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Comments: [External Email]USFA GMUG Draft Plan Comments

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Thank you.

Ralph W. Files

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November 11, 2021

USFS GMUG Draft Plan Comments

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Alternative C is my choice. I definitely oppose Alternative D.

Changing temperatures and weather conditions seem to be more erratic. This causes changes in the forest. No one knows what the changes will be. More invasive species both flora and fauna will need to be addressed. The Forest Service needs the flexibility to respond quickly to help the forest to be as resilient and healthy as possible.

Water resources was one of the major reasons for establishing the USFS. Today every drop of water on the forest is owned by someone/something. Every water shed is critical for someone's existence. Everyone (municipalities and agricultural groups) needs to know where their water sheds are and how vulnerable they are. The geography and geology need to be known.

I am not comfortable with the huge expanse of roadless areas under Alternative C. There seems to be little guidance for how these will change. This is just another offending layer to dig through to work on the forest to mitigate wild fires or improve the health of watersheds.

Some of my concerns for any alternative is the lack of watershed management protocol. I know some of the responsibility of the BAER team after a wild fire. In my opinion some of the knowledge and expertise needs to be extended forward to what the possibilities for mitigation before the fire [ndash] prescribed or wild- and/or removal of trees for fire mitigation. Develop layered maps of possibilities that would help stop and/or slow the movement of debris and sediment that end up in critical streams and reservoirs. This would necessitate working with water management organizations [ndash] such as Project 7 and Uncompahgre Valley Water Users.

The future seems to be now. Water resources are stretched to the limit. We may have a call on our western slope water which would be devastating to agriculture and a domino effect on our economy.

I continue to hunt, hike, back country ski, and ride mountain bikes and atvs. I am very concerned for wildlife and domestic livestock with the introduction of wolves to Western Colorado. My observation of small animals trying to stay away from predators is for them to move closer to humans. It seems very true with our deer population. So, will designated wildlife areas be void of wolves? Having wild life areas designated as in Alternative B does not seem very necessary [ndash] it is similar to wilderness.

As our population grows it has and will be in the future more and more difficult to address everyone[rsquo]s wants and needs. In the 1990s the USFS started working on travel management. It was a long difficult process for parts of the GMUG mostly in the Uncompahgre National Forest. Many of the decisions were more political than based on science and reason. By using the arbitrary decision to limit trails and roads to one mile of trail per one square mile of forest could cause lots of problems. It is more logical to look at terrain, geology, and need for recreation balanced with wildlife needs.

I am a member of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Off Highway Vehicles subcommittee. We return about \$4.25 million each year to agencies and user groups to be used for motorized trails, roads and trail heads along with equipment used to do the work. I have no way of knowing the dollar amount given to the GMUG over the years but it is substantial. There seem to be hints in most of these alternatives that existing trails could be in jeopardy in the future. At the same time many trails need to be connected to form loops for easier upkeep and maintenance. The GMUG and BLM Southwest Region have some of the most outstanding trails in the state. When trails start being decommissioned for arbitrary or political reasons, I am sure CPW OHV dollars will decrease proportionally.