

USFS GMUG Forest Plan Revision  
Forest Assessments: Integrity and System Drivers and Stressors

Comments

by

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for

Gunnison County

1. Page 25, sagebrush shrubland: Note that black sagebrush also occurs on dry, rocky slopes, generally of southwest to southeast aspects. Because this is an important food source for wintering Gunnison sage-grouse, verifying occurrence and identifying forest-specific management options is essential to this planning process for this component of the sagebrush ecosystem.
2. Page 63, Sagebrush: This discussion appears to indicate that the current condition of the sagebrush ecosystem on the GMUG is not of the desired condition to support the Gunnison sage-grouse (GuSG). In the Gunnison Basin much of the sagebrush ecosystem on USFS managed lands meets the habitat guidelines as outlined in the Gunnison Sage-grouse Rangeland Conservation Plan (2005). Gunnison County recommends that the USFS manage the sagebrush ecosystem within the range of the GuSG to meet these guidelines to help ensure the continued persistence of that species.
3. Sagebrush: We believe it is important to note that though the USFS does not manage a large area of the sagebrush ecosystem that supports Gunnison sage-grouse, those areas of this ecosystem that it does manage are of significant importance to this species and should (continue) to be a conservation and management priority under a revised forest plan.
4. Page 94, 10.: Gunnison County recommends the following change to what appear to be current regulations regarding the use of weed-free forage in wilderness areas: Require user camping overnight with recreational livestock to carry and use cubed, pelleted, or rolled feed and/or certified weed-free hay where grazing is prohibited.

Non-recreational (commercial, grazing permittees, etc.) should not be excluded from the requirement to utilize only weed-free livestock food sources in wilderness areas. We are unclear as to whether the weed-free forage requirement extends onto all USFS managed lands. It is our recommendation that it should, considering the issues with weeds on public lands, particularly in the context of Gunnison sage-grouse.