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First name: Michelle

Last name: Wilk

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Additional Working Draft Comments

Good Afternoon,

I am emailing to submit additional comments that were collected from our community in regards to the GMUG Forest Plan Revision Working Draft. I attempted to submit them through the online comment tool but see that it has been taken down. I apologize for not getting these over on Monday. There are 8 comments in total.

Please see attached comments and let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Regards,

Michelle Wilk

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Administrator and Outreach Coordinator

High Country Conservation Advocates

p: 210.416.0125

a: 716 Elk Avenue | P.O. Box 1066, Crested Butte, CO 81224

w: www.hccacb.org

Oh-be-joyful was one of the first watersheds my wife and I explored when we moved to the Crested Butte area. We were there in the autumn and the fall colors combined with cascading water all dropping down from the Raggeds wilderness was incredible. I've since been back many times and in many seasons. The beauty, diversity, and serenity certainly warrant wild and scenic designation in my opinion.

I live here and recreate year-round. More watersheds- Oh-be-joyful definitely is worthy of protection but more watersheds should be included in the priority list. Headwaters are a priceless resources. Colorado River cutthroat trout protections-more of these.

CB resident since 12/1988. Worked NPS, BLM, NFS, and RMBL using degree in Environmental Studies (UCSC, 1987, B.A.). This region is my habitat of choice as an adult. I understand many land use approaches, differences, strengths, and weaknesses.

Wildlife of all species that are present in GMUG indicate the health of our overall bioregion. Wilderness designation is a must in the West Elks to eventually connect with these areas already in the San Juans. Think Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYI)!

Watershed protection is a top priority for the GMUG with all eleven streams included. Conservation watershed networks are a good plan. There must be standards in place that prohibit clear-cutting, mining, storage of fuels, and any toxic chemicals and avoid "ditching, damming, dewatering (and) flooding of any kind of wetlands.

The overall plan/working draft needs some fine-tuning on many points: wildlife management must be scrutinized in terms of interactions between species as well as being site-specific (i.e. mtn. ranges, valleys, riparian and migration corridors).

Hunting and fishing areas, specifically the upper North Fork/Upper muddy creek and Cochetopa Hills areas must be designated as wildlife mgmt. areas.

I think the USFS for proposed wildlife mgmt. area scheme for GMUG. Lower route density is needed in these areas. The standard should state that existing densities, where below whatever density standard is adopted, shall not be increased.

Recreation is an important reason for a comprehensive and detailed plan. Our rivers are needed in pristine condition since there are so many headwaters in GMUG. I am a swimmer and still enjoy discovering new swimming holes after 31 years. Boating, tubing, fishing as well as camping, backpacking, birding and wildlife viewing can and should continue, and are low-impact.

- I'm an avid fly fisherman and the conservation of watershed is very important to me and the thousands of other Coloradans who enjoy the sport. The plan proposes to establish conservation watershed networks to protect watersheds and sensitive species like trout and boreal toad, but provides no detail on how these networks would be applied and maintained. Please close any loopholes that would allow mineral exploration or extraction that would directly have a negative effect on fish species.

- Overall, the plan provides very weak, and in some cases non-existent, direction for protection of important resources. More standards, i.e., mandatory limits on action, need to be included in the plan.

- I support new wilderness areas. When it comes to land and forest management creating new wilderness areas should be a high priority especially when weighing the benefits given such as outdoor recreation and carbon capture of wilderness to combat climate change. I support the new wilderness areas including those in the Community Conservation Proposal and Gunnison Public Lands Initiative.

- When you say in the working draft that the protection of birthing grounds for big game is voluntary, in the real world that means it is non-existent. It needs to be mandatory. That is a loop hole period and needs to be fixed.

- It appears that about 100,000 more acres would be "suitable" for timber production under this plan versus the 1991 amended plan. This means more timber could be cut during the life of the new plan. We do not need to be cutting more. Why? Because we live in a new era where standing trees are more valuable than felled trees. Science (Climate Change) and the true cost of felling large acres of trees needs to be included in the Forest Plan. Climate change is a scientific agreed upon fact therefore must be considered and more weighted when drafting new forest plans. For example in a warming climate beetle kill will increase thus combatting climate change by limiting logging needs to be considered or forest lost will increase.

I have the following comments related to the Working Draft of the GMUG Forest Plan Revision:

Overall, the plan provides very weak, and in some cases non-existent, direction for protection of important resources. More standards, i.e., mandatory limits on action, need to be in the plan.

Frustratingly, there is no land in Gunnison County recommended for wilderness in the Working Draft, and only 22,400 acres across the entire GMUG! I support new wilderness areas, including those in the Community Conservation Proposal and Gunnison Public Lands Initiative.

Voluntary guidelines for protecting Gunnison Sage-grouse are weak and need to be mandated standards, especially for protecting leks, or breeding grounds.

No timber harvest should be allowed in high-quality lynx habitat.

Guidelines for protecting big game (deer, elk, bighorn sheep) on birthing grounds and winter range need to be mandatory.

It appears that significantly more timber would be cut under this plan versus the 1991 amended plan. Not good!

The plan proposes to establish conservation watershed networks to protect watersheds and sensitive species

like trout and boreal toad, but provides no detail on how these networks would be applied and maintained.

have a number of concerns about the current draft plan including: there is no land in Gunnison County designated for wilderness; guidelines for protecting big game on birthing grounds on winter range are not mandatory; and timber harvest would be allowed in high-quality lynx habitat.

I would like to see changes in the final plan related to the issues outlined above. Thank you.

As before, I strongly recommend keeping the 2007 draft plan's designation of Granite Basin as wilderness (see my extensive 8/27/2018 comments).

In addition, I recently hiked to Little Pass Creek, and I was entranced by its beauty, and natural wildlife habitat.

Therefore, I strongly support the Community Conservation Proposal for this area to be designated as wilderness.

- My biggest concern is that there is no land in Gunnison Co recommended for wilderness in the Working Draft. Have you been to Little Pass Creek off of Ohio Pass? This is a treasure that I had a chance to hike to yesterday. It takes you to a beautiful meadow with the backdrop of the Castles.

- Timber harvest - this should be restricted in areas where lynx live. Overall, this makes me very sad as I hike weekly off Kebler and Ohio Passes and always passing other hikers. Why is it that timber harvesting has increased since the 1991 plan? I feel that this is political and not in the best interest of protecting the lands.

- Add guidelines to make it mandatory that wildlife is protected during the winter and on birthing grounds. Visitors and residents treasure our wildlife.

- Lastly the guidelines for protecting Gunnison Sage-grouse need to be mandatory and not voluntary.