

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/5/2024 7:00:00 AM

First name: Alie

Last name: Wettstein

Organization: Town of Marble

Title:

Comments: Dear Mr. Edwards,

The Town of Marble would like to express its support for the proposed administrative mineral withdrawal for the Thompson Divide. Marble is surrounded by public lands that are foundational to our town's identity and way of life. Conserving public lands is good for the clean air, clean water and incredible views that draw residents and visitors to this area. We believe that the draft Environmental Assessment accurately reflects our community's shared values for the resources in the Thompson Divide. We support protecting the Thompson Divide from future oil and gas and mineral development. Marble sits at the eastern edge of the 225,000-acre Thompson Divide area, which is important to our community for its current and existing uses. The Thompson Divide landscape contains significant blocks of roadless area that provide wildlife habitat and migration corridors, and one of the most sought-after hunting units in the state. The area is part of a critical big-game migration corridor and provides key wildlife security for species such as deer, elk, bear, mountain lion and lynx. The entire area is important elk calving habitat and summer range for big game. Watersheds in the Thompson Divide provide clean water to local farmers and ranchers, many of whom depend on these public lands for summer grazing allotments. Locals regularly use the area to climb, hike, bike, ski, and snowmobile. These ecological, recreational, agricultural, and economic values define our rural character and contribute to quality of life in Marble. Energy development in this area would have harmful impacts on the current ecological, recreational, agricultural, and economic values in our community. For a long time, protection of the Thompson Divide has united a diverse coalition of ranchers, mountain bikers, hunters, businesses, and conservationists. The Town of Marble appreciates the opportunity to join with surrounding communities in support for protecting the Thompson Divide. We hope that you will finalize the 20-year mineral withdrawal as soon as possible.