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First name: Nicholas

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Organization: Crest Butte Town Council

Title: Mayor

Comments: The Town of Mt. Crested Butte strongly supports the proposed Thompson Divide Administrative Mineral Withdrawal, a landscape that includes the Mt. Emmons area in close proximity to our community. We support the proposal to withdraw [ndash] subject to valid existing rights [ndash] lands in the Thompson Divide and Mt. Emmons area from all forms of (1) entry, appropriation and disposal under the public land laws; (2) location, entry, and patent under mining laws; and (3) operation of the mineral leasing, mineral materials and geothermal leasing laws.

Included in the proposed Thompson Divide withdrawal area are federal lands near Mt. Crested Butte, such as the iconic Kebler Pass landscape along County Road 12 and lands adjacent to the Raggeds and West Elk Wilderness. The inclusion of federal lands surrounding Mt. Emmons is of particular importance to our community and ski town economy. The Town of Mt. Crested Butte has a vibrant local economy based on outdoor recreation, ranching, and tourism. Our visitors come here to experience and enjoy the picturesque and healthy environment that supports diverse outdoor recreation opportunities. Conservation of Mt. Emmons and the greater Thompson Divide is critical to the economic and environmental sustainability of Mt. Crested Butte, and we strongly support the 20-year protection that the mineral withdrawal would secure.

Hunting, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, and backcountry winter sports are cherished activities that occur within the mineral withdrawal area. Wildlife thrives here, with abundant herds of elk and mule deer, and streams teaming with trout serve as the critical headwaters of the Colorado River. Historic ranching also stands to benefit from the withdrawal, as livestock operations rely on federal grazing in the withdrawal area. In addition, the withdrawal area in Gunnison County is directly upstream from the farms, orchards, and vineyards of Paonia and surrounding communities, an area that supplies much of the fresh, local produce for Mt. Crested Butte residents and businesses.

The proposed mineral withdrawal is good for Mt. Crested Butte, good for its residents and visitors, and good for its surrounding public lands, waters, and wildlife.