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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,

I am an advocate for conserving America's public lands. 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.

Sprawling across the western slope of the Colorado Rockies, the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison national forests (GMUG) represent nearly three million acres of important wildlife habitat. With altitudes ranging from 5,000 to over 14,000 feet, these high forests and alpine peaks are home to a rich and vast array of wildlife, including imperiled species like the Canada lynx and the American pika.

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. The new plan needs to account for recent and growing threats to wildlife in the region, including climate change, fracking and increased human recreation and traffic in addition to long-standing issues like mining and logging that also continue to destroy and degrade habitat.

For example, Canada lynx need large areas of connected habitat and safeguards from threats such as logging while 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, Colorado River cutthroat trout, other animals, and many plants.

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 on the forest for at-risk species.

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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