



MONTROSE COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
317 South 2nd Street
Montrose, CO 81401
Phone: 970-249-7755
Fax: 970-249-7761

October 18, 2021

USFS: Grand Mesa Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests
2250 South Main St
Delta, CO 81416

Montrose County is submitting comments in support of Alternative C. These comments were drafted in the interest of forest health and effective implementation of best management practices to protect and improve both the functionality and resiliency of our forest ecosystems. These comments are submitted in support of science, collaboration, and management directives that foster efficient and effective forest management.

An overly-prescriptive forest plan hinders advancements in stewardship principals and the effectiveness of future forest health initiatives. This approach would not allow adequate adaptation to changing science, future management capacities, and changing conditions in our forests.

Failure to support a plan emphasizing adaptive management imperils the future health and functionality of our forest ecosystems. To effectively protect and improve forest health requires a plan that allows for contiguous implementation of best management practices. Further, with changing conditions in our forests, it's critical to maintain the flexibility to integrate emerging science. A patchwork application of special use areas inhibits the continuity necessary for lasting success. With management criteria in place to protect any given set of desired conditions, a prescriptive plan with complex land use designations creates unnecessary layers of complexity. This complexity would tax limited management capacities and could inhibit stewardship efforts.

Changing conditions in our forests severely impact resiliency and their capacity to independently sustain ecological functionality. The scale of current and future threats to forest health demands efficiency, continuity, and proactive management approaches. Any actions hindering the efficient implementation of adaptive management imperils our forest ecosystems. An effective response to these threats is dependent on (1) Management continuity across the landscape (2) Prioritization of objectives in consideration of cost and management capacities (3) Sustaining management infrastructures. To support an effective response to forest health threats, it is important to acknowledge the role of private industry.

While the timber industry has economic value, the true value of our regional timber producers is in their contributions to forest health and wildfire resilience. That said, the revenue crated by merchantable forest products vastly increases management capacities. In this way, the complex economic variables of a timber sale or forest plan define their value as a partner in forest health and wildfire resiliency