Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/1/2018 6:16:48 PM First name: Mitch Last name: Helling Organization:

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Comments: As a former Gunnison Valley resident (perhaps will be again in the future as well) I write in support of the mountain bike community and the OHV community. I am an avid backpacker that loves to explore existing wilderness, but as a biker and snowmobiler I see so much of our lands off-limits to mechanized recreation while the deeper wilderness has few users. I frequently go days, up to five, hiking in the wilderness areas of CO without seeing another human. I say this to point out that we are not in dire need of additional wilderness. I am all for conservation and protecting the land, and appreciate the spirit of the USFS in that regard, but wilderness designation & amp; expansion is not the only option. The trend has been to place more land into wilderness designation, or into a state of defacto-wilderness through creation of wilderness study areas (thereby sidestepping public input!), and this needs to stop. A shift to more public education on responsible land use along with harsher penalties for resource damage/irresponsible land use, will do much more for land conservation than locking it up into wilderness. Creation of wilderness areas up the Cement Creek drainage outside Crested Butte will hurt the tourism industry in the Crested Butte area, while concentrating mechanized recreation into a smaller area. The same can be said for other wilderness expansions in other areas. Mountain biking, OHV users, and snowmobiling bring much needed money into the high country, as well as drum up valuable volunteer hours for responsible stewardship of our forests. Please listen to the active and relevant organizations such as: Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association, Gunnison Public Lands Initiative, Gunnison Trails, Gunnison SnoTrackers, Gunnison Valley O.H.V. Alliance of Trailriders, High Country Conservation Advocates, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, and Trout Unlimited. Thank you for your consideration.