01 June 2018

Samantha Staley, Forest Planner

Grand Mesa-Uncompahgre-Gunnison National Forest

2250 South Main St Delta, Colorado 81416

[gmugforestplan@fs.fed.us](mailto:gmugforestplan@fs.fed.us)

Dear Ms. Staley,

As a member representing Backcountry Hunters and Anglers from the Gunnison Basin, I would like to recommend the inclusion as Wilderness for the roadless areas near Sawtooth, Lake Branch, West Baldy and Cochetopa Creek.

Founded in 2004, BHA is a nonpartisan group of sportsmen and -women who “seek to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting, through education and work on behalf of wild public lands and waters." Built upon the workings of Theodore Roosevelt and the teachings of men like Aldo Leopold and Jim Posewitz, BHA is an organization that is at the forefront of many of today’s public-lands conservation efforts. BHA works on a diverse set of issues that all merit their own stand-alone writings, but in short, BHA involves itself in the following: the rights of Americans to access and experience public lands and waters; the protection, conservation, and stewardship of those public lands and waters; and the support of ethical pursuit of game species by advocating for fair-chase hunting and fishing laws.  
  
At just over 20,000 members, BHA has nearly doubled in size in the last year, up from 10,000 around this time in 2017. Comprising mostly young and passionate outdoor enthusiasts from all backgrounds and regions of the country, BHA has a youthful tenor that feels unique in the conservation organization world.

I, along with my son and daughter, have personally hunted and fished in the roadless areas near Sawtooth, Lake Branch, West Baldy and Cochetopa Creek. They all have prime fish and/or wildlife habitat which helps people such as myself enjoy hunting and fishing in a wild setting. These areas also provide connectivity for wildlife migrations, connected protected habitats and genetic connectivity across the landscapes of the Gunnison Basin which has wildlife migrations similar in magnitude to those near the greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. These wild settings are becoming increasingly scarce in our rapidly changing world which makes these areas special and even more worthy of Wilderness designation.

All of these locations do not have any conflicting uses that I am aware of that would compromise it ability to be managed as wilderness and they also have the values of being relatively lower in elevation with greater seasonal productivity. These are areas on the landscape where wildness can take its course and provide the wild hunting and angling experiences that people such as myself crave.

I have attached three maps that were produced by other organizations but represent landscape scale management recommendations for the Gunnison National Forest that we, as hunters and anglers who pursue game in wild landscapes, receive great benefit. We support these recommendations for the benefits they provide to wildlife and to people who enjoy pursing fish and wildlife in wild landscapes.

Sincerely,

Kevin Alexander

Gunnison Basin Member,

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers





