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Comments: Grand Mesa Uncompagne National (GMUG) Forest Planning Team:

As a former Grand Junction City Council member, Mayor pro tem and community development director and urban planner for local governments as well as past vice president of the Colorado Chapter of the American Planning Association, I would like to commend the GMUG Forest Planning Team for preparing the Preliminary Draft Plan. I appreciate the recognition of the high volume of use and the associated planning for areas like Divide road and State highway 65. There are some other areas of the study that could use additional attention.

Our local Forest Service lands are essential to the health of our economy and community. This comes directly from proper management. I would like to see the highest level of protective management of the municipal watersheds in the Forest. Locally, the Kannah Creek and Jerry Creek watersheds supply the water to our valley and our cities and urban areas and it is critical that these watersheds have the highest level of protection.

The City of Grand Junction adopted a watershed protection ordinance for Kannah Creek and the Grand Mesa and I encourage the Forest Service to recognize that his watershed supplies the drinking water for the City of Grand Junction (population estimated: 60,000) and most of Mesa County (population estimated: 120,000 inclusive of Grand Junction). To ensure riparian health and availability of clean drinking water, it is important for these watersheds to have the highest level of protection.

I served as Mesa County Planning Director from 1982-89 when serious consideration was given to establishing a wilderness area on the southern and eastern slopes of the Grand Mesa. Several of us hiked this area and observed the beautiful and undisturbed forests and wild lands of this part of the Grand Mesa which deserved protection as a wilderness designation. Unfortunately, this designation did not take place then. I have hiked, skied, and biked in these areas with my family and they represent outstanding natural areas worthy of protection! These areas were not included in the Draft plan and I hope to see them and the other recommended wilderness eligible areas in the Community Conservation Proposal included in the future!

I would like to thank you, the planning team, which has invited public comment at this stage in the planning process. I hope you take my recommendations into consideration and look forward to being involved in future steps of the process to ensure we are properly managing the Forest for future generations.