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November 26, 2021

Hinsdale County is pleased to provide the following comments on the current version of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, Gunnison (GMUG) national forests Draft Plan.

- Outdoor recreation is an economic driver for Hinsdale County and Lake City, and the overall increase of visitation impacts roadways, trails, recreational infrastructure, natural resources, and visitor experience. We support efforts to increase funding and innovative partnerships to address issues, especially in the heavily-visited areas (in Hinsdale, these locations include the 14,000+ peaks of Uncompahgre Peak and Wetterhorn Peak).
- The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, the Colorado Trail, America's Byways Silver Thread Scenic & Historic Byway, and the Alpine Loop Backcountry Byway pass through Hinsdale County. These pathways are vital to our continued economic health. The management of these in a cohesive, collaborative way to address sustainable tourism across jurisdictional boundaries is a primary goal for Hinsdale County.
- We understand that travel management decisions will be made through project-level planning process, separate from the Forest Plan document.
- We support the existing motorized access routes, and encourage vehicular access routes to remain open through hunting season.
- Hinsdale County values the over-the-snow travel groomed routes as currently allowed.
- The mountainous terrain of Hinsdale County, along with its remoteness from primary travel routes, often means that timber sales or production are not economically feasible. We support an increased emphasis on fuels reduction in the GMUG public lands to create defensible space around our forested wildland urban interface community of Lake City.
- Our community is proportionately impacted by natural disasters on public land and supports mitigating and preventative action.

With 96% public land, Hinsdale County has a unique location that spans four Ranger Districts on three National Forests (the Rio Grande, the San Juan, and the GMUG) and the Gunnison Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management. Hinsdale County was formed around use of public lands – for mining, logging, grazing, and recreation. Our current economic future remains tied with our beloved public lands and the continued protection of clean water, clean air, responsible tourism, and multiple use management. We support the blended approach to bring together diverse values with a focus on recreation-management, restoration of forest health, and reduction of fuels.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

/s/ Kristie Borchers

Commissioner Kristie Borchers

/s/ Robert Hurd

Commissioner Robert Hurd

/s/ Greg Levine

Commissioner Greg Levine