

December 7, 2017

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests
Attn: Plan Revision Team
2250 South Main Street
Delta, CO 81416

To whom it may concern,

The mission of the Crested Butte Land Trust is working with our community: To forever protect and steward open lands for vistas, recreation, wildlife, and ranching, thus contributing to the preservation of Gunnison County's unique heritage and quality of life. Our mission aligns with multiple aspects of the current GMUG forest plan revision and as close neighbors and partners in management the Land Trust respectfully submits the following comments.

**8. Multiple uses and their contributions to local, regional, and national economies:
Rangeland Management:**

We ask that the revised GMUG forest plan better recognize the importance of grazing operations to our communities. Most Gunnison Valley agricultural producers rely heavily on public land grazing, and we encourage the Forest Service to engage in management that alleviates the growing pressures of recreation and enables continued use of public land for grazing. The increasing challenges faced by our Valley's ranchers result in the risk of increased conversion of ranch lands to rural residential land use."

9. Recreation:

The Crested Butte Land Trust's 6000+ acre portfolio of protected lands is intricately linked to the Gunnison National Forest, with over 1100 acres of publicly accessible property in the immediate vicinity of Gunnison National Forest Land. The Land Trust hosts over 100,000 annual visits to its publicly accessible fee owned lands every year, many of whom begin their adventures on Land Trust property before making their way to the Gunnison National Forest. Greater collaboration for management solutions between public and private landowners will be critical for managing the impacts that result from increasing recreation in the Gunnison National Forest and Slate River Valley in particular.

A transparent adaptive management strategy for evaluating emerging recreational uses will be key. The Land Trust often establishes its own criteria to be compatible with the management of adjoining public lands. Consistent planning, management, and evaluation across jurisdictional boundaries is a must if we want to protect the mosaic of public and private protected lands in the plan's scope.

Preserving the present for the future

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14. Land Status and Ownership, Use and Access Patterns:

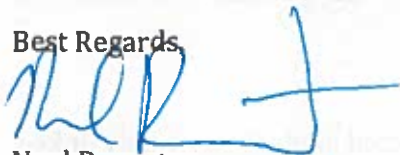
The Crested Butte Land Trust provides public access on many of its fee owned properties. Access for recreation is a key conservation value the Land Trust is responsible for upholding long term. Several of these properties are traversed by undocumented access routes for forest service system roads. Additionally, the Land Trust holds conservation easements on private properties where public is prohibited. These properties are traversed by undocumented accesses for forest service system roads. These vague access routes pose a challenge for the management of our property and the stewardship of conservation easements that we hold. The Land Trust supports further clarity in defining the Forest Service's role in managing public access routes and maintaining (i.e. signing) these routes across private property.

Conservation easements are a critical resource management tool for our complex landscape. The Land Trust encourages greater forest planning efforts with local conservation easement holders to prioritize the acquisition of conservation easements on lands adjacent to the National Forest that protect recreational access, wildlife habitat, agricultural lands, and scenic views that further enhance the public benefit of the Gunnison National Forest.

As a community driven organization focused on protecting the unique character of the Gunnison Valley, the Land Trust has a stake in the future of our publicly accessible lands that lie on the doorstep of our valley communities. The land disposal criteria overlook qualified non-governmental organizations as partners in for potential disposal projects. The Land Trust encourages the Forest Service to entertain exchange with local conservation organizations where feasible.

I hope that you will take these comments into consideration as you complete the revision of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests.

Best Regards,



Noel Durant
Executive Director
Crested Butte Land Trust

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