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Organization:

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Comments: See attached

[Copied from attachment]

To Whom it may Concern:

I am an outdoor recreation enthusiast who has enjoyed many forms of recreation on our public lands. I live in Colorado and thus, primarily, this is where I recreate. Currently, my favorite activities are dirt biking and mountain biking, but over the years I've also been an avid technical climber (rock, snow, ice, alpine), hiker, backpacker, camper, canyoneer and explorer. Since I'm now in my 60s, climbing and long hikes and backpacks don't sit well with my knee. and even long bicycle rides can become problematic, so dirt biking with my son (late 20s) and our friends has risen up towards the top of what I like to do. Of course, singletrack trails that can be connected into loops are the best for both dirt bikes and mountain bikes, but out and backs to scenic vistas are good when they are available. Important to these rides is the ability to escape from a route as efficiently as possible in the event of weather or accident. As many options as possible are needed for everyone's safety and large swaths of land with restrictive designations (e.g. wilderness) can inhibit this. Also, nice dispersed campsites are the best way to get away from it all and to base activities out of.

A few observations about the various alternatives put forth in your recent Draft Forest Plan and associated documents:

Alternative D recommends 261,000 more acres of wilderness. This is excessive and unneeded. Wilderness is the worst alternative for those of us who like to recreate on public lands and it's actually the worst for the land itself. You know why on the latter, but I'll mention it because we are supposed to give reasons for our viewpoints. All one needs to do is look at the catastrophic wildfires that have been occurring throughout the West to see that wilderness is not the answer. The forests need to be actively managed and that requires roads/trails and no legal roadblocks by the wilderness advocates. Alternative D is the worst alternative by far based simply on that.

Building on that, alternative C provides the most acreage suitable for timber production. There is nothing wrong with responsible logging, in fact, it's required to manage the forests, no matter what the environmentalist types will say about how horrible it is. Forest thinning and responsible logging is required to have healthy forests. Alternative C is the best in this regard.

Not all public land needs to be managed with the objective of maximizing wildlife habitat. In contrast to that, I suggest that we manage the majority of GMUG for the maximization of human health and wellbeing!

How[rsquo]s that you might ask? Well, getting out and getting exercise in the good [lsquo]ol outdoors is my preferred tact and that means riding my dirt and mountain bikes. GMUG has alternatives for both, and it has hiking and equestrian trails too. From my personal experience, big game largely ignores dirt bikes. If you get off to approach them, then they take off, otherwise, even if you stop to look at them, they just casually look over at ya, and then resume eating. Likely this isn[rsquo]t how it goes during hunting season[hellip]we don[rsquo]t hunt, but I[rsquo]ve been told the animals get skittish. I[rsquo]m sure they do! Mountain bikes can startle wildlife more easily than motorized recreation even outside of hunting season because of their stealthy approach and sudden appearance. I[rsquo]m not against wildlife habitat, some is for sure valuable, but 25% of GMUG per alternative B is way too much, especially when its managed as primitive and with minimal trails due to restrictive density thresholds. As you state on page 13 of Draft EIS Volume 1 [ldquo]areas not identified as Wildlife Management Areas would be the starting point for future new trails[rldquo]. Exactly what we need (more recreation options to spread out users and minimize impact) and a modest allocation of land for Wildlife Management Areas, ala alternative C, seems ample.

As our population ages, many more people are turning to motorized forms of recreation (including ebikes [ndash] motorized in my book except for pedal assist bikes) and thus, motorized trails should actually be expanded.

With regard to opportunities for nonmotorized recreation, there are new opportunities for this all over the state. The Palisade Plunge comes to mind, as do some new trails near Colorado Springs, and out near Grand Junction. Virtually everywhere. Motorized recreation, on the other hand, almost always suffers losses. Year after year after year. All one needs to do is look at Doctor Park for a GMUG example[hellip].sure, I guess we bothered the folks in the campsite[hellip]how about 9638, 9418, 9409, 9556, 9408? Theres more, you know them better than I.

We, dirt bikers, share trails like Bear Creek and Monarch Crest with mountain bikers, but in spite of being friendly, too often we just get nasty looks or comments from them as if we are the ones intruding. Here is typically how the life of a trail goes: Back in the day, motorized users discovered mostly game trails and found it to be fun and rewarding to ride them. Later, as word spread, these motorized trails gained other users because that user group was growing and/or they discover them, the trails get designated multi-use so all is well, until the trails get too crowded, then the other users kick out motorized. Lets stop this process and retain our motorized, multi-use trails in GMUG and make it known to other user groups that we are as legal as them via signage! I[rsquo]m encouraged by the chart on page 95 of your Revised Management Plan showing that there is some possibility for us to get NEW motorized trails, but compared to the mechanized column, its like always: I tallied 13 possible new for MTB, 4 for moto. And yes, I[rsquo]m a mountain biker too so new is good for MTB too, but the numbers are always in favor of MTB.

My take on wilderness is that some people have an emotional attachment to the idea, but often, these same individuals actually never go experience the wilderness. Sure, some do, but many (likely most) do not. Possibly, some drive close to areas of wilderness or look at it from scenic vistas and oohhh and ahhh, but most don[rsquo]t actually get out and hike and/or backpack and experience it for extended periods of time. In fact, oftentimes, those in favor of wilderness have never even seen the land they advocate for! I[rsquo]ve seen it time and time again over the years when it comes to land management evaluations like this and I[rsquo]m sure you have too (e.g. [ndash] comments from people from states far removed who literally don[rsquo]t know a National Park from National Forest, let alone what a huge restriction a designation of wilderness imposes).

At the same time, some other people seem to think all land must be wilderness and there is never enough. I know of a rancher who wants to rid the National Forest next to his ranch of dirt bikes so he can have it, essentially, be his own personal wilderness for equestrian outfitting! Never mind that he can't be bothered to truck his clients and horses 30 minutes to the Lizard Head Wilderness. In a nut shell, with our growing population and popularity of outdoor pursuits, wilderness is too restrictive (and there is plenty of it currently). 19% of GMUG as wilderness per alternative C is plenty and actually less would be more.

As you have identified, alternative C provides the most management flexibility for ongoing and future multiple uses in the GMUG. This is the direction we should be going, not locking up land and restricting what can be done in the future. Our population continues to grow and we need flexibility in what are and will be the best uses for public lands. In alternative C, the amount of motorized is still only 52%. Plenty remains for other uses.

I didn't find much in your documents about dispersed camping. I commented on that topic to GMUG years ago, perhaps it was a different project. In any event, I touched on it briefly above, but the more dispersed camping opportunities the better. It appears that you agree in that one of your key issues identifies that in some areas unacceptable levels are being reached. This happens when more and more people are jammed into less and less places, and then they are closed due to overuse. That should be avoided.

Another thing I don't want to see, and that is any singletrack trails turned into 50' or bigger trails. This trend goes on illegally at seemingly every single place where the terrain is conducive and results in more and more unsafe trails for those of us (dirt bikers and mountain bikers) who ride on our public lands.

I have not yet had the good fortune of recreating in all of GMUG, but I have spent considerable time in a lot of it in places such as Taylor Park, in the vicinity of Sargents, around Crested Butte and in the North Uncompahgre. Some of my most favorite trails in our state are in those areas. It's a fantastic and beautiful landscape and a wonderful resource for all to enjoy. We truck our bikes and bicycles hundreds of miles to ride in GMUG and other places in the country, people who seek solitude shouldn't be allowed to lock us out of more land just so its more convenient for them to find what they desire in close proximity to where they live.

I have some comments on some errors and/or omissions from your maps.

Specific to Taylor Park:

* There is a very nice small campsite on the north side of 748 between 7748.1L and 7748.1M that is not indicated on your maps. It has a kinda steepish, uphill entrance right off 7748 and is a nice flat spot in some widely spaced trees. Coordinates (close) are N38 53[rsquo] 54.9[rdquo] W 106 37[rdquo] 42.5[rdquo]. This spot has been available for camping for forever and is one of the first places we ever camped in Taylor Park. With the never ending closures of dispersed camping sites everywhere, this one should remain available. Its out of the way and quiet, which is getting to be a rarity.

Specific to Monarch Pass

* The motorized singletrack (9531) that extends from Old Monarch Pass down to just barely on the west side of Monarch Pass is indicated as non-motorized on your maps;

* Also, on the south side of Monarch Pass, 9531 (Monarch Ridge) is again indicated as non-motorized on your map when in fact, it is multi-use and one of the uses is motorized singletrack. Its how we start 531 (Monarch Crest);

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Trail 9484 (Agate Creek) is motorized to the junction with 9531 but your maps don[rsquo]t properly show its status in a short stretch leading to the intersection.

Specific to SE of Sargents:

* Road 243.3E that runs N-S from Marshall Pass Road to 9486 (CDT) is coded restricted motorized for some reason and it is not properly shown to connect to Marshall Pass Road. Its shown to go about 1/3 of the way. This road is KEY for riders who find the route straight south from Marshall Pass via 486, down to where 486 crosses 243.3E to be too difficult;

* Also, there are two roads that are disconnected to the rest of the network. These are generally north of Chester Site which is on Marshall Pass Road. Specifically, road 7843 and 7843.1F. They should connect to roads, one of which goes to Chester and the other is entitled, looking closely at the map, Stage Road. The latter connects to 7243.3k. The former connects to Marshall Pass Road;

* Another missing road is 843.1A. It extends NE from one of the aforementioned missing roads (ie. pretty much from Chester Site) and leads to terrain near Harry Creek (just W of Marshall Pass Road). Your map also shows a road entitled Marshall Spur. This doesn[rsquo]t appear on my Nat Geo map, and I have no idea of its status. If it should be open, it should be so shown as should Harry Creek Spur if it has not been decommissioned.

Specific to areas SW of Sargents:

* Trail 9499 (just south of CO114 where CDT connects to CO114) is incorrectly shown on the ArcGIS maps as non-motorized. I think 9499.1A is correctly shown, but maybe you could double check it;

* Also, the upper portion of road 7750 is missing from the maps. It should extend north from the point on 7750

that's just east of 7781 and link up with County Road 24UU just inside the forest boundary, and then it should proceed east, then south back to 7750 and the junction with 7750.2D;

* Also, a road should be shown that extends from 7750.2D NNE along what I believe is called Peterman Gulch, to connect with the most southern point of 7750 that is east of the junction with 7750.2D;

* I believe there is also a road that circles through Owen Park west of 7750.2D and it goes from 7750.2D to 9645;

* There are a couple other roads in that area that, according to my Nat Geo map, are also missing, but its hard to describe them. I've only been through that whole area a couple times, and didn't hit all the options, so maybe my map is wrong on some of these particulars. I wanted to bring that area to your attention though because, as we know, if something is errantly left off the Plan, then it disappears, often for good. I could email you a picture of what I'm talking about if it would help, but I urge you to get National Geographic Map 139 and look at this area and you will see what I am talking about.

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Also, I believe trail 9496 (Hicks Creek) should connect on the north to a road which extends to the southern limit of the private land. This isn't likely a big deal, but accuracy is.

Quite honestly, it seems that the more I look, the more I find. I for sure don't know the whole GMUG, so I'm pretty much at the end for me. What can't happen is that errors and omissions can't become controlling of the public's access to GMUG. How can this be accomplished without the burden of finding every issue being on the public's plate?

Thank you for considering my comments.