

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/6/2018 4:29:30 AM

First name: Brett

Last name: Wyker

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern:

I greatly appreciate the effort the Forest Service is making to collect and incorporate public comments on the Draft Wilderness Evaluation Report for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forest. As a mountain trail runner and backpacker, I spend a lot of time in GMUG. In fact, I just returned from a visit to Telluride, where I spent the weekend running the high alpine trails over Wasatch Pass and across the ridge of Telluride Mountain. It was a weekend filled with challenging climbs, spectacular views and deep appreciation for the extraordinary open spaces we have available to us in Colorado. The time in GMUG served as a reminder that more needs to be done to protect this special place. As such, I would like to offer the following comments in support of new wilderness in GMUG for your consideration.

While I support the Forest Service's categorization of East Elk, Steuben Creek, Pass Creek and Soap Creek as areas with high wilderness value, there are several areas in Gunnison County that have not been given sufficient protection in the plan. Specifically, in the plan the Forest Service has categorized the area around Matchless Mountain, Star Peak, Deer Creek, Poverty Gulch, and East Cement as having only "moderate" wilderness value. These areas contain all the attributes worthy of wilderness and should be given a "High" rating by the Forest Service.

Additionally, I would like to express my support for balanced use of Forest Service lands. I recognize that it is exceptionally difficult to determine the best designation for the nearly 350,000 acres that make up GMUG. However, responsible management of this area needs to include both plans to sustain current recreation uses (trail running, mountain biking, single-track motorized use, etc) and the designation of new wilderness.

Thank you for your consideration and continued effort to make the revisions to the GMUG forest plan an open process.