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Grand Mesa., Uncompahgre and Gunnison
Forest Plan Revision #51806

Dear Forest Planning Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the GMUG Forest Plan Revision process. I'd like to offer the following comments on the Scoping document of March 18.

The Need for Quiet-Use Backcountry Recreation Should be Recognized and Managed For

My comment concerns Part II: Key Needs for Change, Contribute to Social and Economic Sustainability, page 4, "Consider a landscape-scale strategy to provide adequate motorized recreation opportunities as well as acceptable levels of noise heard within non-motorized areas."

The statement implies that the backcountry will be managed for a mixed bag of recreational uses, intermixing motorized and non-motorized. Backcountry non-motorized recreation (hiking, mountain biking, trail running, nature viewing, etc.) needs to be recognized as a distinct recreational use which should be accommodated. There are currently over three times the number of non-motorized users than motorized users in the GMUG and there is a rising national trend in demand for quiet, human-powered activities. (Draft Forest Assessments: Recreation, November 2017, Chapter 4, pg. 25 and Chapter 3, Table 7.) Recreational users seeking quiet opportunities need places to go where "quiet" is guaranteed. Areas being managed for recreation should ensure specific experiences are provided. Quiet recreation experience should be *anticipated* not *accidental* depending on what time of day or season of the year a user happens to be there.

Therefore, I suggest the statement be changed to "Consider a landscape-scale strategy to provide adequate motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities" to focus the need for managing for specific recreational outcomes.

I also suggest that the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum be incorporated into Part II to emphasize the need for managing for certain setting characteristics to provide the types of experiences and benefits for Forest recreational users.

Additional Wilderness is Needed and Should be Included in the Forest Plan

I believe there is a need for additional designated wilderness to support the Scoping Document's theme to "Maintain the Diversity of Plant and Animal Communities" as a Key Need for Change (pg. 5). Maintaining existing wildlife habitat "in the context of increasing pressure from development, including recreational trails" is critically important to forest health. During my lifetime, recreation has grown to be a very large industry which, unfortunately, can negatively affect healthy ecosystems. I fully support the Citizens' Wilderness & Designations Proposal for the GMUG developed by the Conservation Coalition. The proposal is a result of extensive field work and analyses combined with public input produced by organizations whose sole objective is maintaining and improving the health of the Forest. I also support the initial proposal of the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI) for additional wilderness designations. The GPLI has

done an extensive amount of work bringing local stakeholders together with the common goal of maintaining healthy public lands. Please include both proposals' suggestions for designated wilderness in the Forest Plan.

In addition, I support designation of the Granite Basin area as wilderness. This area was recommended for Wilderness in the 2007 Proposed Land Management Plan for the GMUG. Granite Basin is currently a relatively unfragmented big game habitat. My husband and I have hunted this area almost every year since moving to Crested Butte eight years ago. We know the area is used by hunters from around the country. We met one hunter from Wisconsin whose family has hunted the Granite Basin area for several generations. Granite Basin is primitive, with very little evidence of human activity. There is only one established trail from Cement Creek which leads 2 miles into Horse Basin, then peters out. I have hiked all areas of the Granite Basin area from Horse Basin to the top of Cement Mountain from both ridges to the east and west. The only "trails" I found in these areas are game trails. I've included some photos of my hikes in the Granite Basin area for reference.

Numerous studies show a positive effect of protected public lands on local economic performance. The economic measures of per capita income, growth in per capita income, and growth in per capita investment income are all positively associated with protected public lands. "On average, counties with national parks, wilderness, and other forms of protected public lands benefit through increased economic performance." (*The Effect of Protected Federal Lands on Economic Prosperity in the Non-metropolitan West*, Ray Rasker, Patricia H. Gude, and Mark Delorey, *The Journal of Regional Analysis & Policy*, 2013). I believe the designation of Granite Basin as wilderness will have a positive economic effect on Crested Butte South and surrounding communities.

If the boundaries of the proposed Granite Basin area can be adjusted, based on science supporting protection of forest and wildlife health, to be within the boundaries of existing recreation trails, then there will be no change to existing recreation opportunities resulting from the designation of the area as Wilderness.

I look forward to the next stage in the Forest plan revision process. Thank you again for keeping the public involved. I appreciate your hard work and efforts in incorporating the desires and needs of all stakeholders (including the wild stakeholders) into the planning effort.

Sincerely,

Deidre Witherell



Following Game Trails Toward Cement Mountain



Cement Mountain in November



Looking South into Horse Basin



Encountering Another Hunter on Top of Cement Mountain



Top of Cement Mountain Looking Northeast



Top of Cement Mountain Looking Southeast