



December 15, 2022

Doug Vilsack, State Director  
Bureau of Land Management, Colorado State Office  
2850 Youngfield Street  
Lakewood, Colorado 80215  
Via email at: [BLM\\_CO\\_Thompson\\_Divide@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_CO_Thompson_Divide@blm.gov)

**Re: Support for the Proposed Thompson Divide and Mt. Emmons Mineral Withdrawal**

Dear State Director Vilsack,

Silent Tracks is a 501(c)3 nonprofit membership-based organization located in Gunnison County, Colorado. Our mission is *“to promote, protect and enhance human-powered recreation in the backcountry of the Gunnison Valley”*. Human-powered recreation includes hiking, backpacking, trail running, cross-country skiing, climbing, snowshoeing, mountain biking, etc. Most of our members participate in multiple human-powered activities.

The Federal Register / Vol. 87, No. 199 / Monday, October 17, 2022 / Notices indicates the Thompson Divide and Mt. Emmons Mineral Withdrawal is proposed for a period of 20 years to protect agricultural, ranching, wildlife, air quality, recreational, ecological, and scenic values in the Thompson Divide Area of Colorado. Because our members actively participate in a variety of outdoor recreation activities, preserving lands in close proximity to our community which are included in the proposed Thompson Divide Administrative Mineral Withdrawal, Silent Tracks strongly supports the 20-year protection that this mineral withdrawal would secure.

Outdoor recreation is a precious activity that is vital to our community, and protecting landscapes that ensure scenic values and recreational opportunities are values so very important to our members, the local community and our economy.

USDA Forest Service National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey Results National Summary Report Data collected FY 2015 through FY 2019 and the GMUG Visitor Use Report FY2019 (see Table 13 below) showing that non-motorized, non-mechanized users collectively form the largest group of users and you can see from the chart below that the hours spent camping, hunting, backpacking and viewing natural features is significant.

National Visitor Use Monitoring Results

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison NF (FY 2019)

**Table 13. Activity Participation**

Activity	% Participation*	% Main Activity‡	Avg Hours Doing Main Activity
Viewing Natural Features	52.8	13.2	3.7
Downhill Skiing	35.3	27.8	5.0
Viewing Wildlife	33.0	1.5	3.5
Hiking / Walking	29.9	14.7	3.8
Relaxing	20.7	3.6	12.0
Driving for Pleasure	18.1	7.5	3.4
Cross-country Skiing	15.3	7.5	3.4
Fishing	10.1	7.5	7.1
Developed Camping	6.0	1.5	38.4
Bicycling	5.4	4.1	3.7
Motorized Trail Activity	4.4	2.4	8.6
Picnicking	3.8	0.2	1.0
Nature Study	3.5	0.3	3.4
Hunting	2.9	2.2	27.4
Some Other Activity	2.5	1.3	6.9
OHV Use	2.5	0.4	2.1
Primitive Camping	2.3	0.9	32.3
Nature Center Activities	2.1	0.0	0.0
Backpacking	1.6	0.6	14.8
Visiting Historic Sites	1.5	0.0	0.0
Snowmobiling	1.4	1.2	2.4
Non-motorized Water	1.1	3.4	2.2
Other Non-motorized	1.0	0.1	5.3
Gathering Forest Products	1.0	0.0	4.6
Other Motorized Activity	0.6	0.0	0.0
Resort Use	0.4	0.1	8.0
Horseback Riding	0.3	0.0	7.0
Motorized Water Activities	0.3	0.0	0.0
No Activity Reported	0.1	0.5	

The proposed mineral withdrawal is not only good for our residents and visitors alike, but also for the protection of the wildlife, waters and scenic value this area encompasses.

Sincerely,

Keith Bauer  
President