

November 22, 2021

Mr. Chad Stewart
Forest Supervisor
Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, & Gunnison (GMGU) National Forests
2250 S. Main Street
Delta CO 81416
chad.stewart@usda.gov



RE: GMUG Forest Plan Revision Comments

Dear Mr. Stewart and GMUG Planning Team,

The Tri-County Water Conservancy District was formed in August 1957. Our main purpose was to act as an “official body” to contract with the United States of America under the Colorado River Storage Project Act in the counties within the boundary of our District. We operate and are repaying the Dallas Creek Project, Ridgway Dam and Reservoir under contract with the Bureau of Reclamation. This Project is in the Uncompahgre drainage located in Ouray, Montrose, and Delta counties and stores municipal, industrial, irrigation, and recreational water supplies that are utilized in the Uncompahgre Valley. Ridgway is an impoundment facility in the mainstem of the Uncompahgre River.

In the past few years, the frequency of wildland fires and the adverse effects to the lands and risks to municipal water providers has come to the forefront of the public eye. While we have always been aware of forest and watershed health, it is a growing concern. We have also learned the Wildfire Decision Support Systems (WDFSS) do not incorporate critical municipal water supply infrastructure issues and effects. We believe these tools need refinement to assure water security for water storage reservoirs. A more productive and safer watershed would help the storage of water supplies needed in any coming year. We believe more emphasis should be placed on watershed health hand in hand with promoting forest health.

We appreciate that the GMUG forest plan revision identifies the connections between forest and watershed health and the delivery of municipal water. It is of critical importance. We urge you to elaborate further in the GMUG plan sections on “Fire and Fuels Management” (page 24), “Watersheds and Water Resources” (page 40), and “Infrastructure” (page 50). The municipal and agriculture water supplies may need future specificity such as the direction given to utility corridors and communication sites (page 52).

Thank you for your time and consideration. This Forest Plan will be crucial to lay the foundation for projects that both protect the environment while addressing threats to our water supplies in the GMUG counties.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Berry", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Mike Berry
General Manager