



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

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1 October 2018

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests

Attn: Plan Revision Team

2250 South Main Street

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gmugforestplan@fs.fed.us

RE: CPW Comments - Grand Mesa Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest Draft: Wilderness Evaluation Report (August 2018)

Dear Plan Revision Team:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in a review of the *Draft: Wilderness Evaluation Report* (August 2018) for the Grand Mesa Uncompahgre Gunnison National Forest (GMUG) Plan Revision. Colorado Parks and Wildlife's (CPW) statutory mission is to perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, to provide a quality state parks system, and to provide enjoyable and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that educate and inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of Colorado's natural resources. This mission is implemented through our 2015 Strategic Plan¹ and the goals it embraces which are designed to make CPW a national leader in wildlife management, conservation, and sustainable outdoor recreation for current and future generations.

CPW provided written comments on the subject matter assessments being revised as part of this planning effort on December 8, 2017, January 26, 2018, and March 9, 2018. In addition, CPW provided written scoping comments on June 1, 2018. These previous comments are incorporated herein by reference.

In our previous comments, CPW expresses substantive concerns over the characterization of the socioeconomic importance of fish and wildlife-related recreation, and the potential for fish and wildlife populations and wildlife-related recreation opportunities on the GMUG to be negatively impacted by increasing motorized and non-motorized trail densities and higher intensity trail-based recreation.

Please consider the following comments on the *Draft Wilderness Evaluation Report (August 2018)*. CPW has highlighted in *Table 1 - CPW Wildlife Emphasis Areas and USFS Wilderness Evaluation*, specific areas where the wilderness characteristics and values identified in the USFS Draft Wilderness Evaluation Report may or may not support CPW's wildlife population management goals and concerns.

¹ Colorado Parks and Wildlife 2015 Strategic Plan (November 2015)
<http://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/About/StrategicPlan/2015CPWStrategicPlan-11-19-15.pdf>



The Wildlife Emphasis Areas (WEAs) identified in Figure 1 are specific geographic areas of great importance to wildlife on the GMUG for the reasons identified in Table 1 (see attachments). They are organized generally by USFS District, biological community type, and Ch 70 Wilderness Designation. Within the description of each WEA we have highlighted specific management concerns for wildlife in that geographic area identified by local CPW staff, and how management of the WEA integrates with the findings of the Draft Wilderness Evaluation Report.

Conclusion

CPW appreciates the opportunity to review the *Draft: Wilderness Evaluation Report* and participate in the assessment phase of the GMUG Forest Plan Revision. Wildlife managers are increasingly concerned that competing uses, such as increased recreational trail development and year-round use, are not always compatible with the long-term sustainability of robust wildlife populations that support wildlife-related recreation opportunities. In order to help balance these competing recreational uses, CPW has provided descriptions of *Wildlife Emphasis Areas* (WEAs) and specific management recommendations for these areas to maintain their wildlife value. These WEAs are critical to maintaining robust wildlife populations on the GMUG.

We are encouraged by our positive working relationship with GMUG staff, and we look forward to continued collaboration on the Plan revision as a cooperating agency. CPW recommends an in-person joint review of our combined assessment comments so that both GMUG and CPW staff have a better understanding of how these comments are being addressed.

If you have any questions or would like clarification on any comment in this letter please contact Southwest Energy Liaison, Jon Holst at 970-375-6713.

Sincerely,



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