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First name: Morgan

Last name: Tilton

Organization: Writer

Title: Journalist

Comments: [Attachment is identical to letter TEXT]

Morgan Tilton

Adventure Journalist - San Juan Raised, Gunnison Valley Based

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Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison Forest Plan Revision #51806

To Whom It May Concern:

I grew up in the San Juan Mountains, in Telluride, and have lived in Crested Butte town for three years. For nine years, I have worked as a professional journalist in the outdoor and travel industries, covering news and travel pieces for recreationists that visit and live in Southwest Colorado-and the area of the GMUG Draft Forest Plan. For instance, I wrote this well-received article in 5280 Magazine, "What to Expect From the New Designated Campsites Near Crested Butte." As a lifetime and multi-generational resident of the region, I am a proponent of sustainable, preservation-based forest management that conserves our natural surroundings for the enjoyment of generations to come and for access to clean resources.

For the past decade, I have conservatively pursued human-powered winter backcountry recreation. When I moved to Crested Butte, I learned the value that community members in this region place on motorized on-snow (ungroomed and groomed) travel in order to access out-of-bounds backcountry-skiable terrain.

In the Gunnison Basin Geographic Area, if we eliminate the percentage of public land access for a huge number of hybrid winter motorized travelers-who are using machines to access backcountry ski and splitboard routes-that will unintentionally, simultaneously pigeonhole all non-motorized backcountry uphill recreationists to a much smaller area, creating more avalanche risks and decreasing overall enjoyment maintained by low traffic.

As an active member of Share the Slate, I agree with the emphasis shared in the letter written by the organization: "Motorized users will be packed into dense areas where snowmobiling is still allowed. This will create dangerous conditions for collisions between riders. This will also create hardships for other user groups-rather than the occasional motorized user passing by, the few areas open to snowmobiling will be too busy for other groups to enjoy. We advocate that the GMUG adopt a multi-use approach which allows users to spread

out."

The current GMUG National Forest plan does implement a multi-user approach; whereas many variables in plan B and D limits the public land access to many recreationists in the winter. I encourage GMUG to maintain the percentage of motorized winter access currently granted to the public in Alternative A: 53% or 677,300 acres.

In each management option, from an environmental standpoint I am concerned with the assumption that winter motorized travel and summer motorized travel warrants the same percentage of public land access. The ecological impacts of winter motorized vehicles differs from summer motorized vehicles. In the summer, OHVs impact soil structure, watershed function and quality, depletion of vegetation, habitats for wildlife, and the rise of fugitive dust, according to this USGS 2007 report. Year-round motorized travel should not be generalized in the same category of potential environmental impact. The majority of winter motorized travel in this area is ungroomed, off-trail, and in snow with no impact to the soil and as a result, does not have the same impacts on watershed function and quality. During the winter, elk and deer migrate to lower altitudes, below 7,000 feet, according to Colorado Parks & Wildlife, so those mammals are not negatively impacted by the sound of a passing snowmobile.

Ultimately, I am in opposition to option D for the Gunnison area for the reasons cited in the letter submitted by Share the Slate. It would be ideal if we could tailor the management plan more closely to the recreational and wilderness protection needs in each of these forests rather than a blanket approach. For instance, the Uncompaghre National Forest would benefit well from option D, due to the wilderness protection and there not being a need for snowmobile and hybrid recreationists in the winter season.

I appreciate your time and consideration as you determine the best plan and hope that all recreationists are valued in the equation.

Thank you,