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Comments: Comments on WRNF DEIS leasing plan

To the U.S. Forest Service

As the White River National Forest considers long-term plans for oil and gas leasing, you must protect our roadless areas and the Thompson Divide from oil and gas drilling. There are still many scientific unknowns about the extent of these risks or the methods to safeguard the environment and human health. I urge the Forest Service to place all roadless areas off limits for new leasing because of the road construction and fragmentation such leasing will ultimately cause.

The Thompson Divide, in its entirety, should be unavailable for oil and gas leasing because of the area's importance to local people and communities in its current, undeveloped, and unfragmented state. In addition, the Forest Service must require the highest level of air pollution controls to protect the clean air for the forest, nearby communities, and natural wonders in the area like the world-famous Maroon Bells. Many local airsheds are Class I airsheds, meaning that they are managed to the highest standard and management agencies have an obligation to prevent degradation.

The White River National Forest is too important for water production, recreation, tourism, and wildland values, and no additional leasing should take place there, I support Alternative B, which places nearly 1.5 million acres off limits to leasing, while the other alternatives would leave open at least a quarter of a million acres for future oil and gas leasing. If future leasing is allowed, any development should be restricted to areas that are already disturbed, and surface occupancy should be prohibited anywhere on the forest that is not already developed.

Please protect the beautiful White River National Forest. Western Colorado is doing its part!

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