To the GMUG Forest Management Plan Revision Team,

I am a Masters of the Environment student specializing in Sustainability Planning and Management at the University of Colorado - Boulder. I am also an avid recreationist and enjoy spending time in National Forests. National Forests provide me with recreation opportunities that National Parks do not as they allow me to bring my dog with me on my travels. I also believe that National Forests have a special place within the USDA and USFS as they are designated as Multi Use and therefore the livelihood of many communities depends upon the health of the forest.

I am writing in support of the two proposals set forth by The Citizens’ Wilderness and Designations Proposal (<https://www.gmugrevision.com/>). In the Citizens’ Wilderness and Designations Proposal you will see the following areas proposed to be designated as Wilderness Area:

* The **Elk Park area in central Grand Mesa National Forest** - this area is an important water supply for the North Fork Valley communities and serves as a habitat for many sensitive species such as the boreal owl, northern goshawk, and American martin. As water becomes more and more scarce in the western states, protecting the water that we do have is of vital importance.
* The **Chalk Mountain area also in central Grand Mesa National Forest** – this area is special because approximately 1/3 of the 8,200 acres is comprised of poorly represented ecosystem types (which means that less than 20% of this ecosystem type is already protected). This could serve as an opportunity for the Forest to serve as a research station on this ecosystem type.
* The **Coal Mountain area of Gunnison National Forest** – this area is home to conservation populations of Colorado River cutthroat trout. These native fish are often threatened by non-native trout species as they interact and interbreed. By designating this area as a wilderness area, the Forest can both help to conserve this species and increase the recreation potential of the area thereby increasing the local community’s economic capabilities.
* The **West Baldy area of Gunnison National Forest (just southeast of Gunnison itself)** – this area would act as an ecological connection between the San Juans, the Sawatch ranges, and the Sangre de Cristo Range. This allows wildlife to travel between these areas and extend their habitat without interfering with human ventures. One of the animals likely to use this passage is the lynx.

In conclusion, by accepting the proposal by The Citizen’s Wilderness and Designations Proposal, the GMUG National Forest can improve the water quality and quantity of local communities, increase biodiversity in the region, and improve the local economy through recreation opportunities.

Thank you for your time,

Isabelle Petersen