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Comments: Please accept the following as Scoping Comments on the GMUG Forest Plan Revision:

Generally I would like to urge to plan revision team to incorporate the polygons from the Citizens' Wilderness and Special Designation proposal as an official alternative in the process going forward. It is based on ground truthed research regarding lands with wilderness characteristics as well as areas needing special protection.

Specifically I want to advocate for two areas on the Uncompaghre plateau I have visited in recent years which qualify for wilderness management: Upper Dominguez and Kelso Mesa.

Upper Dominguez accessed off the Tabaguache trail is adjacent to the Wilderness portion of the Dominguez Escalante NCA. From our visit last fall along the Black Point trail I can say that it has many characteristics to recommend it for primitive management. It is already included in the Colorado Roadless Rule, has remote vehicle access to its non motorized trailheads, shows little sign of human alteration, and provides ample opportunity for solitude. Some of the largest Pinion and Juniper trees I have ever seen exist in this rare mid elevation swath of unspoiled terrain. (A panoramic view of the general area taken from Tabaguache Trail road along the perimeter of the area along with a tree example is attached along ).

Adjacent Kelso Mesa is a second area on the Plateau which is included in the Colorado Roadless Rule and currently managed as such by the FS. I visited this large remote section off Divide Road several years ago on horseback and was struck by its unspoiled beauty and opportunity for a rare back country experience. Larger old growth evergreen trees were a unique site on the Plateau and little evidence of human activity. I recommend the FS look at the criteria it used to exclude the northern portion of Kelso in the Escalante Breaks area (which is included in the Colorado Roadless Rule) from its wilderness quality inventory due to perhaps past vegetative management treatment. I plan to submit further comments regarding this section after closer inspection this summer.

Finally I want to also recommend the highest management protection for the Mule Creek Important Bird Area (IBA) recognized by the Audobon Society as an important nesting area for Purple Marten and other cavity nesters. This area adjacent to the Electric Mountain Recommended for Wilderness section north of Paonia is unique in the landscape in that it has extensive healthy aspen forests adjacent to large meadows and deserves special FS management before it is lost to the kind of natural gas development that is going on around it.