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Comments: Comments on GMUG planning

Hi GMUG planning team,

I'm pasting my comments below and attaching the same comments as a file. Thanks,

Bill Day

Dear GMUG Planners,

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the planning process. My single biggest concern with most land management planning is the historic tendency of agencies, including the FS to protect only the left over areas that no one wanted for extractive uses. This has left us with some protection for Spruce-fir and tundra habitats and almost no protection for mid and lower elevation habitat. Of course having very high elevation areas conserved is great for species that live there, but is of no value to the majority of mid elevation species who can't use those areas. The word planning should mean making a conscious decision to manage and protect all habitat types.

Fortunately the 2012 planning rules seem to direct the FS to remedy this through ecosystem representation. I am especially concerned about the habitat types that are really important to wildlife and ones for which GMUG has particularly important or outstanding samples of. It seems obvious that aspen, especially pure or climax aspen, bordered by parkland, is a prime example of both value to wildlife and of areas where GMUG has better, more unique areas than most other Forests. The Muddy and Buzzard Creek drainages are good examples of this. Mountain shrub or Gamble oak habitat is also represented better on the GMUG than most forests. Although the ecotone where the top edge of the shrub hits the bottom edge of the aspens is great, even lower shrub habitat is important. Currant Creek is an example.

Ecosystem Representation should be incorporated into the plan to protect the remaining large areas of all veg types from degradation from increased motorized traffic and industrialization (mainly O&G development) of the forest. Obviously most lower and mid elevation areas- especially if they aren't steep- don't qualify for Wilderness or Roadless designation, but they are often the most important areas for many wildlife species, and are important for human recreation. Stronger protection for the best climax aspen edges (Western Purple Martin habitat) from gas leasing and poorly planned drilling would be one of the most important changes we could hope for from the new plan.

Issues that GMUG has mentioned that are critical include considering climate change in all planning, fire and insects (which relate to climate), weeds and increasing recreation.

Regarding the GMUG page on Species of Special Concern, it is not apparent how this is an improvement. Especially if it only helps species that are almost beyond saving. The old Region 2 Special Status Species sounded better, if it is used to actually make a difference in projects on the ground. GMUG specialties such as Northern Goshawk, Purple Martin, Flammulated and Boreal Owl, plus mule deer and elk should be considered. I know GMUG has a lot of info and knowledge on these and other species, and it needs to be used in the plan. Protection of important veg, especially when considered on a landscape scale might be more important. Planning for protection of habitat core areas and connectivity is one of the most important part of FS planning.

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