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Organization:

Title:

Comments: GMUG Forest Plan Revision - Scoping Comments

Dear GMUG Forest Planning Team:

I've spent multiple weeks every year for the past 30 years in the mountains of SW Colorado. I'm only 34 years old now, so a significant part of my life has been spent in this area. Our family used to spend a few weeks every summer in Ouray, enjoying the jeep trails and later the hiking trails that offer stunning beauty. The changes in the area over the years have been substantial and have influenced my recreational habits significantly. In the 90's and early 2000's I could recall jeeping with my father and grandfather over passes like Engineer and Imogene, while enjoying family picnics in beautiful Yankee Boy Basin. While those are still great memories, we are no longer able to partake in those activities due to the incredible increase in traffic in those areas. If it were normal sight seeing traffic that would be one thing, but we've found that most of the visitors to those jeep roads are there as much for the thrill of driving their machines as they are the scenery - some even more so than others. Incredibly loud side-by-side buggies and motorbikes echo for miles and miles - and thats if you're lucky enough to be away from them. These roads are not a race course, however they are treated as such by many.

As a result of this, our family gladly transitioned out of the Jeeps and onto our feet. It was a significant and substantial step up. We are lucky and glad to be physically able to hike, because it means the world to us now. In a jeep, one might travel 40 miles in a day over a pass to Silverton and back around on the highway to Ouray. On our feet, we might be lucky to travel 10 miles in a day. In effect, our open space becomes much bigger simply by virtue of our reduced speed and range of travel. The mountains of SW Colorado can handle 10,000 hikers, they cannot as easily handle 10,000 jeepers. I would encourage the planners to consider this - work to reduce the speed and environmental impact of the visitors to the GMUG NF.

Our family has shifted once again away from the motorized mecca of Ouray to the mountains of Crested Butte. We still return to Ouray and Silverton, but only well after Labor Day when the craziness has died down. Luckily the mountains around CB do not attract the off-road crowd due to the relative absence of old mining roads. We've found the mountain biking trails in and around CB to be amazing and have really enjoyed our time spent doing that. I've also participated in backcountry winter sports as well as resort skiing in the Gunnison/CB area. I would encourage planners to avoid any decisions that could lead to land fragmentation and/or loss of Wilderness status.

In general, I would encourage planners to use a long term approach in devising a new forest plan. It is clear that tourism is a diverse and strong economic provider for the communities in these areas. Extractive industry is not. This is why the communities like Ouray, CB and Gunnison are thriving and why communities like Somerset and Hotchkiss are not. We can see the writing on the wall with population growth and climate change, so please plan accordingly.

Recreation is a key social and economic driver on the GMUG National Forest and I would like to see recreation addressed pro-actively through the Forest Planning process. Through Wilderness and special area designations, the Forest can protect and enhance recreation experiences for users and ensure these landscapes remain intact for future generations.

There is a need and opportunity for additional wilderness, Wild & Scenic Rivers, and other designated areas on the GMUG. Designations in the Citizens' Wilderness Proposal (<https://www.gmugrevision.com/>) and Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (<http://gunnisonpubliclands.org/>) should both be included in the revised forest

plan.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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