Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/22/2019 6:00:00 AM
First name: Deidre
Last name: Witherell
Organization:
Title:
Comments: I'm a Colorado native who has had the benefit of enjoying our Public Lands my entire life. I'm not lucky enough to be living surrounded by the GMUG National Forest. Colorado's economy absolutely depends on responsible and sustainable use and conservation of our public lands.

Expanding and adding wilderness to the GMUG is supported by hundreds of citizens and businesses who use the GMUG. This is evidenced by the strong support given to wilderness proposals in the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative and Community Conservation Proposal. The preferred alternative in the Draft Forest Plan should include wilderness recommendations form these two proposals. The proposals are community consensus-driven and reflect the needs and desired of Gunnison County.

Wildlife conservation should be prioritized and plans for protecting wildlife and ecosystems need to be specific and enforceable. Voluntary guidelines for protecting species (e.g. sage grouse) are not adequate. We have witnessed the decline in numbers of sage grouse on the GMUG with the implementation of voluntary guidelines. They are obviously not working. Wildlife and ecosystem conservation needs to be a priority over or at least on even par with uses, including recreation.

Recreation is rapidly putting pressure on what has until now been unfragmented wildlife habitat and undisturbed healthy ecosystems. The draft plan needs to include specifics on managing recreation. A winter travel management plan is badly needed to ensure winter motorized travel is regulated to match summer motorized travel. Currently, winter motorized users are disrupting game migration routed which are closed to motorized use in the summer.

The draft plan should be revised to remove areas which are not economically feasible from being identified as suitable for logging. This includes areas which have steep slopes. Logging these areas will probably cause irreparable damage and erosion. Any logging operations should include the cost of repairing damage and returning the area to its pre-logging state. Realistically, there are areas which will be prohibitively expensive to recover. These areas should be removed from the plan. Any areas identified as suitable for timber production should include an analysis of whether re-vegetation/recuperation is feasible.