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Organization: City of Gunnison

Title: Acting City Manager

Comments: The City of Gunnison, Colorado strongly supports the proposed withdrawal of the Thompson Divide area, including the area surrounding Mt. Emmons. We specifically support the proposal to withdraw- subject to valid existing rights [ndash] approximately 224,794 acres of land in the Thompson Divide 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 Thompson Divide withdrawal area are federal lands at the headwaters of the Gunnison valley including the iconic Kebler Pass landscape along County Road 12, lands near Ohio Pass, and lands adjacent to the Raggeds Wilderness and West Elk Wilderness. Tourists base our of Gunnison to tour the West Elk Scenic Byway, particularly during fall foliage for our valley[rsquo]s scenic views. Large-scale industrial mining in this area would negatively impact this tourism.

The inclusion of lands surrounding Mt. Emmons is of particular importance to our City[rsquo]s economic well-being. Local stockgrowers have in the past expressed concern over potential impacts to cattle health if there were to be increased levels of molybdenum in our local streams due to the mining of the molybdenum deposit in Mt. Emmons. Our robust recreational economy relies on high-quality waters to sustain our fisheries and intact habitat to support our wildlife and hunting. The proposed withdrawal will protect our community from potential water quality and quantity impacts from mining, helping to protect our water supply while preserving our agricultural heritage and natural environment.

Conservation of this interconnected landscape is critical to the economic and environmental sustainability of the City Gunnison, and we support the 20 year protection of this area through this mineral withdrawal.