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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Tell the Forest Service to Protect Wildlife

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GMUG Plan Revision Team

Dear Revision Team,

As an environmental educator and field biologist, a parent, and a citizen who cares deeply about conservation and preserving biodiversity, I urge the Forest Service to include strong protections for wildlife, wildlands, and water in the revised management plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison national forests (GMUG).

Many at-risk species depend on these forests. They provide key habitat for the Canada lynx and Gunnison sage-grouse, which are both threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Canada lynx need large areas of connected habitat and safeguards from threats such as logging. Oil and gas development should be avoided in Gunnison sage-grouse habitat. Other vulnerable species that need strict management standards and guidelines include the river otter, Gunnison's prairie dog, American white pelican, bald eagle, boreal owl, northern goshawk, and Colorado River cutthroat trout. Other animals, and many plants also deserve protection.

One of the best ways to protect wildlife and plants in our national forests is to designate special areas dedicated to conservation. This is why I support the Citizens' Wilderness Proposal. The Proposal would provide important management direction for essential places in the forest for at-risk species.

Protecting wildlife in our public lands is especially important at this time because of climate change, which is putting great stress on many species indeed, on entire ecosystems. Climate change is causing unpredictable weather patterns, which, in turn, can change food availability and have a major, but unknown, effect on migration. Climate change is likely to have an impact on the ranges of animals as well. Whatever the effects, they are not likely to be ones that will help most species prosper, which is why keeping our public lands as pristine and undisturbed as possible is the most prudent course of action. In essence, climate change caused mainly by the emission of greenhouse gases is like a giant science experiment on our planet. By keeping our wild lands as wild as possible, we are limiting the variables in this experiment as we observe what happens to the wildlife; we don't have to wonder if oil and gas drilling, mining, or

traffic are having a deleterious effect if they are not present.

I encourage the GMUG Plan Revision Team to develop and adopt a management plan alternative that maximizes conservation for the wildlife that depend on these forests and their habitat.

Sincerely,

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