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July 24, 2019

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests
2250 S. Main Street
Delta, CO 81416

Re: Preliminary Comments on Working Draft of the Revised Land Management Plan, Project #51806

Thank you for the opportunity to provide preliminary comments on the Working Draft of the Forest Plan Revision currently in process with the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests. With 96% public land, Hinsdale County values a strong partnership with our land management agencies.

- Hinsdale County supports the overall approach of a user-friendly, clear and specific Forest Plan that is not redundant. We believe the Working Draft reflects this approach.
- Hinsdale County supports reducing the complexity of management areas from the 1983 Plan to the current Working Plan for clarity.
- Hinsdale County supports the shared vision of a “landscape of resilient ecosystems sustaining balanced multiple-use opportunities far into the future.” We appreciate the emphasis on how Forests contribute to the identify and economies of adjacent communities, our prosperity and continued way of life.
- Hinsdale County supports the watershed-based approach to maintain our high-quality and high-value local source of 1.9 million acre-feet of water.
- Hinsdale County supports the emphasis on vegetation management, including the proposed 6,486.3 acres identified as suitable for timber production in the northeast portion of Hinsdale County.
- Hinsdale County strongly supports the removal of woody material through the timbering program, and the increased safety for our community through the Slumgullion Pass firebreak. We support the two fire management emphasis areas – of the enhancement emphasis areas where a wildland fire can play a key role in maintaining, restoring, and enhancing ecosystem resiliency, and a protection emphasis area where there may be values at risk. Hinsdale County supports decision-making on an ignition by ignition basis and an active partnership to reduce wildland fire risk in the Wildland Urban Interface.
- Hinsdale County values the emphasis the Working Draft places on the “history of livestock grazing by ranching families in the region” and the “specialized rural agricultural society with a strong interest in and capacity for public land stewardship.” Hinsdale County is a right-to-farm-and-ranch county.

- Hinsdale County supports continued access to existing trails and roads.
- Hinsdale County supports the emphasis on public enjoyment, maintaining scenic values, the connection of our communities on tourist-based outdoor recreation, and further development of year-round recreation opportunities, specifically the upgrade of recreation infrastructure to meet the increased use at the Uncompahgre Peak Trailhead; the development of a management designation for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and the corridor designation of the Silver Thread Scenic & Historic Byway; managing high-use dispersed camping sites within riparian zones to reduce negative impacts; and the focus on interpretation and education of cultural, historical and ecological resources, and the value placed on our mining and homesteading heritage.
- Hinsdale County understands that the Working Draft seeks to reflect the current, on-the-ground travel management policies. In the Working Draft, the summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) in the Sawmill / Rambouillet area identifies a broader area for semi-motorized travel. We understand this buffer area allows reduction of sight and sound impacts and may leave more options available for future planning and opportunities.
- Hinsdale County would like further discussions and clarification regarding any proposed changes with winter recreational opportunities. In the Working Draft, the winter Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) in the area south of County Road 30 and south of Highway 149 indicate non-motorized winter travel. The development of our winter trails and their multi-use is critical for our residents and our visitors.
- Hinsdale County supports the robust monitoring plan which is critical to developing evidence-based and informed strategic goals and actions. By proactively identifying and documenting the changing conditions and common indicators, this monitoring will strengthen our understanding and effectiveness to meet our shared vision.

We realize that we are halfway through this extensive planning process and that work will continue for a 2020 release of DRAFT Plan and formal comment period. Thank you for your work and our partnership as we work together for stewardship on our public lands.

Respectfully,



Stan Whinnery
Chair