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First name: Natalie

Last name: Ehmsen

Organization:

Title:

Comments: October 25, 2023

To Chad Stewart, Forest Supervisor:

My name is Natalie Ehmsen, and I previously provided comments on the Draft Forest Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests. I am, with this letter, submitting an objection to the Revised Forest Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement for the GMUG National Forests.

Specifically, I object to the following aspects of the Revised Forest Plan:

(1) Wilderness Recommendations - The Revised Plan only contains 46,000 additional acres of proposed wilderness. The United States Forest Service (USFS) itself noted in its record of decision that over 100,000 acres of the contained high wilderness qualities! The USFS further noted in its record of decision that designation of 100,000 acres would change management only slightly. In my comments during the draft plan comment period, I highly encouraged the USFS to include the wilderness and special management area (SMA) recommendations found in Alternative D, including areas recommended by GPLI and the Community Conservation Proposal, in the final forest management plan. Again, I implore the USFS to recommend the 261,000 additional acres of wilderness and 246,000 of SMAs as proposed in Alternative D of the Revised Plan.

(2) Timber Policy - As noted in my comments during the draft plan comment period, the GMUG National Forests should not be viewed primarily through the lens of potential timber harvest when it is much more valuable for biological diversity, climate resilience and recreation. The Revised Plan finds that twenty-five percent (25%) of the GMUG is suitable for commercial timber harvest. Frankly this finding seems to run afoul of the Biden administration's recent Executive Order (attached) to identify, protect, and conserve old growth and mature forests. I ask that you reconsider this finding; specifically, I ask that you reduce the amount of the GMUG found to be suitable for timber harvest to no more than the amount in the old forest plan for the GMUG: 472,000 acres. (Current Revised Plan finds 772,000 acres suitable - an increase of 300,000 acres over the old plan).

The updating of the forest management plan for the GMUG National Forests is happening at a time when it is possible to actually see climate change occurring across our world. Please keep this in mind when making the decisions that will guide the uses of our public land for the upcoming decades.

Thank you for your consideration.

Natalie Ehmsen

304 Horseshoe Dr., Mt. Crested Butte, CO