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Comments: Comments on Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests

Forest Plan Revision: Scoping [Dated: March 2018]

Submitted by Jan P. Potterveld, President, Grand Mesa Back Country Horsemen

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments throughout this Planning Process. We have participated in the Assessment phase, and now the Scoping Document, and we plan to be with you during the remaining phases as well. The GMUG Forest is extremely important to us for all of the recreation and outfitter opportunities it provides in both Wilderness and non-Wilderness areas. The Scoping document is broad and provides guidance on how the Plan will be developed but "the Devil is in the details" and we look forward to engaging with you as we progress.

We have a few comments to make at this point with regard to Scoping.

1. In the statement of Vision under Public Enjoyment, the first bullet should include horseback riding as a principal use, and are not just another form of recreation. In addition to recreating on the trails we provide a significant amount of volunteer hours and value to the development and maintenance of trails and trail-heads. As the planning moves forward, we want to be with you on how the Areas are developed and maintained for all forms of recreation including both Motorized and Non-Motorized uses as we all impact one another.
2. In Part II: Key Needs for Change on Social and Economic Sustainability, there is a strong need to revisit the whole structure of how trails are planned, developed and maintained. Some areas need to be structured to emphasize Motorized and some to emphasize Non-Motorized. Neither need to be exclusionary. Many trails can be suitable for multiple categories of use, considering terrain, volume expectations and other characteristics of the Forest. Considering funding availability and the availability of volunteer efforts, sustainability is always an important factor.
3. In Part III: Management Area Framework, the Scoping document seems to be very vague about how the various areas such as Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, Colorado Roadless Areas, and Back Country Areas are going to be treated. I see an inclination to let Natural Processes dominate, yet these same areas are most attractive to recreation in limited numbers by the Quiet Users. As currently stated, it will be very interesting to see the proposed alternatives for recreation in these areas. We have done an Area by Area analysis during the assessment period and provided recommendations that should be helpful in guiding the forthcoming planning.