Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/1/2018 8:42:44 PM
First name: Jimbo
Last name: Buickerood
Organization: San Juan Citizens Alliance
Title: Lands and Forest Protection Program Manager
Comments: June 1, 2018

Forest Planning Team
GMUG National Forest
2250 Highway 50
Delta, CO 81416

Dear Planning Team:

Please accept these brief scoping comments on behalf of San Juan Citizens Alliance regarding the forthcoming revised forest plan and environmental impact statement for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest. Others will be providing more detailed comments. Our focus is on specific geographies.

We would like to highlight the need to assess landscapes across jurisdictional boundaries, specifically with adjacent lands on the San Juan National Forest and those administered by the BLM in the Alpine Loop region between Silverton, Lake City, and Ouray.

One particular area we encourage the GMUG to notice and emphasize is the unofficial roadless area that encompasses Columbine Lake on the San Juan and the Bridal Veil Creek-Blue Lake vicinity on the GMUG. This area comprises over 5,000 acres of undeveloped, roadless terrain but was overlooked during the Colorado Roadless Rule apparently because the area is separately less than 5,000 acres on each national forest. The roadless unit is roughly bounded on the south by Ophir Pass, on the north by Black Bear Pass, on the east by Highway 550, and on the west by Telluride Ski Area. This is classic, alpine, San Juan Mountains high country. The GMUG portion includes important municipal watersheds feeding into Blue Lake, as well as some of the most spectacular and most visited high country hiking destinations around Telluride such as Silver Lake, Blue Lake, and Bridal Veil Creek. On the San Juan side, Columbine Lake is an increasingly favored destination for hikers. The entire area is also popular for backcountry skiing and mountaineering. We strongly encourage the GMUG to identify this Blue Lake-Bridal Veil-Columbine Lake unit as roadless, and apply a management prescription similar to that of the roadless rule that prohibits new road construction and mineral extraction.

We also have a strong interest in the headwaters of the Animas River. The BLM's Handies Peak Wilderness Study Area extends across the divide at the headwaters of the Animas and the Lake Fork of the Gunnison. We encourage the GMUG to assess how its adjacent Cataract roadless area complements and enhances the Handies Peak WSA, and to reaffirm the prior favorable wilderness recommendation for Cataract.

Sincerely,

Jimbo Buickerood
Lands and Forest Protection Program Manager