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Comments:

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RECREATION INITIATIVE

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GMUG Forest Plan Revision Staff

2250 S. Main St.

Delta, CO 81416

November 8, 2017

Dear Forest Plan Revision Staff,

I submit these comments on the Recreation Assessment as someone who enjoys hiking, wildlife viewing, and birdwatching in the GMUG Forest.

Also, from the perspective of how the Recreation Assessment is addressing the growing footprint of outdoor recreation, especially trail recreation, on wildlife and their habitat.

There is a need for the Recreation Assessment to place greater emphasis on disclosing current and projected impacts of both managed and unmanaged recreation on trails in the three forests, especially from those trail uses that have the highest mileage and acreage requirements, motorized, mechanized and snowmobiles. Faster-moving trail uses have the potential to spread wildlife disturbance farther and faster than traditional uses, causing greater habitat fragmentation. Habitat fragmentation by trails is a resource concern that needs to be addressed in the Forest Plan Revision.

What are current and projected trends in amount of mileages and acreage of expanding trail systems, and how are these projected changes expected to impact large landscape habitat regions, and landscape connectivity for wildlife in the three forests.

Info exchange with CPW wildlife managers in the field should yield some estimates of these trends.

Where in the Forest are recreational trails under good management and not expanding beyond the designated systems via social trail development? Where is this not occurring?

Where is new trail designation anticipated and what wildlife standards and guidelines are or will be applied to proposed system additions?

The section below on the Uncompahgre Plateau illustrates the approach taken in the assessment to the questions above. I recommend that the Recreation Assessment include as well an assessment of the factors described above.

Draft Forest Assessment: Recreation P 63 - "Recent years have seen a renewed interest in recreation activities on the Plateau. Increasing uses include OHV travel, mountain biking, and winter activities such as cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and fat biking. The area is particularly popular for its interconnected motorized trail systems. Two long distance mountain bike trails, the Tabeguache and Paradox trails, provide multi-day

opportunities from Telluride to Moab. Hunting remains a popular activity on the Plateau, commencing in the spring with turkey season and culminating with big game season in the fall. Beginning with archery season in August and ending in October or November when the snow flies, hunters are typically present along almost every drivable road corridor."

Thank you for consideration of these comments. I look forward to continued participation in this important planning process.

Sincerely,

Roz McClellan, Conservation staff