I am writing to register my strong support for the Forest Service 2007 Wilderness recommendation for Granite Basin in Gunnison County.

This is a rare opportunity to preserve wilderness near populated areas. My family has enjoyed being able to hike in the pristine Granite Basin multiple times every year. The solitude and communion with nature is integral to our physical and mental health, as well as to our children and future generations. While there are alternative wilderness areas, they are less accessible and consequently visited far less often. Moreover, having such a wilderness area close to this popular vacation destination will only increase the attractiveness of Gunnison County and thus add to the local economy.

I, as well as most bikers, bike for the exercise not the enjoyment of nature. Gunnison County is already the mountain biking capital of the U.S., so we do not need to invade every undeveloped area with more mountain biking trails. As a biker I know that the challenge of riding these trails actually prevents me from enjoying the environment as I do hiking because 99% of my attention is on staying upright. While I do enjoy the views when I stop to do so, that is only 1% of the time I spend on the trail

When I am hiking trails that also allow biking, the presence of bikers - some of which are not sufficiently respectful of hikers - and the alarm when they approach at five times the speed of hikers and the need to quickly jump off the trail to allow them to pass - effectively negates the serenity I seek when hiking.

Moreover, biking and snowmobiling are disruptive to the animals who depend on the wilderness for their lives. The longer term effect could be detrimental to the economic benefits from the hunting season by changing the grazing and migration patterns of elk and deer.

Therefore, I submit that we need to preserve areas that exclude activities that degrade the solitude of the area (such as biking and snowmobiling). Since the Forest Service does not and will not in the foreseeable future have the budget and manpower to monitor and enforce a “managed” area, the only effective way to preserve Granite Basin and ensure the benefits for future generations is to designate it a wilderness area.