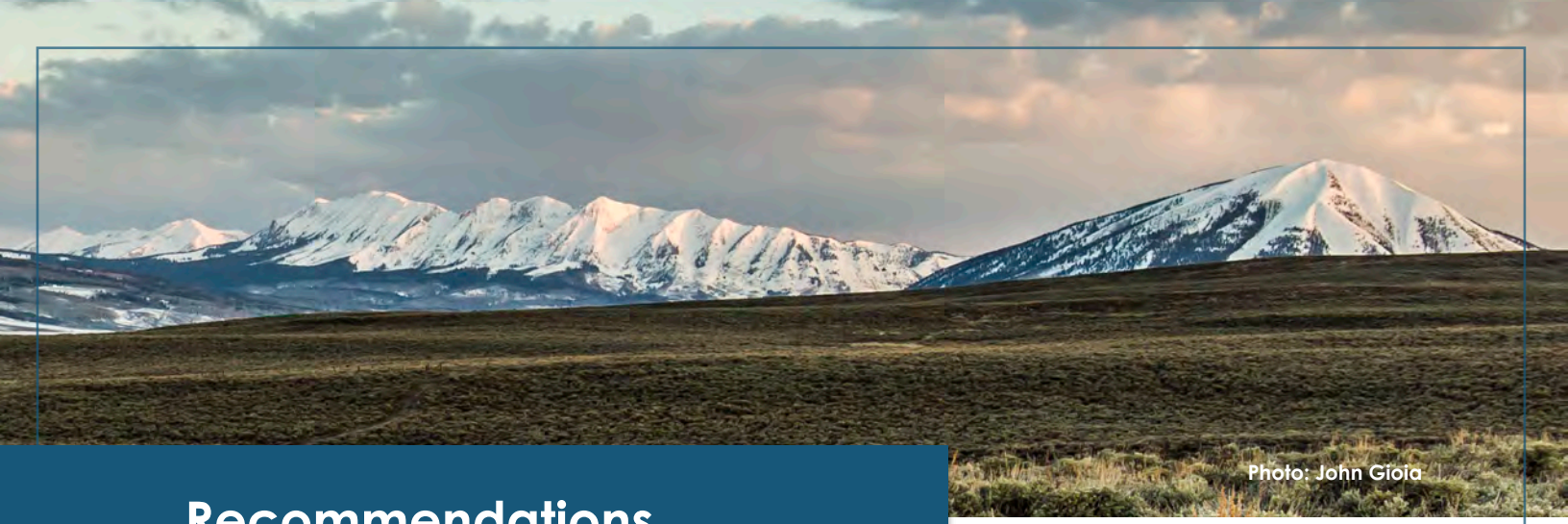


Photo: John Gioia

Recommendations

The Working Group made recommendations for key public lands in Gunnison County that they felt deserving of protection. These recommendations reflect sixteen months of work learning about Gunnison County's public lands, discussing potential options for their permanent protection, hard-won compromises, and agreements between Working Group members.

The goal of the group was to work together to create a true community proposal that reflects a range of community values including mountain biking, motorized recreation, ranching, conservation, science, water resources, and hunting and angling. These recommendations are designed as a community proposal reflects the common ground between all of the Working Group members.

The Working Group's recommendations will be refined to accurately reflect on-the-ground conditions and boundaries. The Working Group recognizes that additional work may be needed to ensure that the boundaries of some of these areas are correctly drawn. They will conduct an extensive public outreach process beginning in Summer 2017.

Their outreach will also include also consulting with nearby communities on any recommendation categorized as "Considered for SMA and/or wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities". The working group identified these areas for potential protection, but felt they needed a more in-depth conversation to fully understand on-the-ground conditions, appropriate boundaries and suitable designations.

This proposal is meant to give the community a carefully vetted idea of what public lands legislation could like for Gunnison County and to invite feedback on these initial recommendations.

The working group's recommendations:

- Do not close any roads or trails that are currently open, existing trail uses would remain essentially the same.
- Allow future trail projects to be considered for construction through agency review from the BLM and Forest Service.
- Do not affect popular over the snow riding areas.
- Protect quiet use in areas with high ecological value.
- Ensure that current ranching operations and water use can continue.
- Protect critical habitat for species such as mule deer and elk, while providing flexibility for habitat restoration projects for species such as bighorn sheep and Gunnison sage-grouse. Gunnison sage-grouse.

Recommendation Format Guide

The recommendation structure for each potential conservation area in the initial proposal package is:

Recommended designation type: There are three potential designation types including:

- Wilderness
- Special Management Area (SMA)
- 'Considered for SMA and/or wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities'.

Wilderness - All recommended Wilderness areas would follow the standards and guidelines of the Wilderness Act of 1964.

- The Working Group recommends that applicable legislative provisions be modeled after other wilderness areas in Colorado. The Hermosa Creek Wilderness and Dominguez Canyon Wilderness legislation provide two of the most recent examples. These bills include special provisions for the management of wildfire, insects, and disease, protection of grazing interests and water rights, and jurisdiction over wildlife.

Special Management Area - Each SMA will have a number of common elements and special provisions.

- *Common Elements:* The Working Group proposal recommends that every SMA would allow agencies to continue to manage grazing and special use permits (such as outfitter and guide permits) to continue. The agencies would also retain broad authority to manage wildfire, insects, diseases, and habitat restoration. No existing roads or trails would be closed, and new trails out-

lined in the SMA could still be built if approved by the land management agencies. Every SMA also would include a mineral withdrawal limiting future mining activity to maintain the special ecological, environmental, water, air, scientific, scenic, historical, or other special values in the area. In all cases, valid existing rights would be protected, including valid water rights, private property rights, and mineral rights. These common elements are not specified in the area summaries that follow.

- *Special Provisions:* The SMAs also would have special provisions emphasizing or providing for specific values or uses. In some cases, for example, wildlife conservation, science, or recreation would be established as a primary purpose of an SMA. Certain uses may be restricted within the proposed SMAs. Special provisions in some SMAs may provide that a proposed trail or use would not be affected by the SMA designation, such as through a "savings provision" that ensures that the land management agencies would consider the activity or proposal at a future date without being positively or negatively influenced by the designation. Where such special provisions were specifically discussed and agreed to, they are noted in the area summaries that follow.

'Considered for SMA and/or wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities'

- These areas were identified as key public lands in Gunnison County, but the Working Group acknowledges the need to have a more in-depth conversation with regional communities to fully understand on-the-ground conditions, appropriate boundaries and suitable designations. This recommendation is for either SMA or wilderness.

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities: This section is a written record of information gathered at Working Group meetings. Working group meetings discussed existing public land uses and desired future conditions

- Information reviewed included topography, roads, water structures, existing and proposed trails, grazing operations, scientific research sites, restoration projects, and the location of wildlife, sensitive species, and ecological systems (such as watersheds).

Rationale: This section details out the compromises, values, and reasoning for how a recommendation was decided.

Next Steps: For some areas, the Working Group felt that more information was needed before the area was included in draft legislation. This section outlines next steps to ensure this proposal is technically sound and enjoys broad community support.

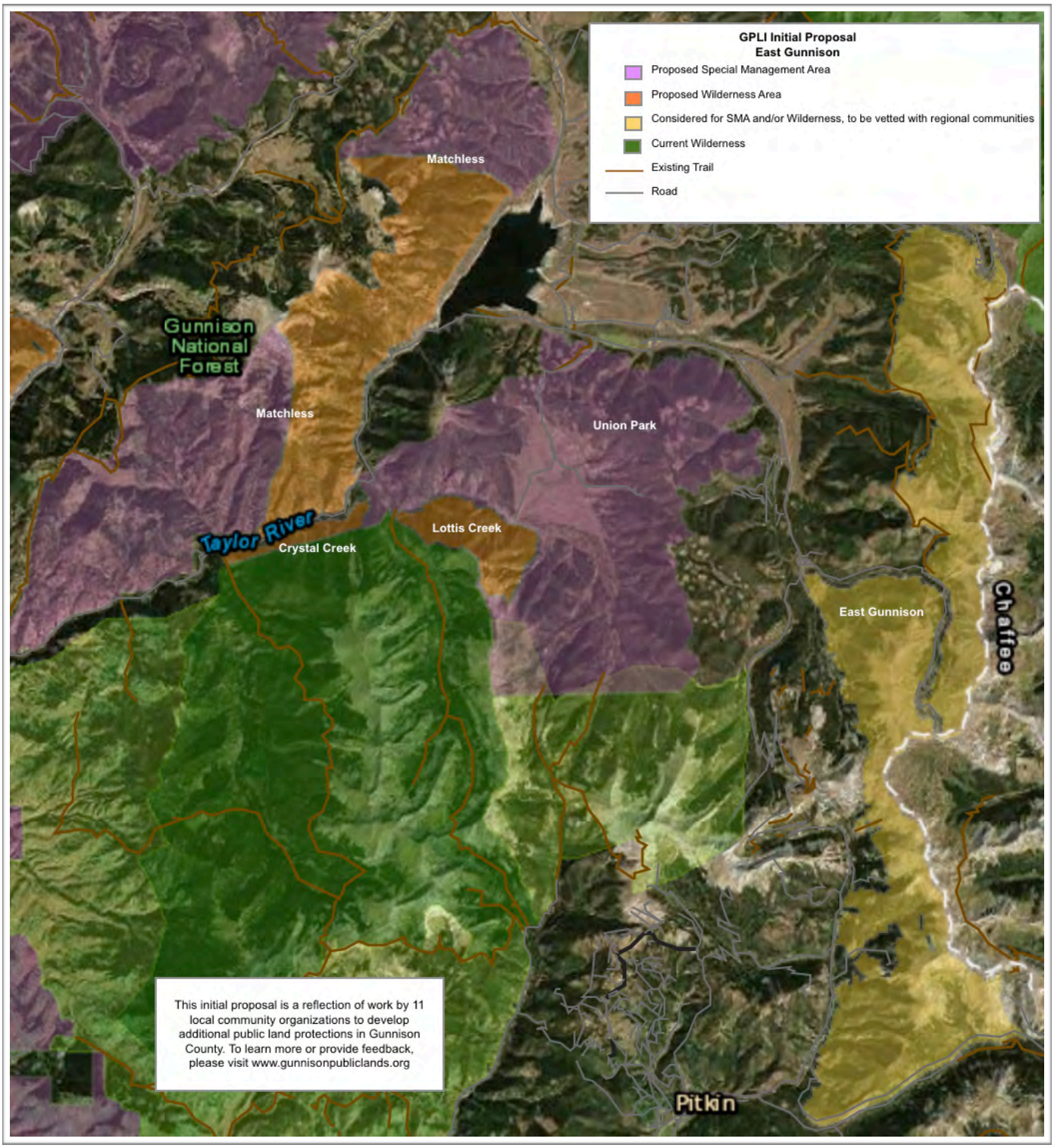
Maps

The Working Group has developed maps to accompany this report. Maps can be found at the links below.

An interactive map and story of the initial proposal can be found online here or at:
http://wilderness.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=95a62ce5aa5e4e57a25145464a4ea7d2

An interactive map of the initial proposal can be found here or online at:
http://wilderness.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d2f82838bae64ff7a2a936d38937e789

Eastern Gunnison



Crystal Creek

Recommendation: Wilderness addition to Fossil Ridge

Full Consensus of the Working Group

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Improved Wilderness boundary integrity
- Wilderness character.

Rationale for Recommendation

The Working Group is unaware of any existing uses that are not compatible with Wilderness in this area. A Wilderness addition would improve the integrity of the Fossil Ridge Wilderness, provide protection for Colorado River cutthroat trout, and improve the USFS's ability to manage the existing Fossil Ridge Wilderness.

Next steps

- This area is ready for a final review to ensure that the boundary is identifiable on the ground and that the designation will not have unintended consequences.

Lottis Creek

Recommendation: Wilderness addition to Fossil Ridge

Full Consensus of the Working Group

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Improved Wilderness boundary management for the USFS
- Wilderness character

Rationale for Recommendation

The Working Group is unaware of any existing uses that are not compatible with Wilderness in this area. A Wilderness addition would improve the integrity of the Fossil Ridge Wilderness, maintain the wilderness character of the area, and improve the Forest Service's ability to manage the existing Fossil Ridge Wilderness.

Next steps

- This area is ready for a final review to ensure that the boundary is identifiable on the ground and that the designation will not have unintended consequences.

Union Park Special Management Area

Recommendation: Wildlife and recreation-focused SMA

Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Summer motorized and mechanized allowed
- Winter motorized allowed
- No new roads
- No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Moderate Biodiversity Significance (B4)
- Elk calving and migration
- Heavy recreational use in the area
- Winter motorized use
- Summer motorized use on existing roads and trails in the area

Recommendation Rationale

This is a unique area, central to the character of the Gunnison Valley. The Working Group felt this area should be safeguarded from development.

The SMA designation seeks to balance wildlife values with existing summer and winter motorized recreation. The designation will serve as a backstop against habitat fragmentation and water quality degradation by prohibiting new roads and trails. The SMA will allow recreational uses on existing routes to continue. The Working Group feels that this area should be preserved for recreation and wildlife, and therefore is inappropriate for new mining, oil and gas, or commercial timber harvest.

This area abuts the existing Fossil Ridge Recreation Management Area (RMA). The Fossil Ridge RMA could be amended to include this area, instead of creating a new, but adjoining SMA. This could facilitate management of the area by creating consistent guidelines across both protected areas, but would only be appropriate if consistent with the Working Group's goals for the area and the existing management of the RMA.

In the past, this area was discussed as a potential site of a transmountain water diversion. The Working Group feels strongly that this area should not be used for a transmountain water diversion.

Next steps

- Check boundaries
- Refine SMA language
- Determine if the SMA should be included as an amendment to the current Fossil Ridge RMA

East Gunnison Divide

Considered for SMA and/or wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities

***Considered* Recommendation:** Recreation-focused SMA

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Summer motorized and mechanized recreation allowed
- Winter motorized recreation allowed
- No new roads
- No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- High Biodiversity Significance (B3), including potential habitat for boreal toad, and linkage area for lynx
- Elk and mountain goat migration and summer concentration area
- Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and Colorado Trail
- Heavy and highly valued winter motorized recreation, including hybrid use for backcountry skiing
- Existing summer motorized and mechanized use
- Existing winter motorized use
- Wilderness character and exceptional views

Recommendation Rationale

This is area is home to some of the iconic peaks along the Continental Divide and an SMA designation would provide protection for the viewscape as well wildlife habitat.

Due to its proximity to the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness and high-quality habitat the Working Group considered this area for an SMA designation. The Working Group is aware of the highly-valued mechanized and motorized use in the area and an SMA seeks to strike a balance between habitat protection, recreational use, and the desire to protect the area's wild character.

However, before they recommend any decision for this area, the Working Group plans to consult with the nearby communities.

Next steps

- Engage and work with regional communities to understand current on-the-ground uses, explore if an SMA is an appropriate designation for this area and appropriate boundaries.

Matchless Special Management Areas and Wilderness

Recommendation: Two wildlife-focused SMAs and a Wilderness area
Full Consensus of the Working Group

Proposed Designations

1. No designation for the western side of the ridge between Rocky Point and Bald Mountain
2. Wilderness area between Bald Mountain and Rocky Point to the Taylor Reservoir
3. An SMA to the north and south of the Wilderness area. SMA with the following stipulations:
   - Summer/Winter motorized and mechanized recreation not allowed
   - No new roads
   - Allowance for prescribed burning (including installation of fire breaks, etc.) and restoration work for bighorn sheep habitat.

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Winter motorized use occurs on the northwest side of the proposal area (Spring Creek Road to the ridgeline between Matchless and Baldy Mountains) and potential use in the meadows along the northwest side of Taylor Reservoir.
- Habitat restoration work for bighorn sheep, including mechanical treatment and prescribed burns.
- Preservation of the area's wilderness character, particularly with increased motorized use in Taylor Park.
- The area has very high biodiversity significance (B2) and big game habitat.
- Ensure Wilderness and SMA boundaries align with Bureau of Reclamation operational boundaries for Taylor Park Reservoir and dam.

Recommendation rationale

The recommendation seeks to strike a balance between the need for habitat protection and restoration, recreational use, and the desire to protect the area's wilderness character. By moving the north western boundary of all of the designations to the ridgeline, existing winter motorized recreational opportunities from the Spring Creek area should be unaffected by any designations. Motorized and mechanized use along the Doctor's Park/ Gunnison Spur of the Colorado Trail will also be unaffected.

The SMA designations will ensure that bighorn sheep habitat restoration in the area can continue unimpeded, while maintaining the remote and undeveloped nature of this sensitive habitat.

The Wilderness is located in a rugged, steep area where habitat restoration would be difficult. The GPLI checked with the Forest Service and it does not currently have habitat restoration plans in the proposed Wilderness area. The Wilderness area would protect an area of very high biodiversity concern (rare plant species) and maintain the area's remote character.

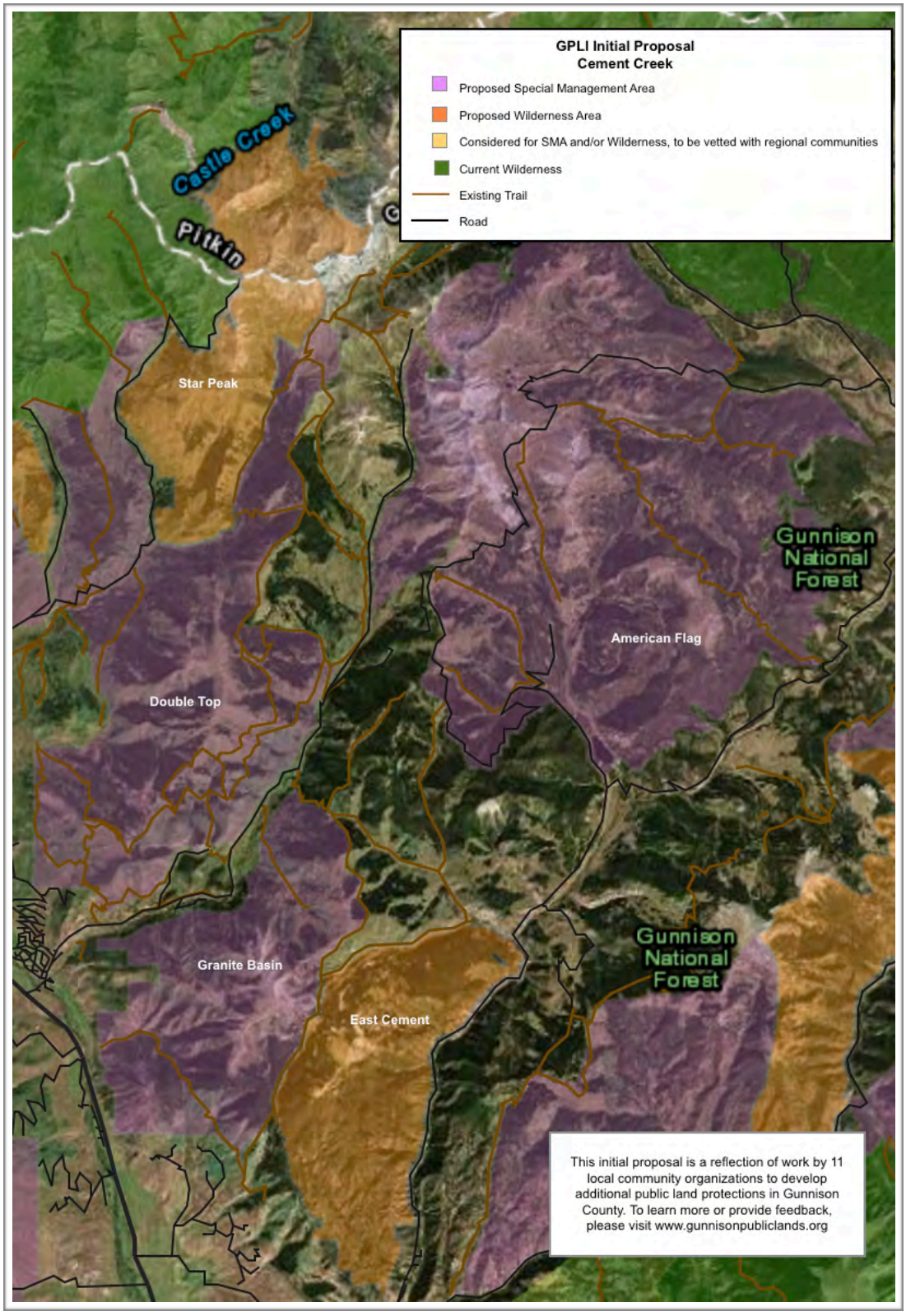
Boundaries will be cross-checked with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Taylor Park Boundary and Ownership map to ensure the area around the Taylor dam and reservoir that are under BOR's jurisdiction are not within a Wilderness designation.

Next steps

- Walk potential boundaries
- Outreach to confirm zones of winter motorized recreation on the northwest side of Taylor Reservoir
- Continue to work with Bureau of Reclamation to ensure their needed areas of operation and maintenance for Taylor Dam and Reservoir are met

Photo: Hilary Henry

Cement Creek Area



East Cement Wilderness

Recommendation: Wilderness
Full Consensus of the Working Group

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Big game habitat and high biodiversity significance (B3)
- Wilderness character
- Winter motorized use on moderate slopes
- Ability to reroute the Cement Mountain Trail if necessary

Rationale for Recommendation

A new Wilderness area would provide protection for big game, an area of high biodiversity along Spring Creek, and maintain the remote and wild character of the land in a landscape with important quiet recreational use.

Some winter-motorized may exist on the moderate slopes in the northern part of the proposal area. However, both the Rosebud and Cement Mountain Trails are closed to all motorized use from 10/1 to 6/30, making any potential for such use either difficult or contrary to current Forest Service travel management restrictions. So that the Working Group's recommendations are consistent with trail closures, the boundaries are to remain as originally proposed.

The Working Group does not know of any other uses that are not compatible with wilderness in the area.

Next steps

- This area is ready for a final review to ensure that the boundary is identifiable on the ground and that the designation will not have unintended consequences.


Photo: Hilary Henry

Granite Basin Special Management Area

Recommendation: Solitude-focused SMA
Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Summer motorized recreation not allowed
- Summer mechanized recreation allowed
- Winter motorized recreation not allowed
- No new roads
- No new motorize or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment with a savings provision that would allow for the potential development of the Eccher exit trail at highway 135, subject to agency review


Photo: Hilary Henry

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Big game habitat and very high biodiversity significance (B2)
- Wilderness character
- Winter motorized use on moderate slopes
- Ability to reroute the Eccher Gulch and Cement Mountain Trails

Rationale for Recommendation

Some winter-motorized use likely exists on the moderate slopes in the southern part of the proposal area. However, both the Rosebud and Cement Mountain Trails are closed to all motorized use from 10/1 to 6/30, making any potential for such use either difficult or contrary to current Forest Service restrictions. So that the Working Group's recommendations are consistent with trail closures, the area will be closed to winter motorized use.

The SMA would allow for continued use of the Eccher Gulch trail as well as potential realignments and improvements.

An SMA designation in this area would protect an area of high biodiversity in the Cement Creek Valley and big game habitat.

Next steps

- Walk potential boundaries

Double Top Special Management Area

Recommendation: Recreation-focused SMA

Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Summer motorized and mechanized recreation allowed
- Winter motorized not allowed
- No new roads

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Winter motorized use coming west from Cement Creek road starting north of the Deadman's parking lot.
- Winter habitat for big game and areas of very high (B2) and high (B3) biodiversity significance.
- Desire for the area around the Friends Hut to remain a quiet use area.

Recommendation rationale

The SMA will protect winter habitat in the southeast part of the region, as well as calving near Timbered Hill. It will also protect zones of very high and high biodiversity significance and keep the area closest to the Friend's Hut as a quiet area.

The slopes in the northern Cement Creek drainage see significant winter motorized use. The SMA boundaries have been moved so that winter motorized can continue to use area from the Cement Creek Valley floor to the top of the ridge between Star Peak, Crystal Peak, and Double Top – starting at Waterfall Creek.

The SMA would allow for motorized and mechanized use to continue in the area during the summer, along with potential realignments and improvements to existing trails.

The boundaries and stipulations of this SMA are designed to best meet the interests of summer recreational users, winter motorized users, quiet users in the upper East Brush Creek basin, and sensitive winter and calving habitat.

Next steps

- The group needs to decide whether new trail building will be allowed in this area or if use will be confined to existing trails.

Star Peak Wilderness

Recommendation: Wilderness - Boundaries exclude area north of Star Pass to provide for continued winter motorized recreation and directly adjacent to the Friend's Hut.

Full Consensus of the Working Group

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Wilderness character
- Potential to serve as a wildlife refuge in a landscape with increasing recreational use
- Winter-motorized use
- Quiet use and maintenance of the Friend's Hut experience

Recommendation Rationale

A standalone Wilderness in this area will protect the wilderness character of the area, serve as a wildlife refuge, and maintain quiet use near the Friend's Hut.

Pulling back the Wilderness boundary to Star Pass, along the ridge between Star Peak and Crystal Peak, will ensure that highly-valued winter motorized recreation remains open.

The Friends Hut, because it is not 50 years old, likely would not qualify as a 'historical' structure under the Wilderness Act. The Friends Hut and the area directly adjacent to the hut have been removed from the Wilderness boundary.

Next steps

- Walk potential boundaries

American Flag Mountain Special Management Area

Recommendation: Wildlife and recreation-focused SMA

Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Summer motorized and mechanized allowed
- Winter motorized allowed
- No new roads
- No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment with a savings provision that would allow for the potential development of the Big Grassy trail, subject to agency review.

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Two areas of moderate biodiversity significance (B4) — one area of general biodiversity significance (B5)
- Elk and mule deer migration routes
- Colorado River cutthroat trout populations in Cement Creek, North Fork Italian Creek, and Upper Spring Creek
- Sensitive bird species in the area
- Heavy recreational use in the area
- Winter motorized use
- Summer motorized use on existing roads and trails in the area
- Star Peak Trail is highly valued by motorized users and in need of significant maintenance

Recommendation Rationale

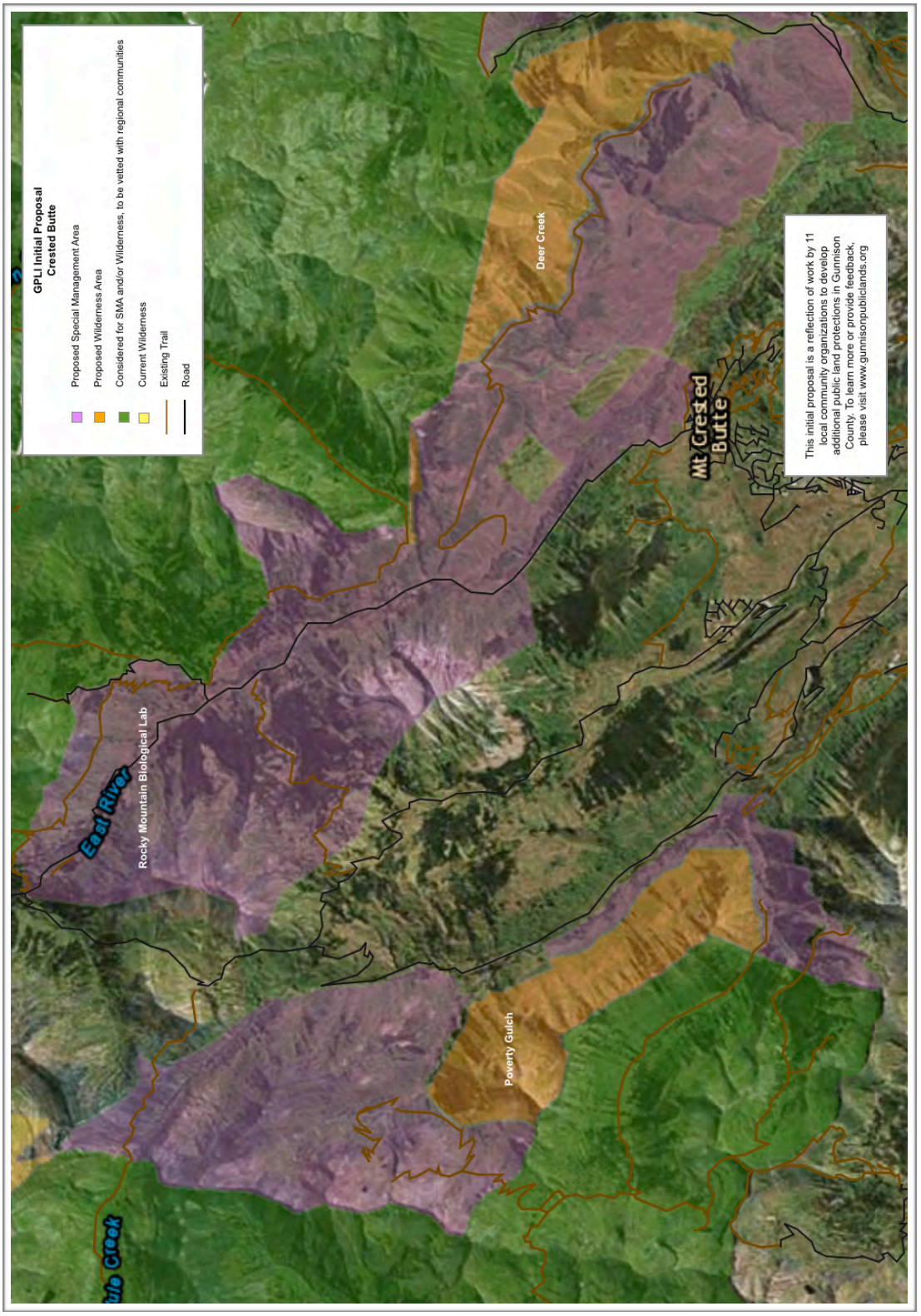
This area is home to several sensitive species, including populations of Colorado River cutthroat trout. It is also home to a well-known motorized trail (the Star Peak Trail). To protect these species while allowing for continued recreational use, the Working Group has proposed an SMA that will prohibit new trails and roads. The SMA will allow existing summer and winter motorized and mechanized use, including potential realignments and improvements to existing trails.

The Working Group feels that this area should be preserved for recreation and wildlife, and therefore is an inappropriate area for mining, oil and gas, or commercial timber harvest.

Next steps

- Walk potential boundaries

Crested Butte



Deer Creek Special Management and Wilderness Addition

Recommendation: Wildlife and recreation-focused SMA and Wilderness additions
Full Consensus of the Working Group

Proposed Designations:

1. Wilderness additions to the existing Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness to a portion of the Deer Creek Trail
2. An SMA from the Deer Creek Trail to the private property to the south with the following stipulations:
    - Summer motorized recreation not allowed
    - Summer mechanized allowed
    - Winter motorized recreation not allowed
    - No new roads
    - No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment with a savings provision that would allow for the potential development of the Deer Creek connector trail to Brush Creek, subject to agency review

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Areas of Very High (B2) and High (B3) Biodiversity Significance
- Winter range, production areas, and migration routes for elk
- Colorado River cutthroat trout in West Brush Creek
- Close proximity to ranching operations and water structures

Rationale for Recommendation

Deer Creek was proposed for Wilderness and special management protection due to its wildlife and recreational opportunities.

The Working Group has consulted with RMBL about the area to ensure that that adjoining boundaries between the SMA proposed by RMBL and the Deer Creek Wilderness/ SMA accommodate RMBL's research sites and operational needs.

By using both a Wilderness addition and an SMA, the Working Group will be able to protect the public land from the valley floor to the top of some of the region's iconic 14,000 ft. mountains. Protecting lands across elevation gradients is an important strategy for climate change adaptation. The SMA designation will ensure that the Deer Creek Trail can remain open and sustainable trail reroutes can be implemented.

Next steps

- Continue to collaborate with RMBL throughout the duration of the project
- Talk with adjacent ranching families who currently use the area
- Walk potential boundaries

Photo: Hilary Henry

Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory Special Management Area

Recommendation: Scientific research-focused SMA, along with conservation, non-motorized recreation, and other existing uses.
Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Summer mechanized allowed
- No new roads
- Mineral withdrawal

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Desire by RMBL for the area to be permanently managed for scientific research, as well as providing for ranching, recreation, and other compatible existing uses
- Existing and proposed mountain bike trails in the area

Rationale for Recommendation

The Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory (RMBL) has proposed that the Forest Service land surrounding its research laboratory be managed for scientific research. Sixty to seventy percent (60-70%) of RMBL's research occurs in this area. To ensure the long-term success of the laboratory and its ecological and biological research, the area should be explicitly managed for scientific research through an SMA.

The proposal would allow for existing and proposed non-motorized recreation, as well as ranching, in the East River Valley to continue. To protect existing and future research, the proposal also would include a mineral withdrawal.

The Working Group feels strongly that RMBL's research has high value for Gunnison County's public lands and the proposed SMA should be permanently protected in a manner that protects and fosters that research. The Working Group and RMBL collaborated to further common objectives and reconcile differences between RMBL's initial SMA proposal, GPLI's initial Wilderness and SMA proposal, and other stakeholder interests in the area.

Next steps

- Continue to collaborate with RMBL to ensure accurate boundaries and desired SMA language
- Talk with adjacent ranching families who currently use the area
- Walk potential boundaries

Poverty Gulch Special Management Area and Wilderness Addition

Recommendation: Wildlife and recreation-focused SMA and Wilderness addition

Full Consensus of the Working Group

Proposed Designations

1. An addition to the Raggeds Wilderness to the base of Schuylkill Ridge.
2. An SMA in Poverty Gulch contiguous to the Wilderness addition extending from Gunsight Pass Road on the south and along the west side of Slate River Road. SMA stipulations include:
    - Summer motorized recreation not allowed
    - Summer mechanized recreation allowed, limited to the potential Lower Loop trail extension
    - Winter motorized allowed
    - No new roads
    - No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment with a savings provision for the potential mechanized Lower Loop trail extension, subject to agency review

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Potential for a mechanized Lower Loop trail extension
- Desire by winter motorized users to maintain access to Baxter Basin by way of Poverty Gulch Road
- Desire by RMBL to maintain access to research sites adjacent to proposed Wilderness addition.
- Protection of wildlife migration routes and an area of High Biodiversity Significance (B3)
- Ability to retain the wild and natural characteristics of the area
- The potential for a molybdenum mine in the area. The claims block for a potential Red Lady Mine is adjacent to this area.

Rationale for Recommendation

Wilderness designation is recommended for the southern section of this area to bring the boundary of the Raggeds Wilderness down the steep slopes of Schuylkill Ridge to its base just above the Slate River. This will offer a more manageable boundary for the east side of the Wilderness and protect ecological and other wilderness values. There are currently no known uses that are not compatible with wilderness in the area.

The Working Group also recommended an SMA that would drop from the Wilderness addition boundary over to a setback from Slate River Road and down to Gunsight Pass Road. This SMA would help to protect the migration corridor for wildlife from the Slate River to the peaks of the Raggeds Wilderness, while still allowing for the highly desired Lower Loop extension to be built if approved by land management agencies and winter motorized use.

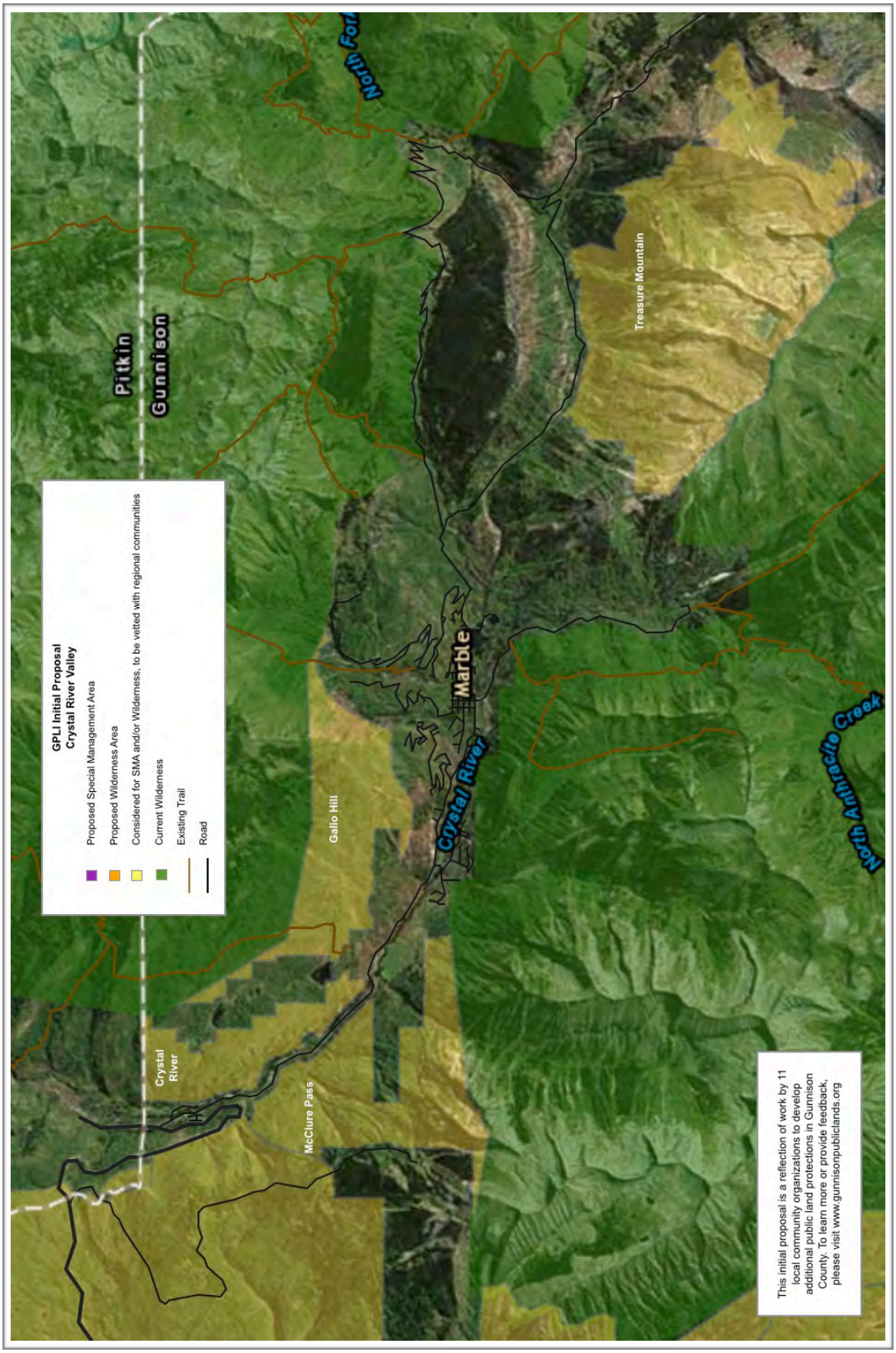
Winter motorized use in Poverty Gulch and Baxter Basin are highly valued by backcountry skiers and snowmobilers. In order to provide for these and other recreational values, the Working Group proposed an SMA in Baxter Basin that would allow for winter motorized use, while prohibiting new roads or trails and industrial use. These stipulations seek to balance the area's wilderness character, important wildlife habitat and corridors, and recreational opportunities.

Next steps

- GPS proposed Lower Loop Trail extension
- Walk potential boundaries
- Talk to neighboring private landowners

Photo: Hilary Henry

Crystal River Valley



Treasure Mountain

Considered for SMA and/or wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities

***Considered* Recommendation:** Wilderness addition to the existing Raggeds Wilderness

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Very High Biodiversity Significance (B2)
- Elk Summer Range
- Ptarmigan habitat
- Rare plant communities
- Rocky Mountain Biological Lab (RMBL) has research sites near North Pole Basin
- Winter motorized recreation corridor, connecting Schofield Pass to the Town of Marble.

Rationale for Recommendation

Due to its rugged wild character, the Working Group considered this area for Wilderness designation. Several issues with a Wilderness designation need to be addressed including winter motorized recreation in the area and the use of some of the area by the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory for scientific research.

Before a recommendation can be made for this area, the Working Group feels that the community of Marble must be consulted. They also recommend that outreach with motorized recreation stakeholders and the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory continue to develop acceptable wilderness and/or SMA boundaries.

Next steps

- Engage the community of Marble to understand if wilderness and/or SMA is an appropriate designation for this area.
- Work with the community to understand current on-the-ground uses and acceptable boundaries.
- Ensure RMBL research interests are accommodated.

Crystal River

Considered for SMA and/or wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities

***Considered* Recommendation:** Wilderness

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- High Biodiversity Significance (B3)
- Critical winter range, calving area and summer range for elk
- Connectivity between the Thompson Divide, Raggeds Wilderness, and Maroon Bells Wilderness
- Potential overlap with proposed trails from the Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association (RFMBA)
- Desire for Wilderness designation on behalf of some community stakeholders

Rationale for Recommendation

The Working Group considered this area for Wilderness designation to provide protection for wildlife and water. This area is also critical to the viewshed of the Crystal River Valley. Additional outreach is needed with community stakeholders, including the RFMBA and Wilderness Workshop, to address potential conflicts with potential future mountain biking trails and the wilderness character of the area. The Working Group also feels strongly that the community of Marble be consulted before making any recommendation.

Next steps

- Engage regional communities to understand if wilderness is an appropriate designation for this area.
- Work with the community to understand current on-the-ground uses and acceptable boundaries.

Photo: Hilary Henry

Gallo Hill

Considered for SMA and/or wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities
***Considered* Recommendation: SMA and/or wilderness**

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- High Biodiversity Significance (B3)
- Critical winter range, calving area and summer range for elk
- Mapped lynx habitat
- Bighorn sheep winter range
- Connectivity between the Thompson Divide, Raggeds Wilderness, and Maroon Bells Wilderness
- Potential overlap with proposed trails from the Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association (RFMBA) and Thompson Divide Protection Bill
- Wilderness character

Rationale for Recommendation

The Working Group considered this area for Wilderness designation to provide protection for wildlife and water. However, they understand that any recommendation should be well vetted by the community of Marble and stakeholders in the Crystal River Valley. Some of the issues that have been identified in this area include, potential overlap with proposed mountain biking trails, and critical wildlife habitat for bighorn sheep.

Next steps

- Engage regional communities to understand if wilderness is an appropriate designation for this area.
- Work with the community to understand current on-the-ground uses and acceptable boundaries.

McClure Pass

Considered for SMA and/or wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities

***Considered* Recommendation:** SMA and/or wilderness

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- High Biodiversity Significance (B3)
- Critical winter range, calving area and summer range for elk
- Potential mechanized route for the Crested Butte to Carbondale Trail and/or potential mechanized connector trail to existing trails in the Clear Fork Area
- Mapped lynx habitat
- Connectivity between the Thompson Divide, Raggeds Wilderness, and Maroon Bells Wilderness
- Wilderness character
- Potential for a small hydro-electric dam
- Viewscape of the West Elk Scenic Byway

Rationale for Recommendation

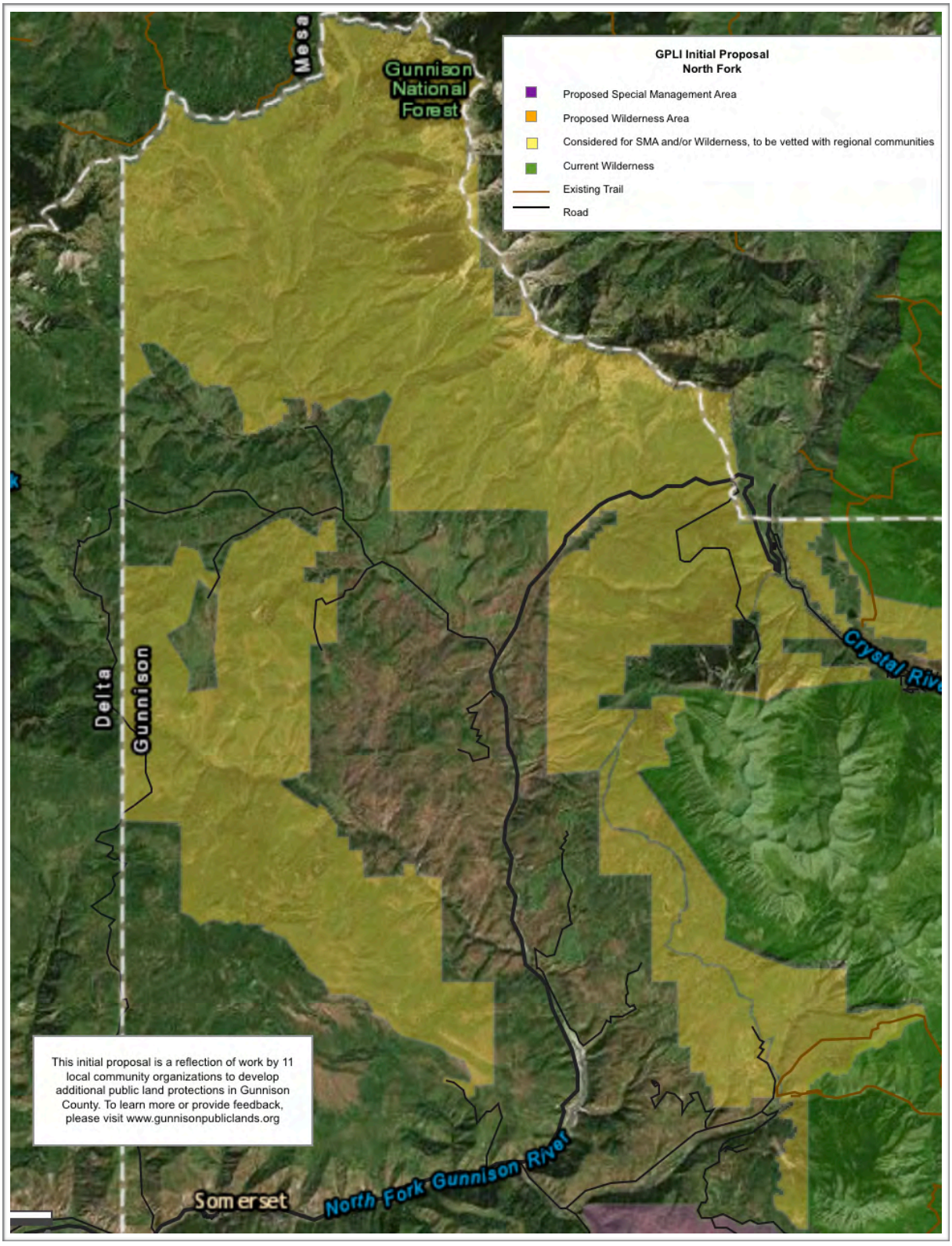
The Working Group considered this area for Wilderness designation to provide protection for wildlife and water. The Working Group is not aware of any conflicting uses in the area. Some of the issues identified in this area include critical wildlife habitat, protection of viewscapes along the West Elk Scenic Byway, use of a small stream for small-scale private power generation, and potential new mechanized mountain bike trails.

The Working Group plans to collaborate with local community stakeholders to find an appropriate recommendation for this area.

Next steps

- Engage regional communities to understand if wilderness is an appropriate designation for this area.
- Work with the community to understand current on-the-ground uses and acceptable boundaries.

North Fork River Valley



Clear Fork

Considered for SMA and/or wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities

***Considered* Recommendation:** Wildlife-focused SMA

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Summer motorized recreation allowed
- Summer mechanized allowed
- Winter motorized allowed
- No new roads
- No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Very High Biodiversity Significance (B2)
- Water supply for the Town of Paonia and headwaters of the East Fork of the Muddy Creek and Clear Fork Creek
- Calving and summer range for elk
- Populations of Colorado River cutthroat trout, including conservation populations in Clear Fork Muddy Creek, Second Creek, North Twin Creek, and South Twin Creek
- Mapped lynx and moose habitat
- High potential for oil and gas development
- Overlap with the Thompson Divide Withdrawal and Protection Act of 2017
- Potential for the Crested Butte to Carbondale Trail

Rationale for Recommendation

To protect wildlife habitat and cold water fisheries from further habitat fragmentation. The Working Group considered this area for SMA designation. They plan to work with community stakeholders in the North Fork to better understand the suitability of the recommendation.

Next steps

- Engage regional communities to understand if an SMA and/or wilderness is an appropriate designation for this area.
- Work with the community to understand current on-the-ground uses and acceptable boundaries.

Pilot Knob

Considered for SMA and/or wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities

***Considered* Recommendation:** Wildlife-focused SMA

An SMA for the entire area with the following stipulations:

- No new roads
- No new trails, beyond those existing at time of enactment

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Water supply for the Town of Paonia Winter range for elk and bald eagles
- Summer range for mule deer, black bear, mountain lion and elk
- Mapped lynx and moose habitat
- High potential for oil and gas leasing
- Overlap with existing coal leases
- Extensive existing oil and gas leases
- Overlap with potential Spruce Beetle Epidemic Aspen Decline Management Response (SBEADMR) Forest Treatment
- Suitable habitat for sensitive bird species including the northern goshawk, purple martin, flammulated owl, and the American marten

Rationale for Recommendation

The Working Group considered this area for an SMA designation to protect the area's wild character. Especially, the northern end of this proposal area provides opportunities for solitude and protection of wildlife habitat and valuable backcountry hunting experience. This area is home to one of the largest aspen forests in Western Colorado and prime mid-elevation habitat for big-game and sensitive bird species.

The Working Group considered this area for SMA designation. They plan to work with community stakeholders in the North Fork to better understand the suitability of the recommendation

Next steps

- Engage regional communities to understand if an SMA and/or wilderness is an appropriate designation for this area.
- Work with the community to understand current on-the-ground uses and acceptable boundaries.

Munsey Creek / Erickson Springs

Considered for SMA and/or wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities

***Considered* Recommendation:** SMA and wilderness combination

Considered Recommendation:

1. A Wilderness addition from the existing Raggeds Wilderness boundary to the Raggeds Trail.
2. A SMA from the Raggeds Trail to the private property boundary with the following stipulations:
    - Summer motorized recreation allowed along the existing Raggeds Trail based on the 2010 Travel Management Plan
    - Summer mechanized allowed along the existing Raggeds Trail
    - Winter motorized allowed
    - No new roads
    - No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Water supply for the Town of Paonia
- Winter range for elk and bald eagles
- Summer range for elk and mule deer
- Populations of Colorado River cutthroat trout
- Mapped lynx and turkey habitat
- High potential for oil and gas leasing
- Existing oil and gas leases
- Potential development of the Crested Butte to Carbondale Trail, along with potential realignments and improvements of the Raggeds Trail.
- Motorized and mechanized use along the Raggeds Trail
- Overlap with Thompson Divide Withdrawal and Protection Act of 2017

Rationale for Recommendation

This area has a high degree of naturalness and supports a valuable backcountry hunting experience. The Working Group discussed that the Wilderness boundary could potentially be snapped to the new alignment of the Crested Butte to Carbondale, if stakeholders in the North Fork and Gunnison Valley feel comfortable with Pitkin County Open Space's proposed alignment. This area is in the watershed for the North Fork Valley, which is one of the largest suppliers of local, organic agriculture in the Western Slope.

The Working Group plans to work with community stakeholders in the North Fork if a

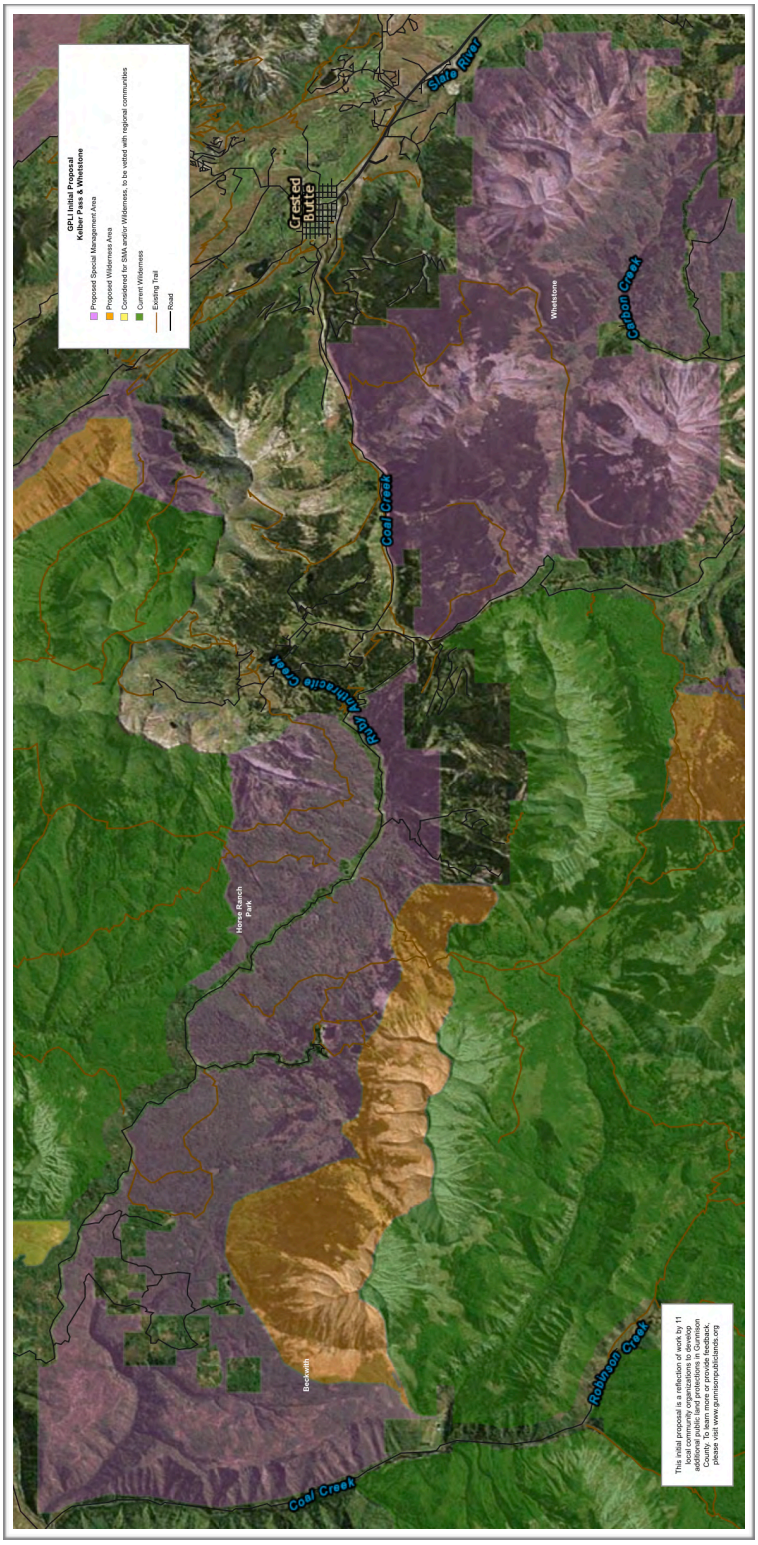
designation could be suitable for this area. They have suggested that the Raggeds Wilderness could be extended to the Raggeds Trail. To allow the trail to remain open to is current uses, they have considered that an SMA for the remainder of the Roadless area.

Next steps

- Engage regional communities to understand if a combination of SMA and/or wilderness is an appropriate designation for this area.
- Work with the community to understand current on-the-ground uses and acceptable boundaries.
- Consider the proposed Wilderness boundary with the potential Crested Butte to Carbondale Trail

Photo: Hilary Henry

Kebler Pass


GPLI Initial Proposal
Kebler Pass & Whetstone
Proposed Special Management Area
Proposed Wilderness Area
Considered for SMA and/or Wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities
Current Wilderness
Existing Trail
Road
Crested Butte
Slate River
Whetstone
Carbon Creek
Coal Creek
Anthracite Creek
Horse Ranch Park
Beckwith
Robinson Creek
Coal Creek
This initial proposal is a reflection of work by 11 local community organizations to develop collective public lands priorities for Gunnison County. To learn more or provide feedback, please visit www.gunnisonpubliclands.org

Horse Ranch Park Special Management Area

Recommendation: Recreation-focused SMA
Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA for the entire area with the following stipulations:

- Summer motorized recreation not allowed
- Summer mechanized recreation allowed
- Winter motorized recreation allowed
- No new roads
- No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment with a savings provision that would allow for the potential development of the Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail, Crested Butte to Paonia (including the Wagon Trail) and Dark Canyon Loop, subject to agency review

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Highly-valued and heavily used winter motorized recreation
- Motorized backcountry ski access for Ruby and Owen Peaks
- Area of High (B3) Biodiversity Significance
- Largest aspen forest in the world
- Connectivity between the Raggeds Wilderness and the West Elk Wilderness
- Kebler Pass is a scenic byway

Rationale for Recommendation

This area – along with the Beckwiths – is home to the most heavily-used winter motorized recreation corridor in the County. It is highly valued as a motorized access corridor for backcountry skiers looking to summit Ruby and Owen Peaks.

The area has a high degree of naturalness and is known for its spectacular beauty. It is one of a few heavily photographed locations on the West Elk Scenic byway.

The Working Group decided that this area was better suited for an SMA, rather than Wilderness designation. Winter motorized users highly value this area and the Working Group agreed that it was necessary to recognize this use in the area.

The SMA will provide additional protections for the landscape to maintain its remote backcountry feel. This should enhance the long-term recreational value of the area, while protecting the naturalness of the area.

Next steps

- Walk potential boundaries

Photo: John Fielder

Beckwiths Special Management Area And Wilderness Addition

Recommendation: Wildlife and recreation-focused SMA and Wilderness addition
Full Consensus of the Working Group

Proposed Designations:

1. A Wilderness addition from the current West Elk Wilderness boundary at the Beckwiths ridgeline, to the base of the Beckwiths on the north
2. An SMA for the remaining area with the following stipulations:
    - Summer motorized recreation not allowed
    - Summer mechanized allowed
    - Winter motorized use allowed
    - No new roads
    - No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment

Additional considerations:

- The Working Group would prefer if the Crested Butte to Paonia Trail was built near the border of the Beckwiths SMA, rather than through the middle of the area.

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Highly-valued winter motorized recreation and heavy use
- Colorado River cutthroat trout in Coal Creek and Snowshoe Creek
- Areas of High (B3) Biodiversity Significance
- Largest aspen forest in the world
- Connectivity between the Raggeds Wilderness and the West Elk Wilderness
- Kebler Pass is a scenic byway
- The future construction of a Crested Butte to Carbondale and Crested Butte to Paonia Trail

Rationale for Recommendation

This area is home to the most heavily-used winter motorized recreation corridor in the County. It is highly valued by backcountry skiers and snowmobilers, and is accessed from the west (Crested Butte) and the east (Paonia).

The area also has several streams with Colorado River cutthroat trout, serves an important link for connectivity between the West Elk and Raggeds Wilderness, and is home to

the largest aspen forest in the world. Some of this area, particularly Snowshoe Mesa, has high wilderness character.

To balance the wilderness characteristics, wildlife habitat, and highly-valued recreational use, the Working Group recommends an SMA for the majority of the area. A small Wilderness addition, where there is currently very little motorized use, due to the natural steepness of the terrain, is proposed from the top of the Beckwiths to their base on the northern side. The Working Group proposes an SMA for the rest of the area to ensure that current recreational uses can continue and the recommendation is consistent with the on-the-ground reality.

The Working Group recommends that the western SMA boundary stop on the eastern side of Coal Creek.

Next steps

- Walk potential boundaries
- Talk to adjacent private landowners

Photo: Mitch Warnick

Whetstone Special Management Area

Recommendation: Recreation-focused SMA
Full Consensus of the Working Group

<u>One contiguous SMA for the entire area with the following stipulations:</u>

- Winter motorized use allowed
- Summer motorized allowed
- Summer mechanized allowed
- Winter motorized allowed
- No new roads
- No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment, with a savings provision that would allow for the potential development of the Splain's Gulch Connector, Whetstone/Carbon Loop, Baxter and Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail, subject to agency review

<u>Additional considerations:</u>

1. The proposed Splain's Gulch Connector could be motorized, but not the Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail. A savings provision would need to accommodate these different potential uses, subject to the land management agency review
2. BHA asked CBMBA to consider not looping the top section of the Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail
3. The group agreed to general savings clause language that reads, "*Nothing in this section [i.e. the designation of the SMA(s)] affects the Secretary's authority to construct or reject a non-motorized recreation trail proposed by Gunnison Trails and CBMBA, called the Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail, in accordance with applicable law*". They understand that the language may be tweaked in the drafting of legislation, but asked to be consulted on changes.

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Potential mine development on Mt. Emmons and the possibility for the construction of a tailings pond near the Carbon Creek Trail.
- Big game habitat and excellent hunting opportunities.
- Wilderness character on the backside of Mt. Whetstone.
- Highly-valued winter motorized recreation near Splain's Gulch, Mt Axtell, and the Carbon Creek drainage.
- Motorized and mechanized use on the Carbon Creek and Para Me, Para Te trails (Carbon Creek Trail). Mechanized use on the Green Lake Trail.
- Construction of a Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail is highly desired by the mountain biking community. Additional desire for the construction of a Splain's Gulch Connector. CBMBA also has plans to reroute the Carbon Trail and complete the Baxter Gulch Trail.
- Lynx denning habitat and high biodiversity significance (B3).
- Protection of the Coal Creek Watershed – Crested Butte's drinking water.

Recommendation rationale

Whetstone is a pristine natural area with excellent recreational opportunities right outside of Crested Butte. This area is highly-valued with many of the Working Group's member's primary concerns overlapping in this area.

This recommendation seeks to protect ecological and recreational values, while balancing the various needs of members of the Working Group. Working Group members were in consensus that this area should never be open to mining, oil and gas drilling, or other industrial activities. A mineral withdrawal for this area is a top priority for the group.

The Working Group also recommended no Wilderness for this area, as the two proposed Wilderness areas would be very small (barely surpassing the 5,000-acre requirement) and could be potentially difficult to manage. Some Working Group members were also concerned about limiting existing winter motorized use.

The SMA's stipulations seek to balance the area's wilderness character, important wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities. The SMA would generally limit trails to those currently established and proposed, so as to protect wildlife habitat and wilderness character. Current trails would be unaffected by the SMA designation.

By including a savings clause in the SMA language, the Whetstone designation would not preclude the potential development of the Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail and the Splain's Gulch Connector. These trails would still need to pass agency review before being constructed. In effect, the savings clause would not change the potential trail construction to be either more or less likely than what it is now.

- Walk potential boundaries
- Talk to adjacent ranching families who currently use the area

Existing West Elk Wilderness Boundary Change

Recommendation: Slightly pull the current West Elk Wilderness back to allow for safe passage of winter motorized user through Ohio Pass

Full Consensus of the Working Group

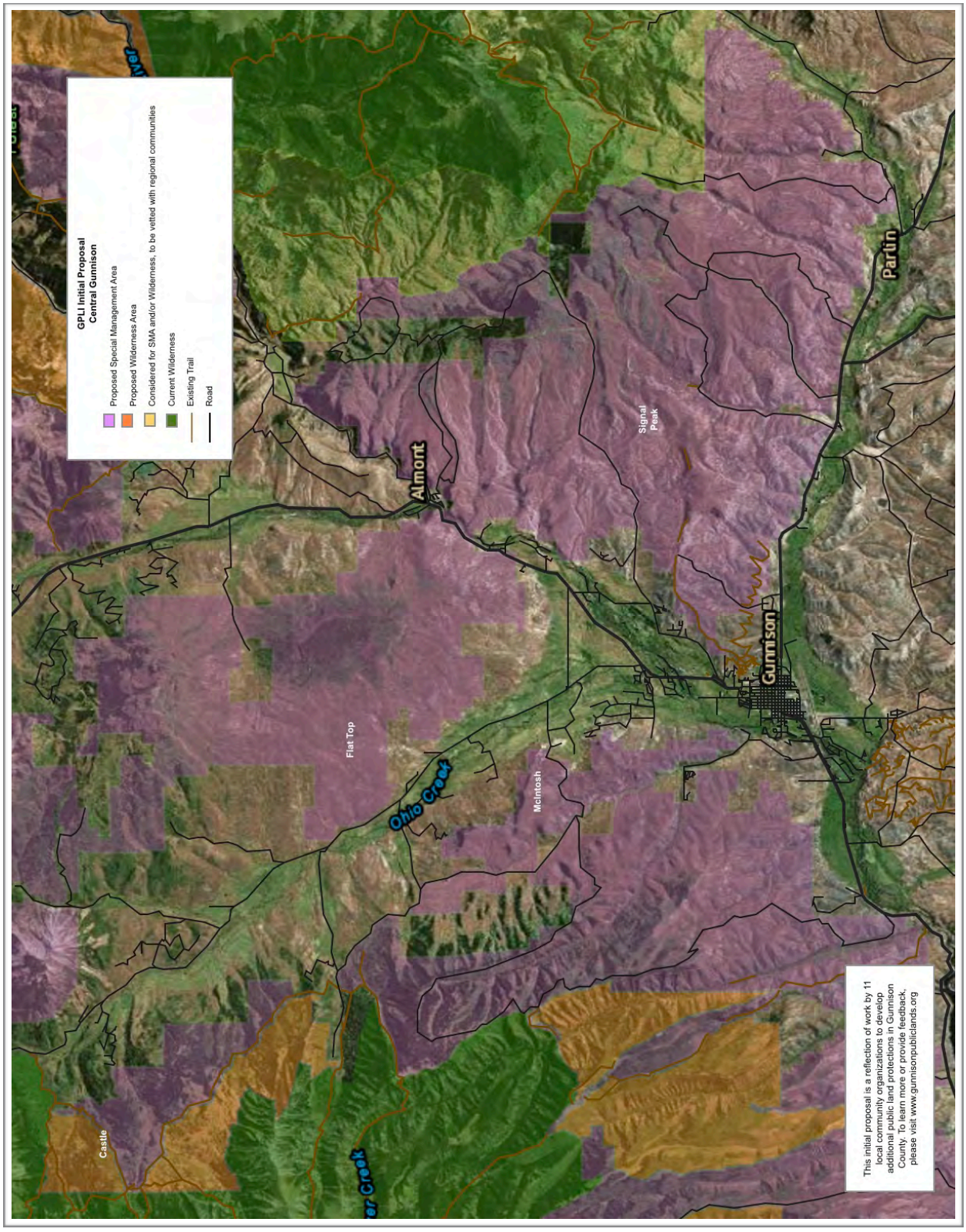
Recommendation rationale

While adjustment of boundaries of existing wilderness areas is very rare and typically controversial, the Working Group believes that this adjustment is appropriate given the important public safety considerations, the benefits of the boundary adjustment to the administration of the existing West Elk Wilderness, and the minor nature of the change.

Next steps

- The area will be GPS'ed over summer to determine the appropriate adjustment for the boundary.
- Walk potential boundary adjustment.

Central Gunnison



Flat Top Special Management Area

Recommendation: Wildlife-focused SMA

Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Winter motorized recreation not allowed
- Summer motorized recreation not allowed
- No new roads
- No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment, with the exception of a savings provision that would allow for the potential development of the Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail, subject to agency review
- Continued allowance of restoration efforts such as the Wet Meadows Resiliency Project
- Legislation should prescribe seasonal closures for potential mechanized use to protect critical wildlife habitat, subject to degree and timing determined by the managing agency

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Construction of a Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail
- Tier-1 Sage Grouse habitat and known leks
- High Biodiversity Significance (B1)
- Underrepresented ecosystem type (sagebrush) in the nation's protected areas
- Ongoing habitat restoration projects, including the Wet Meadows Resiliency Project
- High-value big game habitat for mule deer and elk (Mule Deer: migration routes, winter range, Elk: migration routes, winter ranges, and production areas)
- Potential for increased recreation to affect grazing opportunities and wildlife management

Rationale for Recommendation

This SMA recommendation attempts to balance desired recreation opportunities, sensitive species, big game habitat, and grazing. By limiting new roads and trails (beyond the potential Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail), the SMA will prevent habitat fragmentation and water pollution, protecting the area's wildlife.

The group has varied opinions about the potential construction of a Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail. The group agreed to a savings clause (identical to the one in Whetstone) that does not preclude the building of the trail. The savings clause does not take a stand to either build or not build the trail and would leave construction and management subject to agency determination. The group agreed to general savings clause language that reads, "*Nothing in this section [i.e. the designation of the SMA(s)] affects the Secretary's authority to construct or reject a non-motorized recreation trail proposed by Gunnison Trails and CBMBA, called the Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail, in accordance with applicable law*". They understand that the language may be tweaked in the drafting of legislation, but asked to be consulted on changes.

This allows the Working Group to ensure that additional protections for the area, such as a mineral withdrawal and no new roads could be enacted legislatively, while allowing groups to advocate for their desired position on the trail at the administrative level in the future.

The group is in consensus that habitat restoration efforts should continue in the area and that SMA language should not prohibit projects such as the Wet Meadows Resiliency Project.

Next steps

- Talk to adjacent ranching families who currently use the area
- Walk potential boundaries

Photo:Hilary Henry

Signal Peak Special Management Area

Recommendation: Wildlife and recreation-focused SMA

Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Summer motorized and mechanized recreation allowed
- Winter motorized recreation allowed
- No new roads
- No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment, with savings provisions that would allow for the potential development of:
  - the Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail, subject to agency review
  - trails in the Urban Interface Recreation Area in the Gunnison sage-grouse Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA), subject to agency review
- Continued allowance of restoration efforts such as the Wet Meadows Resiliency Project
- Legislation should prescribe seasonal closures for motorized and mechanized use to protect critical wildlife habitat, subject to degree and timing determined by the managing agency

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Desired construction of a Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail
- Desired construction of a stacked loop trail system for the Signal Peak area
- Tier-1 Sage Grouse habitat and known leks
- High Biodiversity Significance (B1)
- Underrepresented ecosystem type (sagebrush) in the nation's protected areas
- Ongoing habitat restoration projects, including the Wet Meadows Resiliency Project
- Winter Range for mule deer and elk. Mule deer migration routes.
- Potential for increased recreation to affect grazing opportunities and wildlife management
- Some winter motorized use
- Area managed for wildlife, including the option for CPW to place a restriction on winter motorized and mechanized use in high snow years

Rationale for Recommendation

The issues in the Signal Peak area are very similar to the Flat Top area. The goal of the SMA recommendation is to balance wildlife concerns with the desire for potential trail development and existing roads and trails.

The Working Group is in agreement that this area should not have new roads, should have a mineral withdrawal, and should continue to allow for habitat restoration efforts, including the Wet Meadows Resiliency Project. These stipulations would protect wildlife, ensure a high-quality recreational experience, and protect grazing.

The Working Group recommends a 'savings clause', identical to the one discussed in the Whetstone and Flat Top area, for the Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail in this area. The group agreed to general savings provision language for the Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail that reads, "*Nothing in this section [i.e. the designation of the SMA(s)] affects the Secretary's authority to construct or reject a non-motorized recreation trail proposed by Gunnison Trails and CBMBA, called the Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail, in accordance with applicable law"*. They understand that the language may be tweaked in the drafting of legislation, but asked to be consulted on changes. They also recommend that an additional savings clause allow for potential trail construction in the Urban Interface Recreation Area (as defined in the Gunnison sage-grouse CCA). Existing road and trail use could continue under the proposed designation.

The Working Group agrees that outside of the proposed and existing roads and trails described above, the area should be managed for wildlife habitat. The area is winter range for deer and elk and is home to Sage-grouse leks and a rare species of milkvetch. The Working Group recommends that winter motorized use is managed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), granting them the ability to restrict use in years when snowmobiling would conflict with wildlife use in the area.

The Working Group recommended a larger boundary than originally proposed by BHA. As critical winter range for deer and elk, as well as habitat for sensitive species, extends beyond the area originally proposed, and there were no conflicting uses in a larger area, the Working Group felt it was prudent to protect the entire area. The boundaries now extend to the Taylor River Road to the north, to the existing Fossil Ridge Recreation Management Area to the northwest, to County Road 76 to the west, and Highway 50 to the south.

This larger SMA boundary for Signal Peak adjoins with the existing Fossil Ridge Recreation Management Area. Farther to the north, the Fossil Ridge RMA also adjoins with the existing Union Park SMA. The Working Group has decided to defer to the judgment of Senator Michael Bennet to decide whether these areas should be designated as one continuous SMA or three separate areas. They wish that its recommendations for the Signal Peak SMA and the Union Park SMA in this document are followed, but believe that the Senator will be able to make the best judgment on whether these areas should

be combined.

Next steps

- Have Senator Bennet decide whether this area should be combined with the existing Fossil Ridge RMA and the Union Park SMA
- Walk potential boundaries
- Talk to adjacent ranching families who currently use the area

Photo: Maddie Rehn

McIntosh Mountain Special Management Area

Recommendation: Wildlife-focused SMA

Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Summer motorized recreation allowed
- Summer mechanized recreation allowed
- Winter motorized recreation not allowed
- No new roads
- No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment, with a savings provision for the East West Antelope Trail, West West Antelope Trail, and Mill Creek Connector, subject to agency review
- Continued allowance of restoration efforts such as the Wet Meadows Resiliency Project
- Legislation should prescribe seasonal closures for motorized and mechanized use to protect critical wildlife habitat, subject to degree and timing determined by the managing agency

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Tier-1 and Tier-2 Sage Grouse habitat and known leks
- Areas of Outstanding (B1) and High (B3) Biodiversity Significance.
- Conservation populations of Colorado River cutthroat trout in West Antelope Creek and Beaver Creek.
- Underrepresented ecosystem type (sagebrush) in the nation's protected areas.
- Winter Range for mule deer and elk. Mule deer, elk, and bighorn sheep migration routes.
- Designated an 'Area of Critical Environmental Concern' by the BLM.
- High-use in the area just west of Wiley Lane from hikers, equestrian users, and snowshoers.
- Gunnison Trails has proposed two new loop trails in the northern part of the proposal area, as well as a connector trail to Mill Creek. While the BLM will make final use decisions, these trails could be open to both motorized and mechanized use.

- The trail beginning in Van Tuyl could also be open for hiking, skiing, and snowshoeing (with no grooming) during the winter, if wildlife was not stressed by extreme winter conditions.

Rationale for Recommendation

McIntosh Mountain was proposed for its exceptional wildlife values, including sensitive and threatened species, winter habitat, and Colorado River cutthroat trout conservation populations. As McIntosh Mountain is also close to town, Gunnison Trails sees the area as valuable for improving the accessibility of recreation to local residents and providing more options to a growing population.

The Working Group agrees that this area is deserving of a basic level of protection, including no new roads and a mineral withdrawal. They believe that both the recreational and wildlife values of this area make the area unsuitable for industrial development or new roads. The Working Group also believes that in this area, as in all areas that they have discussed, restoration efforts for climate change and the Gunnison sage-grouse, such as the Wet Meadows Resiliency Project, should be able to continue.

The areas of primary concern for wildlife habitat in this area are near the edges of the proposal where there are known Sage-grouse leks, in West Antelope Creek, and in the southern timbered part of the area. The proposed new trails from Gunnison Trails primarily don't overlap with these critical wildlife areas and where they do, more sustainable trails, in comparison to the existing routes used on the ground, could provide a benefit to wildlife.

This SMA seeks to strike a balance between wildlife and recreation by not precluding the future development of trails, but ensuring that the area remains closed to industrial uses.

Next steps

- Talk to adjacent ranching families who currently use the area
- Walk potential boundaries

Castle Special Management Area And Wilderness Addition

Recommendation: A wildlife-focused SMA and wilderness addition to the current West Elk Wilderness.

Full Consensus of the Working Group

Proposed Designations:

1. A Wilderness addition from the existing West Elk Wilderness Boundary to the Lowline Trail
2. An SMA from the Lowline Trail to the private property boundary with the following stipulations:
    - Summer motorized recreation not allowed
    - Summer mechanized recreation not allowed, except on the Lowline Trail
    - Winter motorized recreation not allowed
    - No new roads
    - No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Tier-1 and Tier-2 Sage Grouse habitat
- Areas of Outstanding (B1) and High (B3) Biodiversity Significance
- Part of the largest aspen forest in the world
- Elk winter range, production areas, and migration corridors. Mule deer winter range and migration. Bighorn sheep winter range.
- Existing mechanized use on the Lowline Trail, along with potential realignments and improvements
- Existing ditches and water structures - Several ditches and reservoirs exist in this area. These should be removed from the Wilderness to the extent practicable.

Rationale for Recommendation

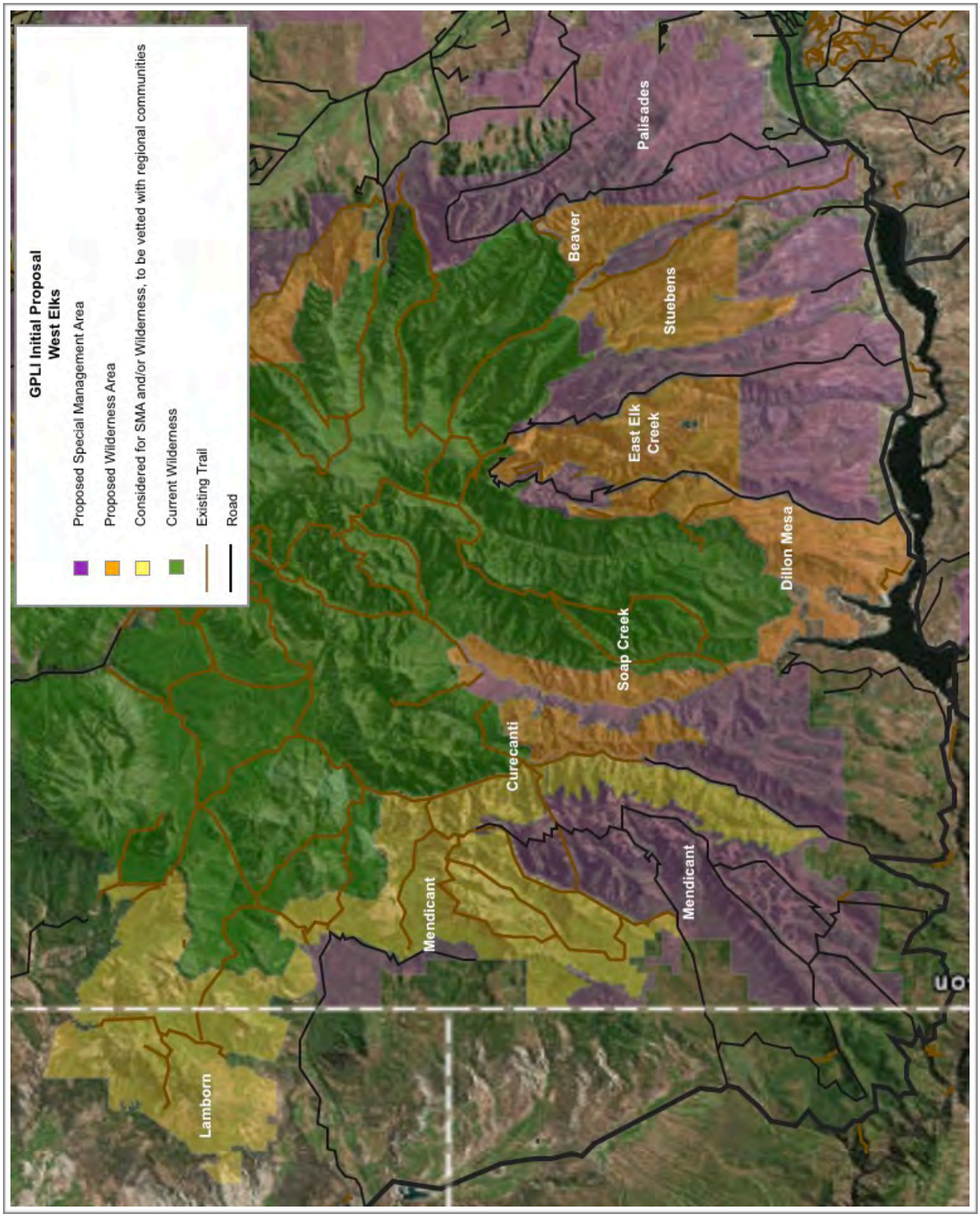
The Working Group believes that this area should be protected for its importance as wildlife habitat, recreational value, and scenic beauty. The recommended SMA would limit habitat fragmentation and water quality degradation by prohibiting extractive uses, as well as new roads and trails. The SMA would allow continued mechanized recreational use on the Lowline trail.

Next steps

- Walk potential boundaries
- Talk to adjacent ranching families
- Check on the ongoing maintenance needs for existing water structures

Photo: Dave Kozlowski

West Elks


GPLI Initial Proposal
West Elks
Proposed Special Management Area
Proposed Wilderness Area
Considered for SMA and/or Wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities
Current Wilderness
Existing Trail
Road
Palisades
Beaver
Stuebens
East Elk Creek
Dillon Mesa
Soap Creek
Curecanti
Mendicant
Mendicant
Lamborn

Mt Lamborn

Considered for SMA and/or wilderness addition, to be vetted with regional communities

Considered Recommendation: SMA and/or wilderness addition to the existing West Elk Wilderness

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Populations of Colorado River cutthroat trout, including conservation populations
- Water supply for the Town of Paonia
- Winter range for elk
- Migration corridors for mule deer
- Black bear concentration area
- Mapped lynx habitat

Rationale for Recommendation

Due to its remote location, high-quality habitat, and wilderness character, the Working Group considered this area for Wilderness designation. The Working Group is not aware of any conflicting uses in the area.

However, they feel uncomfortable making any decision without significant input from the Town of Paonia and Delta County on the suitability of any recommendation.

Next steps

- Talk to ranchers grazing in the area
- Engage regional communities to understand if wilderness is an appropriate designation for this area and acceptable boundaries.
- Walk potential boundaries

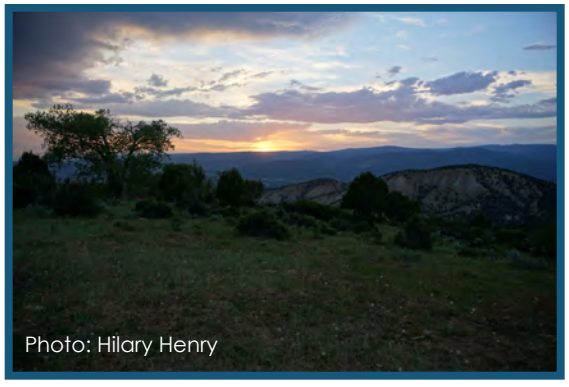


Photo: Hilary Henry

Mendicant

Considered for SMA and/or wilderness addition, to be vetted with regional communities

Considered Recommendation: SMA and/or wilderness addition to the existing West Elk Wilderness

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Winter motorized use coming from the Black Mesa
- Elk and mule deer winter range
- Elk production
- Remote with exceptional opportunities for solitude
- Water structures in the vicinity
- Colorado River cutthroat trout in South Smith Fork Creek
- Potential mountain bike trail development from the North Fork Trails Alliance Group (TAG)

Rationale for Recommendation

There was not consensus amongst the Working Group regarding a potential designation for Mendicant. Some members see the area to have high-quality wilderness characteristics, while others see an opportunity for mechanized trail development. The Working Group has agreed that considerable outreach is needed to Crawford, Paonia, Delta County, and the North Fork community to be partners in any decisions that are made for this area to determine what is an appropriate designation for this area.

There may be some winter-motorized use in this area coming from the Black Mesa that would not be compatible with a Wilderness designation. The Working Group tried to remove existing water structures and areas with motorized use from the potential Wilderness boundary, but this should be confirmed with Crawford, Paonia, Delta County, and the North Fork community.

Next steps

- Talk to ranchers grazing in the area
- Engage regional communities to understand if what is an appropriate designation for this area and acceptable boundaries.
- Walk potential boundaries

Curecanti Wilderness Addition

Recommendation: Wilderness addition to the West Elk Wilderness east of Curecanti Creek

Full Consensus of the Working Group

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Bighorn sheep overall range
- Elk winter range
- Migration corridor for mule deer
- Near a population of Colorado River cutthroat trout
- Wilderness character
- Winter motorized use coming from the Black Mesa
- Closer proximity to the Crawford Community than to Gunnison

Rationale for Recommendation

The Working Group recommends Wilderness designation for the east side of Curecanti Creek. This area has outstanding ecological values and a high sense of remoteness and naturalness. There are no known conflicting uses with wilderness for this area.

The west side of Curecanti Creek also has exceptional ecological and wilderness values. The Working Group has considered this area for Wilderness designation, but has not yet vetted it with Delta County and the Crawford community. The western side of Curecanti may have some winter motorized use, which would not be compatible with a Wilderness designation.

As the Working Group recognizes that these communities are the primary users of the land, they are waiting to make a final decision until considerable input is provided from the Delta regional communities.

Next steps

- Talk to ranchers grazing in the area
- Engage regional communities.
- Walk potential boundaries

Black Mesa Special Management Area

Recommendation: Wildlife and recreation-focused SMA

Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Winter motorized use allowed
- Summer motorized allowed
- Summer mechanized allowed
- Winter motorized allowed
- No new roads
- No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment
- Legislation should prescribe seasonal closures for motorized and mechanized use to protect critical wildlife habitat, subject to degree and timing determined by the managing agency

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Winter range and production areas for elk
- Migration corridors for mule deer
- Extensive winter motorized use on the Black Mesa

Rationale for Recommendation

This is a beautiful area with a high-level of naturalness. The area is also heavily used by ranchers, outfitters, and winter motorized users. The Working Group believes that the exceptional recreational, and to a lesser extent, wildlife characteristics of this area, make it deserving of protection.

As this area is near Crawford and Delta County, these communities should be engaged before any decision is made.

Next steps

- Talk to ranchers grazing in the area
- Engage regional communities.
- Walk potential boundaries

Soap Creek Wilderness Addition

Recommendation: Wilderness addition to the West Elk Wilderness

Full Consensus of the Working Group

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Bighorn sheep winter range, production, migration routes and overall range
- Winter range for mule deer and elk
- Migration corridor for mule deer
- Habitat for bald eagles
- Remote with high wilderness characteristics
- Area of Moderate Biodiversity Significance (B4)

Rationale for Recommendation

Soap Creek has outstanding ecological and wilderness values. With no conflicting on-the-ground uses, the Working Group proposed the area for Wilderness designation.

Next steps

- Talk to ranchers grazing in the area
- Walk potential boundaries

Dillon Mesa Wilderness Addition

Recommendation: Wilderness addition to the West Elk Wilderness

Full Consensus of the Working Group

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Geological formations
- Bighorn sheep winter range, production, migration routes and overall range
- Winter range for mule deer and elk
- Migration corridor for mule deer
- Tier 1 and Tier 2 Gunnison sage-grouse habitat

Rationale for Recommendation

Because of the exceptional wildlife habitat and wilderness characteristics, along with the lack of conflicting uses, the Working Group proposed Dillon Mesa for Wilderness designation.

Next steps

- Talk to ranchers grazing in the area
- Walk potential boundaries

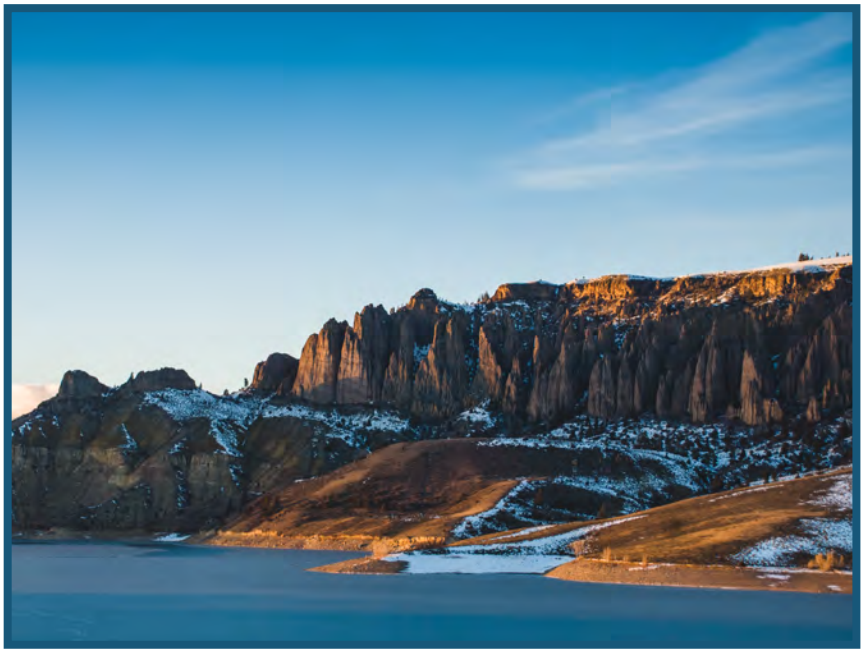


Photo: Mitch Warnick

East Elk Creek Wilderness Addition

Recommendation: Wilderness addition to the West Elk Wilderness

Full Consensus of the Working Group

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Winter range and migration corridors for mule deer and elk
- Elk production area
- Overall range and production area for bighorn sheep
- Riparian habitat

Rationale for Recommendation

East Elk Creek, like the other proposed additions to the West Elk Wilderness, has exceptional habitat. It is also remote, rugged terrain, with a high-quality wilderness characteristics. Because there are no on-the-ground conflicting uses, the Working Group proposed the area for Wilderness designation.

Next steps

- Talk to ranchers grazing in the area
- Walk potential boundaries

Steuben Creek Wilderness Addition

Recommendation: Wilderness addition to the West Elk Wilderness

Full Consensus of the Working Group

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Mule deer and elk winter range
- Overall bighorn range
- Migration route for mule deer
- Conservation Population of Colorado River cutthroat trout
- Area of High (B3) Biodiversity significance
- Lynx and bald eagle habitat

Rationale for Recommendation

Like the Beaver Roadless Area, the Steuben Roadless Area has exceptional wilderness qualities and high-quality wildlife habitat. As there are no current uses in the area that conflict with Wilderness designation, the Working Group recommended this area as a Wilderness addition.

Next steps

- Talk to ranchers grazing in the area
- Walk potential boundaries

Beaver Creek Wilderness Addition

Recommendation: Wilderness addition to the West Elk Wilderness

Full Consensus of the Working Group

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Sensitive riparian woodland
- Winter habitat for elk and mule deer
- Overall range for bighorn sheep
- Conservation Population of Colorado River cutthroat trout in West Antelope Creek
- Area of High (B3) Biodiversity Significance

Rationale for Recommendation

The Beaver Roadless area provides some of the most high-quality wildlife habitat in Gunnison County. It is in critical winter range for big game and is near a conservation population of Colorado River cutthroat trout.

As there are currently no uses in the area that are not compatible with Wilderness designation, the Working Group recommended that this area be protected as wilderness, due to its exceptional ecological value.

Next steps

- Talk to ranchers grazing in the area
- Walk potential boundaries

Palisades Special Management Area

Recommendation: Wildlife-focused Special Management Area

Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Summer motorized and mechanized recreation allowed
- Winter motorized not allowed
- No new roads
- No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment with a savings provision that would allow for the potential development of the Antelope Ridge Trail and connector.
- Legislation should prescribe seasonal closures for mechanized use to protect critical wildlife habitat, subject to degree and timing determined by the managing agency

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Tier 1 and Tier 2 Gunnison sage-grouse habitat
- Known Gunnison sage-grouse leks
- Areas of Outstanding (B1) and High (B3) Biodiversity Significance
- Winter range and migration corridors for mule deer
- Winter range, production, and migration corridors for elk
- Winter range, production, migration corridors, and overall range for mule deer
- Potential for logging as part of the SBEADMR project
- BLM Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

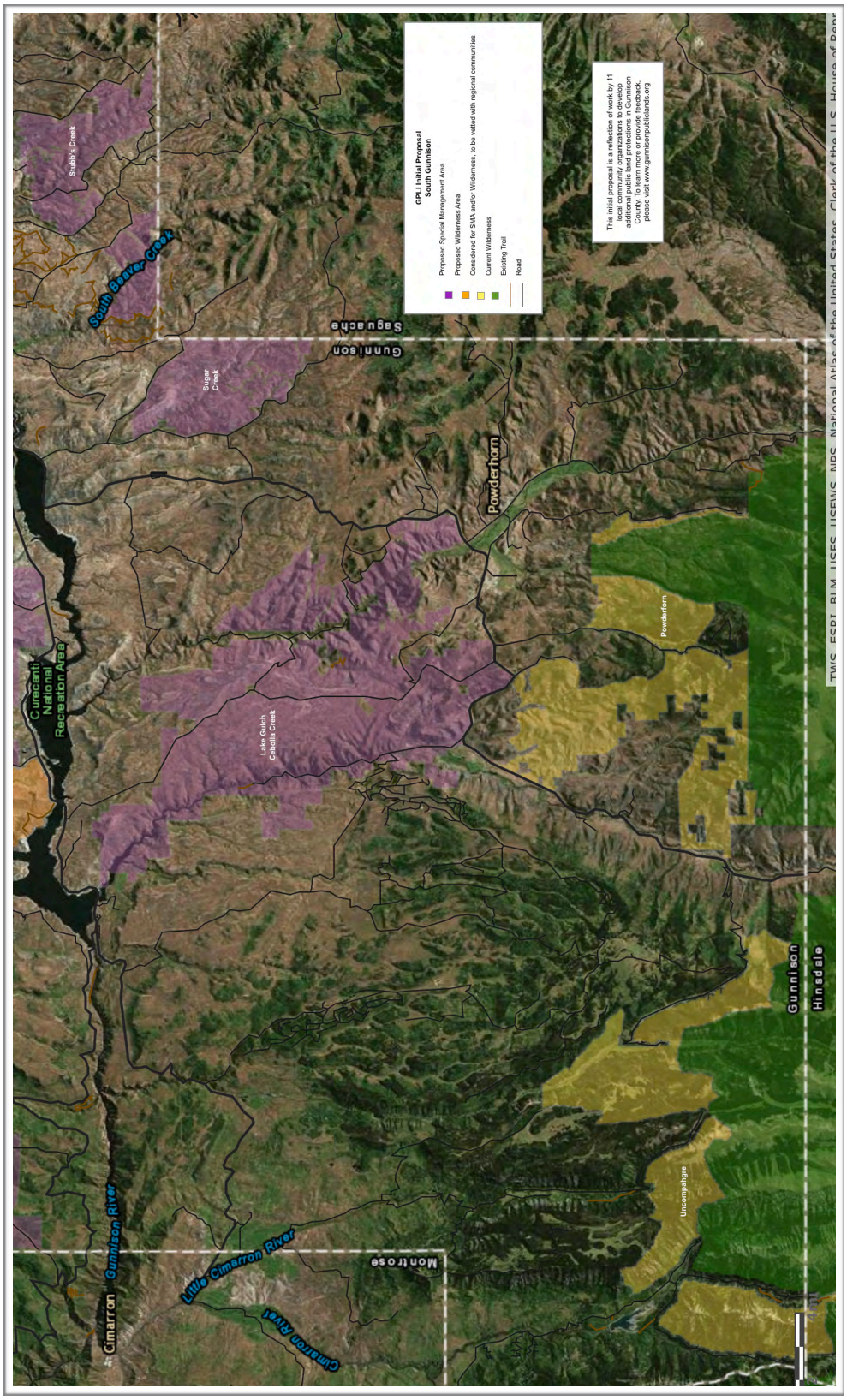
Rationale for Recommendation

The East Sportsmen's Conservation Area, with Gunnison sage-grouse leks, winter habitat for big-game, and several sensitive plant species, is some of the most important habitat in Gunnison County. The proposed SMA would allow existing uses to continue, including travel on system roads and trails and forest treatments through the SBEADMR project. The SMA would also, however, provide permanent protection for this critical ecological resource by limiting future development. The SMA balances this area's close proximity to Highway 50, extensive travel on backcountry roads, and critical wildlife resources.

Next steps

- Talk to ranchers grazing in the area
- Walk potential boundaries

Southern Gunnison



Stubb's Gulch Special Management Area

Recommendation: Wildlife-focused Special Management Area

Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Summer motorized recreation not allowed
- Mechanized recreation allowed
- Winter motorized recreation not allowed
- No new roads
- No new motorized or mechanized trails, beyond those existing at the time of enactment, with a savings provision for the potential development of the W Mountain to Bambi's Trail
- Continued allowance of restoration efforts such as the Wet Meadows Resiliency Project
- Legislation should prescribe seasonal closures for mechanized use to protect critical wildlife habitat, subject to degree and timing determined by the managing agency

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Tier-1 Sage Grouse habitat and known leks
- Area of Outstanding (B1) Biodiversity Significance
- Overlaps with a BLM 'Lands with Wilderness Characteristics' designation
- Underrepresented ecosystem type (sagebrush) in the nation's protected areas
- Winter Range for mule deer and elk.
- Proposed trail from the back of Tenderfoot (W) Mountain to Bambi's Trail in Hartman Rocks, that could traverse this area.
- The Old Spanish National Historic Trail could traverse this area.

Rationale for Recommendation

Stubb's Gulch is a relatively undisturbed area in an otherwise heavily altered landscape. This area is prime habitat for big game, Sage-grouse, and a threatened plant species (Gunnison Milkvetch). The Working Group agreed that Stubb's Gulch, as with the other areas in TU's original Winter Wildlife Areas proposals (Cebolla Creek, Sugar Creek, South Beaver Creek, and Stubb's Gulch), should be protected for these biodiversity values.

Currently, there are no existing roads, trails, mining claims, or oil and gas leases in the area. Gunnison Trails has proposed a new connector trail from the backside of Tender-

foot (W) Mountain to Bambi's Trail in Hartman Rocks. The group agreed that a reasonable compromise would be to use a savings clause to allow for the possible construction of this trail, but to request that Gunnison Trails try to route this trail as close to the edge of the designated area as possible.

Like South Beaver Creek, the Old Spanish Trail could establish an on-the-ground route through this area if it was determined as part of the historic route, but it would be required to be non-motorized and non-mechanized.

Next steps

- Talk to adjacent ranching families who currently use the area
- Walk potential boundaries

South Beaver Creek Special Management Area

Recommendation: Wildlife-focused Special Management Area

Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Summer motorized and mechanized recreation not allowed
- Winter motorized recreation not allowed
- No new roads
- Continued allowance of restoration efforts such as the Wet Meadows Resiliency Project

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Tier-1 Sage Grouse habitat and known leks
- Area of Outstanding (B1) Biodiversity Significance
- Overlaps with BLM 'Lands with Wilderness Characteristics' and 'Area of Critical Environmental Concern' designations
- Underrepresented ecosystem type (sagebrush) in the nation's protected areas
- Winter Range for mule deer, pronghorn, and elk.
- Proximity of Hartman Rocks and the Aberdeen Trail
- Potential for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail to overlap with the SMA boundary
- Potential for the Wet Meadows Resiliency Restoration Projects in the area

Rationale for Recommendation

The areas that TU proposed as its Winter Wildlife Special Management Areas (Cebolla Creek, Sugar Creek, South Beaver Creek, and Stubb's Gulch) all have exceptional wildlife habitat. South Beaver Creek, in particular, is notable in that it has both of the BLM's 'Lands with Wilderness Characteristics' and 'Area of Critical Environmental Concern' designations.

The Working Group agreed that these wildlife values should be protected through an SMA with the following stipulations: mineral withdrawal, no new roads or trails, no motorized or mechanized use, and guidance that the area should be managed for wildlife. No oil and gas leases, mining claims, roads, or trails currently exist in the area.

The South Beaver Creek area lies directly adjacent to the Aberdeen Trail and within the

backcountry zone of Hartman Rocks Urban Interface Area, designated the Gunnison sage-grouse CCA. The South Beaver Creek Area lies outside all existing and planned recreational trails at Hartman Rocks. Because the Aberdeen Trail was built recently, and according to sustainable trail guidelines, a standard 50' buffer should be sufficient for this trail.

The South Beaver Creek proposal area, along with Stubb's Gulch, lies in the general vicinity of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. While the Working Group generally does not want to interfere with the establishment of historic trails, some members were concerned about whether or not the establishment of this trail would allow motorized or mechanized use in the area, as it is sensitive wildlife habitat. The designation of an SMA should not affect the designation of an on-the-ground route of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail in this area, but would ensure that any such established on-the-ground trail was non-motorized and non-mechanized.

Next steps

- Talk to adjacent ranching families who currently use the area
- Walk potential boundaries

Sugar Creek Special Management Area

Recommendation: Wildlife-focused Special Management Area

Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Summer motorized and mechanized recreation not allowed
- Winter motorized recreation not allowed
- No new roads
- Continued allowance of restoration efforts such as the Wet Meadows Resiliency Project

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Tier-1 Sage Grouse habitat and known leks
- Area of Outstanding (B1) Biodiversity Significance
- Overlaps with a BLM 'Lands with Wilderness Characteristics' designation
- Underrepresented ecosystem type (sagebrush) in the nation's protected areas
- Winter Range for mule deer and elk.

Rationale for Recommendation

Similar to Lake Gulch/Cebolla Creek, Sugar Creek has exceptional qualities for wildlife habitat. The Working Group believes this area should be managed for wildlife. No system roads or trails exist in this area, so the Working Group believes that the area should be closed to all motorized and mechanized use. An existing system 4WD route off of County Road 31 will be excluded from the SMA with a Cherry Stem. To prevent habitat fragmentation, the Working Group also believes that the area should be closed to all mining and oil and gas drilling. There are no mining or oil and gas claims in the area.

Next steps

- Talk to adjacent ranching families who currently use the area
- Walk potential boundaries

Lake Gulch and Cebolla Creek Special Management Area

Recommendation: One combined SMA for the overlapping areas of Lake Gulch and Cebolla Creek

Full Consensus of the Working Group

An SMA with the following stipulations:

- Summer motorized and mechanized recreation not allowed
- Winter motorized recreation not allowed
- No new roads
- Continued allowance of restoration efforts such as the Wet Meadows Resiliency Project

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Tier-1 Sage Grouse habitat and known leks
- Areas of Outstanding (B1) and High (B3) Biodiversity Significance
- Underrepresented ecosystem type (sagebrush) in the nation's protected areas
- Winter Range for mule deer, bighorn sheep, and elk. Mule deer and elk migration routes.
- Possible exploration for rare earth minerals in the area.
- Motorized use on existing roads

Rationale for Recommendation

This area is exceptional habitat for big game and sagebrush species, including the Sage-grouse. Given that sagebrush ecosystems are often underrepresented in the national protected area system, this area would be a significant conservation gain.

The Working Group feels that this area should be managed for wildlife and be restrictive of other uses, including extraction and recreation. The SMA designation will allow existing roads (according to the 2013 Gunnison Travel Management Plan) including County Road 26, County Road 64, and several existing, system 4WD roads to remain open.

The group is interested in looking further into the existing mining claims in the region and will evaluate these before making any final determination to include this area in a final public lands package.

The Working Group intends to reach out to the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, one of the surrounding land owners, for their feedback on this and other proposed designations before including this parcel in a final proposal.

Next steps

- Research the mining claims in the area
- Reach out to the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
- Talk to adjacent ranching families who currently use the area
- Walk potential boundaries

Powderhorn Wilderness Addition

Considered for SMA and/or Wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities

Considered Recommendation: Wilderness addition to the Powderhorn Wilderness

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Includes summer range for elk, mule deer, black bear.
- Contain watersheds for Colorado River cutthroat trout.
- Potential lynx and sage grouse habitat has been identified.
- Potential timber projects proposed by the BLM's Gunnison Field Office
- Potential winter motorized recreation use

Rationale for Recommendation

The Working Group considered this area for Wilderness designation, but felt that the communities of Powderhorn and Lake City and other relevant stakeholders should be partners in any decisions that are made for this area.

The lack of trails and roads in this area provide a rugged backcountry experience. Parts of the proposed Powderhorn Wilderness Addition are BLM Wilderness Study Areas and are currently managed for wilderness qualities. This area sees little use besides back-country hunting and angling. The Powderhorn Wilderness Addition contains the head-waters of Indian Creek. The Addition also includes part of the West Fork of Powderhorn Creek.

The BLM has proposed timber and forest management projects in some of this area. The Working Group will need to coordinate with the BLM on any designation in this area.

Next steps

- Talk to ranchers grazing in the area
- Talk to the BLM about timber projects
- Engage regional communities in to see if SMA and/or wilderness is an appro-priate designation for this area and acceptable boundaries.
- Walk potential boundaries

Uncompahgre Wilderness Addition

Considered for SMA and/or Wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities

Considered Recommendation: Wilderness addition to the current Uncompahgre Wilderness

Primary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Unique geologic features including pinnacles and turrets
- This area contain summer habitat, winter concentration areas, and calving areas for elk
- Habitat for the American marten, American three-toed woodpecker, wolverine, northern goshawk, and boreal owl
- Bighorn Sheep range, as well as some areas of winter and summer range
- Wilderness character
- Potential winter motorized recreation use

Rationale for Recommendation

This area includes the Little Cimarron, Failes Creek/Soldier Creek, and Turret Ridge Roadless Areas. All of these areas are upper-tier Roadless Areas.

The Working Group considered this area for Wilderness designation - as the 2007 Draft Forest Plan recommended these areas for Wilderness. They plan on working with surrounding communities to see if this is a suitable recommendation.

Next steps

- Talk to ranchers grazing in the area
- Engage regional communities.
- Walk potential boundaries

Changes Integrated into the GPLI Initial Proposal

The Working Group made the following changes that significantly differ from the original proposals submitted by TU, BHA, and GPLI. The Working Group incorporated feedback from all working group members and sought to balance the needs of different interests when making these changes:

1. Poverty Gulch:
    - The extent of Wilderness was reduced to allow for existing winter motorized use. An SMA was added to protect against future industrial development.
    - The boundaries were adjusted to meet the needs of RMBL to access current and future research sites.
2. Whetstone:
    - The entire area was proposed as an SMA, rather than a combination of SMA and wilderness, to allow for existing motorized and mechanized use. Savings clauses for proposed trails were added.
3. Existing West Elk Wilderness Boundary:
    - The existing boundary will be pulled back slightly to allow for safe passage of winter motorized users through Ohio Pass.
4. Horse Ranch Park:
    - The area was changed to an SMA, rather than the originally proposed Wilderness, to allow for existing winter motorized and summer mechanized use. The proposed designation area was expanded.
5. Beckwiths:
    - The proposed Wilderness area was reduced to just the steep flanks of the Beckwiths range, minimizing conflicts with Wilderness designation and winter-motorized use. The SMA area on the west of Coal Creek was removed. A savings clause allowing for the Crested Butte to Paonia Trail was added.

6. Flat Top:
    - A savings clause for the Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail was added to the SMA.
7. Matchless:
    - The area below the ridge between South Matchless and Rocky Point on the northwest were removed from all designations to allow for winter motorized use.
    - Desires for intensive restoration work for bighorn sheep and preservation of wilderness character were balanced by splitting the remaining area between Wilderness and SMA designations.
    - Boundaries were adjusted to reflect Bureau of Reclamation's operational boundaries around Taylor Reservoir and Dam.
8. Union Park and American Flag Mountain:
    - The scope of the original Matchless-Spring Creek SMA in the Trout Unlimited Proposal was narrowed to two specific areas to accommodate additional uses on the landscape, especially recreational use.
9. Double Top:
    - Starting at Waterfall Creek, the area below the ridge between Double Top and Crystal Peak was removed from the Double Top designation to allow for winter motorized use.
10. Star Peak:
    - The area to the northeast of the ridge between Star Peak and Crystal Peak was removed to allow for existing winter motorized use.
    - Friend's Hut was removed from the potential Wilderness because it does not fit the wilderness definition of 'historical'.
    - The area between Trail #400 and the ridge to Star Peak was removed to allow for future trail realignment.
11. Signal Peak:
    - A savings clause for the Gunnison to Crested Butte Trail and the Signal Peak Trail Complex was added.
    - The designation area was extended to the north and east.
12. McIntosh Mountain:
    - Savings clauses for proposed trails were added.
13. Stubb's Gulch:
    - Provision barring human entry was removed.
    - A savings clause allowing a connector trail between W Mountain and Bambi's was added.
14. South Beaver Creek:
    - Provision barring human entry was removed.
15. Sugar Creek:
    - Provision barring human entry was removed.
16. Cebolla Creek/Lake Gulch:
    - Provisions barring human entry were removed.
    - Proposal areas were combined.
    - Provisions added to allow existing use of motorized roads.

17. Steuben Creek:
    - Proposal area was expanded.
    - Black Gulch Trail was removed from the proposal area.
18. Curecanti:
    - The west side of the proposed Wilderness addition was flagged for further discussion, due to concerns with winter motorized use, and added to the "Considered, to be vetted" category.
19. Mendicant:
    - Areas near the Bald Mountain Reservoir were added to the "Considered, to be vetted" category.
20. Mendicant SMA:
    - SMA changed to allow for winter-motorized use.

*Additional changes are expected for areas in the '*Considered for SMA and/or Wilderness, to be vetted with regional communities* category'. These include Curecanti, Mendicant, Mt. Lamborn, Munsey Creek/Erickson Springs, Clear Fork, Pilot Knob, Crystal River, McClure Pass, Treasure Mountain, East Gunnison Divide, Powderhorn, and Uncompahgre.

Sustainable Trail Reroute Provisions

A component of the Working Group process was to identify trails that border or are near a Wilderness boundary that need future trail maintenance. The goal was to evaluate the condition of those specific trails and topography to find an appropriate setback from the Wilderness boundary to ensure the necessary space for trail sustainability reroute work. The Working Group sought to balance the need to preserve the integrity and size of Wilderness areas, with the need to maintain sustainable trails into the future.

A subgroup of the Working Group, including Gunnison Trails, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association, Gunnison O.H.V. Alliance of Trailriders, High Country Conservation Advocates, and The Wilderness Society, met, identified, and discussed trail buffers for eleven trails. They presented their suggestions to the entire Working Group and the Working Group agreed that the proposal and any future legislation stemming from this report should include the following trail buffer recommendations.

Trail	Trail Buffer	Exceptions and Notes
Rosebud	Wilderness should be placed 50 ft. from Rosebud Creek	East Cement Wilderness should stay southeast of Rosebud Creek and away from Rosebud trail with a buffer of 50 ft.
Cement Mountain	100 ft., with an additional buffer of 300 ft. from the saddle of Cement Creek to East Cement Mountain	The switchbacks on the climb up Cement Creek need rerouted for an improved recreational experience and to mitigate erosion concerns. The GOATs feel 300' would be enough to create a sustainable trail reroute.

Aberdeen	50 ft.	N/A
Trail #400	50 ft. with EXCEPTIONS	Exception: Beginning at the intersection with Hunter Hill Trail, the Star Peak Wilderness should be pulled back to the ridgeline between Star Peak and the Trail to give room for reroutes. This area will be added to the Double Top SMA. This change is shown on the proposal map
Deer Creek	300 ft. with EXCEPTIONS	Exceptions: The Deer Creek Trail will have a 300ft buffer to the north, with the Wilderness boundary out 500' for reroutes at the Black Hole, Dry Creek, and Perry Creek. There needs to be a 700ft buffer from W Brush Creek road on the south.
Lowline Trail	300 ft.	This trail should be GPS'd before the final Wilderness Boundary is drawn.
West Brush Creek Road	TBD	This road needs to be GPS'd to define the Valley Floor in the winter. The Double Top SMA then will be drawn to this boundary.
Union Canyon Trail	100 ft.	
Cross Creek Trail	100 ft.	
Raggeds	TBD	This trail should be closely monitored. If the proposed alignment from Pitkin County Open Space for the Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail, to be released in 2018, is acceptable to North Fork and Gunnison Valley stakeholders, the Wilderness boundary should snap to this alignment.
Doctor Park	100 ft.	

Photo: Hilary LeBlanc

Next Steps

This initial proposal represents the group's vision for public lands in Gunnison County. The proposal is meant to give the Gunnison County community a solid and carefully vetted outline of what public lands legislation could include in Gunnison County. However, the coalition recognizes that community involvement is essential.

The group has now completed their initial recommendations and are presenting them to the community for review. Starting summer of 2017, the group will begin engaging the community in a robust conversation about the proposal and what it would mean for the future of public lands. They believe that the following steps should be taken before any legislation is drafted:

- The Gunnison County community and state and federal land management agencies have an opportunity to review and comment on the proposal.
- Communities who are users and stakeholders of these public lands are consulted as decisions are made for areas in the proposal defined as 'Considered for SMA and/or Wilderness, To Be Vetted With Regional Communities'.
- Boundaries of proposal areas are fine-tuned to ensure that they are compatible with the topography, existing water structures, fences, and the needs of local grazers.
- This initial proposal is revised to reflect the information learned and feedback received in the bullet points above.

Thinking long-term, the group hopes that this initial proposal will serve as the basis for federal legislation. After they have incorporated comments from community engagement efforts, they hope that a revised proposal can be drafted as legislation. The coalition intends to remain involved in the community engagement, drafting, and congressional advocacy that will be necessary to move this initial proposal to a final bill introduced to Congress. They will operate as one coalition known as the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative throughout the next steps and will continue to make decisions collectively during the further development of this proposal.