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Organization:

Title:

Comments: (Hard copy scanned and attached, body of letter below)

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the DRAFT Wilderness Evaluation as part of the ongoing GMUG Forest Plan Revision process.

A letter of comment has been provided recently by the Hinsdale County Commissioners raising their concern with regard to wilderness and other federal designations. That letter does NOT represent most of the citizens and property owners in Hinsdale County.

The County has a very high percentage of property owners who are seasonal and vacation users with around 71 % of the housing units owned by non-residents. Non-residents are also non-voters, and their views with regard to Hinsdale public lands have not been the same as our politicians in recent years.

The Hinsdale County economy relies heavily on tourism, and tourists love our public lands because of the serenity, wild beauty, and unspoiled scenic vistas that we treasure. Our economy also relies heavily on non-resident property owners who do not have a voting voice in the County. Our pristine public lands are unique and unrivalled in the lower 48. Many, if not most, of Hinsdale property owners and lands users favor maintaining this scenic and unspoiled treasure, and adding to it with additional wilderness or protected designations where possible.

In the past, the Commissioners have pointed toward threats such as wildfire, insect, and disease issues they believe are unmanaged in wild areas. This is a false argument. As you know, these are natural processes. You also know that the Wilderness Act has special provisions that allow for intervention and management in cases of wildfire, insect, or disease outbreaks, at the discretion of the Secretary of Agriculture.

The recent insect outbreaks and wildfires were natural events. They were not caused by unmanaged protected areas. As we see all across the West, these events occur in private, managed, and unmanaged areas without regard to these classifications. So-called management will not stop or reduce these events in the future.

Our public lands belong to all of us. They are a treasure that must be protected from commercial use, motorized abuse, and other misuse. Where possible, our government agencies should lead the way to protect other areas that qualify for the future of our children and grandchildren.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of those of those of us that are ignored by our local politicians.

Respectfully,

Bernie Krystyniak