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Comments: Comments on the GMUG Draft Plan and DEIS are attached.

[PDF Conversion may result in errors; COMMENT LETTER PASTED BELOW]

ATTACHMENT: GMUG Draft Plan DEIS Comments SUBmittal 11-21-2021.pdf - copied below

ATTACHMENT: Attachment A CDNST Comprehensive Plan Final 092809.pdf

ATTACHMENT: Attachment B Gunnison Segment CDNST Corridor.pdf

ATTACHMENT: Attachment C WO 2305 Amend-2020.pdf

ATTACHMENT: Attachment D FS ROS Book 1986.pdf

ATTACHMENT: Attachment E ROS Management Tool 1986.pdf

SEE LETTER FOR: Section II Nature and Purposes of the CDNST

SEE LETTER FOR: Section III Land Management Planning

SEE LETTER FOR: Section VII Legislative History and Policy Review

SEE LETTER FOR: Section VIII - CDNST Regulatory Planning Framework

SEE LETTER FOR: Section IX - Glossary

SEE LETTER FOR: Section X- Specialized and Expert Knowledge

Submitted via <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=51806>

I appreciate this opportunity to comment on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison Draft Plan and DEIS. The following comments are mostly related to forest planning processes to provide for the integrated management of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) a congressionally designated area. The CDNST Comprehensive Plan is included in these comments as Attachment A. A reasonable delineation of a minimum extent of a CDNST management corridor is depicted on the maps in Attachment B. FSM Chapter 2350 - Trail, River, and Similar Recreation Opportunities is included as Attachment C. These comments also address the application of the 1986 ROS (Recreation Opportunity Spectrum) Book planning framework which is included as Attachment D. Related, the 1986 Recreation Opportunity Setting as a Management Tool Technical Guide is found as Attachment E. These comments regarding the Draft Plan and DEIS are consistent with submitted scoping comments. The most recent version of a CDNST Planning Handbook and ROS-Scenery Management Primer is posted online: NSTrail.org.

Section I. Brief Review of Planning Issues and Recommendations

A. Introduction - Statutorily Designated Areas

Statutorily designated areas are specific areas or features within the plan area that have been given a permanent designation to maintain its unique special character or purpose. A recurrent theme in designated area legislation has been the mandate to preserve areas for future generations and to keep the protected resource in a condition representative of the values or conditions for which it was designated. Important land conservation legislation that is relevant to land management planning includes the National Trails System Act (NTSA) of 1968 (PL 90- 543), which states that National Scenic Trails will be established, "In order to[hellip] promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas[hellip] of the Nation[hellip] Will be extended trails so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass[hellip] National scenic or national historic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-use facilities. Other uses along the trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, may be permitted[hellip] To the extent practicable, efforts be made to avoid activities incompatible with the purposes for which such trails were established. The use of motorized vehicles by the general public along any national scenic trail shall be prohibited[hellip]" (Sections 3(a) and 7(c)). National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plans must identify specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including the identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved and high potential route segments protected (Section 5(f)).

Enacted on the same day as the National Trails System Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (PL 90-542), states that designated rivers, "with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations" (Section 1(b)). Similarly, the Wilderness Act of 1964 (PL 88-577), requires managing agencies to administer wilderness areas "for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character[hellip]" (Section 2(a)).

National Scenic Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Wilderness legislation keeps the management of the federal land under the agencies existing authorities, but subject to the overriding purpose of protecting qualities and values described by the designated area legislation. The establishment of these designated areas thus constitutes an overlay on the management regime otherwise applicable to lands managed by the agency. By eliminating activities and uses incompatible with the purposes for which an area is designated, the designated area limits the management discretion that the agency might otherwise have.

The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) Leadership Council 2004 vision for the future of the CDNST states, "Complete the Trail to connect people and communities to the Continental Divide by providing scenic, high-quality, primitive hiking and horseback riding experiences, while preserving the significant natural, historic, and cultural resources along the Trail." The Leadership Council in 2006 reviewed concerns related to the 1985 CDNST Comprehensive Plan and decided to amend the Comprehensive Plan direction following official public involvement processes.¹[36 CFR [sect] 216] The final amended CDNST Comprehensive Plan programmatic direction was published in a Federal Register Notice and took effect on November 4, 2009.²[<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2009/10/05/E9-23873/continental-divide-national-scenic-trail-comprehensive-plan-fsm-2350>] The CDNST Comprehensive Plan should eventually be revised to further address the conservation,³ [16 U.S.C. [sect][sect] 1242(a)(2), 1246(k)] protection,⁴ [16 U.S.C. [sect][sect] 1244(f)(3), 1246(i)] and preservation⁵ [16 U.S.C. [sect][sect] 1241(a), 1244(f)(1)] purposes of this National Scenic Trail.

The amended Comprehensive Plan was approved by Chief Thomas Tidwell⁶ [https://www.fs.fed.us/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/cdnst_comprehensive_plan_final_092809.pdf]. An outcome of the amended Comprehensive Plan was the description of the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail: "Administer the CDNST consistent with the nature and purposes for which this National Scenic Trail was established. The CDNST was established by an Act of Congress on November 10, 1978 (16 USC 1244(a)).

The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor." The amended Comprehensive Plan establishes other important direction for the management of the CDNST including:

[bull] The right-of-way for the CDNST is to be of sufficient width to protect natural, scenic, cultural, and historic features along the CDNST travel route and to provide needed public use facilities.

[bull] Land and resource management plans are to provide for the protection, development, and management of the CDNST as an integrated part of the overall land and resource management direction for the land area through which the trail passes.

[bull] The CDNST is a concern level 1 travel route with a scenic integrity objective of high or very high.

[bull] Manage the CDNST to provide high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and pack and stock opportunities. Use the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) in delineating and integrating recreation opportunities in managing the CDNST.⁷[Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS settings provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST.] The use of motorized vehicles by the general public along any national scenic trail shall be prohibited with limited exceptions.⁸ [16 U.S.C. [sect] 1246(c)]

The CDNST Federal Register Notice provided additional direction to the Forest Service as described in FSM 2353. The final directives added a reference to the CDNST Comprehensive Plan as an authority in FSM 2353.01d; [hellip] added the nature and purposes of the CDNST in FSM 2353.42; and added detailed direction in FSM 2353.44b for governing implementation of the CDNST on National Forest System lands.

The Land Management Planning Handbook establishes important guidance that address relationships between National Scenic and Historic Trail Comprehensive Plans and Forest Plans. Appropriate management of National Scenic Trails (36 CFR [sect] 219.10(b)(1)(vi)) is addressed in FSH 1909.12 24.43 stating:

[bull] The Interdisciplinary Team shall identify statutorily designated national scenic and historic trails and plan components must provide for the management of rights-of-ways (16 U.S.C. [sect] 1246(a)(2)) consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders.

[bull] Plan components must provide for the nature and purposes of existing national scenic and historic trails.

The final amendments to the CDNST Comprehensive Plan and corresponding directives [hellip] will be applied through land management planning and project decisions following requisite environmental analysis (74 FR 51124). CDNST management direction enacted through correspondence may supplement this direction, but such direction would not supersede the guidance found in the National Trails System Act, Executive Orders, CDNST Comprehensive Plan, regulations, and directives.

B. Summary of Issues and Statements of Explanation

CDNST Plan Components

The National Trails System Act of 1968, 82 Stat. 919, as amended, provides that the CDNST shall be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture and so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities. It empowers and requires that the Secretary of Agriculture select the CDNST rights-of-way which informs the National Scenic Trail corridor location and width. The CDNST travel route is to be located within the established corridor. The establishment of the CDNST corridor thus constitutes an overlay on the management

regime otherwise applicable to public areas managed by land management agencies. The NTSA and Trails for America in the 21st Century Executive Order limits the management discretion the agencies would otherwise have by mandating the delineation and protection of the CDNST rights-of-way (aka National Trail Management Corridor) for the purpose of providing for the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

The revised Draft Forest Plan CDNST plan components do not reflect the guidance in the National Forest Management Act of 1976 and the National Trails System Act as amended in 1978. The Forest Service relies on an ambiguous right-of-way⁹ [16 U.S.C. [sect] 1246(a)(2)] statement in the National Trails System Act as enacted in 1968 as an indicator that the management and protection of National Scenic and Historic Trails is subordinate to common multiple-use programs. This improper interpretation of the rights-of-way selection guidance in the NTSA often goes as follows: "The National Trails System Act at 16 U.S.C. [sect] 1246(a)(2) indicates that management in the vicinity of the CDNST while it traverses management areas that are subject to development or management is acceptable, but should be designed to harmonize with the CDNST as possible.

Development and management of each segment of the National Trails System shall be designed to harmonize with and complement any established multiple-use plans for that specific area in order to insure continued maximum benefits from the land. The wording recognizes multiple uses and seeks to moderate impacts on the trail from resource management to the extent feasible while meeting resource management objectives."¹⁰ [Medicine Bow Landscape Vegetation Analysis Project, Reviewing Officer's Instructions, June 10, 2020.]

The 1968 guidance "to be designed to harmonize with and complement any established multiple-use plans for that specific area" was interpreted by Chief Max Peterson in 1980 directives: "Development and administration of a National Scenic Trail or National Historic Trail will ensure retention of the outdoor recreation experience for which the trail was established[hellip] Land management planning should describe the planned actions that may affect that trail and its associated environments. Through this process, resource management activities prescribed for land adjacent to the trail can be made compatible with the purpose for which the trail is established. The objective is to maintain or enhance such values as esthetics, natural features, historic and archeological resources, and other cultural qualities of the areas through which a National Scenic or National Historic Trail goes."

The National Forest Management Act requires that a Land Management Plan address the comprehensive planning and other requirements of the NTSA in order to form one integrated Plan. As such, the NTSA guidance that a National Trails System segment be, "designed to harmonize with and complement any established multiple-use plans for that specific area," is not applicable to a land management plan approved after the passage of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) in 1976 and as addressed in the 1982 planning regulations.

Furthermore, the NTSA was amended in 1978 in part to designate the CDNST and require comprehensive planning for National Scenic and Historic Trails, which the Forest Service until recently was attempting to complete through staged decisions for the CDNST whereas the revised GMUG Forest Plan is critical in contributing to NTSA comprehensive planning requirements.

The National Forest Management Act requires the formulation of one integrated plan (16 U.S.C. [sect] 1604(f)(1)). The 2012 NFMA regulations 36 CFR [sect] 219.1 requires integrated resource management of the resources within the plan area and that plans must comply with all applicable laws and regulations. These regulations also require integrated resource management of multiple use (36 CFR [sect] 219.10(a)), including providing for plan components to provide for the, "(vi) Appropriate management of other designated areas or recommended designated areas in the plan area, including research natural areas." Planning directives describe that planning for designated areas may be met through the land management plan, unless the authorities for the designation require a separate plan; however, in the case of the CDNST the Comprehensive Plan directs that Forest Plans further implement the CDNST comprehensive planning requirements through staged-decision

making. "[hellip] Any parts of a designated area plan that meet the requirements for land management plan components must be included in the land management plan. The entire area plan does not need to be included in the land management plan. The land management plans must also be compatible with these designated area plans or either the land management plan or the designated area plan must be amended to achieve this compatibility." (FSH 1909.12 - 24.3)

The revised Draft Forest Plan CDNST plan components do not protect the qualities and values of this National Scenic Trail. The plan components do not address the National Trails System Act and CDNST Comprehensive Plan requirements to: (1) provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities that reflect ROS planning framework conventions, and (2) conserve scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass (16 U.S.C. [sect] 1242(a)(2)). In addition, the plan does not establish direction to: (1) preserve significant natural, historical, and cultural resources (16 U.S.C. [sect] 1244(f)(1)); and (2) protect the CDNST corridor to the degree necessary to ensure that the values for which the CDNST was established remain intact or are restored (E.O. 13195, FSM 2353.44b(1) and FSH 1909.12 24.43). The revised plan draft decision does not avoid approving activities that are incompatible with the purposes for which the CDNST was established (16 U.S.C. [sect] 1242(c)).

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) provides a framework for stratifying and defining classes of outdoor recreation environments, activities, and experience opportunities. The Forest Service uses the recreation opportunity spectrum to define recreation settings. The 1982 ROS User Guide, 1986 ROS Book, and FSM 2310 (WO Amendment 2300-90-1) were the recreation resource technical basis for the planning rule and planning directives. To be consistent with the planning rule and recreation policy and research the Forest Plan must define and apply ROS principles that are consistent with the ROS planning framework which is the best available scientific recreation planning information. Most important is including ROS physical setting indicators when describing Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, and Semi- Primitive Motorized ROS setting desired conditions.

The ROS Book states, "The physical setting is defined by the absence or presence of human sights and sounds, size, and the amount of environmental modification caused by human activity. The physical setting is documented by combining these three criteria as described below. Physical Setting - The physical setting is best defined by an area's degree of remoteness from the sights and sounds of humans, by its size, and by the amount of environmental change caused by human activity[hellip] The explicit nature of the ROS assists managers in identifying and mitigating conflict. Because the ROS identifies appropriate uses within different recreation opportunities, it is possible to separate potentially incompatible uses. It also helps separate those uses that yield experiences that might conflict, such as solitude and socialization[hellip] The ROS also helps identify potential conflicts between recreation and non-recreation resource uses. It does this in several ways. First, it can specify the overall compatibility between a given recreation opportunity and other resource management activities. Second, it can suggest how the activities, setting quality, or likely experiences might be impacted by other non-recreation activities. Third, it can indicate how future land use changes might impact the present pattern of a recreation opportunity provision. The apparent naturalness of an area is highly influenced by the evidence of human developments. If the landscape is obviously altered by roads, railroads, reservoirs, power lines, pipe lines, or even by highly visual vegetative manipulations, such as clearcuttings, the area will not be perceived as being predominately natural. Even if the total acres of modified land are relatively small, "out of scale" modifications can have a negative impact."

The Forest Service, in FSM 2310 (WO Amendment 2300-2020-1) on April 23, 2020, modified the 1982 ROS User Guide and 1986 ROS Book Recreation Opportunity Spectrum setting definitions and no longer refers to the 1982 ROS User Guide direction for planning purposes. The agency does not explain the change to policy, but it appears that the agency wishes to allow for mechanical treatment of vegetation and timber production in Semi-

Primitive ROS settings.

Concerning is that the agency does not disclose the consequences of those changes to recreationists seeking Primitive and Semi-Primitive ROS experiences when new roads and vegetation management activities are encountered, including those seeking high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities along the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. The GMUG Draft Plan and DEIS alternatives promote development actions in Semi- Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings that are incongruent with the desired conditions of these ROS classes, which is inconsistent with the ROS planning framework as referenced in the planning rule and used in the PEIS.

Primitive and Semi-Primitive ROS classes must constrain some management actions such as mechanical treatments of vegetation that utilize heavy equipment and permanent or temporary roads if these desired ROS class opportunities as described in the 1986 ROS Book and referenced in the planning rule PEIS are to be protected.

The recreation opportunity spectrum provides a framework for integrating recreational opportunities and nonrecreational activities. The central notion of the spectrum is to offer recreationists alternative settings in which they can derive a variety of experiences. Because the management factors that give recreational value to a site are interdependent, management must strive to maintain consistency among these factors so that unplanned or undesired changes in the opportunities do not occur.

C. Proposed Solutions to Improve the Plan and EIS

The CDNST Comprehensive Plan in Chapter IV Part A states, "The primary policy is to administer the CDNST consistent with the nature and purposes for which this National Scenic Trail was established. The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor."

The Forest Service should take the following actions:

- [bull] Reference and follow the direction in the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan.

- [bull] ROS setting descriptions need to be consistent with the 1986 ROS Book which was a basis for the recreation direction in the planning rule as informed by the Planning Rule PEIS and FSM 2310 (WO Amendment 2300-90-1). ROS class definitions need to be expanded to add descriptions of Non-Recreation Uses, Evidence of Humans, and Naturalness characteristics.

- [bull] The plan must indicate where established ROS classes, Scenic Character, and Scenic Integrity Objectives apply. Forest Plan modifications of where ROS, Scenic Character, and SIO direction applies (including maps) must follow amendment processes and not be addressed as an administrative change.

- [bull] Modify the description of "Overlay" by indicating that underlying management direction would be constrained by Continental Divide National Scenic Trail desired conditions, standards, guidelines, and suitability to ensure that actions, such as those actions that may occur in General Forests, do not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail.

- [bull] Recognize that Comprehensive Plans developed in response to the requirements of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. [sect][sect] 1244(e), 1244(f)) and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. [sect] 1274(d)) are not resource plans as defined by the NFMA (16 U.S.C.[sect]1604(i) and 36 CFR [sect]219.15(e)).

- [bull] Protect the high potential route segments within the project area of the "Continental Divide National Scenic

Trail and The Colorado Trail Reroute Lujan to La Garita Wilderness" 2013 Environmental Assessment.

[bull] Recognize that the 1968 NTSA Section 7(a)(2) statement that, "development and management of each segment of the National Trails System shall be designed to harmonize with and complement any established multiple-use plans for the specific area in order to insure continued maximum benefits from the land" simply identified the need for National Scenic Trails and National Recreation Trails to be an integral part of multiple-use plans. Integration requirements were strengthened with the passage of NFMA in 1976. In 1978, Public Law 95-625 established and designated the CDNST. This law also added National Historic Trails to the system and required comprehensive planning for National Scenic and Historic Trails.

[bull] To address the requirements of NFMA Section 6(f)(1) and NTSA Sections 3(a)(2), 5(f) and 7(c), modify the management direction for the CDNST management corridor (as depicted in Attachment B) by adding the following plan components and eliminating proposed plan guidance that may conflict with the following direction:

1. Desired Condition: The CDNST provides for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and conserves natural, historic, and cultural resources along the corridor (nature and purposes).¹¹ [16 U.S.C. [sect][sect] 1242(a)(2), 1244(f), 1246(c); CDNST Comprehensive Plan Chapter IV.A.; FSM 2353.42 - 74 FR 51124]

2. Desired Condition: Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS setting¹² [CDNST Comprehensive Plan Chapter IV.B.5 and FSM 2353.44b - 74 FR 51125; ROS User Guide; ROS Book] characteristics are protected or restored.

3. Desired Condition: Scenic Character is Naturally Evolving or Natural-Appearing. Scenic Integrity Objective is Very High or High.¹³ [CDNST Comprehensive Plan Chapter IV.B.4 and FSM 2353.44b - 74 FR 51124; Landscape Aesthetics Handbook]

4. Desired Condition: The CDNST management corridor contributes to providing for habitat connectivity for Canada lynx and other wildlife species.

5. Standard: Resource management actions and allowed uses must be compatible with maintaining or restoring Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS settings.

6. Guideline: To provide for desired Scenic Character, management actions should meet a Scenic Integrity Level of Very High or High in the immediate foreground and foreground visual zones as viewed from the CDNST travel route.

7. Standard: Motor vehicle use by the general public is prohibited unless that use:

a. Is necessary to meet emergencies;

b. Is necessary to enable adjacent landowners or those with valid outstanding rights to have reasonable access to their lands or rights;

c. Is for the purpose of allowing private landowners who have agreed to include their lands in the CDNST by cooperative agreement to use or cross those lands or adjacent lands from time to time in accordance with Forest Service regulations; or

d. Is on a motor vehicle route that crosses the CDNST, if that use will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST;

e. Is designated in accordance with 36 CFR Part 212 Subpart B and:

i. The vehicle class and width were allowed on that segment of the CDNST prior to November 10, 1978, and the use will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST or

ii. That segment of the CDNST was constructed as a road prior to November 10, 1978; or

f. In the case of over-snow vehicles, is allowed in accordance with 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart C and the use will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.14 [16 U.S.C [sect][sect] 1244(a)(5), 1246(c); CDNST Comprehensive Plan Chapter IV.B.6 and FSM 2353.44b - 74 FR 51125]

8. Suitability: The CDNST management corridor is not suitable for timber production. Timber harvest is not an objective.

9. Objective: Within 5 years of plan approval, a CDNST unit plan (a project level plan) should be completed.

D. Completing the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail

The Draft Forest Plan does not protect the qualities and values of the CDNST, which would result in actions if implemented that perpetually prevent the CDNST from being completed with a protected corridor on the GMUG National Forest. Of the alternatives presented in the DEIS, Alternative D best protects the CDNST qualities and values. Other alternatives are clearly inconsistent with the National Trails System Act and need to be modified or discarded.

Representatives Neguse and Fernandez introduced House of Representatives Bill 5118 titled the "Continental Divide Trail Completion Act" on August 27, 2021. The passage of H.R. 5118 could help protect and complete the CDNST through National Forest System and other lands in Colorado.

Section IV. Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison Draft Plan

A. Native Species Diversity

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan on page 29 reviews bighorn sheep and states, "FW-STND-SPEC-13: On active grazing allotments, maintain effective separation between domestic sheep and bighorn sheep herds. Effective separation is defined as spatial or temporal separation between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep[hellip]

Management Approaches - To implement GDL-SPEC-13, Tier 1 bighorn sheep herds with the greatest potential to contribute to population viability in the plan area should be prioritized. Tier 2 herds, where they interact or have the potential to interact with Tier 1 herds, should also be prioritized. Use the most current version of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency's Recommendations for Domestic Sheep and Goat Management in Wild Sheep Habitat to inform management."

Comment: The Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep should be identified as a Species of Conservation Concern, which would be consistent with the Rio Grande National Forest recent plan decision. Some domestic sheep allotments on the Forest are in and near occupied range and suitable range of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. There is a potential risk of contact occurring between domestic sheep and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. Research shows that contact between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep and goats can lead to transmission of respiratory disease and pneumonia in bighorn sheep, which could potentially affect the ability of bighorn sheep populations to persist over time. To promote healthy populations of bighorn sheep that persist over time, domestic sheep stocking and distribution should be managed to minimize risk of contact with Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep.

The complexities, disease history, and mechanisms or causal agents leading to epizootic disease events are still not fully understood in the wild. The best available science suggests that maintaining spatial or temporal separation of the species is a prudent step when the management objective is to maintain bighorn sheep populations. The GMUG National Forest should minimize bighorn and domestic sheep interactions. Every effort should be made to reduce the risk of contact with domestic sheep.

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan on page 33 reviews Canada lynx and states, "FW-STND-SPEC-35a (VEG S7) (Alternatives B and C): In stands that do not qualify for VegS6 due to overstory mortality, salvage activities in stands that represent high quality lynx habitat may occur in up to 7 percent of the high-probability lynx use area (95 percent lynx use areas shown on the High Probability Lynx Use Area Map) that overlaps the suitable timber base. Harvest activities in VEG S7 stands in combination with all vegetation management activities, including incidental damage resulting in either Stand Initiation Structural Stage conditions, a reduction of horizontal cover, or both, are tracked for 15 years from the decision date for this forest plan decision. See also appendix 4 for more background on this standard."

MAP EXCERPTED: High Probability Lynx Use Area Map

Comment: These amendments appear to be limited in scope based on Figure 14 - Area where VEG S7 applies in alternative B. Any standard should not state monitoring requirements.

However, this area is in established ROS settings that are not compatible with timber production. FW-STND-SPEC-35a (VEG S7) should be dropped from further consideration.

All discussion of management overlays must clearly describe that the most constraining standard or guideline of each overlay controls management actions. Any standard should not include monitoring requirements.

Quote continues

"FW-STND-SPEC-35b (VEG S8) (Alternative D): In stands that do not qualify for VegS6 due to overstory mortality, vegetation management activities may occur in up to 7 percent of mapped lynx habitat. Harvest activities in VEG S7 stands in combination with all vegetation management activities, including incidental damage resulting in either Stand Initiation Structural Stage conditions, a reduction of horizontal cover, or both, are tracked for 15 years from the decision date for this forest plan decision. See also appendix 4 for more background on this standard."

Comment: All discussion of management overlays must clearly describe that the most constraining standard or guideline of each overlay controls management actions. Any standard should not include monitoring requirements.

B. Continental Divide National Scenic Trail

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan beginning on page 29 reviews Designated Trails stating, "Designated trails in the GMUG include congressionally designated trails (Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and Old Spanish National Historic Trail) and administratively designated trails (Crag Crest and Bear Creek National Recreation Trails). To incorporate the resources, qualities, values, associated settings, and primary uses of the GMUG's designated trails, each trail is mapped to include the foreground viewshed (about one-half mile from either side of the trail tread). In the draft forest plan, Designated Trails encompasses a mapped area of approximately 77,600 acres (2.5 percent of the GMUG) that overlies multiple other management areas. The forest plan components listed below identify applicability to the trail itself, up to one-half mile on either side of the trail (the visible foreground), or both[hellip]

Comment: To incorporate CDNST resources, qualities, and values the CDNST management corridor should include an area that emphasizes the foreground viewshed and that provides for a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS setting for existing and high potential CDNST route segments.

Quote Continues

Desired Conditions

FW-DC-DTRL-01: The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is a well-defined trail traversing a natural-appearing setting along the Continental Divide. The trail provides for high-quality hiking and horseback riding opportunities, other compatible non-motorized trail activities, as well as motorized vehicle use expressly allowed by administrative regulations at the time of trail designation [16 USC 1246(c)]. Where possible, the trail provides visitors with expansive views of the natural landscapes along the Continental Divide. See also the Forestwide guideline for scenery SCNY-05.

Comment: Desired conditions are the basis for the rest of the plan components; objectives, standards, guidelines, and suitability determinations must be developed to help achieve the desired conditions.

To provide for high-quality, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities, recreation desired settings must be protected along the CDNST corridor. To address this need, a Forest Plan must address the NFMA programmatic planning requirements following in part the 1982/1986 ROS planning framework protocols. Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized settings would provide for desired user opportunities and conserve landscapes consistent with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

The first part of Desired Condition 01 is fixated on the CDNST travel route and could imply that the CDNST is simply a path that is well signed, constructed following more developed trail design parameters, and has a high level of maintenance. However, since this direction is vague it should be deleted and instead be addressed through establishing trail design parameters and trail maintenance schedules in CDNST unit plan decisions.

Programmatic considerations for a highly scenic setting and expansive views should be addressed through forest planning processes to review and establish the location of the CDNST corridor.

The principle desired condition must be to provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST: CDNST Management Area (MA) or described National Trail Management Corridor (NTMC) provides high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and conserves natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV.A). Excluding the nature and purposes of the CDNST as a desired condition plan component fails to address the requirement for integrated resource planning and fulfilling the requirements of the National Trails System Act (36 CFR [sect] 219.1(f)).

This concern alone demonstrates that the plan would not fulfil the integration requirements of the National Forest Management Act (16 U.S.C. [sect] 1604(f)(1), 36 CFR [sect] 219.10, FSH 1909.12 parts 23 and 24.43) and the comprehensive planning requirements of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. [sect] 1244(f)).

Regarding other compatible trail activities, mountain bike use is addressed in the CDNST Comprehensive Plan in Chapter IV.B.5.b(2) and FSM 2353.44b(10). Motor vehicle use is addressed in the CDNST Comprehensive Plan in Chapter IV.B.6.b and FSM 2353.44b(11). Primary CDNST travel route design parameters are described in FSM 2353.44b(9).

Desired condition 01 should be restated as, "The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail management corridor [aka Management Area] provides high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and

conserves natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV.A.)."

Quote Continues

FW-DC-DTRL-02: The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail can be accessed from multiple locations, allowing visitors to select the type of terrain, scenery, and trail length (e.g., ranging from long-distance to day use) that best accommodate their desired outdoor recreation experience(s):

[bull] Wild and remote backcountry segments provide opportunities for solitude, immersion in natural landscapes, and primitive outdoor recreation.

[bull] Easily accessible trail segments complement local community interests and contribute to their sense of place.

Comment: Local community interests must be compatible with the CDNST nature and purposes. The second bullet statement should be deleted.

Quote Continues

FW-DC-DTRL-03: The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is well-maintained, signed, and passable.

Objectives

FW-OBJ-DTRL-04: Within 10 years of plan approval, relocate the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail off of roads.

Comment: This objective should be replaced with an objective to accomplish an Optimum Location Review. Otherwise, restate as, "Within 10 years of plan approval, relocate the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail off of roads that were constructed prior to 1978."

Quote Continues

Standards

FW-STND-DTRL-05: Energy and mineral materials sites shall not be allowed within the visible foreground, up to one-half mile on either side of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.

Comment: The guidance should also state that special use authorizations must not result in a substantial interference to the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

Quote Continues

FW-STND-DTRL-06: New motorized events shall not be permitted on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. Existing permitted motorized events may continue.

FW-STND-DTRL-07: Motorized use shall not be allowed on newly constructed segments of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.

Comment: FW-STND-DTRL-06 and FW-STND-DTRL-07 are inconsistent with the requirements of the National Trail System Act. The appropriate standard is controlled by the direction in the NTSA, CDNST Comprehensive

Plan Chapter IV(b)(6), and FSM 2353.44b(11):

"Motor vehicle use by the general public is prohibited on the CDNST, unless that use is consistent with the applicable land management plan and:

- (1) Is necessary to meet emergencies;
- (2) Is necessary to enable adjacent landowners or those with valid outstanding rights to have reasonable access to their lands or rights;
- (3) Is for the purpose of allowing private landowners who have agreed to include their lands in the CDNST by cooperative agreement to use or cross those lands or adjacent lands from time to time in accordance with Federal regulations;
- (4) Is on a motor vehicle route that crosses the CDNST, as long as that use will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST;
- (5) Is designated in accordance with 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart B, on National Forest System lands or is allowed on public lands and:
 - (a) The vehicle class and width were allowed on that segment of the CDNST prior to November 10, 1978, and the use will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST or
 - (b) That segment of the CDNST was constructed as a road prior to November 10, 1978; or
- (6) In the case of over-snow vehicles, is allowed in accordance with 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart C, on National Forest System lands or is allowed on public lands and the use will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST."

Quote Continues

Guidelines

FW-GDL-DTRL-08: If management activities result in short-term impacts to the scenic integrity of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, mitigation measures should be included, such as screening, feathering, and other scenery management techniques to minimize visual impacts within and adjacent to the trail (within visible foreground, up to one-half-mile of either side of the trail at a minimum).

Comment: Management activities must not substantially interfere with the CDNST nature and purposes. To be consistent with the NTSA, forest health and timber harvest projects may only be allowed where the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the timber harvests and related activities do not result in the substantial degradation of CDNST qualities and values. The allowance for short-term effects should only be permitted for CDNST resource benefits.

This guideline has several issues including the assumption that unconstrained forest health projects will be allowed to degrade existing scenic integrity for some undefined period. Forest health and timber harvest projects must not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST. The guideline needs to be deleted and replaced with Scenic Integrity Objectives desired conditions and a Scenic Integrity Level guideline or standard.

Quote Continues

FW-GDL-DTRL-09: To promote high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities along the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, the minimum trail facilities necessary to safely accommodate the amount and types of use anticipated on any given trail segment should be provided.

FW-GDL-DTRL-10: To conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail should not be used for timber pile landings or as a temporary road for any purpose except where the trail is currently co-located on an open road. Hauling or skidding along a co-located portion of the trail may be allowed only when 1) no other haul route or skid trail options are available, and 2) design criteria are used to minimize impacts to the trail infrastructure.

Comment: This direction should be addressed through establishing appropriate ROS settings through forest planning and recognizing that the ROS allocations for the CDNST corridor are not suitable for timber production.

Mixing pedestrians, equestrians, log trucks, and skidders on roads is a bad and unsafe idea with the probable outcome being that the routes are closed during timber operations. Any timber management actions along the CDNST travel route need to be consistent with SPNM setting constraints and be only allowed when there is a determination that the action will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST. To provide for a safe user experience, hauling and skidding must not be allowed on existing CDNST travel routes and such direction should be included as a standard or guideline.

The Forest Service relies on ambiguous rights-of-way (16 U.S.C. [sect] 1246(a)(2)) direction in the National Trails System Act as an indicator that the management and protection of National Scenic and Historic Trails is subordinate to common multiple-use programs. This interpretation is inconsistent with the direction in the National Trails System Act. This improper interpretation of the rights-of-way guidance in the NTSA often goes as follows: "The National Trails System Act at 16 U.S.C. [sect] 1246(a)(2) indicates that management in the vicinity of the CDNST while it traverses management areas that are subject to development or management is acceptable, but should be designed to harmonize with the CDNST as possible. Development and management of each segment of the National Trails System shall be designed to harmonize with and complement any established multiple-use plans for that specific area in order to insure continued maximum benefits from the land. The wording recognizes multiple uses and seeks to moderate impacts on the trail from resource management to the extent feasible while meeting resource management objectives."

Quote Continues

FW-GDL-DTRL-11: To ensure continuous recreational access along the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, alternate routes should be made available in the case of temporary closures resulting from natural events, such as fire or flood, or land management activities.

Comment: Land management activities must not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

Quote Continues

FW-GDL-DTRL-12: To promote natural-appearing settings, unplanned fires in the visible foreground (up to one-half mile) of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail should be managed using minimum impact suppression tactics or other tactics appropriate for the protection of national scenic trail values. Prescribed fires in the foreground of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail should be managed to incorporate national scenic trail values.

Construction of firelines by heavy equipment should not be allowed within the visible foreground of the

Continental Divide National Scenic Trail unless necessary for emergency protection of life and property.

FW-GDL-DTRL-13: To protect the scenic values of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, special use authorizations for new communication sites, utilities, and renewable energy sites should not be within the visible foreground of the trail (up to one-half mile either side), and should not be visually dominant within the middleground viewshed of the trail (up to 4 miles either side). Exception: the utility corridor overlay and Monarch Ski Area.

Comment: The guidance should also state that special use authorizations must not result in a substantial interference to the nature and purposes of the CDNST. Monarch Ski Area expansion plans should be subject to a CDNST substantial interference determination.

Quote Continues

FW-GDL-DTRL-14: To maintain the integrity of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and the values for which it was designated, new linear utilities and special use authorizations that cross the trail should be avoided. Where unavoidable, these should be limited to a single crossing of the trail per special user authorization. Exception: the utility corridor overlay and Monarch Ski Area.

Comment: Along the CDNST corridor, linear utilities, easements/rights-of-way, and Monarch Ski Area expansion should be addressed through forest planning processes and presented if appropriate as an accepted ROS inconsistency. Developments must not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

Quote Continues

FW-GDL-DTRL-15: To promote a natural-appearing setting along the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, any new temporary or permanent motorized routes (roads and trails) should only be contemplated if new routes are (a) required by law to provide access to private lands, (b) necessary for emergency protection of life and property, or (c) determined to be the only prudent and feasible option. In such circumstances, any project involving construction of a motorized route across or within the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail corridor should be designed in such a manner that minimizes impacts to the scenic, natural, and experiential values of the trail."

Comment: Roads should not be constructed within the CDNST Management Area unless consistent with the nature and purposes of the CDNST. Possibly, this guideline could describe that, "Roads should not be constructed within the CDNST Management Area, unless allowed by a valid existing right. The purpose of this guideline is to protect the nature and purposes of the CDNST by avoiding the construction of roads."

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan on page 336 states, "Removed from working draft: FW-STND-DTRL- 06: Existing motorized use may continue on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, as long as it does not substantially interfere with the trail's nature and purpose. Justification: staff conversations concluded that the component[mdash]having raised early questions amongst reviewing cooperators as to what 'substantial interference' meant[mdash] was unduly complicated and an unnecessary component. Existing motorized use will continue on motorized portions of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, up until if/when those routes are relocated to be separated from a non-motorized Continental Divide National Scenic Trail portion."

Comment: This commitment by the Forest Supervisor to avoid taken actions to protect CDNST qualities and values is inappropriate and shows bias. A substantial interference determination in a programmatic NEPA document is not complicated when using the ROS planning framework and Scenery Management System as envisioned in the Planning Rule and PEIS.

The Draft Forest Plan and the existing Gunnison Travel Plan do not protect the qualities and values of the CDNST, which would result in actions if implemented that perpetually prevent the CDNST from being completed with a protected corridor on the GMUG National Forest.

The CDNST travel route has never been evaluated for motor vehicle use following 36 CFR [sect]212.55 processes. The Gunnison Ranger District Travel Plan decision, dated June 28, 2010, failed to address the requirements of the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan, FSM 2353.44b(11), and 36 CFR 212 for the CDNST travel route.

The Deputy Regional Forester of Operations, on September 30, 2010, affirmed most of the Gunnison National Forest Travel Plan decision, with two explicit exceptions. One of these exceptions addressed motor vehicle use on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail: "The designation decision of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) is reversed with the following instructions:

1. The CDNST is excluded from this decision and will revert to the previous decision related to travel management, which includes motorized travel. This direction is consistent with 36 CFR 212.50 (b), stating "the responsible official may incorporate previous administrative decisions regarding travel management made under other authorities, including designations and prohibitions of motor vehicle use[hellip]69"[Specific to 36 CFR 212.50 (b), previous travel plans did not address the requirements of the National Trails System Act and as such failed to protect the nature and purposes of the CDNST.]
2. This change is effective immediately and should be reflected on the motor vehicle use map (MVUM).
3. The Gunnison National Forest shall analyze the Monarch Crest Trail within a larger context of CDNST management. A subsequent decision on designation of Monarch Crest Trail will be incorporated into travel management pursuant to revision designations in 36 CFR 212.54."

There may be continuing confusion on whether this decision applies to the entire CDNST on the Forest or if the decision is limited to only the Monarch Crest Trail section of the CDNST. A specific issue is the designation of Trail No. 787 for motor vehicle use, which is a CDNST section that is located east of Spring Creek Pass. This section of the CDNST has traditionally been managed for nonmotorized use as demonstrated in the 1983 Gunnison Basin Area Travel Plan. Implementation of the first instruction by itself would reverse the designation decision and result in managing Trail No. 787 for nonmotorized use subject to any new decision. The third instruction directs that an analysis be completed of the Monarch Crest Trail within a larger context of the CDNST management. Trail No. 787 is within the larger context of CDNST management and should be considered in subsequent analyses that will address the CDNST planning requirements. The appeal decision instructions should be interpreted so that the motor vehicle use designation decision of the CDNST is reversed and that the first and second instructions apply to the entirety of the CDNST travel route that is within the Gunnison National Forest Travel Plan area. The Gunnison Travel Plan did not address the requirements of 36 CFR [sect] 212.55 for the CDNST Travel route.

Summary Comment: National Forest System lands has an overlay of management regimes within the CDNST management corridor. The Forest Service discretion to implement the general provisions of the Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act is curtailed by provisions of the National Trails System Act within a selected CDNST rights-of-way.

The final plan must address providing for the integrated management of statutorily designated areas. Statutorily designated areas must be managed to achieve the purposes for which they were established. The NTSA establishment and designation of the CDNST provides for the Secretary of Agriculture to manage the CDNST under existing agencies authorities, but subject to the overriding direction of providing for the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail. The establishment of the CDNST thus constitutes an overlay on the

management regime otherwise applicable to public areas managed by land management agencies. The NTSA and

E.O. limits the management discretion the agencies would otherwise have by mandating the delineation and protection of the CDNST corridor. The draft plan fails to act on addressing the requirements of the National Trails System Act to describe the CDNST rights-of-way and approve plan components that protect the nature and purposes of the CDNST. The plan encourages activities and use that if implemented will degrade CDNST qualities and values and substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail which is not allowed by the National Trails System Act.

The National Trails System Act establishes National Scenic Trails (16 U. S. C. [sect] 1244(a)), including the CDNST (16 U. S. C. [sect] 1244(a)(5)). It empowers and requires the Secretary of Agriculture to establish the CDNST location and width by selecting the National Scenic Trail "rights-of-way" (16 U.S.C. [sect][sect] 1246(a)(2), 1246(d), 1246(e)). The revised plan should establish a CDNST Management Area (aka National Trail Management Corridor) with an extent of at least one-half mile on both sides of the CDNST travel route and along high-potential route segments.

Much of the CDNST direction departs from the CDNST Comprehensive Plan, FSH 2353.44b, and FSH 1909.12 24.43 guidance without providing a reasoned basis or a detailed justification for ignoring these previous findings and direction. The APA ensures that agencies do not change course based on the "whim and caprice of the bureaucracy," and prevents agencies from subverting the rule of law by making policy based on shifting "political winds and currents."

When reversing a prior policy that "has engendered serious reliance interests," the agency must "provide a more detailed justification than what would suffice for a new policy created on a blank slate." This requires a "reasoned explanation[hellip] for disregarding the facts and circumstances that underlay or were engendered by the prior policy." The Forest Service should take the following actions:

- [bull] Reference and follow the direction in the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan.

- [bull] ROS setting descriptions need to be consistent with the 1986 ROS Book which was a basis for the recreation direction in the planning rule as informed by the Planning Rule PEIS and FSM 2310 (WO Amendment 2300-90-1 ROS class definitions need to be expanded to add descriptions of Non-Recreation Uses, Evidence of Humans, and Naturalness characteristics.

- [bull] The plan must indicate where established ROS classes, Scenic Character, and Scenic Integrity Objectives apply. Forest Plan modifications of where ROS, Scenic Character, and SIO direction applies (including maps) must follow amendment processes and not be addressed as an administrative change.

- [bull] Modify the description of "Overlay" by indicating that underlying management direction would be constrained by Continental Divide National Scenic Trail desired conditions, standards, guidelines, and suitability to ensure that actions, such as those actions that may occur in General Forests, do not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail.

- [bull] Recognize that Comprehensive Plans developed in response to the requirements of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. [sect][sect] 1244(e), 1244(f)) and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. [sect] 1274(d)) are not resource plans as defined by the NFMA (16 U.S.C.

- [sect]1604(i) and 36 CFR [sect]219.15(e)).

- [bull] Protect the high potential route segments within the project area of the "Continental Divide National Scenic

Trail and The Colorado Trail Reroute Lujan to La Garita Wilderness" 2013 Environmental Assessment.

[bull] Recognize that the 1968 NTSA Section 7(a)(2) statement that, "development and management of each segment of the National Trails System shall be designed to harmonize with and complement any established multiple-use plans for the specific area in order to insure continued maximum benefits from the land" simply identified the need for National Scenic Trails and National Recreation Trails to be an integral part of multiple-use plans. Integration requirements were strengthened with the passage of NFMA in 1976. In 1978, Public Law 95-625 established and designated the CDNST. This law also added National Historic Trails to the system and required comprehensive planning for National Scenic and Historic Trails.

[bull] To address the requirements of NFMA Section 6(f)(1) and NTSA Sections 3(a)(2), 5(f) and 7(c), modify the management direction for the CDNST management corridor (as depicted in Attachment B) by adding the following plan components and eliminating proposed plan guidance that may conflict with the following direction. [A Google Earth KMZ file of the CDNST Management Corridor is posted online: http://nstrail.org/cdt_planning.htm.]

1. Desired Condition: The CDNST provides for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and conserves natural, historic, and cultural resources along the corridor (nature and purposes).⁷⁰

2. Desired Condition: Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS setting⁷¹ [CDNST Comprehensive Plan Chapter IV.B.5 and FSM 2353.44b - 74 FR 51125; ROS User Guide; ROS Book] characteristics are protected or restored.

3. Desired Condition: Scenic Character is Naturally Evolving or Natural-Appearing. Scenic Integrity Objective is Very High or High.⁷² [CDNST Comprehensive Plan Chapter IV.B.4 and FSM 2353.44b - 74 FR 51124; Landscape Aesthetics Handbook]

4. Desired Condition: The CDNST management corridor contributes to providing for habitat connectivity for Canada lynx and other wildlife species.

5. Standard: Resource management actions and allowed uses must be compatible with maintaining or restoring Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS settings.

6. Guideline: To provide for desired Scenic Character, management actions should meet a Scenic Integrity Level of Very High or High in the immediate foreground and foreground visual zones as viewed from the CDNST travel route.

7. Standard: Motor vehicle use by the general public is prohibited unless that use:

a. Is necessary to meet emergencies;

b. Is necessary to enable adjacent landowners or those with valid outstanding rights to have reasonable access to their lands or rights;

c. Is for the purpose of allowing private landowners who have agreed to include their lands in the CDNST by cooperative agreement to use or cross those lands or adjacent lands from time to time in accordance with Forest Service regulations; or

d. Is on a motor vehicle route that crosses the CDNST, if that use will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST;

e. Is designated in accordance with 36 CFR Part 212 Subpart B and:

i. The vehicle class and width were allowed on that segment of the CDNST prior to November 10, 1978, and the use will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST or

ii. That segment of the CDNST was constructed as a road prior to November 10, 1978; or

f. In the case of over-snow vehicles, is allowed in accordance with 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart C and the use will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.73 [16 U.S.C [sect]][sect] 1244(a)(5), 1246(c); CDNST Comprehensive Plan Chapter IV.B.6 and FSM 2353.44b - 74 FR 51125]

8. Suitability: The CDNST management corridor is not suitable for timber production. Timber harvest is not an objective.

9. Objective: Within 5 years of plan approval, a CDNST unit plan (a project level plan) should be completed.

Map Excerpted - Proposed CDNST Management Corridor for Revised Plan

C. Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan beginning page 63 reviews Recreation Opportunity Spectrum allocations. Guideline FW-GDL-REC-16 states, "To achieve and maintain an array of place-based, desired recreation settings and opportunities across the landscape for the long-term, project- level planning (including the development of new facilities), travel management planning (designation of National Forest System roads, trails, and/or areas for motorized/mechanized use), development of area management plans (including wilderness), and all national forest management decisions and activities (range, timber, vegetation, wildlife, minerals, lands, etc.) should be consistent with the (1) desired recreation opportunity spectrum setting parameters detailed in tables 9-14 and (2) corresponding broad-scale desired summer and winter recreation opportunity spectrum allocations (see table 8 and table 9) and maps. See Recreation Management Approaches section for implementation. See also appendix 1 for maps[hellip]."

Comment: The Plan must include ROS class Desired Conditions that are supported by Standards, Guidelines, and Suitability determinations.

Table 8 describes acreage of summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum allocations by draft alternative. However, the number displayed do not reflect ROS conditions based on the 1982 ROS User Guide and 1986 ROS Book. Repeated below is the acreage of summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum allocations by draft alternative (Page 63).

Table Excerpted: Table 8 acreage of summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum allocations by draft alternative.

Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive ROS settings are not suited for timber production and timber harvest is not an objective in these areas. Hence, there are either extensive areas that need to be reclassified to Roaded Natural/Roaded Modified from Semi- Primitive ROS setting allocations or the estimate of lands suitable for timber production needs to be substantially decreased. A Roaded Modified ROS subclass would distinguish those settings that would be significantly altered by timber production and timber harvest from other roaded natural settings. The following table displays gross estimates of ROS class assignments if the assignments were controlled by timber suitability as proposed in the Draft Plan.

Acreage in Summer ROS classes that reflect timber production suitability overlay (adjusted for timber suitable cells that overlap SPNM and SPM ROS setting allocations)

I recommend that the acres of lands suitable for timber production be decreased to reflect the exclusion of Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings. For example, Alternative B may indicate approximately 400,000 acres that are suitable for timber production in a Road Modified ROS setting.

ROS setting Tables 10 through 14 use terms that are outdated. The 2012 Planning Rule made the terms "prescription" and "theme" obsolete. Instead, ROS settings should be described using Planning Rule terms of Desired Conditions, Standards, Guidelines, and Suitability.

The revised Forest Plan (and for each EIS alternative) should present the distribution of ROS Desired Conditions similar to Table 22 as found in the proposed 2007 Forest Plan:

Table Excerpted: ROS from proposed 2007 Forest Plan

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan on pages 71 and 72 states, "Desired recreation opportunity spectrum functions as a framework for (1) meeting the persisting and evolving needs of diverse user groups (FW-DC-REC-01) and, (2) ensuring that recreation is appropriately prioritized and balanced with other national forest resources over time (MA-DC-EMREC-01 and FW-DC-REC-02). Mapped at the national forest-scale, desired recreation opportunity spectrum settings provide desired landscape-level settings to work toward and/or maintain over the life of the forest plan. However, should finer-scale analysis, public feedback, and/or place-based needs lead to a decision that is substantially or irreversibly inconsistent with the Forestwide mapped desired recreation opportunity spectrum setting allocations (e.g., installation of permanent infrastructure such as a non-conforming trail class cutting through the middle of a desired recreation opportunity spectrum setting), the following will be done as part of that planning effort: (a) the inconsistency and rationale for deviation is documented, and, if changes are spatial, (b) the desired recreation opportunity spectrum map(s) is/are amended. The responsible official will determine whether the scale of inconsistency is of such magnitude to require a plan amendment or an administrative map change due to mapping alterations."

Comment: ROS class definitions need to be expanded to add descriptions of Non-Recreation Uses, Evidence of Humans, and Naturalness characteristics. ROS setting descriptions need to be consistent with the 1986 ROS Book which was a basis for the recreation direction in the planning rule as informed by the Planning Rule PEIS and FSM 2310 (WO Amendment 2300-90- 1).

The plan must indicate where established ROS classes, Scenic Character, and Scenic Integrity Objectives apply. Forest Plan modifications of where ROS, Scenic Character, and SIO direction applies (including maps) must follow amendment processes and not be addressed as an administrative change.

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan on page 75 states, "Suitability - About 948,200 acres of land in the GMUG National Forests have been identified as suitable for timber production in alternative B of the draft forest plan. Lands are identified as suitable for timber production through the process detailed in appendix 8, which further details the acres identified as suitable for timber production for each of the analyzed alternatives. Even though lands may be identified as suitable for timber production, those lands are not guaranteed to be feasible for harvest.

Feasibility is determined at the site-specific, project level with more detailed information. See appendix 8 for more information."

Comment: Alternative B is described as having 948,200 acres suitable for timber production. However, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings are not suited for timber production and timber harvest is not an objective in these areas. Lands suitable for timber production should be confined to areas established for Road Modified ROS class conditions preferably to a subclass area of a Road Modified ROS setting. Lands suitable for timber production should be approximately 400,000 acres after being constrained

by ROS classifications. The Forest Service may wish to consider establishing a Roaded Modified ROS setting in those areas where the intent is to manage the land for timber production. This reclassification should seek public review in a supplemental DEIS.

The apparent naturalness of an area is highly influenced by the evidence of human developments. If the landscape is obviously altered by roads, railroads, reservoirs, power lines, pipe lines, or by highly visual vegetative manipulations, such as clearcuttings, the area will not be perceived as being predominately natural. Even if the total acres of modified land are relatively small, "out of scale" modifications can have a negative impact.

Primitive and Semi-Primitive ROS classes will constrain some actions such as mechanical treatments with heavy equipment and road development if these desired ROS class opportunities are to be available to recreationists seeking these experiences. The recreation opportunity setting since its inception has been composed of other natural features in addition to the six factors. Landform types, vegetation, scenery, water, and wildlife are all important elements of recreation environments; they influence where people go and the kinds of activities possible.

Summary Comment: The Forest Service should take the following actions:

[bull] ROS setting descriptions need to be consistent with the 1986 ROS Book which was a basis for the recreation direction in the planning rule as informed by the Planning Rule PEIS and FSM 2310 (WO Amendment 2300-90-1). ROS class definitions need to be expanded to add descriptions of Non-Recreation Uses, Evidence of Humans, and Naturalness characteristics.

[bull] The plan must indicate where established ROS classes, Scenic Character, and Scenic Integrity Objectives apply. Forest Plan modifications of where ROS, Scenic Character, and SIO direction applies (including maps) must follow amendment processes and not be addressed as an administrative change.

[bull] Modify the description of "Overlay" as described below under Glossary Terms.

[bull] Modify ROS plan components as described below.

Primitive ROS Setting

Primitive ROS Class Desired Conditions

[bull] Setting: The area is essentially an unmodified natural environment. Interaction between users is very low and evidence of other users is minimal.

[bull] Experience: Very high probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance through the application of outdoor skill in an environment that offers a high degree of challenge and risk.

[bull] Evidence of Humans: Evidence of humans would be un-noticed by an observer wandering through the area. Natural ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease exist. The area may provide for wildlife connectivity across landscapes. Primitive ROS settings contain no motorized and mechanized vehicles and there is little probability of seeing other groups. They provide quiet solitude away from roads and people or other parties, are generally free of human development, and facilitate self-reliance and discovery. Signing, and other infrastructure is minimal and constructed of rustic, native materials. Scenic Integrity Objective is Very High.

Primitive ROS Class Standards and Guidelines

[bull] Standards: Motor vehicles are not allowed unless the use is mandated by Federal law and regulation. Permanent and temporary roads may not be constructed.

[bull] Guidelines: (1) No new permanent buildings should be constructed, since buildings may degrade the unmodified character of these landscapes; (2) Less than 6 parties per day encountered on trails and less than 3 parties visible at campsite since an increase in the number of groups may lead to a sense of crowding; (3) Party size limits range between 6 and 12; and (4) No roads, timber harvest, or mineral extraction are allowed in order to protect the remoteness and naturalness of the area.

Primitive ROS Class Suitability of Lands

[bull] Suitability: (1) Motorized and mechanized recreation travel are not suitable; and (2) lands are not suitable for timber production.

Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS Setting

Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS Class Desired Conditions

[bull] Setting: The area is predominantly a natural-appearing environment where natural ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease exist. Interaction between users is low, but there is often evidence of other users.

[bull] Experience: High probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance through the application of outdoor skill in an environment that offers a high degree of challenge and risk.

[bull] Evidence of Humans: Natural setting may have subtle modifications that would be noticed but not draw the attention of an observer wandering through the area. The area provides opportunities for exploration, challenge, and self-reliance. The area may contribute to wildlife connectivity corridors. Closed roads may be present, but are managed to not dominate the landscape or detract from the naturalness of the area. Rustic structures such as signs and footbridges are occasionally present to direct use and/or protect the setting's natural and cultural resources. Scenic Integrity Objective is High.

Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS Class Standards and Guidelines

[bull] Standards: (1) Motor vehicle use is not allowed unless the use is mandated by Federal law and regulation; and (2) Permanent and temporary roads may not be constructed.

[bull] Guidelines: (1) The development scale of recreation facilities should be 0-1 to protect the undeveloped character of desired SPNM settings; (2) Less than 15 parties per day encountered on trails and less than 6 parties visible at campsite, since an increased in the number of groups may lead to a sense of crowding; (3) Party size limits range between 12 and 18; (4) Vegetation management may range from prescribed fire to very limited and restricted timber harvest for the purpose of maintaining or restoring a natural setting; and (5) To protect resources, any existing road should be decommissioned, including obliteration and recontouring with natural slopes.

Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS Class Suitability of Lands

[bull] Suitability: (1) Motorized recreation travel is not suitable; and (2) Lands are not suitable for timber production. Timber harvest is not an objective.

Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS Setting

Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS Class Desired Conditions

[bull] Setting: The area is predominantly a natural-appearing environment. Concentration of users is low, but there is often evidence of other users.

[bull] Experience: Moderate probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance in an environment that offers a high degree of challenge and risk. Opportunity to have a high degree of interaction with the natural environment. Opportunity to use motorized equipment.

[bull] Evidence of Humans: Natural setting may have moderate alterations, but would not draw the attention of motorized observers on trails and primitive roads within the area. The area provides for motorized recreation opportunities in backcountry settings. Vegetation management does not dominate the landscape or detract from the experience of visitors. Visitors challenge themselves as they explore rugged landscapes. Scenic Integrity Objective is Moderate.

Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS Class Standards and Guidelines

[bull] Guidelines: (1) The development scale of recreation facilities should be 0-1 to protect the undeveloped character of desired SPM settings; (2) Low to moderate contact between parties to protect the social setting; (3) Vegetation management may range from prescribed fire to limited and restricted timber harvest for the purpose of maintaining or restoring natural vegetative conditions; and (4) Motorized routes are typically designed as motorized trails (FSH 2309.18 part 23.21, Trail Class 2, No Double Lane) and Four-Wheel Drive Vehicles routes (FSH 2309.18 part 23.23, Trail Class 2, No Double Lane) offering a high degree of self-reliance, challenge, and risk in exploring these backcountry settings.

Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS Class Suitability of Lands

[bull] Suitability: Lands are not suitable for timber production. Timber harvest is not an objective.

Roaded Natural ROS Setting

Roaded Natural ROS Class Desired Conditions

[bull] Setting: The area is predominantly natural-appearing environments with moderate evidences of the sights and sounds of human activities. Such evidences usually harmonize with the natural environment. Interaction between users may be low to moderate, but with evidence of other users prevalent. Resource modification and utilization practices evident, but harmonize with the natural environment. Conventional motorized use is provided for in construction standards and design of facilities.

[bull] Experience: About equal probability to experience affiliation with other user groups and for isolation from sights and sound of humans. Opportunity to have a high degree of interaction with the natural environment. Challenge and risk opportunities associated with a more primitive type of recreation are not very important. Practice and testing of outdoor skills might be important. Opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized forms of recreation are possible.

Evidence of Humans: Natural settings may have modifications, which range from being easily noticed to strongly dominant to observers within the area. However, from sensitive travel routes and use areas these alternations

would remain unnoticed or visually subordinate. The landscape is generally natural with modifications moderately evident. Concentration of users is low to moderate, but facilities for group activities may be present. Challenge and risk opportunities are generally not important in this class. Opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized activities are present. Construction standards and facility design incorporate conventional motorized uses.

Roaded Modified ROS setting is a subclass of Roaded Natural includes areas that exhibit evidence of extensive forest management activities that are dominant on the landscape, including having high road densities, heavily logged areas, highly visible mining, oil and gas, wind energy, or other similar uses and activities. Scenic Integrity Objective is Low. Desired Scenic Character may be described as "Agricultural" expressing dominant human agricultural land uses producing domestic products.

Roaded Natural ROS Class Suitability of Lands

[bull] Suitability: Lands may be suitable for timber production.

Rural ROS Setting

Rural ROS Class Desired Conditions

[bull] Setting: Area is characterized by substantially modified natural environment. Resource modification and utilization practices are to enhance specific recreation activities and to maintain vegetative cover and soil. Sights and sounds of humans are readily evident, and the interaction between users is often moderate to high. A considerable number of facilities are designed for use by a large number of people. Facilities are often provided for special activities. Moderate densities are provided far away from developed sites. Facilities for intensified motorized use and parking are available.

[bull] Experience: Probability for experiencing affiliation with individuals and groups is prevalent as is the convenience of sites and opportunities. These factors are generally more important than the setting of the physical environment. Opportunities for wildland challenges, risk-taking, and testing of outdoor skills are generally unimportant except for specific activities like downhill skiing, for which challenge and risk-taking are important elements.

[bull] Evidence of Humans: Natural setting is culturally modified to the point that it is dominant to the sensitive travel route observer. May include intensively managed wildland resource landscapes. Pedestrian or other slow-moving observers are constantly within view of the culturally changed landscape.

D. Scenery Management

Draft Plan: The Draft Forest Plan beginning on page 72 states, "FW-GDL-SCNY-05: To maintain scenic character for the scenic byways, travel corridors, trails, and streams that make up the set of concern level 1 travelways, vegetation should be managed within 300 feet of the travelway to retain or enhance the scenic quality of the immediate foreground of the travelway, unless such measures would directly conflict with maintenance standards for such infrastructure (i.e., reduction of hazardous fuels along a power line that immediately bisects the route). See appendix 3 for full list of concern level 1 travelways. FW-GDL-SCNY-06: To maintain scenic character for scenic byways, travel corridors, scenic trails, and streams that comprise the set of concern level 1 travelways, the development of large facilities (including, but not limited to, powerlines, gas wells, and power stations) should be avoided within the immediate foreground of the route (300 feet), unless the proposed infrastructure can be fully screened (i.e., with vegetation and topography). Exception: Where concern level 1 travelways intersect the utility corridor overlay or other established rights-of-way."

Comment: These guidelines should be modified to reflect the guidance in Landscape Aesthetics Handbook No. 701 to address foreground, middle-ground, and distant views.

E. Timber Products

Draft Plan: The Draft Forest Plan beginning on page 74 states, "Desired Conditions - Vegetation management contributes to a variety of desired conditions. See Social and Economic Environment FW-DC-SCEC-01; Key Ecosystem Characteristic FW-DC-ECO-01, 02, and 07; and Fire and Fuels DC FFM-01.

Suitability - About 948,200 acres of land in the GMUG National Forests have been identified as suitable for timber production in alternative B of the draft forest plan. Lands are identified as suitable for timber production through the process detailed in appendix 8, which further details the acres identified as suitable for timber production for each of the analyzed alternatives. Even though lands may be identified as suitable for timber production, those lands are not guaranteed to be feasible for harvest. Feasibility is determined at the site-specific, project level with more detailed information. See appendix 8 for more information[hellip]

FW-STND-TMBR-03: Timber shall not be harvested for the purpose of timber production on lands not suited for timber production (36 CFR 219.11(d)(1)). Timber harvest may occur on these lands as a tool to assist in achieving or maintaining one or more applicable desired conditions or objectives of the plan in order to protect other multiple-use values and for salvage, sanitation, public health, or safety (36 CFR 219.11(c)). Examples of using timber harvest to protect other multiple use values include improving wildlife or fish habitat and thinning to reduce fire risk[hellip]."

Comment: Timber production effects are inconsistent with the desired conditions of Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorize and Semi-Primitive Motorize ROS settings. In addition, timber production is inconsistent with CDNST desired conditions. Roads are inconsistent with the desired conditions of Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorize and Semi-Primitive Motorize ROS settings. In addition, roads are inconsistent with CDNST desired conditions.⁷⁴ [36 CFR [sect] 219.11(a)(1)(i) - Lands not suited for timber production - Statute prohibits timber production on the land and 36 CFR [sect] 219.11(a)(1)(iii) Lands not suited for timber production - Timber production not compatible with desired conditions.] Lands suitable for timber production is over estimated with the proposed ROS settings to be established.

F. National Forest System Trails

Draft Plan: The Draft Forest Plan beginning on page 77 review National Forest System trails.

Comment: Suggest adding a sustainable trail guideline: "To promote a sustainable trail system, constructed trails must be designed following National Forest System trail development standards, unless constructed within a special use permit area such as a ski area."

G. National Forest System Roads

Draft Plan: The Draft Forest Plan beginning on page 78 states, "FW-STND-TSTN-03: All temporary roads shall be closed and rehabilitated within 2 years following completion of the use of the road, which involves re-contouring where significant side slope exists, elimination of ditches and other structures, out-sloping during construction, removal of ruts and berms, removal of culverts or other instream structures and associated fills, effectively blocking the road to normal vehicular traffic where feasible, and construction of drainage features such as cross ditches and water bars[hellip]

FW-STND-TSTN-04: National Forest System roads determined through the National Environmental Policy Act process to be not needed shall be either a) converted to another use, such as a trail, or b) decommissioned

within 3 years of the determination[hellip]."

Comment: Suggest using the term decommissioned instead of rehabilitated in FW-STND-TSTN-

03. Roads should not be converted to a National Forest System trail unless is documented in a NEPA document that the new trail is priority for the trail system on the forest and that there is reasonable expectation that it will be maintained.

H. Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers

Draft Plan: The Draft Forest on page 79 states, "Desired Conditions - FW-DC-WSR-01: Eligible wild river segments are free of impoundments and waters are free flowing. Shorelines are essentially primitive with little or no evidence of human activity, with the exceptions of historical or culturally significant features. The areas are generally inaccessible except by trail for non- motorized travel. Water quality meets or exceeds State standards for aesthetics, for propagation of fish and wildlife adapted to the river habitat, and for human contact.

FW-DC-WSR-02: Eligible scenic river segments are free of impoundments and waters are free flowing. Shorelines are largely primitive and undeveloped with no substantial evidence of human activity. Roads may occasionally reach or bridge scenic river corridors.

FW-DC-WSR-03: Eligible recreation river segments may have some existing impoundment or diversion features, but waterways remain free flowing and riverine in appearance. Recreation river segments are accessible by road or trail, improvements occur, and encounters with people are expected.

Standards - FW-STND-WSR-04: Management actions within the river corridors of eligible river segments shall be consistent with management direction contained in FSH 1909.12, chapter 80, section 84, FSM 2354, or other current direction."

Comment: I recommend adding the following Desired Condition which would contribute to protecting wetlands and supplement the RMGD plan components by referring to Proper Functioning Condition.

Desired Condition - "Stream ecosystems, riparian zones, and associated stream courses are functioning properly and resilient to natural disturbances and climate change."

Reference: USDI BLM; USDA FS; USDA NRCS (USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDA Forest Service, USDA National Resource Conservation Service). 1998. Riparian area management: A user guide to assessing proper functioning condition and the supporting science for lotic areas, TR 1737-15. Denver, CO.

Standard - "Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers are managed to protect outstandingly remarkable values."

I. Management Area Establishment

Draft Plan: The Draft Forest on page 80 states, "The GMUG National Forests contain several areas that require additional or different direction and plan components. These areas are identified as management areas. A management area represents a management emphasis for an area or several similar areas on the landscape. Some management areas have been designated by Congress, such as designated wilderness; other areas are identified by this forest plan. Plan components for a management area may differ from Forestwide guidance by:

[bull] Constraining an activity where Forestwide direction does not,

[bull] Constraining an activity to a greater degree than Forestwide direction, or

[bull] Providing for an exception to Forestwide direction, when Forestwide direction would otherwise conflict with the management emphasis of the management area.

[bull] All Forestwide plan components are otherwise applied to management areas.

The distribution of management areas in the draft forest plan is identified in table 17. See appendix 1 to find the location of associated maps.

Management areas are proposed for Wilderness, Special Areas and Designations, Research National Areas, Fossil Ridge Special Recreation Area, Colorado Roadless Areas, Wildlife Management Area, Special Management Area, Mountain Resorts, Recreation Emphasis Corridors, and General Forest (i.e., Forestwide direction)." [National Scenic and Historic Trails are not included.]

Comment: The CDNST management corridor is said to be equivalent to a Management Area. To avoid plan implementation confusion the revise plan should describe a CDNST Management Area. This would be consistent with FSM 2353.44b.

J. Recommended Wilderness

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan on page 90 states, "This section applies to recommended wilderness, if any areas result from step four of the wilderness process (FSH 1909.12 chapter 70). Should any recommended wilderness areas ultimately be designated by Congress as wilderness during the implementation period of this forest plan, Management Area 1.2 (RECWLD) would become moot for those areas. Management direction for those areas would be provided in Management Area 1.1 (WLDN) of this plan, and any other parameters set forth in legislation designating recommended areas as wilderness."

Comment: The analysis step should address the conservation benefits of overlapping Wilderness, Wild and Scenic River, and National Scenic Trail designations. Each congressional designation offers protections that the other does not. Overlapping designations would help ensure National Forest System lands are protected for current and future generations by protecting wilderness characteristics, outstandingly remarkable values of eligible wild and scenic rivers, and the nature and purposes of the CDNST. Where National Trail corridors, Wilderness Areas, and/or Wild and Scenic Rivers overlap the most restrictive management measures would control. Protecting wilderness values would include, in part, establishing plan components that identifies recommended wilderness as not being suitable for motor vehicle use and mechanized transport.

Specific to National Scenic Trails, the NTSA states that, "national scenic trails, established as provided in section 5 of this Act, which will be extended trails so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2), and that comprehensive planning will describe specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including the identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved[hellip](16

U.S.C. 1244(f))." The nature and purposes policy for the CDNST is: "The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor" (2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan, FSM 2353.42, and 74 FR 51116[mdash]Notice of final amendments to comprehensive plan and final directives).

The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail potential rights-of-way/management corridor is found within the following roadless areas: Texas Creek #167, Sanford Basin #170, Mirror Basin #169, Agate Creek #173, Cochetopa Hills #165, Cochetopa #141/#143, Carson #73, and Cataract #62. Recommending these areas for

wilderness designation and managing the areas to protect wilderness characteristics would contribute to the conservation purposes of the CDNST.

Plan components applicable to a recommended area must protect and maintain the social and ecological characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness recommendation and should include the following plan components:

Desired Condition: Areas recommended for wilderness retain their wilderness characteristics until their designation as wilderness or other use determined by Congress.

Desired Condition: Enhance the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness designations.

Standard: Continue existing uses, only if such uses do not prevent the protection and maintenance of the social and ecological characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness designation.

K. Wildlife Management Area

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan on page 93 states, "Desired Conditions - MA-DC-WLDF-01: Large blocks of diverse habitat are relatively undisturbed by routes, providing security for the life history, distribution, and movement of many species, including big-game species. Habitat connectivity is maintained or improved as fragmentation by routes is reduced. See also the Forestwide objective for native species diversity SPEC-03.

Standards - MA-STND-WLDF-02: To maintain habitat function and provide security habitat for wildlife species by minimizing impacts associated with roads and trails, there shall be no net gain in system routes, both motorized and non-motorized, where the system route density already exceeds 1 linear mile per square mile, within a wildlife management area boundary. Additions of new system routes within wildlife management areas shall not cause the route density in a proposed project's zone of influence to exceed 1 linear mile per square mile. Within the Flattop Wildlife Management Areas in the Gunnison Ranger District, there shall be no new routes. Exception: this does not apply to administrative routes (see appendix 12, Footnotes Regarding Best Available Scientific Information for further detail).

Objectives - MA-OBJ-WLDF-03: Within 5 years of plan approval, identify potential area-specific management actions for each wildlife management area to improve habitat connectivity with respect to existing route densities and to achieve desired ecological conditions for constituent ecosystems. Within 10 years of plan approval, complete one action in each wildlife management area."

Comment: Approximately seventy percent of the Wildlife Management Areas are identified as being suitable for timber production, which is inconsistent with the Desired Condition for this Management Area. Vegetation management in these areas should be for resource benefit.

A plan component should be added stating, "Lands are not suitable for timber production. Timber harvest is not an objective."

L. References Cited

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan on page 123 cites references.

Comment: The following references should be cited in the Forest Plan in the appropriate selections and listed as references:⁷⁵ [These articles can be found online at <http://nstrail.org/references.htm>.]

[bull] USDA Forest Service. 2020. Chapter 2350 - Trail, River, and Similar Recreation Opportunities. (WO Amendment 2300-2020-1)

[bull] Visitor Perceptions of Bark Beetle Impacted Forests in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado by Christa Cooper Sumner, and Jeffrey A. Lockwood. 2020.

[bull] USDA Forest Service. 2013. "Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and The Colorado Trail Reroute Lujan to La Garita Wilderness" 2013 Environmental Assessment.

[bull] USDA Forest Service. 1990. Chapter 2310 of Forest Service Manual 2300 - Planning and Data Management. (WO Amendment 2300-90-1)

[bull] USDA Forest Service. 1986. ROS Book 1986.

[bull] USDA Forest Service. 1986. Recreation Opportunity Setting as a Management Tool Technical Guide by George Stankey, Greg Warren, and Warren Bacon. Pacific Northwest Region.

[bull] Visitor Preferences for Visual Changes in Bark Beetle-Impacted Forest Recreation Settings in the United States and Germany by Arne Arnberger and others. 2017

[bull] The forgotten stage of forest succession: Early-successional ecosystems on forest sites by Mark E Swanson and others. 2010.

[bull] An Assessment of Frameworks Useful for Public Land Recreation Planning by McCool, Clark, and Stankey, General Technical Report PNW-GTR-705. 2007.

[bull] The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum: A Framework for Planning, Management, and Research, General Technical Report PNW-98 by Roger Clark and George Stankey. 1979.

M. Glossary Terms

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan on page 153 states, "Overlay -Overlays are mapped and represent areas with more specific emphases and direction. These include scenic integrity objectives, desired recreation opportunity spectrum settings; designated trails; scenic byways; eligible wild and scenic river segments; and utility corridors. The direction for these areas builds on Forestwide and any underlying management area direction. An example of this is the designated trails overlay, which includes the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. While Continental Divide National Scenic Trail direction would apply along the entirety of the trail in the GMUG, how the corridor is managed would be impacted by the underlying management area direction, which adjusts as this trail traverses through several management areas, including Designated Wilderness (1.1), Colorado Roadless Areas (3.1), Mountain Resorts (4.1), and General Forest (5)."

Comment: Modify the glossary description of "Overlay" by stating that, "Overlays are mapped and represent areas with more specific emphases and direction. These include scenic integrity objectives, desired recreation opportunity spectrum settings; designated trails; scenic byways; eligible wild and scenic river segments; and utility corridors. [SUGGESTED DELETE "The direction for these areas builds on Forestwide and any underlying management area direction."] An example of this is the designated trails overlay, which includes the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. While Continental Divide National Scenic Trail direction would apply along the entirety of the trail in the GMUG, how the corridor is managed [SUGGESTED REPLACE "would" WITH "may"] be impacted by the underlying management area direction, which adjusts as this trail traverses through several management areas, including Designated Wilderness (1.1), Colorado Roadless Areas (3.1), Mountain Resorts (4.1), and General Forest (5). [SUGGESTED ADD [Insert:] "Conversely, the underlying management direction

may be constrained by the standards, guidelines, and suitability for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. The most constraining standards, guidelines, and suitability determinations control when there are overlapping plan components."]

National Scenic Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Wilderness legislation keeps the management of the federal land under the agencies existing authorities, but subject to the overriding purpose of protecting qualities and values described by the designated area legislation. The establishment of these designated areas thus constitutes an overlay on the management regime otherwise applicable to lands managed by the agency. By eliminating activities and uses incompatible with the purposes for which an area is designated, the designated area limits the management discretion that the agency might otherwise have.

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan on pages 156 and 157 states, "Recreation opportunity spectrum also known as recreation setting. Allocations that identify a variety of recreation experience opportunities categorized into six classes on a scale from primitive to urban. Each class is defined in terms of the degree to which it satisfies certain recreation experience needs, based on the extent to which the natural environment has been modified, the type of facilities provided, the degree of outdoor skills needed to enjoy the area, and the relative density of recreation use. The six classes are:

[bull] Primitive - Very high probability of experiencing solitude, self-reliance, and challenge; natural landscape with natural processes allowed to function; very low interaction between users; restrictions and controls not evident; access limited; generally cross- country travel.

[bull] Semi-primitive non-motorized - Good probability of experiencing solitude, self-reliance, and challenges; natural primitive landscapes; some evidence of users; minimum subtle controls; access by low standard trails and cross-country travel; natural processes allowed to function with subtle vegetative alterations. Managed for non-motorized use.

[bull] Semi-primitive motorized - Moderate probability for self-reliance and experiencing solitude away from travelways (roads/trails); risk associated with motorized equipment; predominantly natural landscapes; low concentration of users and interaction by users long travelways; minimum but subtle restrictions; vegetative alterations visually blend with the landscape. Existing routes are designated for off highway vehicles and other high clearance vehicles. Mountain bikes and other mechanized equipment are present.

[bull] Roaded natural - Low opportunity to avoid other users; little opportunity for risk or challenge; substantial modified landscapes; moderate evidence and interaction of users; controls and restrictions present; variety of motorized users and access; various shapes and sizes of vegetative alterations that blend with the landscape. The road system is well defined and can accommodate sedan travel.

[bull] Rural - Good opportunity to affiliate with others; facilities important; self-reliance of little importance; altered landscapes but attractive; high interaction among users; obvious and prevalent controls; extensive motorized use; vegetation maintained. Rural settings represent most developed recreation sites.

[bull] Urban - Opportunity to affiliate with others important; outdoor skills associated with competitive events; landscapes extensively changed with dominant structures; large numbers of user interactions; intensive controls are numerous; motorized use prevalent, including mass transit; vegetation planted and maintained. Highly developed ski areas and resorts are examples of a typical urban setting on National Forest System lands."

Comment: ROS characterizations are incomplete. Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classes. ROS class desired conditions must be compatible with the 1986 ROS Book descriptions. The definitions in Draft Plan and DEIS should be modified:

[bull] Primitive ROS Class Desired Conditions. Setting: The area is essentially an unmodified natural environment. Interaction between users is very low and evidence of other users is minimal. Experience: Very high probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance through the application of outdoor skill in an environment that offers a high degree of challenge and risk. Evidence of Humans: Evidence of humans would be un-noticed by an observer wandering through the area. Natural ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease exist. The area may provide for wildlife connectivity across landscapes. Primitive ROS settings contain no motorized and mechanized vehicles and there is little probability of seeing other groups. They provide quiet solitude away from roads and people or other parties, are generally free of human development, and facilitate self-reliance and discovery. Signing, and other infrastructure is minimal and constructed of rustic, native materials.

[bull] Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS Class Desired Conditions. Setting: The area is predominantly a natural-appearing environment where natural ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease exist. Interaction between users is low, but there is often evidence of other users. Experience: High probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance through the application of outdoor skill in an environment that offers a high degree of challenge and risk. Evidence of Humans: Natural setting may have subtle modifications that would be noticed but not draw the attention of an observer wandering through the area. The area provides opportunities for exploration, challenge, and self-reliance. The area may contribute to wildlife connectivity corridors. Closed roads may be present, but are managed to not dominate the landscape or detract from the naturalness of the area. Rustic structures such as signs and footbridges are occasionally present to direct use and/or protect the setting's natural and cultural resources.

[bull] Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS Class Desired Conditions. Setting: The area is predominantly a natural-appearing environment. Concentration of users is low, but there is often evidence of other users. Experience: Moderate probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance in an environment that offers a high degree of challenge and risk. Opportunity to have a high degree of interaction with the natural environment. Opportunity to use motorized equipment. Evidence of Humans: Natural setting may have moderate alterations, but would not draw the attention of motorized observers on trails and primitive roads within the area. The area provides for motorized recreation opportunities in backcountry settings. Vegetation management does not dominate the landscape or detract from the experience of visitors. Visitors challenge themselves as they explore rugged landscapes.

[bull] Roaded Natural ROS Class Desired Conditions. Setting: The area is predominantly natural-appearing environments with moderate evidences of the sights and sounds of human activities. Such evidences usually harmonize with the natural environment. Interaction between users may be low to moderate, but with evidence of other users prevalent. Resource modification and utilization practices evident, but harmonize with the natural environment. Conventional motorized use is provided for in construction standards and design of facilities. Experience: About equal probability to experience affiliation with other user groups and for isolation from sights and sound of humans. Opportunity to have a high degree of interaction with the natural environment. Challenge and risk opportunities associated with a more primitive type of recreation are not very important. Practice and testing of outdoor skills might be important. Opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized forms of recreation are possible. Evidence of Humans: Natural settings may have modifications, which range from being easily noticed to strongly dominant to observers within the area. However, from sensitive travel routes and use areas these alternations would remain unnoticed or visually subordinate. The landscape is generally natural with modifications moderately evident. Concentration of users is low to moderate, but facilities for group activities may be present. Challenge and risk opportunities are generally not important in this class. Opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized activities are present. Construction standards and facility design incorporate conventional motorized uses. The Roaded Modified subclass includes areas that exhibit evidence of extensive forest management activities that are dominant on the landscape, including having high road densities, heavily logged areas, highly visible mining, oil and gas, wind energy, or other similar uses and activities. Scenic Integrity

Objective is Low.

[bull] Rural ROS Class Desired Conditions. Setting: Area is characterized by substantially modified natural environment. Resource modification and utilization practices are to enhance specific recreation activities and to maintain vegetative cover and soil. Sights and sounds of humans are readily evident, and the interaction between users is often moderate to high. A considerable number of facilities are designed for use by many people. Facilities are often provided for special activities. Moderate densities are provided far away from developed sites. Facilities for intensified motorized use and parking are available. Experience: Probability for experiencing affiliation with individuals and groups is prevalent as is the convenience of sites and opportunities. These factors are generally more important than the setting of the physical environment. Opportunities for wildland challenges, risk-taking, and testing of outdoor skills are generally unimportant except for specific activities like downhill skiing, for which challenge and risk-taking are important elements. Evidence of Humans: Natural setting is culturally modified to the point that it is dominant to the sensitive travel route observer. May include intensively managed wildland resource landscapes. Pedestrian or other slow-moving observers are constantly within view of the culturally changed landscape.

N. Scenic Integrity Descriptions and Scenic Travelways

Draft Plan: The Draft Forest Plan beginning on page 187 states, "Scenic integrity objectives for some management areas and overlays vary:

[bull] Wildlife management area - Scenic integrity objectives vary from high to low depending on underlying area (i.e., Colorado roadless area) and other factors (i.e., concern level routes and distance zones, etc.).

[bull] Recreation emphasis corridors - Scenic integrity objectives vary from high to low depending on underlying area (i.e., Colorado roadless area) and other factors (i.e., concern level routes and distance zones, etc.).

[bull] General forest - Scenic integrity objectives vary from high to low depending on underlying area (i.e., recreation opportunity spectrum setting) or other factors (i.e., concern level routes and distance zones, etc.) and other factors.

[bull] Desired recreation opportunity spectrum setting - The scenic integrity objectives are proposed to vary depending on the recreation opportunity spectrum setting and the draft alternative:

o Alternative B: Semi-primitive non-motorized is only moderate, high, or very high scenic integrity objective (only low where coincident with the utility corridor overlay)

o Alternative C: Semi-primitive non-motorized and semi-primitive motorized vary from low to high scenic integrity objective.

o Alternative D: Semi-primitive non-motorized is only high or very high scenic integrity objective. Semi-primitive motorized is moderate, high, or very high scenic integrity objective (only low where coincident with the utility corridor overlay)."

Comment: The direction should also reflect that timber production is not consistent with the desired conditions for Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings. Scenic integrity objectives for the CDNST travel route are Very High or High. Scenic integrity objectives should be consistent with the comparison table in the Landscape Aesthetics

- A Handbook for Scenery Management (Agriculture Handbook No. 701, Appendix F-3).

O. Timber Suitability Analysis

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan beginning on page 226 states, "Lands identified as suitable for timber production have a regularly scheduled timber harvest program that contributes to Forestwide desired conditions and multiple use goals, such as providing mosaics of habitats for wildlife species, managing fuels, and contributing to the economic sustainability of local communities[hellip]

Alternative D - The land suited for timber production under alternative D was defined using the criteria below. Starting with the may be suitable timber areas, the following areas were removed because timber production is not compatible with the desired conditions and objectives for these areas: Wilderness to be analyzed/recommended wilderness, Special interest areas, Research natural areas, Eligible wild, scenic, and recreational rivers (using wild and scenic river overlay), Mountain resort areas (Management Area 4.1) Designated trails (using designated trails overlay), Recreation emphasis corridors, Scenic byways, Special management areas, slopes greater than 40 percent."

Comment: The rule provides overall direction for how plans are developed, revised, and amended. Section 219.11(a)(1)(i) "Statute, Executive order, or regulation prohibits timber production on the land." The National Trails System Act prohibits actions that substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of a National Scenic or Historic Trail. Section 219.11(a)(1)(iii) requires that where timber production would not be compatible with desired conditions and objectives established by the plan, including those established in accordance with the requirements for suitability ([sect] 219.8), diversity ([sect] 219.9), and multiple use ([sect] 219.10), the responsible official shall identify such lands as not suitable for timber production.

Timber production effects are incompatible with achieving National Trails System Act objectives and the CDNST nature and purposes desired conditions. Furthermore, timber production is inconsistent with Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS setting desired conditions. These areas are characterized by a predominantly natural or natural- appearing environment of moderate-to-large size. Natural setting may have subtle modifications that would be noticed, but not draw the attention of an observer wandering through the area (SPNM). Natural setting may have moderately dominant alterations, but would not draw the attention of motorized observers on trails and primitive roads within the area (SPM).

The Plan should recognize that timber production and associated actions and activities are inconsistent with the provisions of (1) the National Trails System Act, including providing for the nature and purposes of the CDNST and (2) Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS settings, which are appropriate ROS allocations for a CDNST management corridor or rights-of- way. Regulated forest structure conditions maintained by periodic forest harvest and regeneration is inconsistent with and unnecessary for achieving CDNST, Primitive ROS class, and Semi-Primitive ROS class desired conditions; these areas must not be classified as suitable for timber production, timber harvest should not be an objective, and harvest quantity projections must not be included in projected wood sale quantity and projected timber sale quantity calculations.

The purpose of timber production is the purposeful growing, tending, harvesting, and regeneration of regulated crops of trees to be cut into logs, bolts, or other round sections for industrial or consumer use, which is in stark contrast and clearly incompatible with protecting the purposes for which National Scenic Trails are established. The CDNST rights-of-way/ management corridor is not suitable for timber production (36 CFR [sect] 219.11(a)(1)(i) and (iii)).

Managing the CDNST corridor for Roaded Natural/Modified and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings (as well as for timber production) would lead to management actions that substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST. In areas of timber production, the spread of non-native vegetation (e.g., noxious weeds) and reoccurring harvests for timber purposes, stand tending, road construction and reconstruction, CDNST travel route closures, and other development activities are incompatible with desired ROS settings and Scenic Integrity

Objectives. The lasting effects of timber production activities (roads, timber harvest) as well as short-term effects (logging trucks, noise) degrade CDNST recreation, scenic, historic, natural, and cultural qualities.

P. Regional Forester's List of Species of Conservation Concern

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan beginning on page 260 reviews Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep.

1. "Threats that are known to operate on the GMUG include genetic isolation due to barriers to movement, disease, predation, recreation and climate-change related drought that impacts their low-elevation water sources. Disease risk is related to contact with domestic sheep on and off the GMUG.
2. Historically, over approximately the last 200 years, the population dramatically declined. However, the total population on the GMUG has increased 20 percent since 2002 due to intensive restoration efforts by Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Recreation pressure is likely resulting in a declining habitat trend.
3. The population on the GMUG is in the middle of the sub-species' geographic range of the as a whole and thus does not represent a restricted range.
4. There is no restricted ecological condition or low population number."

Comment: The Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep should be identified as a Species of Conservation Concern, which would be consistent with the Rio Grande National Forest decision. Some domestic sheep allotments on the Forest are in and near occupied range and suitable range of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. There is a potential risk of contact occurring between domestic sheep and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. Research shows that contact between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep and goats can lead to transmission of respiratory disease and pneumonia in bighorn sheep, which could potentially affect the ability of bighorn sheep populations to persist over time. To promote healthy populations of bighorn sheep that persist over time, domestic sheep stocking and distribution should be managed to minimize risk of contact with Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep.

The complexities, disease history, and mechanisms or causal agents leading to epizootic disease events are still not fully understood in the wild. The best available science suggests that maintaining spatial or temporal separation of the species is a prudent step when the management objective is to maintain bighorn sheep populations. The GMUG National Forest should minimize bighorn and domestic sheep interactions. Every effort should be made to reduce the risk of contact with domestic sheep.

Q. Eligible Wild and Scenic River Segments - Cochetopa Creek

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan beginning on page 301 lists eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers. I recommend that a 12-mile stretch of Cochetopa Creek be identified as an eligible Wild and Scenic River. Total eligible area is 4,000 acres on the Gunnison Ranger District. Outstandingly Remarkable Values are Fish and Wildlife (Ecological and Botanical Values). Preliminary Classification is Wild in Wilderness and Scenic outside. This segment of Cochetopa Creek is meandering through wetlands that provide a high level of habitat diversity. The river provides uniquely diverse or high-quality habitat for fish and wildlife species indigenous to the region.

Section VI. Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison Plan DEIS

A. Action Alternatives

DEIS: The DEIS Volume I beginning on page 17 states, "Plan direction is consistent with existing travel management plans, with the exception of some areas recommended as wilderness or special management areas. Site-specific travel decisions needed to bring travel plans in these areas into compliance with the revised

forest plan would occur subsequent to the revised forest plan decision[hellip]

Comment: The Draft Forest Plan and the existing Gunnison Travel Plan do not protect the qualities and values of the CDNST. The Draft Plan if implemented would perpetually prevent the CDNST from being completed with a protected corridor on the GMUG National Forest. Of the alternatives presented in the DEIS, Alternative D best protects the CDNST qualities and values.

Quote Continues

The direction for these overlying areas builds on Forestwide and any underlying management area direction. An example of this is the congressionally and administratively designated trails overlay, which includes the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. While direction for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail would apply along the entirety of the trail in the GMUG, how the corridor is managed would be determined by the underlying management area direction, which adjusts as this trail traverses through several management areas, including Designated Wilderness (MA 1.1), Colorado Roadless Areas (MA 3.1), Mountain Resorts (MA 4.1), and General Forest (MA 5) [hellip]

Comment: The proposed underlying management direction does not protect the nature and purposes of the CDNST. The CDNST management corridor direction must provide for CDNST desired conditions with supporting standard, guidelines, and suitability determinations.

Quote Continues

Major spatial components that do not vary by action alternative: Although the spatial extent of these areas does not vary by action alternative, the management framework for each area does vary by action alternative due to interactions with suitable timber (area is included or excluded), varying scenic integrity objectives, and varying recreation opportunity settings (recreation opportunity spectrum).

Congressionally and Administratively Designated Trails - the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and Old Spanish National Historic Trail, and the administratively designated trails Craggs Crest and Bear Creek National Recreation Trails. Each trail is mapped to include the foreground viewshed (about one-half mile from either side of the trail tread). In the draft revised forest plan, designated trails encompass a mapped area of approximately 77,600 acres (2.5 percent of the GMUG) that overlie multiple other management areas. The forest plan also includes integrated direction for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and Old Spanish National Historic Trail to provide for the nature and purposes for which they were established[hellip]

Comment: The CDNST management corridor did not use the ROS planning framework when establishing the mapped corridor for existing and high potential route segments, which may lead to actions that substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail.

Quote Continues

[bull] Expanded and updated suitable timber. In general, approximately twice as much acreage is identified as "may be suitable" in step 1 of the suitability process. This occurred for two reasons: 1) unlike the 1982 Planning Rule, the 2012 Planning Rule does not require exclusions based on economic feasibility; and 2) the plan revision team took a more inclusive approach to account for relatively outdated, error-prone timber and other spatial data. From the "may be suitable" starting point, for each action alternative, select management areas were then excluded in accordance with the theme of the alternative for step 2 of the suitability process[hellip]

Comment: The plan improperly identifies Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings for timber production. This was in error, since the effects of timber production are not desired conditions

of these ROS settings.

Quote Continues

Alternative A [hellip] The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, Old Spanish National Historic Trail, and other national recreation trails in the GMUG would continue to be managed in accordance with their enabling legislation and agency policy[hellip]

Comment: The statement is not factual. The current management of the CDNST is not in compliance with the requirements of the National Trails System Act.

Quote Continues

Alternative B [hellip] The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, Old Spanish National Historic Trail, and other national recreation trails in the GMUG would be managed with a cohesive set of plan direction within mapped management corridors[hellip]

Alternative C [hellip] The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, Old Spanish National Historic Trail, and other national recreation trails in the GMUG would be managed with a cohesive set of plan directions within mapped management corridors[hellip]

Comment: Alternatives B and C do not establish plan components that protect the CDNST qualities and values and should be modified or discarded.

Quote Continues

Alternative D [hellip] The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, Old Spanish National Historic Trail, and other national recreation trails in the GMUG would be managed with a cohesive set of plan directions within mapped management corridors. However, the trail corridors would not be included within areas suitable for timber production[hellip]

Comment: Managing for Naturally Evolving or Natural-Appearing Scenic Character, Scenic Integrity Objectives of Very High or High, and Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized settings could accommodate many management practices, such as prescribed fire, and in limited situations timber harvest, to sustain ecosystem integrity and diversity. However, in most cases complex early seral forest ecosystems that result from fire and insect events fully support or are compatible with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

The CDNST rights-of-way corridor may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-use facilities. Other uses that could conflict with the nature and purposes of the CDNST may be allowed only where there is a determination that the other use would not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST. To protect CDNST values, the extent of the established CDNST Management Area or National Trail Management Corridor must be based on compatible Scenic Integrity and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum allocations along the CDNST travel route and high potential route segments.

It is appropriate that the trail corridors not be included within areas identified for timber production.

Quote Continues

Public feedback also requested the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail be identified as a management area. Because it intersects so many management areas, for ease of mapping, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is identified as a corridor. There is no functional difference between the implementation of the two different

mapping terms[hellip]

Semi-primitive Settings and Surface Development / Timber Harvest - Public feedback requested that primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized settings be found unsuitable for timber harvest, surface disturbance associated with oil and gas operations, and other discretionary mineral development. This concept for timber harvest was not carried forward, as it would not meet the need for continued fuels reduction even within more remote, non-motorized areas of the national forests, and timber harvest can be a byproduct of fuels treatments."

Comment: The Draft Plan improperly identifies Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi- Primitive Motorized ROS settings for timber production. This was in error, since timber production is not a desired condition of these ROS settings.

The Plan should establish Roded Modified ROS settings in areas where fuels reduction with roads and timber harvests are desired. The Roded Modified subclass includes areas that exhibit evidence of extensive forest management activities that are dominant on the landscape, including having high road densities, heavily logged areas, highly visible mining, oil and gas, wind energy, or other similar uses and activities.

Where the allowed non-motorized activities reflect the purposes for which the National Trail was established, the establishment of Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes and high and very high scenic integrity allocations would normally protect the nature and purposes (values) of the CDNST. Management direction for Semi-Primitive Motorized, Roded Natural, Rural, and Urban ROS classes allow uses that would substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST if the allocation desired conditions are realized.

Summary Comment: None of the alternatives were developed following the ROS planning framework as used in the development of the Planning Rule and PEIS. Alternatives B and C should be modified or discarded. Of the alternatives presented in the DEIS, Alternative D best protects the CDNST qualities and values. Alternative D may provide for CDNST qualities and values, except along identified high potential route segments.

Alternative D should be modified or a new Alternative F developed to add an additional eligible Wild and Scenic River in Cochetopa Creek drainage and to enlarge the Cochetopa Creek Proposed Wilderness, West Baldy, and Lake Branch proposed recommended Wilderness. Also, a Texas Creek proposed Wilderness should be added to this alternative.

B. Road and Trail Considerations and Reasonable Alternatives

DEIS: Transportation information is important to several programs and resources including timber, wildlife, watershed, soil, recreation, and National Trails. The DEIS does not provide an overview of the status of the existing transportation system and does not take a hard look at the effects of the transportation system on several important resources and special areas.

The NEPA document should include a review of the miles of National Forest System roads and trails that are projected for each alternative.

The EIS effects analysis should review in narratives and cross tabular data (with geospatial data available to the public) the following relationships for each alternative:

[bull] Miles of projected permanent and temporary roads by established ROS class,

[bull] Miles of projected permanent and temporary roads in Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings that are also identified as being suitable for timber production.

[bull] Miles of projected permanent and temporary roads in soils with a Severe or Very Severe erosion hazard,

[bull] Miles of projected permanent and temporary roads in the CDNST Management Corridor

[bull] Miles of projected designated motor vehicle use trails by established ROS class,

[bull] Miles of projected designated motor vehicle use trails in the CDNST Management Corridor, and

[bull] Acres of each established ROS class that is found in the CDNST Management Corridor.

A new Alternative F should be developed in a Supplemental DEIS with a foundation of Alternative D and informed by the analyses that are described above. Alternative F could potentially reduce the number of roads in areas of erosive soils, reduce public motor vehicle use on roads and trails in Primitive, and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS settings, and reduce miles of permanent and temporary roads in Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS settings.

C. Sustainable Recreation

DEIS: The DEIS Volume 1 on page 342 describes the recreation resource and lists the inventoried existing summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum settings in the GMUG National Forests - [Recreation opportunity spectrum class designations are only applied to National Forest System lands and do not include private lands within the GMUG boundary]

"Affected Environment [hellip] As the overall intensity and duration of national forest visits increase, dispersed recreation can pose health and safety concerns (i.e., littering, escaped campfires, and human waste) and resource impacts (i.e., vegetation removal, trampling, soil erosion, wildlife disturbance, etc.). Creation of unauthorized trails is an ongoing problem in many parts of the GMUG that can cause negative resource impacts.

Access issues, drought, climate change, invasive and noxious species, livestock grazing, infrastructure, and motorized travel will continue to affect hunting, fishing, and other wildlife- related recreation activities. Decreased levels of Forest Service personnel and increasing recreation demand and uses are major obstacles to meeting 1991 forest plan management direction to meet public demand for developed recreation facilities and manage dispersed recreation. If shortages in Forest Service personnel continue, trails and facilities will continue to be difficult to manage at the full-service level, and more facilities, trails, and sites may be decommissioned. Barriers to visitation and recreation use by minorities, low income families, and other underrepresented groups will continue to be a challenge for the GMUG."

Comment: The Affected Environment should also review in a Supplemental DEIS existing vegetation management practices, including the associated road construction, that are occurring in Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings.

This section should also describe in narratives, maps, and cross tabular data (with geospatial data available to the public) areas that exhibit evidence of extensive forest management activities that are dominant on the landscape, including having high road densities, heavily logged areas, extensive vegetation management, highly visible mining, oil and gas, or other similar uses and activities. These areas should be identified as Roaded Modified ROS settings.

The following information should be presented in the Affected Environment section of the EIS: The 2018 Recreation Assessment report beginning on page XV states, "The Forest's existing summer ROS was inventoried and mapped by using the Forest Service's National Recreation

Opportunity Spectrum Inventory Mapping Protocol, a geographic information system (GIS) mapping procedure (USDA Forest Service 2017) that identifies mapping criteria and provides repeatable instructions to inventory, map, and classify existing ROS settings. This National mapping protocol is used to reduce variations within and across Forest Service administrative boundaries and help the agency effectively communicate recreation settings and opportunities on the Forest to the public. This protocol focuses on providing a product which informs existing conditions for the forest plan assessment phase of the three phase planning framework (FSH 1909.12 Chapter 10, section 13.4). It is also used as a starting point for integrating with other resource values and deriving desired ROS settings later in the plan revision process (FSH 1909.12 Chapter 20, section 23.23) [hellip]

The product is an existing condition inventory of ROS settings during the summer season, and mapped inconsistencies with those recreation settings. The settings mapped in this inventory protocol reflect existing travel management decisions. Inconsistencies with the mapped recreation opportunities occur when there is a motorized administrative route and/or use in an otherwise non-motorized setting. Inconsistencies with mapped recreation opportunities also occur when landscape modifications (areas heavily altered by vegetation management, timber harvest, utility infrastructure, etc.) detract from an otherwise naturally-appearing setting. The GMUG's 2016 mapped Existing Scenic Integrity (ESI) was used to capture setting inconsistencies in regards to landscape modifications. Areas reflecting Low or Very Low ESI within mapped Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, Semi-Primitive Motorized, and Roaded Natural recreation settings were marked within the mapped setting as "physical setting inconsistencies".

Inconsistencies with the existing ROS settings are documented in this process, but do not change the overall ROS settings mapped and identified. Rather, the inconsistencies are used with the ROS settings mapped in this process to provide an overall existing condition for ROS and help identify places that may need management actions to improve consistency with desired conditions as those are developed in the forest plan revision process."

EXCERPTED TABLE: Inventoried Existing Summer ROS settings on the GMUG; ROS Class Designations across the GMUG

This report on page lxvii states, "The existing Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) was mapped site specifically with the Forest Plan; however, we are unable to locate a complete set of maps. The plan does not specify acreages or locations of different settings to maintain, other than desired range of acceptable recreation setting within management areas. The management intent for ROS appears to have been to let it change as a by-product of other management activities, as opposed to an objective to be managed for, other than in a few specific management areas. Management activities that occurred did not need to consider changes to the setting/impacts to recreation. Yet the recreation value of the GMUG has increased to the extent that managing for recreation can no longer simply be a byproduct of other management on the GMUG. In order to ensure that desired recreation settings are maintained, a spatial map of desired recreation settings (summer and winter) is needed.

Consider direction to manage toward those desired conditions for recreation, integrated with the full spectrum of multiple use activities that occur on the GMUG." I agree.

DEIS: The DEIS Volume I beginning on page 343 describes Environmental Consequences. "Environmental Consequences - Analysis Framework: The environmental consequences analysis for recreation focuses on management direction that differentiates outcomes between alternatives. Several quantitative measurement indicators will be used to compare the difference in recreation opportunities and management approaches based on management direction between alternatives. In addition, a qualitative discussion of the similarities and differences will aide comparison of the alternatives[hellip]

The National Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Inventory Mapping Protocol, August 2019 states, "This National inventory protocol identifies mapping criteria and provides repeatable instructions to inventory, map, and classify existing Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) settings based on forest recreation opportunities and off-forest influences (e.g. motorized routes of other jurisdiction). The product is an existing condition inventory of ROS settings, mapped inconsistencies with those settings, and mapped unique or special opportunities. The settings mapped in this inventory protocol reflect travel management decisions. Inconsistencies with the mapped recreation opportunities may occur due to unauthorized or administrative uses.

Inconsistencies with the existing ROS settings are documented in this process, but do not change the overall ROS settings mapped and identified. Rather the inconsistencies are used with the ROS settings mapped in this process to provide an overall existing condition for ROS and help identify places that may need management actions to improve consistency with desired conditions[hellip]

Since the early 1980s, the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) has been used as a framework to identify, classify, plan, and manage a range of recreation settings for both existing and desired conditions. ROS remains the best available framework for recreation planning. Six distinct settings: urban, rural, roaded natural, semi-primitive motorized, semi-primitive non-motorized, and primitive are defined using specific physical, social, and managerial criteria[hellip]

The physical characteristics are defined by the absence or presence of the sights and sounds of people, size, and the amount of environmental modification caused by human activity and authorized uses.

Remoteness - Remoteness from the sights and sounds of people is used to indicate greater or lesser amounts of social interaction and corresponding primitive to urban influences as one moves across the spectrum. The further one is from the sights and sounds of humans, the more remote the setting and more remote one feels. Remoteness is measured by the distance from motorized use on roads and trails.

Size - The size of an area is used to indicate greater or lesser potential for self-sufficiency related to a sense of vastness, where large, relatively undeveloped areas tend to provide a sense of vastness and smaller, developed areas less so as one moves across the spectrum.

Evidence of Humans - The evidence of humans criteria is used to indicate varying degrees of modifications to the natural landscape as one moves across the spectrum. Authorized uses affecting this criteria include such things as: vegetation treatments, oil and gas development, livestock grazing, recreation developments and other infrastructure.

Landscapes may vary from naturally appearing to heavily altered as one moves across the spectrum. Site management may also factor into this criteria. Site management refers to the amount or degree of on-site modification (e.g., vegetation manipulation, landscaping) and the level or scale of development of constructed features (e.g., parking areas, campgrounds, trails, administrative facilities, buildings and other structures) [hellip]

Physical Characteristics - In previous mapping steps, the evidence of humans criteria was only applied to differentiate between Roaded Natural, Rural, and Urban ROS settings. In this step, the evidence of humans criteria may also be applied to Primitive, Semi-primitive Non-motorized and Semi-primitive Motorized settings to identify inconsistencies with those settings. The overall inventoried ROS setting will not be changed in Primitive, Semi-primitive Non-motorized and Semi-primitive Motorized settings, but will be mapped as an inconsistency[hellip]."

Comment: The National Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Inventory Mapping Protocol adequately describes ROS setting characteristics; however, the DEIS recreation analysis framework allowed for incongruent physical, social, and operational components, so the GMUG process did not result in an effective approach for ensuring

the integration of compatible resource allocations in land management planning.

The National Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Inventory Mapping Protocol improperly avoids assessing administrative and permitted roads. ROS setting inconsistencies need to be addressed in the revised plan. As stated in the protocol, "Inconsistencies with the existing ROS settings are documented in this process, but do not change the overall ROS settings mapped and identified. Rather the inconsistencies are used with the ROS settings mapped in this process to provide an overall existing condition for ROS and help identify places that may need management actions to improve consistency with desired conditions." For example, in areas where timber product is a desired condition, the established ROS class should be a Roaded Modified setting. Where Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS settings are the desired condition, roads should be decommissioned.

The EIS recreation analysis framework should review the rationale for allowing unfettered timber production, timber harvests, and road construction in Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings. These actions are inconsistent with the ROS planning framework as referenced in the planning rule and used in the PEIS. These vegetation management practices would result in a Roaded Modified ROS setting with effects that are not disclosed in the DEIS.

The proposed plan and DEIS alternatives are proposing to promote road construction in Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS classes. The EIS must identify the general extent and location of the temporary and permanent road system associated with these ROS settings and provide a rational explanation of why these inconsistencies is to be allowed in these more primitive ROS classes. The NEPA document must disclose that timber production, extensive vegetation management, and supporting roads are incompatible with Primitive and Semi-Primitive ROS settings.

ROS class definitions need to be expanded to add descriptions of Non-Recreation Uses, Evidence of Humans, and Naturalness characteristics. Primitive and Semi-Primitive ROS classes must constrain some management actions such as mechanical treatments of vegetation that utilize heavy equipment and permanent or temporary roads if these desired ROS class opportunities as described in the 1986 ROS Book and referenced in the planning rule PEIS are to be protected.

Quote Continues

Alternative D is the most restrictive management option for recreation. Special management areas, areas to be analyzed as wilderness, and wildlife management areas all contain restrictions on trail construction and visitor use types, and the combined acreage of these protected areas is 1,681,000 acres (table 152). This would restrict motorized and mechanized uses on a substantial portion of the GMUG. Non-motorized, wildlife-dependent activities would be enhanced under alternative D[hellip]

Comment: The general statement that, "Alternative D is the most restrictive management option for recreation" demonstrates a bias towards providing for certain recreation activities vs. protecting recreation settings from resource development. Alternative D provides the greatest opportunity for recreationists that are seeking a Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS setting experience.

Quote Continues

Conclusion - The draft revised forest plan is consistent with 36 CFR 219.10(a) because the effects of plan direction would provide ecosystem services and multiple uses through integrated resource management because it integrates sustainable recreation management with other resources by providing summer and winter recreation opportunity spectrum direction on a Forestwide basis. This recreation opportunity spectrum direction integrates physical settings, social desires, and managerial actions with multiple uses and resources such as timber, range, and wildlife. Furthermore, the inclusion of recreation standards in wildlife management areas further integrates

recreation into planning with other resources. Alternative B would integrate recreation with other resources in a balanced way, providing a mix of motorized and non-motorized settings. Alternative C would provide the most motorized opportunities, even opportunities in some critical wildlife habitat. Beyond effects on wildlife, alternative C would have negative impacts on other non-motorized forms of recreation in areas that were not problematic before the draft revised forest plan. Finally, in alternative D most of the GMUG would be managed as non-motorized, preserving a large amount of habitat. However, because alternative D classifies several popular motorized areas as non-motorized management, motorized opportunities would be greatly reduced."

Comment: The conclusion should address the effects of identifying Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings for timber production.

Summary Comment: Established ROS plan components do not protect Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings from being degraded to Roded Modified ROS setting conditions as a result of timber production and vegetation management practices.

Managing Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings for timber production would lead to management actions that degrade these areas to a Roded Modified ROS setting condition. In areas of timber production, the spread of non-native vegetation (e.g., noxious weeds) and reoccurring harvests for timber purposes, stand tending, road construction and reconstruction, travel route closures to public use, and other development activities are incompatible with the desired conditions of these ROS settings. The lasting effects of timber production activities (roads, timber harvest) as well as short-term effects (logging trucks, noise) degraded recreation, scenic, historic, natural, and cultural qualities. Roded Modified ROS settings should be associated with areas identified as being suitable for timber production.

The EIS effects analysis should describe the consequences of establishing Roded Modified ROS settings in narratives, maps, and cross tabular data (with geospatial data available to the public). A Supplemental DEIS should present the distribution of ROS Desired Conditions similar to Table 22 as found in the proposed 2007 Forest Plan:

EXCERPTED TABLE: Table 22 as found in the proposed 2007 Forest Plan

The technical guide "Recreation Opportunity Setting as a Management Tool" provides an integrated model for recreation and other resource management on NFS lands. The guide for each ROS class described compatible recreation, timber, wildlife, range, and water resource relationships. The concepts in this technical guide may be useful in formulating the direction in the final plan.

D. Scenic Resources

DEIS: The DEIS Volume 1 beginning on page 354 states, "Affected Environment Scenic character is a combination of the physical, biological, and cultural images that gives an area its scenic identity and contributes to its sense of place. Scenery varies depending on existing natural features including vegetation, water features, landform and geology, cultural features, and management activities (such as buildings, structures, or manipulations of the land or vegetation). Cultural features and management activities may contribute to scenic character when these elements have historical backgrounds, have nostalgic connotations, reflect the cultural legacy of an area, or create a visually pleasing complement to the scenic character.

Research shows there is a high degree of public agreement regarding scenic preferences and that people tend to value most highly the more visually attractive and natural-appearing landscape (USDA Forest Service 1995) [hellip]

Vegetation Management - Vegetation management activities would be conducted to improve forest health and

resilience to wildfire, disease, and insect infestation, and in time enhance and protect long-term scenic quality under all alternatives. However, these actions also would temporarily impact scenic resources. Activities including tree removal, depending on the intensity of the treatment, can have varying consequences on scenery. Mechanical treatments could change the character of the landscape in the short-term where activities occur. Some management activities may have visually dominant effects in the short term, which may be out of step with adopted scenic integrity objectives. Activities such as large-scale vegetation management projects to restore ecosystem resiliency provide short-term changes such as ground disturbance, stumps, slash, and burnt vegetation.

Effects of Alternative D - To provide for sustainable recreation, scenic integrity objectives were integrated with desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes to reduce and eliminate inconsistencies between the two systems. Inconsistencies where utility corridors overlap with semi-primitive non-motorized or semi-primitive motorized are assigned a low scenic integrity objective.

Alternative D proposes high a scenic integrity objective where utility corridors overlap with the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, San Juan Skyway, and Grand Mesa Scenic Byway corridors. A high scenic integrity objective would provide for a natural-appearing character with the most scenery design considerations applied in these overlapping multiple use areas."

Comment: The FEIS should review human-caused deviations. Natural scenic character originates from natural disturbances, succession of plants, or indirect activities of humans. The existing scenic character continues to change gradually over time by natural processes unless affected by drastic natural forces or indirect human activities. In a natural-appearing landscape, the existing landscape character has resulted from both direct and indirect human activities.

Scenic character may have changed gradually over decades or centuries by plant succession unless a concerted effort was made to preserve and maintain cultural elements through processes such as prescribed fires.

Scenic integrity is defined as the degree of direct human-caused deviation in the landscape, such as temporary and permanent roads, timber harvests, or activity debris. Indirect deviations, such as a landscape created by human suppression of the natural role of fire, are not included in scenic integrity evaluations. Natural occurring incidents, such as insects and disease infestations, are not defined as human-caused deviations in the landscape.

E. Timber Suitability

DEIS: The DEIS Volume I beginning on page 383 states, "Lands suitable for timber production were determined following the 2012 Planning Rule. The draft revised forest plan (appendix 8) describes this process and results from the suitability analysis in more detail. Lands that may be suitable for timber production are the same for all alternatives and total 986,500 acres (table 157). These lands are physically and biologically capable of timber production and have not been administratively withdrawn[hellip]

Comment: It is not factual to state that, "Lands suitable for timber production were determined following the 2012 Planning Rule." The Plan is not in compliance with:

[bull] 36 CFR [sect] 219.11(a)(1)(i) - Lands not suited for timber production - Statute prohibits timber production on the land

[bull] 36 CFR [sect] 219.11(a)(1)(iii) Lands not suited for timber production - Timber production not compatible with desired conditions

Suitability is inconsistent with the National Trails System Act Section 7(c) as implemented using the ROS planning framework and as informed by the Planning Rule and PEIS.

Quote Continues

"Effects of Recreation Program Direction on the Timber Program - Draft revised forest plan direction for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail outlines how that trail should not be used for timber pile landings or as a temporary road except where the trail is currently co-located on an open road. Hauling or skidding along a co-located portion of the trail may be allowed when no other haul route or skid trail options are available and impacts to the trail infrastructure are minimized. In addition, any new temporary or permanent roads along the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, while clearly limited, would be possible if determined to be the only prudent and feasible option and would need to be designed to minimize impacts to the trail. As such, draft revised forest plan direction for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail will have a minimal impact on the timber program.

FW-GDL-REC-16 indicates that national forest management decisions and activities, including timber and vegetation management activities, should be consistent with the desired recreation opportunity spectrum setting parameters that correspond with broadscale desired summer and winter recreation opportunity spectrum allocations and maps[hellip]

Recreation opportunity spectrum tables in the draft revised forest plan containing setting prescriptions indicate that:

[bull] For primitive settings, vegetation is natural, with no treatments except fire use.

[bull] For semi-primitive non-motorized settings, vegetation treatments enhance forest health and mimic natural vegetation patterns.

[bull] For semi-primitive motorized settings, vegetation treatments improve forest health and mimic natural vegetation patterns.

[bull] For roaded natural settings, vegetation treatment are evident but in harmony with the scenic character.

[bull] For rural settings, vegetation treatments are often visible, but blend with the landscape."

Comment: National Forest System lands include not only areas that are managed for general multiple use programs, but also areas where management actions are restricted by legislation such as the Wilderness Act, Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and National Trails System Act.

Vegetation management actions must reflect the values of each special area and must not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of National Scenic and Historic Trails.

Quote Continues

"The majority of the suitable timber area, under each alternative, is in the semi-primitive non- motorized and semi-primitive motorized settings. Given the plan direction for these settings, most vegetation management treatments will need to enhance or improve forest health and mimic natural vegetation patterns. Current and planned vegetation management activities on the GMUG reduce stand density (increasing resilience to insects and disease), reduce fuels, and/or improve wildlife habitat and generally mimic natural vegetation patterns. Given the focus on forest health in all of these activities, though not always the primary purpose and need, this plan direction, while new, should have a little to no impact on the timber program. Hazard tree removal is generally done along roadsides and near campgrounds and would likely be occurring in the roaded natural settings."

Comment: Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings are not compatible with timber production and associated road development. The plan should establish a Roaded Modified ROS setting for those areas with timber production is to be the norm.

Primitive and Semi-Primitive ROS classes must constrain some management actions such as mechanical treatments of vegetation that utilize heavy equipment and permanent or temporary roads if these desired ROS class opportunities as described in the 1986 ROS Book and used in the Planning Rule PEIS are to be protected.

The proposed timber management program would have a significant impact on the recreation programs in more primitive ROS settings.

Summary Comment: The FEIS did not use the 1982/1986 ROS planning framework to establish ROS settings to provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST. Definitions of ROS Classes desired conditions must include ROS Class Characteristics descriptors that address, "Evidence of Humans," "Non-Recreation Uses," and "Naturalness" characteristics, and to make other changes that support providing for the integration of the recreation resource in natural resources planning processes.

The rule provides overall direction for how plans are developed, revised, and amended. Section 219.11(a)(1)(iii) requires that where timber production would not be compatible with desired conditions and objectives established by the plan, including those established in accordance with the requirements for suitability ([sect] 219.8), diversity ([sect] 219.9), and multiple use ([sect] 219.10), the responsible official shall identify such lands as not suitable for timber production.

Timber production is inconsistent with Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS setting desired conditions. These areas are characterized by a predominantly natural or natural-appearing environment of moderate-to-large size. Natural setting may have subtle modifications that would be noticed, but not draw the attention of an observer wandering through the area (SPNM). Natural setting may have moderately dominant alterations, but would not draw the attention of motorized observers on trails and primitive roads within the area (SPM) - ROS Book.

The purpose of timber production is the purposeful growing, tending, harvesting, and regeneration of regulated crops of trees to be cut into logs, bolts, or other round sections for industrial or consumer use, which is in stark contrast and clearly incompatible with protecting the purposes for which National Scenic Trails are established.

A Roaded Modified ROS setting should be established where timber production and harvest are to be the norm. Roads are an integral part of this class and provide a range of opportunities for users of high clearance vehicles on dirt roads to passenger cars on pavement. Roads may be closed to recreational use to meet other resource management objectives. In addition to roads, a full range of trail types and difficulty levels can be present in order to meet recreation objectives. The natural setting is often heavily altered as this environment and access throughout are often the result of intensive commodity production. Harvest activities should protect user-established sites from alteration and provide access to them. It should be used to meet other recreation needs such as providing trailhead access, parking areas, and a diversity of travelway opportunities.

F. National Scenic and Historic Trails

DEIS: The DEIS Volume I beginning on page 408 states, "National Scenic and Historic Trails - Affected Environment - Approximately 130 miles of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail traverse the Gunnison Ranger District of the GMUG National Forests, from the district's southern boundary with the Rio Grande National Forest, along its eastern boundary with the Pike-San Isabel National Forest, and north to boundary with the White River National Forest.

The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is primarily to be managed for non-motorized use, although much of the trail is currently located on open roads or motorized trails. It is also currently located within a more developed recreation opportunity spectrum class than is desirable for a national scenic trail, which may have impacts on scenic integrity and other natural, historic, and cultural resources along the corridor[hellip]

Comment: The National Trails System Act of 1968, 82 Stat. 919, as amended, provides that the CDNST, "shall be administered" "by the Secretary of Agriculture" so located as to "provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment" of "nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities." It empowers and requires that the Secretary of Agriculture select the CDNST rights-of-way which informs the National Scenic Trail corridor location and width. The establishment of the CDNST thus constitutes an overlay on the management regime otherwise applicable to public areas managed by land management agencies. The NTSA and E.O. 13195 - Trails for America in the 21st Century - limits the management discretion the agencies would otherwise have by mandating the delineation and protection of the CDNST rights-of-way (aka National Trail Management Corridor) for the purpose of providing for the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

The affected environment review fails to describe the environment of the area to be affected by the alternatives under consideration. The affected environment section must describe the degree to which CDNST qualities and values are being protected, including the protection of desired recreation settings, scenic integrity, and providing for the conservation purposes along the existing CDNST travel route within the presumed CDNST rights-of-way corridor.

The affected environment does not describe the environment of the CDNST rights-of- way/corridor to be affected or created by the alternatives under consideration. What is the degree to which current management direction is protecting the values for which each National Trail was designated, including protecting cultural landscapes, recreation settings, scenic integrity, and addressing the conservation purposes of National Scenic and Historic Trails?

Additional Affected Environment review considerations are found in Section V Part D of these comments.

Quote Continues

Environmental Consequences - The existing forest plan direction for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is minimal, but it did establish a sizeable corridor in which scenery was to be managed to the highest levels possible. The trail was to be managed for foot and horse, while allowing pre-existing motorized uses to continue. However, management of the trail is further guided by the 2009 Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan. The draft revised forest plan direction would build upon the basic framework in the existing forest plan and address a variety of other uses: no energy and mineral materials sites would be allowed within one-half mile of the trail, no motorized events would be allowed, it would be an avoidance area for larger special use infrastructure, and more direction is aimed at retaining the natural appearance and primitive nature of the trail and its surroundings. Provisions ensure continuous recreational access during timber harvest and other forest management activities.

The overall effect of the proposed direction on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail would be more comprehensive protection of the nature and purposes of the trail. Additionally, the objective to move the trail off of roads would further improve the trail setting in the long term.

Comment: Environmental Consequences review considerations are found in Section V Part E of these comments. Forest Service CDNST plan components are reviewed in Section IV Part B of these comments.

Quote Continues

Alternative D would remove the trail overlay area from the area suitable for timber production, which may result in fewer commercial timber harvests in the vicinity of the trail relative to the other alternatives. There may be fewer interruptions to recreationist experiences and fewer visible impacts of harvest. But there may also be fewer opportunities for opening vistas or harvesting dead timber, which could result in a long-term difference in the scenic quality of the trail and trail middle-ground.

Comment: Viewing natural and natural-appearing landscapes is the desired scenic integrity objective for the CDNST. The selected CDNST rights-of-way and the located travel route should consider opportunities to view vistas.

Quote Continues

Where the trail intersects the utility corridor overlay, the scenery objective would vary by alternative, from low in alternative C, to medium in alternative B, to high in alternative D. The visual impact of future development in the corridor would need to be mitigated accordingly. Alternative B represents a balanced approach to future utility development in these established corridors as well as to the natural-appearing setting of the trail.

Comment: Utility corridors should be evaluated and considered as a ROS setting inconsistency.

Quote Continues

The recreation setting in alternative B would range from roaded natural (most developed) to primitive (least developed). Approximately 56 percent would be managed as primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized settings, while 44 percent would be managed as semi-primitive motorized and roaded natural settings due to the presence of existing roads and motorized trails in and crossing the trail corridor, as well as locations in which the trail is co-located on an existing road. In alternative C, approximately 5 percent more area of the trail overlay would be managed in a motorized setting. In alternative D, 99 percent of the trail overlay would be managed in a non-motorized setting.

Comment: Implementation of Alternative B would lead to actions that substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST. The percentages quoted in the DEIS are not accurate, since the plan did not use the ROS planning framework protocols to determine ROS class settings.

Quote Continues

The 1983 forest plan provided no direction for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. The effect of the proposed plan and alternatives would be to manage the trail and its corridor for its nature and purposes. The objective FW-OBJ-DTRL-17 would further the interpretation of the trail for the public, and standards and guidelines would address a variety of uses: no energy and mineral materials sites would be allowed within one-half mile of the trail, it would be an avoidance area for larger special use infrastructure, and unplanned fire and prescribed fire would be managed such that the scenic and historic character of the trail would be maintained[hellip]

Comment: Unplanned fire and prescribed fire should be the primary management tools for maintaining or achieving CDNST corridor desired vegetation conditions.

Quote Continues

Cumulative Effects for the National Trails - As the population of Colorado increases, so too does the demand for recreation on public lands. More trail users are anticipated on the designated trails in the GMUG, which would result in more direct experiences on and awareness of the trails, but could also lead to wear and tear on the trail,

use conflicts, or dispersed camping impacts. There may be demand for more motorized trails that may cross portions of the trails, which would impact the setting in their general vicinity."

Comment: The Regional Forester's and Forest Supervisor's CDNST plan components are leading to revised Forest Plan decisions that do not provide for protecting the nature and purposes of the CDNST. A recent example of CDNST qualities and values being degraded is the approval of the 2021 Lujan Pass Timber Management project. The implementation of this project will have effects that substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST. The Rio Grande Forest Plan maps indicate that the established ROS class for this Management Area is Roaded Natural and Semi-Primitive Motorized. These ROS settings do not provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST. The timber sale area is highly visible from the CDNST travel route as it passes through the Gunnison Ranger District. The action will result in a scenic objective level of low.

The revised plan and timber sale decisions do not honor the "Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and The Colorado Trail Reroute Lujan to La Garita Wilderness" 2013 Environmental Assessment reroute decision.

The cumulative effects discussion is too narrow. The discussion needs to address both the recreation and conservation purposes of the CDNST both locally and broader.

Summary Comment: The National Trails System Act, Section 2(a), policy describes an objective as, "[hellip]to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation[hellip]." Section 3(a)(2), states that, "national scenic trails[hellip]will be[hellip]located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass." Section 5(f), describes that a comprehensive plan, which is being completed through staged decision making on NFS lands, will provide management direction that addresses, "specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including the identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved[hellip], and a protection plan for any[hellip]high potential route segments." Section 7(c) restricts uses and activities, including the removal of vegetation describing that, "Other uses along the trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, may be permitted."

The CDNST Comprehensive Plan and FSM 2353.42 policy describes desired conditions, "Administer National Scenic and National Historic Trail corridors to be compatible with the nature and purposes of the corresponding trail... The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor." Managing for Naturally Evolving or Natural-Appearing Scenic Character, Scenic Integrity Objectives of Very High or High, and Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized settings provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

The revised Forest Plan CDNST plan components do not protect the qualities and values of this National Scenic Trail. The plan components do not address the National Trails System Act and CDNST Comprehensive Plan requirements to: (1) provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities that reflect ROS planning framework conventions, and (2) conserve scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass (16 U.S.C. [sect] 1242(a)(2)). In addition, the plan does not establish direction to: (1) preserve significant natural, historical, and cultural resources (16 U.S.C. [sect] 1244(f)(1)); and (2) protect the CDNST corridor to the degree necessary to ensure that the values for which the CDNST was established remain intact or are restored (E.O. 13195, FSM 2353.44b(1) and FSH 1909.12 24.43). The revised plan draft decision does not avoid approving activities that are incompatible with the purposes for which the CDNST was established (16 U.S.C. [sect] 1242(c)).

The revised Forest Plan direction is inconsistent with and not supportive of the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive

Plan direction. The identification and selection of the rights-of-way (16 U.S.C. [sect] 1246(a)(2)) may lead to varying degrees of effects, but most often a National Scenic Trail management corridor would be the primary area for addressing the effects analysis. Effects on scenic integrity and ROS class conditions should be based on analysis of the effects of the allowable uses.

The Plan should recognize that timber production and associated actions and activities are inconsistent with the provisions of (1) the National Trails System Act, including providing for the nature and purposes of the CDNST and (2) Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes, which are appropriate ROS allocations for a CDNST management corridor or rights-of-way. Regulated forest structure conditions maintained by periodic forest harvest and regeneration is inconsistent with and unnecessary for achieving CDNST, Primitive ROS class, and Semi-Primitive ROS class desired conditions; these areas must not be classified as suitable for timber production, and harvest quantity projections must not be included in projected wood sale quantity and projected timber sale quantity calculations.

Timber production is incompatible with achieving National Trails System Act objectives and the CDNST nature and purposes desired conditions. The purpose of timber production is the purposeful growing, tending, harvesting, and regeneration of regulated crops of trees to be cut into logs, bolts, or other round sections for industrial or consumer use, which is in stark contrast and clearly incompatible with protecting the purposes for which National Trails are established. The CDNST rights-of-way/management corridor is not suitable for timber production (36 CFR 219.11(a)(1)(i) and (iii)).

The lasting effects of an activity (roads, timber harvest) as well as short-term effects (logging trucks, noise) degrade CDNST values. Managing the CDNST corridor for Roaded Natural/Modified and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings and timber production purposes would lead to management actions that substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST. In areas of timber production, reoccurring harvests for timber purposes, stand tending, road construction and reconstruction, CDNST travel route closures, and other activities are incompatible with desired ROS settings and Scenic Integrity Objectives.

The EIS must disclose effects of the proposed action and alternatives on scenic integrity and ROS class conditions. Utilizing the ROS and Scenery Management System will help ensure that NEPA assessments are systematic and accurately describe the affected environment and expected outcomes from each alternative. The EIS should recognize that management direction for Semi-Primitive Motorized, Roaded Natural, Rural, and Urban ROS classes allow uses that would substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of a National Scenic Trail if the allocation desired conditions are realized.

The EIS needs to address the expected effects of each alternative on CDNST nature and purposes values as measured through Recreation Opportunity Spectrum and Scenery Management System planning frameworks, which are the accepted Best Available Science and Methodology and Scientific Accuracy analysis systems. The proposed plan and alternatives do not disclose that vegetation management practices are constrained to only those actions that do not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of National Scenic and Historic Trails.

G. Designated Wilderness

DEIS: The DEIS Volume I on page 410 states, "The wilderness area categories in the 1983 plan (8, 8A, 8B, 8C) are carried forward in the draft plan alternatives (1, 1.1 A, 1.1 B, 1.1 C), as well as the associated direction for each category. Plan direction from the 1983 plan that repeated law, regulation, and policy is omitted, consistent with the approach throughout the draft plan of avoiding redundancy. Additional plan components in the action alternatives would make permanent the forest orders that have been renewed repeatedly; there would be no change to management on the ground, but the agency's process hurdle of renewing orders would be removed."

Comment: The FEIS fails to review the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences of the proposed management direction on wilderness character. This NEPA analysis deficiency needs to be corrected in the Supplemental DEIS.

H. Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers

DEIS: The DEIS Volume I beginning on page 410 states, "Affected Environment - In the current forest plan, no streams are managed as eligible, as no eligibility report has been adopted and finalized. Although the 2007 proposed forest plan effort included a draft eligibility report, the report and plan were not adopted. For the current planning effort, an eligibility study has again been conducted. A total of 13 segments and their tributaries represented in approximately 118 miles were found to be eligible for wild and scenic river status. Most segments are located within wilderness or other congressionally designated areas (Tabeguache and Roubideau). A detailed description of each eligible segment's location, preliminary classification, and outstandingly remarkable values is contained in appendix 11 of the draft revised forest plan..."

Under all alternatives, approximately 36,700 acres would be managed as eligible corridors. Eligible segments classified as scenic and recreational would be included in the areas suitable for timber production in alternatives B and C, but they are excluded from suitable timber production in alternative D. Per existing policy, a range of vegetation management and timber harvest practices are allowed if these practices are designed to protect users or protect, restore, or enhance the river environment, including the long-term scenic character (FSH 1909.12, chapter 84.3, 9b). Alternatives B and C could have more commercial timber production within scenic and recreational segments, but would still be subject to this policy as well as the draft revised forest plan mapped scenic integrity objectives. However, more timber production could result in more short-term impacts to scenic character and recreational access, would alter the vegetation structure, and would change existing wildlife habitat. Commercial timber harvest may still occur within alternative D, but the primary purpose would be objectives other than commercial production."

Comment: The analysis process screening did not adequately address unique Outstandingly Remarkable Values of Cochetopa Creek. I recommend that a 12-mile stretch of Cochetopa Creek be identified as an eligible Wild and Scenic River. Total eligible area is approximately 4,000 acres on the Gunnison Ranger District. This river segment is uniquely located with two Congressional designations: Wilderness and National Scenic Trail.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values are Fish and Wildlife (Ecological and Botanical Values). Preliminary Classification is Wild in Wilderness and Scenic outside. This segment of Cochetopa Creek is meandering through wetlands that provide a high level of habitat diversity. The river provides uniquely diverse or high-quality habitat for fish and wildlife species indigenous to the region.

Cochetopa Creek is a good example of a regionally significant healthy and diverse riparian and wetland vegetation. These riparian and wetland areas are critical to ecosystem integrity, and provides for flood control, floodplain and streambank stability, water quality protection, peat accumulation, and wildlife, rare plant, and aquatic habitat. Root masses stabilize streambanks, slow floods, filter sediment, and prevent erosion, and above-ground vegetation provides essential habitat for terrestrial and aquatic organisms as well as nutrient input into aquatic ecosystems. Vegetation can also shade streams, moderating water temperatures thereby impacting the structure of in-stream communities. Moreover, riparian and wetland systems are crucial for floral diversity; in Colorado, more than 40 percent of all plant species occur in wetlands. As riparian and wetland areas are the interface between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, the health of these ecosystems is closely interrelated to the surrounding watershed (Forest Plan Aquatic and Riparian Ecosystems Assessment).

Policy direction stating, "Per existing policy, a range of vegetation management and timber harvest practices are allowed if these practices are designed to protect users or protect, restore, or enhance the river environment, including the long-term scenic character" is inconsistent with the Scenery Management System and is not clearly

associated with protecting the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of eligible rivers.

Scenic character originates from natural disturbances, succession of plants, or indirect activities of humans. The existing scenic character continues to change gradually over time by natural processes unless affected by drastic natural forces or indirect human activities. In a natural-appearing landscape, the existing landscape character has resulted from both direct and indirect human activities. Scenic character may have changed gradually over decades or centuries by plant succession unless a concerted effort was made to preserve and maintain cultural elements through processes such as prescribed fires

EXCERPTED MAP: Proposed Cochetopa Creek Eligible Wild and Scenic River

I. Recommended Wilderness

DEIS: The DEIS Volume I beginning on page 412 states, "Action alternatives B and D would recommend additional wilderness. The total recommended by alternative is indicated in table 165. The wilderness analysis (appendix 6 of this draft environmental impact statement) provides detail regarding how these areas were carried forward in alternatives, including some of the trade-offs for managing them as wilderness. Further impacts on different resources and programs from managing these areas as wilderness are included in the resource sections throughout this chapter."

Comment: Alternative D should be modified or a new Alternative F developed that enlarges the Cochetopa Creek, West Baldy Lake Branch, and Texas Creek proposed recommended Wilderness. Increasing the size of existing wilderness and recommending would benefit wilderness character and wilderness characteristics of the recommended standalone areas.

Recommending these areas for Wilderness would contribute to the conservation purposes of the CDNST and be fully compatible with the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail.

J. Glossary Terms

DEIS: The DEIS Volume 1 on page 443 describes Overlay: "Overlays are mapped and represent areas with more specific emphases and direction. These include scenic integrity objectives, desired recreation opportunity spectrum settings; designated trails; scenic byways; eligible wild and scenic river segments; and utility corridors. The direction for these areas builds on Forestwide and any underlying management area direction. An example of this is the designated trails overlay, which includes the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. While Continental Divide National Scenic Trail direction would apply along the entirety of the trail in the GMUG, how the corridor is managed would be impacted by the underlying management area direction, which adjusts as this trail traverses through several management areas, including Designated Wilderness (1.1), Colorado Roadless Areas (3.1), Mountain Resorts (4.1), and General Forest (5)."

ROS characteristics are described on page 446: "Recreation opportunity spectrum - Also known as recreation setting (see entry below). Allocations that identify a variety of recreation experience opportunities categorized into six classes on a scale from primitive to urban. Each class is defined in terms of the degree to which it satisfies certain recreation experience needs, based on the extent to which the natural environment has been modified, the type of facilities provided, the degree of outdoor skills needed to enjoy the area, and the relative density of recreation use[hellip]."

Comment: Modify the glossary description of "Overlay" by stating that, "Overlays are mapped and represent areas with more specific emphases and direction. These include scenic integrity objectives, desired recreation opportunity spectrum settings; designated trails; scenic byways; eligible wild and scenic river segments; and utility corridors. [SUGGESTED DELETE "The direction for these areas builds on Forestwide and any underlying

management area direction."] An example of this is the designated trails overlay, which includes the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. While Continental Divide National Scenic Trail direction would apply along the entirety of the trail in the GMUG, how the corridor is managed would [may] be impacted by the underlying management area direction, which adjusts as this trail traverses through several management areas, including Designated Wilderness (1.1), Colorado Roadless Areas (3.1), Mountain Resorts (4.1), and General Forest (5). [SUGGESTED ADD [Insert:] "Conversely, the underlying management direction may be constrained by the standards, guidelines, and suitability for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. The most constraining standards, guidelines, and suitability determinations control when there are overlapping plan components."]

ROS characterizations are incomplete. ROS class desired conditions must be compatible with the 1986 ROS Book descriptions. The definitions in Draft Plan and DEIS should be modified:

[bull] Primitive ROS Class Desired Conditions. Setting: The area is essentially an unmodified natural environment. Interaction between users is very low and evidence of other users is minimal. Experience: Very high probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance through the application of outdoor skill in an environment that offers a high degree of challenge and risk. Evidence of Humans: Evidence of humans would be un-noticed by an observer wandering through the area. Natural ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease exist. The area may provide for wildlife connectivity across landscapes. Primitive ROS settings contain no motorized and mechanized vehicles and there is little probability of seeing other groups. They provide quiet solitude away from roads and people or other parties, are generally free of human development, and facilitate self-reliance and discovery. Signing, and other infrastructure is minimal and constructed of rustic, native materials.

[bull] Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS Class Desired Conditions. Setting: The area is predominantly a natural-appearing environment where natural ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease exist. Interaction between users is low, but there is often evidence of other users. Experience: High probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance through the application of outdoor skill in an environment that offers a high degree of challenge and risk. Evidence of Humans: Natural setting may have subtle modifications that would be noticed but not draw the attention of an observer wandering through the area. The area provides opportunities for exploration, challenge, and self-reliance. The area may contribute to wildlife connectivity corridors. Closed roads may be present, but are managed to not dominate the landscape or detract from the naturalness of the area. Rustic structures such as signs and footbridges are occasionally present to direct use and/or protect the setting's natural and cultural resources.

[bull] Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS Class Desired Conditions. Setting: The area is predominantly a natural-appearing environment. Concentration of users is low, but there is often evidence of other users. Experience: Moderate probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance in an environment that offers a high degree of challenge and risk. Opportunity to have a high degree of interaction with the natural environment. Opportunity to use motorized equipment. Evidence of Humans: Natural setting may have moderate alterations, but would not draw the attention of motorized observers on trails and primitive roads within the area. The area provides for motorized recreation opportunities in backcountry settings. Vegetation management does not dominate the landscape or detract from the experience of visitors. Visitors challenge themselves as they explore rugged landscapes.

[bull] Roaded Natural ROS Class Desired Conditions. Setting: The area is predominantly natural-appearing environments with moderate evidences of the sights and sounds of human activities. Such evidences usually harmonize with the natural environment. Interaction between users may be low to moderate, but with evidence of other users prevalent. Resource modification and utilization practices evident, but harmonize with the natural environment. Conventional motorized use is provided for in construction standards and design of facilities. Experience: About equal probability to experience affiliation with other user groups and for isolation from sights

and sound of humans. Opportunity to have a high degree of interaction with the natural environment. Challenge and risk opportunities associated with a more primitive type of recreation are not very important. Practice and testing of outdoor skills might be important. Opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized forms of recreation are possible. Evidence of Humans: Natural settings may have modifications, which range from being easily noticed to strongly dominant to observers within the area. However, from sensitive travel routes and use areas these alternations would remain unnoticed or visually subordinate. The landscape is generally natural with modifications moderately evident. Concentration of users is low to moderate, but facilities for group activities may be present. Challenge and risk opportunities are generally not important in this class. Opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized activities are present. Construction standards and facility design incorporate conventional motorized uses. The Roaded Modified subclass includes areas that exhibit evidence of extensive forest management activities that are dominant on the landscape, including having high road densities, heavily logged areas, highly visible mining, oil and gas, wind energy, or other similar uses and activities. Scenic Integrity Objective is Low.

[bull] Rural ROS Class Desired Conditions. Setting: Area is characterized by substantially modified natural environment. Resource modification and utilization practices are to enhance specific recreation activities and to maintain vegetative cover and soil. Sights and sounds of humans are readily evident, and the interaction between users is often moderate to high. A considerable number of facilities are designed for use by many people. Facilities are often provided for special activities. Moderate densities are provided far away from developed sites. Facilities for intensified motorized use and parking are available. Experience: Probability for experiencing affiliation with individuals and groups is prevalent as is the convenience of sites and opportunities. These factors are generally more important than the setting of the physical environment. Opportunities for wildland challenges, risk-taking, and testing of outdoor skills are generally unimportant except for specific activities like downhill skiing, for which challenge and risk-taking are important elements. Evidence of Humans: Natural setting is culturally modified to the point that it is dominant to the sensitive travel route observer. May include intensively managed wildland resource landscapes. Pedestrian or other slow-moving observers are constantly within view of the culturally changed landscape.

H. References Cited

Draft Plan: The Draft Plan on page 123 cites references.

Comment: The following references should be cited in the Forest Plan in the appropriate selections and listed as references:

[bull] USDA Forest Service. 2020. Chapter 2350 - Trail, River, and Similar Recreation Opportunities. (WO Amendment 2300-2020-1)

[bull] Visitor Perceptions of Bark Beetle Impacted Forests in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado by Christa Cooper Sumner, and Jeffrey A. Lockwood. 2020.

[bull] USDA Forest Service. 2013. "Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and The Colorado Trail Reroute Lujan to La Garita Wilderness" 2013 Environmental Assessment.

[bull] USDA Forest Service. 1990. Chapter 2310 of Forest Service Manual 2300 - Planning and Data Management. (WO Amendment 2300-90-1)

[bull] USDA Forest Service. 1986. ROS Book 1986.

[bull] USDA Forest Service. 1986. Recreation Opportunity Setting as a Management Tool Technical Guide by George Stankey, Greg Warren, and Warren Bacon. Pacific Northwest Region.

[bull] Visitor Preferences for Visual Changes in Bark Beetle-Impacted Forest Recreation Settings in the United States and Germany by Arne Arnberger and others. 2017

[bull] The forgotten stage of forest succession: Early-successional ecosystems on forest sites by Mark E Swanson and others. 2010.

[bull] An Assessment of Frameworks Useful for Public Land Recreation Planning by McCool, Clark, and Stankey, General Technical Report PNW-GTR-705. 2007.

I. Species of Conservation Concern Determinations

DEIS: The DEIS Volume II, Appendix 3, beginning on page 69 states, "The plan components that address ecological conditions necessary for each species contained in the draft regional forester list of species of conservation concern are identified in table 51. Determinations in accordance with FSH 1909.12.23.13c.2 are indicated[hellip]

Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep - Rocky, steep, or rugged terrain for escape cover with open grass- dominated habitats nearby for foraging. Summer range at high elevation and winter range in valley bottoms or where snow depth is minimal (Beecham et al. 2007).

Comment: The Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep should be identified as a Species of Conservation Concern, which would be consistent with the Rio Grande National Forest decision. Some domestic sheep allotments on the Forest are in and near occupied range and suitable range of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. There is a potential risk of contact occurring between domestic sheep and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. Research shows that contact between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep and goats can lead to transmission of respiratory disease and pneumonia in bighorn sheep, which could potentially affect the ability of bighorn sheep populations to persist over time. To promote healthy populations of bighorn sheep that persist over time, domestic sheep stocking and distribution should be managed to minimize risk of contact with Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep.

The complexities, disease history, and mechanisms or causal agents leading to epizootic disease events are still not fully understood in the wild. The best available science suggests that maintaining spatial or temporal separation of the species is a prudent step when the management objective is to maintain bighorn sheep populations. The GMUG National Forest should minimize bighorn and domestic sheep interactions. Every effort should be made to reduce the risk of contact with domestic sheep.

J. Wilderness Evaluation

DEIS: The DEIS Volume II, Appendix 6, on page 177 states, "Continental Divide National Scenic Trail: Comments request that the evaluation criterion specifically consider the presence of any national scenic or historic trail segments within evaluation polygons. Comments were also provided concerning the Gunnison Ranger District Travel Plan decision (dated June 28, 2010) in regard to requirements of the 2009 Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan and portions of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail that coincide with the Monarch Crest Trail. Additional comments recommend that the analysis step address the conservation benefits of overlapping wilderness, wild and scenic river, and national scenic trail designations. Comments also urge the Forest Service to acknowledge the proposed Continental Divid

Wilderness and Recreation Act in relation to the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and the GMUG forest planning, including the GMUG wilderness process.

A bullet has been added to the "Evaluation Considerations" column within both Question 4b and Question 4c.

Primitive-type recreation opportunities that the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail offer (primitive hiking and horseback riding) are also considered in relation to Question 2b. Comments regarding management direction for congressionally designated trails and other special designations will be noted and considered throughout the forest plan revision process, which includes both the wilderness and wild and scenic river processes[hellip]."

Comment: The National Trails System Act states, "national scenic trails, established as provided in section 5 of this Act, which will be extended trails so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2), and that comprehensive planning will describe specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including the identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved[hellip](16 U.S.C. 1244(f))." The nature and purposes policy for the CDNST is: "The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor."

The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail potential rights-of-way/management corridor is found within the following roadless areas: Texas Creek #167, Sanford Basin #170, Mirror Basin #169, Agate Creek #173, Cochetopa Hills #165, Cochetopa #141/#143, Carson #73, and Cataract #62. Recommending these areas be designated as wilderness would be consistent with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

Alternative D should be modified or a new Alternative F developed that identifies Cochetopa Creek (3,600 acres), West Baldy-Lake Branch (26,700 acres), and Texas Creek (3,800 acres) as Recommended Wilderness. The wilderness characteristics of the identified areas would be protected or restored with the identified supporting plan components. These areas would contribute to the Wilderness Preservation System if designated.