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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am in support of the Bureau of Land Management and the USDA Forest Services efforts to forward on a federal mineral withdrawal of lands surrounding Mt Emmons in Gunnison County. The Red Lady has heralded our mornings and evenings forever and without the withdrawal, this mountainous backdrop could be lost. I worked as a consultant collecting water samples at the mine water treatment plant and the surrounding streams for years. While I understood that the plant was operated (and still is) fairly well, I have always been concerned the future efforts to mine the area would prove a poor outcome for stream water and drinking water quality in Crested Butte and its environs.

Additionally, transport of the ore and mill tailings might include an inordinate amount of truck traffic impacting Ohio Creek Road or US Hwy 135. The component of a mining operation could additionally impact roads, the rural nature of the area which is already impacted by increased construction and visitation, and water quality of downstream water bodies. I request your protection of Mt. Emmons area by moving forward with a deferral mineral withdrawal. Achieving and maintaining water quality in our area has been an important feature of my career, and I fear a mining operation at Mt. Emmons would jeopardize that achievement and maintenance.

Also, I support moving forward with a full mineral withdrawal for the entirety of the Thompson Divide Area. Oil and gas development in this area would impact water quality and quantity, downstream agriculture, big game populations, hunting and fishing, grazing, and recreation. Precipitation that falls and later flows in and to this area supports agriculture and drinking water. While I have not recreated nor hunted and fished in this area, I have eaten a lot of the produce from this area and consider it a local source of good food. Again, maintaining good water quality in support of agriculture and drinking is very important to me. In addition, this area harbors habitat for deer and elk and other wildlife necessary to ecosystem function. Oil and gas development would disrupt their habitat and ecosystem processes.

At this point in time, according to an NPR article, big oil isn't drilling for several reasons: supply chain, worker shortage, and investor fear: (<https://www.npr.org/2022/03/19/1086925726/gas-prices-oil-crude-drilling>). While this may not be the case for smaller drillers, we appear to have reserves and sufficient leased public lands to continue drilling for oil and gas in other parts of Colorado and the country. For this reason, I consider that a full federal mineral withdrawal, instead of closing these areas, would free them from the burden of unwarranted development when we, as a nation, are reconsidering our energy options. That's not to say I think that oil and gas development and use should stop, but that instead we strategically look at places where its development and its use is best suited. The Big Thompson Divide area is not the area to concentrate oil and gas development.