

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests
Attn: Plan Revision Team
2250 South Main Street
Delta, CO 81416

November 26th, 2021

Dear GMUG Planning Team,

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest. As a farmer in the North Fork Valley, using irrigation water from the North Fork of the Gunnison, I depend on your responsible decisions on the use of the national forest land that surrounds me.

I concur with the Valley Organic Growers Association (VOGA) comments, and support Alternative D in regard to management-area designations. I strongly support the *Community Conservation Proposal* and *Gunnison Public Lands Initiative* and request that the management-area designations in these two proposals be adopted in the final plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest.

I share VOGA's concern over protection of the water that flows from the national forests that surround Paonia, Hotchkiss, and Crawford, through my irrigation ditch, and onto my farm and vegetables. I echo their call for increased collaboration, communication, and coordination between the Forest Service and the local communities for activities that may impact our drinking and irrigation water. I have actively engaged in commenting on oil and gas activities with the BLM and COGCC over the past decade or more, and have found it increasingly difficult to learn about and understand the activities on our public lands that may harm my farm, including oil and gas development, spills, and timber sales. Increased communication will help farmers and ranchers in our communities become aware of these activities and improve trust between the communities and the US Forest Service. I encourage you to facilitate communication of activities and proposed activities so those of us who are concerned with their effects feel like we have a voice in the decision-making process.

I also agree with VOGA's support of Wildlife Management Areas on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest, and ask that these areas include additional protections for wildlife, like a standard or guideline that requires or encourages maintenance of habitat blocks of at least 500 acres, having no roads or other human intrusions in big-game habitat.

Please incorporate the above recommendations in your draft plan and alternatives moving forward in the revision process. Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Thanks,

Mark Waltermire
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