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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Forest Planning Team:

Please accept this formal comment on your draft Management Plan, specifically as it applies to your proposal for Management Areas on the Uncompahgre Plateau, the Kelso Mesa quadrant in particular.

The area, which I have personally hiked and rode by horseback over the years, and which was found to be suitable for management as wilderness, at least in its southern and central sections, in your original draft inventory, needs to be recommended for wilderness protection in your final preferred alternative. Merely keeping it as "Roadless", and as a Special Wildlife Management Area, is not a sufficient protection going forward as this is last large tract of unspoiled wilderness quality land on the Plateau.

While there is a cherry stemmed road within its Roadless boundary and private in holdings adjacent, this not a disqualification for management at the highest protection level. Sections of the North and Middle Forks of Escalante Creeks, as well as Kelso Creek and their adjacent steep canyons, merit Wild and Scenic designation and further highlight the unspoiled nature of Kelso Mesa.

It is a mistake to discount the pristine qualities of this area in the future management plan, which I fear is based on the fact the the commissioners of Mesa County oppose considering any "new" land in their area as wilderness worthy. The Forest Service's duty is to manage the GMUG as multi use but not multi use in all places. With the exception of the Tabaguache and Roubideaux special management areas the plateau lacks the multi use balance that wilderness protection for Kelso Mesa would provide.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my comments in your final analysis.