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First name: Jan

Last name: Potterveld

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment during the assessment stage of the GMUG Planning effort. I am a member of and Past President of the State Board for Back Country Horsemen of Colorado, President of the Grand Mesa Chapter of BCHCO, and a Director of Back Country Horsemen of America. While this is a personal commentary, I do speak with some credentials worthy of consideration.

This is such a large Forest with many Districts and areas to be assessed and planned for, that I have asked a number of Chapters to study and comment during this period so that we may address the plan in totality with the best ground truth information available. I think this is going to take a lot longer than the time allotted ending today, August 30, and would ask that you extend this initial comment period for at least another 30 days. The initial presentations only ended last week.

Thus, my initial comments are confined to the Grand Valley District, covering their portion of The Grand Mesa Forest, and the Northern Section of the Uncompahgre Forest. This the area of the NF where we have been doing most of our maintenance and trail riding. In both of these areas, Recreation has become the dominant feature, while the Forest also supports extensive grazing, forestry, and mineral exploitation. Fish and Game are also very important in these areas. I see no reason why the management of these areas can not continue to support all of these functions as you have done in past, given sustainable funding. However, as apparent from recent studies, you can expect to see increasing demand for Recreation opportunities.

Without a doubt all forms of mechanized activity is increasing in a variety of forms compared with the scenarios available in past planning efforts. From the BCH perspective we are realizing the necessity to work jointly with the bicycle community on new trails and maintenance of existing trails, outside of the Wilderness areas. This is true not only in the NFS areas but also in those locations managed by the BLM. Horses can go almost anywhere that others can tread with some terrain exceptions and even overland without trail. In today's world our preference is generally to go on trail and on such trails where the amount of other traffic does not significantly impede the joyful experience of riding through the woods.

For now my suggestion would be to make the following areas into Special Management Recreation Areas with no particularly use being dominant. The idea would be to give high priority to recreational uses over other competing uses. We can leave the sorting out among various recreational uses until it is time to work out the Travel Management Plan. These areas would include the Top of the Grand Mesa from Leon Peak to Indian Point and Lands End, including Kannah Creek Basin; the Northern Uncompahgre from Hwy 141 to the Norwood District Line and from Divide Fork to the Western Boundary; and, the small area on Pinyon Mesa including the Fruita Reservoirs. Existing trail management initiatives and designations seem to support this type of allocation.

This leaves large sections unassigned and open for a wide variety of emphasis. Recreation objectives should be considered for these as well and will be addressed in future correspondence.