Janie VanWinkle

VanWinkle Ranch LLC

2043 N Road, Fruita CO 81521

970-210-4292

[vanwinkleranch@gmail.com](mailto:vanwinkleranch@gmail.com)

Attention: GMUG Plan Revision Team

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Scoping Stage for the GMUG Plan Revision. My name is Janie VanWinkle and our family has been involved with grazing on the GMUG for 4 generations. I grew up enjoying all that the Forest has to offer and spent all of my summers there as a youth. We currently have a permit on the Uncompaghre in the Mudholes/Lakes Allotment. We frequently work on range improvements to further manage the cattle grazing and provide habitat improvements for wildlife. A lot of time horseback allows us to have the opportunity to interact with many outdoor recreation enthusiasts that enjoy the Forest as well.

**Forest Plan Vision, Roles & Contributions**

According to the Department of the Interior, grazing on public lands contributes a minimum of $1.5 billion to the national economy. In Mesa County alone, every cow represents more than $600 to the local economy. Cattle production is the largest single segment of the Mea County economy. This is according to information from the Tri River Extension Service. As stated in the Scoping document, there are approximately 51,000 head of cattle permitted. This is over $30 million in economic impact to the local communities in and surrounding the GMUG.

Ranchers who graze on public lands also serve as stewards for that land. We frequently work with our Range Conservationist to identify where invasive species are gaining a foothold. With limited budgets, FS employees appreciate additional eyes on the land.

We strongly support the bulleted statement under “Commodity Use and Community Connections” related to livestock grazing and rangeland resources. Our family has been a part of this process for over 100 years and we support the rangeland program on the GMUG and ask that adequate resources be dedicated to the range programs to ensure that they can continue. This is a valuable component of the Forest Service’s statutory obligation to provide for multiple use on the Forest.

**Key Needs for Change**

Our family supports the need for development of a rangeland monitoring plan on a landscape level. This plan must be meaningful and repeatable. Livestock permittees should be engaged with the monitoring process that focuses on site specific analysis. Site specific capabilities and analysis should be implemented. We are on the land and it matters to each of us how the land is responding to our management.

Specific site potential needs to be considered when describing desired plant communities. Determinations of stubble height and composition cannot be standardized due to differing soil conditions, moisture, etc. For example, the area in the Bald Hills unit on the Uncompaghre cannot be considered on the same standards as the area around the Indian Point on Grand Mesa.

As I mentioned earlier in this document, we interact with outdoor recreationalists on a frequent basis. We see the impact of campers leaving trash and other debris in many areas. Many areas are being loved to death. In other words, they are being used in an irresponsible manner. In an area north of the Divide Forks campground on the Uncompaghre, the very shallow soils have been substantially impacted by dispersed camping and vehicles driving off the designated areas. Recreation must be managed on a regular basis and a key element of managing it is monitoring the impacts.

**Management Area Framework**

Our family supports the multiple use concept on the GMUG. It is important that historical uses continue as we find new ways to enjoy and sustainably use the Forest.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to be a part of the GMUG Plan Revision process.

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