

October 2, 2019

Dan Dallas
Forest Supervisor
Río Grande National Forest
1803 W. Highway 160
Monte Vista, CO 81144

Dear Supervisor Dallas,

The Upper Río Grande is filled with a diverse array of wildlife species including Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, pronghorn, Canadian lynx, black bear, cougar, bald and golden eagles, turkey, and cutthroat trout. These species, including big game, can move considerable distances to meet their daily, seasonal, and ecological needs. Increased fragmentation from more roads, fences, development, fires, and other human-created and natural barriers are making it more difficult for wildlife species to migrate safely across landscapes. As the primary stewardship agency of our nation's forests, the U.S. Forest Service has an important role in identifying and addressing habitat connectivity for wildlife so that they can safely move and migrate across forest lands. Protecting wildlife connectivity and critical habitat will continue to support exceptional hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and other recreational opportunities that are critical to the economic livelihood and identity of many communities in Southern Colorado.

While this forest belongs to each and every American equally, those of us who are lucky enough to live near the forest have a personal connection and stake in the final outcome of the forest plan that is being finalized right now. Our way of life in Southern Colorado depends highly on our wildlife resources that, for centuries, have been intertwined with the cultural fabric of the Upper Río Grande Basin. Wildlife has been integral in supporting rural communities and local economies while our interaction with wildlife has fostered the creation of important cultural traditions that continue to be passed down from generation to generation.

As an Alamosa County Commissioner, I support preserving and enhancing wildlife connectivity so that wildlife can safely move and migrate across forest lands. It is important to adopt and establish the proposed Spruce Hole/ Osier/ Toltec special interest area and the proposed Chama Basin Watershed Protection special interest area to ensure that these areas get the special protections and management they deserve in the finalized version of the Río Grande National Forest Service plan.

Sincerely,



Helen Sigmond
Alamosa County Commissioner