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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Comment on plan revision

I have lived in Orchard City, just south of Grand Mesa, for 22 years. I have climbed most of the fourteeners and been cross-country skiing since 1970. Colorado is a wonderful place, and it is in danger of being rendered economically unlivable by out-of-state advocacy groups. Oil and gas are essential energy sources for modern civilization, but their development is opposed by people who enjoy the use of that energy while refusing to participate in the production of it. Local groups such as Citizens for a Healthy Community (Paonia) amplify their voices by pulling in money, and out-of-state comments on lease plans, from people who have no stake in the matter. This tends to overwhelm the voices of other local residents who realize that the risks of drilling are being far overblown in pursuit of a squeaky-clean image for a few 'organic' fruit growers.

Natural resources are developed and used when there is an economic need for them. There is a need for energy when the sun is not shining and the wind is not blowing. Electricity from coal, oil and gas is less expensive than from sun and wind, and can be generated at any time. This satisfies a need for average citizens; the rich can install expensive off-grid systems, but meeting our routine needs with wind and solar would require more space and more mineral resources than this economy can provide.

The western slope of Colorado gets all the motor fuel for tourism and agriculture from refineries 250 miles or more away, and the transportation is costly. It would make better sense to develop the known oil and gas resources in the Whitewater area, and build a new, modern refinery in the area that could demonstrate just how clean the industry can be. No new refineries have been constructed in America for many years; surely there is a company that can build a new one rather than expanding and retrofitting old facilities. Our local resource is not as large as those in Texas or the Dakotas, but an appropriately sized refinery to handle our market would not be a monumental effort and could be a good demonstration of current clean technology.

Wood is also a natural resource of many uses. The preservationist attitude that leads groups like the Sierra Club and Wildearth Guardians to oppose timber sales actually ends up being responsible for the increasingly large forest fires that wipe out vegetation and animals in overmature forests. Healthy forests are essential to the water supplies that we depend on in Colorado. Large areas of beetle-kill come largely from moisture stress in excessively thick forest; those must be harvested carefully to avoid erosion, and then allowed to regrow. This harvesting, as well as routine timber sales, should be planned in such a way as to create firebreaks which will limit the spread of wildfires. Sales planned as firebreaks must be protected from interference by out-of-area organizations. These preventive operations should be a priority item in NEPA analyses.

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