



Board of County Commissioners  
Matt Salka, Chair  
Marsha Porter-Norton, Vice Chair  
Clyde Church, Commissioner

**ACCOUNTABILITY · INTEGRITY · RESPECT**

1101 East 2nd Ave  
Durango, CO 81301  
(970) 382-6219

March 26, 2024

Noah Daniels  
USFS Columbine Field Office  
367 Pearl St  
Bayfield, Colorado 81122

RE: Comments on J-Firm Project

Dear Mr. Daniels:

La Plata County Board of Commissioners appreciates this opportunity to review and comment on the USFS Junction Falls Integrated Resource Management or J-Firm draft environmental assessment. This project is located within the San Juan National Forest within La Plata County in the Junction Creek, Logchutes, and Falls Creek/Hidden Valley area. This project proposes to promote ecosystem resiliency and function by improving core values of the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI) on 8,200 acres of land.

This project's core values include long-term benefits that would improve forest health, reduction of high-intensity fire, and increase resiliency to insects and disease. La Plata County believes this project aligns with our shared commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable land management. This project holds significant promise for our community, offering a balanced approach that considers ecological preservation and economic vitality. The draft environmental assessment reflects the dedication of the US Forest Service in addressing the concerns and interests of local stakeholders. La Plata County supports this project enhancing our natural surroundings and contributes to the well-being of our residents.

La Plata County has the following comments:

- The Draft EA indicates collaboration with local entities to achieve goals with a detailed Forest Health summary and treatment prescriptions, but lacks detail on notification procedures.
- The Draft EA discusses the reduction in the average age and density of Gambel Oak in the Dry Fork/Junction Creek area. The proposed treatments would increase the proportion of palatable oak for big game while also improving access to big game cover.
- The reintroductions of native vegetation and other desirable plant species would improve habitat for big game, also in the Dry Fork/Junction Creek area.
- The reduction in activities would coincide with seasonal migrations of elk and deer as proposed by CPW (Colorado Parks and Wildlife).

- La Plata County appreciates the implementation of a water development rehabilitation process to support groundwater dependent ecosystems. Habitat surveys would occur prior to implementation in wet meadows deemed suitable for the recently listed Silverspot Butterfly and preservation of existing springs in the Junction Creek/Log Chutes area.
- La Plata County supports the improvement of Junction Creek Road #171 through chip seal or asphaltting, which will decrease the dust and material runoff with less maintenance.
- La Plata County supports the streambank rehabilitation and erosion control along Junction Creek.
- La Plata County supports the authorization of emergency egress from FS Road #065 in the Falls Creek/Hidden Valley area.
- La Plata County supports the proposed cultural survey to mitigate impacts in areas that may hold cultural significance in the Junction Creek/Log Chutes area.

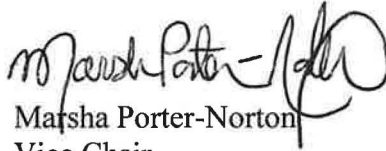
The Board of County Commissioners appreciates the effort of the US Forest Service and engagement with the public for this project. Thank you again for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft environmental analysis for the proposed project.

Sincerely,

LA PLATA COUNTY  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



Matt Salka  
Chair



Marsha Porter-Norton  
Vice Chair



Clyde Church  
Commissioner