

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/21/2021 11:00:00 AM

First name: Allison

Last name: Elliot

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for accepting my comment letter. - Allison Elliot

[copied from attachment Forest Plan Comment AEE.docx]

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests

2250 South Main Street

Delta, CO 81416

sm.fs.gmugplanning@usda.gov

RE: Support for the conservation and Alternative D+ for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) Forest draft plan

Dear Forest Service Planners,

Thank you for accepting public comments on the Draft Plan of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests Plan Revision. The GMUG National Forests are extremely important to me and the future of the North Fork Valley and beyond.

I have lived in Paonia for the past 22 years, and I regularly visit the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest. I hike, bike, view wildlife, ski, and fish on the wildlands that surround my home of Paonia. Some of my fondest memories of this place include hikes in the West Elk and Raggeds Wilderness areas, primarily on Kebler Pass, as well as adventures in the Roadless Areas around Overland Reservoir and up Stephen's Gulch. I sincerely want my experiences in these areas to continue and to be preserved for future generations.

I care deeply about protecting and preserving wilderness character that exist in our National Forest lands and know that these resources can be lost very quickly if proper management does not exist. I support the recommended Wilderness designations included in Alternative D, as well as support the inclusion of all recommended Wilderness areas presented in the Community Conservation Proposal and Gunnison Public Lands Initiative.

Wildlife resources on our forest lands are extremely important to me and must be protected. I strongly support the Wildlife Management Area concept presented in the draft plan, and ask that those be retained and strengthened with additional plan components. Additional plan components for this designation are needed to ensure retention of security habitat for big game. I recommend a standard or guideline that requires or encourages maintenance of habitat blocks at least 500 acres in size having no roads or other human intrusions in big game habitat in all areas assigned to this management area, as I believe this will further bolster protections for wildlife species.

A major area of concern for me is to make Wildlife Migration Corridors a priority when considering timber sales and the road building that go with them. I would like to see clear and specific language that protects Wildlife Migration Corridors and Calving Areas when it comes to having to choose which resource is to be valued in any given scenario. The potential Timber Sale maps are large and overlap the Wildlife Migration areas and Calving Areas. While Timber Sales have flexibility, timber operations must not disrupt the connectivity of wildlife migration, therefore Wildlife Migration Corridors must be prioritized and protected.

Water is unspeakably important to me and to the future of my community. I support the protection included in Riparian Management Zones, but ask that standards and guidelines be enhanced. I support the eligibility findings for all the stream segments included in the draft revised forest plan. At the same time, there are several streams that were previously found eligible but have been left out of the revised draft forest plan, and those should be included, such as Ruby Fork of Anthracite Creek and Deep Creek.

Thank you again for your work on updating the forest plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest. The revision is long since due, as the current plan we are operating under is from 1983, and wish that the forest planners prioritize the protection of Wilderness, wildlife, and water resources in this new revision. Just as other agencies have recently reviewed and refocused their mission to balance extractive activities with conservation of the remaining high quality and pristine public lands, the GMUG Forest Plan must also do its part to balance long term and short term benefits for the American people and for the planet as a whole.

Sincerely,

Allison Elliot