



OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

Administration - Building - Engineering – Road and Bridge
Traffic - Planning - Solid Waste Management – RTPO- Code Compliance

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May 31, 2018

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

RE: Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests- Plan Revision: Scoping

Dear Forest Plan Revision Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests Plan Revision. Mesa County supports the prudent use of public lands and resources and the approach the Forest Service is proposing to maintain a healthy, diverse landscape while addressing historical and developing issues on the forest appears appropriate. We appreciate the cooperative relationship Mesa County has with the Forest Service (USFS) and look forward to reviewing subsequent documents for the project.

The following comments are based on the scoping document from the USFS dated March 2018.

Part I: Forest Plan Vision, Roles and Contributions

Public Enjoyment

In the first paragraph under Public Enjoyment, the list of activities should include “equestrian trails and uses”.

Commodity Use & Community Connections

The Scoping document does not identify mineral and energy resources. As an integral part of the forests, mention of these resources should be added to the Commodity Use & Community Connections section. Potential language to be added to the fourth paragraph could include “The GMUG's important energy and mineral resources contribute to the economies of local communities, the region, state and nation.”

The fifth paragraph should include businesses when discussing the draw of the area’s desirability. The last sentence could read “The beauty and accessibility of the landscape also contributes to the desirability of the area for new businesses and year-round and part time residents”.

Part II: Key Needs for Change

While we realize the term “Needs for Change” is used in many plans, we believe most reviewers will better understand the term “Key Issues” rather than “Needs for Change”.

Provide Strategic, Adaptive Direction

An additional paragraph in this section detailing budget and capacity constraints in regard to effectively managing and achieving the identified “needs for change” on the GMUG would be beneficial.

In the first bulleted paragraph, “in collaboration with a variety of public and private partners with appropriate expertise” should be added to the end of the last sentence.

In the second bulleted paragraph, we suggest adding “in close collaboration with CPW, research universities, etc.” to the end of the last sentence.

In the third bulleted paragraph, the second sentence should be revised to “Consider updating plan direction to allow more flexibility as new methods and proven best management practices emerge”.

The final sentence in that paragraph should end with “while assessing short and long term impacts to the natural and social environmental”.

Contribute to Social and Economic Sustainability

In keeping with our above comment regarding the importance of mineral and energy resources to the economies in the area, we suggest adding the words “and mineral” after to the word energy in the preamble.

In bulleted paragraph 11, mention of a plan for new and appropriate uses within the changing landscapes and areas that were once spruce-fir forests is advised.

The last sentence in bulleted paragraph 12 should include mention of a cooperative and collaborative relationship with municipalities, irrigation providers and other state and federal resource management agencies.

Maintain the Diversity of Plant and Animal Communities

In the preamble “watchable wildlife” should be included in the last sentence.

Integrate Resource Management for Multiple Uses and Ecosystem Services

We recommend adding the phrase “healthy vegetative communities” after the word objectives in the first bulleted paragraph.

The third bulleted paragraph should read “Address high conflict areas, both existing and potential, between public recreation/ access and private lands”.

Incorporate Best Available Science, Update to Existing Law and Policy

It is important to note in the second bulleted paragraph that those areas designated since 1983 need management consistent with adopted objectives within management plans for those areas, e.g., Old Spanish Trail.

In the last bulleted paragraph, there is no mention of working with appropriate water users and agencies. We believe watershed planning needs to be in coordination with appropriate water users and agencies and consistent with plans currently in place.

Build an Accessible, Useful Plan

The finalized plan needs to be easy to use for agency personnel as well as all permittees and other forest users.

Part III: Management Area Framework

In the Management Area Framework, reference to “themes and categories” drafted in the 2007 Proposed Plan should be specified for readers unfamiliar with the 2007 Proposed Plan.

In regard to area management, specific language as to whether travel management “zones” will be established within each of the management emphasis areas or if each of these has their own travel mode emphasis should be clearly defined. It should be obviously stated that the Plan will set the direction for a future detailed route by route management plan consistent with this framework.

We also recommend adding management framework, or identifying which management area it would fit into, for areas identified as suitable for energy and mineral development.

Natural Processes Dominate

Please clarify whether an area where natural processes dominate will be available only to non-motorized uses or if other mechanical modes of transportation, such as bicycles, will be permitted?

Recreation Focus Areas/High-Use Recreation Emphasis

In regard to designated trails, we recommend differentiating between segregated and shared motorized/non-motorized trail systems.

Thank you for your consideration on the above points. Please keep us updated as the project progresses.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Baier". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Peter Baier, P.E.

Mesa County Deputy Administrator of Operations/ Public Works

cc: Mesa County Board of County Commissioners
Patrick Coleman, County Attorney
Shane Walker, U.S. Forest Service
Samantha Staley, U.S. Forest Service