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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Chris and I'm an artist and environmentalist from Denver, Colorado. I'm writing today to encourage the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests to encourage a highly conservation-based final Forest Plan. Since the Plan will likely determine the management of the forests for a couple of decades, I think it's of the utmost importance to ensure that we protect species and locations to the best of our ability within it, using the best-known science, especially as we are starting to see the effects of climate change, which will only increase as time goes on.

Specifically, I would like to see the final Plan make all protections for Gunnison sage-grouse mandatory, especially those protecting leks. Currently, there are about 5,000 Gunnison sage-grouse in existence, mostly in Utah and Colorado. Since we have the ability to do so, we should be doing all we can to protect those living in Colorado now, which means protecting their habitat wherever it might be.

I would also like to see increased Wilderness areas in the final Plan. Specifically, those that are enumerated in the Community Conservation Proposal and the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative. I've been reading a lot about the 6th Mass Extinction and the Half Earth Plan and I think setting aside lands that qualify as Wilderness would be a huge help moving forward.

I do appreciate that the draft Plan proposes to establish conservation watershed networks to protect sensitive species like trout and endangered ones like the boreal toad. I would like to see the final Plan provide details on how these networks should be applied and maintained.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to voice my concerns and requests. I would really like to see us do all that we can to protect our Colorado species and their habitats as much as possible, especially with the knowledge that climate change will make a huge impact on our species.

For your amusement, I'm attaching an illustration that I made of Gunnison sage-grouse, during the #UnscienceAnAnimal trend.

Thanks again,
Chris Talbot-Heindl
Denver, CO