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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Wilderness opposition

Hello,

I wish to express my total opposition to all the Wilderness proposals in the GMUG especially on the Grand Mesa.

This designation will -

1. Harm motorized recreation opportunities. With the VAST current Wilderness areas and the many, many areas that are managed as non-motorized, the motorized recreational opportunities are already limited in a growing recreational activity. We should be INCREASING motorized recreational areas not reducing.
2. Deny the aging population, injured vets and handicapped among us the opportunity to enjoy their National Forest. As our population ages the need for more motorized access becomes greater. Wilderness areas are for the young and healthy.
3. Greatly limit the management of the forest. Our forest health is poor and getting worse with the beetle infestation. We need to have the ability to manage these areas and Wilderness ties the hands of land managers. Getting the beetle devastation under control should be a top priority of the USFS and Wilderness areas will stop management of these infested areas. The Grand Mesa is a MAJOR source of water for the surrounding areas both for drinking and irrigation. A fire on the Mesa will destroy the watersheds for years to come.
4. Forest fires with the poor health, dying trees, drought etc are becoming a bigger threat each year. If this Wilderness proposal goes thru expect more devastating wildfires that will destroy the forest and surrounding communities. The USFS released a study in September 2011 at the request of Senator Mark Udall to investigate the devastating wildfires that have plagued the Colorado Forests. The study SPECIFICALLY STATED THAT WILDERNESS AREAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE FIRES DUE TO LIMITED TREATMENTS AVAILABLE. It would be IRRESPONSIBLE TO DESIGNATE ANY ADDITIONAL WILDERNESS AREAS. The National Forest of CO and specially the Grand Mesa are in a widespread beetle infestation and dead and dying trees are all over the Mesa. The USFS must have the management options available to manage the forest to improve forest health, Wilderness areas will make it impossible to manage the areas properly.
5. Negative economic impact on local communities. In a recently released study motorized recreation contributes more to local communities than any other activities. Small towns and shops will have a large economic hardship placed upon them.
6. Just look at a map of the state of CO with forest land highlighted and Wilderness areas marked and see the vast amount of land already designated Wilderness. We don't need anymore Wilderness areas. These areas didn't meet the requirements in the massive Wilderness designations of the past and don't need to be included now.

The areas in the proposal have been managed for decades well enough so as to "be considered Wilderness areas". If this is true, then continue the current management of multi-use, obviously it is working well. Wilderness would be a devastating decision for the Grand Mesa.

Keep public lands open for the public.

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