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First name: Nate
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: To Whom It May Concern:

Being a rancher that grazes on the West Elk Wilderness, I have seen continued improvement of the rangeland through proper grazing management. Through proper grazing I have seen natural vegetation return to dominance in areas across the permit. I don't believe we can completely eliminate certain less desirable forages, but without proper grazing management those plants will take back over and kill off the native vegetation that has been regaining ground.

In regards to competition between livestock and wildlife, the whole picture must be considered. Many ranchers private lands are critical winter habitat for wildlife. Without our grazing allotments many ranches would be sold and subdivided, ultimately reducing that winter habitat for the wildlife. Livestock also helps "open up brushy" country, allowing for more feed to grow with the improved sunlight reach.

Stubble height is not an accurate indicator of range health and therefore should not be the index used to determine range health. There are many factors that must be considered. For example, precipitation, plant diversity, wildlife use and location. Livestock managers take all these factors into consideration when developing their range management plan. I don't think that anyone is more suited to deal with the challenges of climate change than livestock producers. We must manage our range and adjust our day to day management based on the weather.

According to a study done in 2011 by the Colorado State University Extension office in Delta, livestock contributes approximately $137,050,650 to the counties located in the GMUG. A significant amount is directly related to federal land grazing. Since this study was done, stock prices have risen significantly, therefore increasing the economic impact on those communities. The economic impact of ranchers is felt in more areas than just livestock sales. Most ranchers own their winter ground and spend the summer growing feed for their livestock to make it through the winter. With that, they must also purchase equipment and maintain that equipment to ensure success.

In regards to grazing on the wilderness, livestock have a very positive impact. Without the livestock many trails would become unpassable. It is the permittees that keep these trails clear for not only the livestock but the general public. The Forest Service has limited resources and relies on the permittees to help them maintain the trails.

In 2014, our small operation of 150 cows grossed around $200,000. If we had not had our federal grazing lease we would not have been able to run even 150 head of cows. Permittees are great resources whose knowledge of the land and management systems should be utilized in the drafting of a new GMUG management plan. They have a lot at stake and are the ones that will put the plan into action.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Nate and Kim Adam
Adam Ranch LLC
West Elk Grazing Allotment-Member