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First name: Western

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Organization:

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Comments: GMUG Forest Plan Working Draft Comments

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Introduction: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the preliminary Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest management plan. I am glad the USFS is considering ways to protect important natural resources like wildlife habitat, domestic and irrigation water, wild and scenic rivers, air quality, and recreation. In particular, I support the designation of recommended Wilderness areas and special recreation management areas as mentioned in the Community Conservation Proposal, as well as the Lamborn/Landsend area. These will preserve habitat connectivity, wildlife corridors, undeveloped open space, and recreation opportunities within our region.

I urge the USFS to consider including the Community Conservation Proposal as its preferred alternative in its Draft Forest Management Plan. The Community Conservation Proposal includes protections for wildlife, recreation, wilderness-quality lands, air, and water. It would preserve scenic viewsheds that local communities and economies depend upon. I have a vision for the future that embraces our natural resources instead of exploiting them, and I recommend the USFS consider that when drafting a Forest Management Plan.  
Comments: Unfortunately, almost the entirety of the Upper North Fork/east Grand Mesa falls into either General Forest or Colorado Roadless Management Area. The General Forest designation provides no additional protections for certain areas within the North Fork Valley that hold incredible scenic, wildlife, and wilderness values. In addition, the lack of prescription and emphasis on maximum agency flexibility sets a bad precedent for the future forest-wide oil and gas leasing analysis. Please include additional management area designations as proposed in the Community Conservation Proposal, specifically in the North Fork region, in the Draft EIS.  
Conclusion: In conclusion, I want to thank the GMUG Forest Planning team for releasing a Working Draft of the Forest Plan revision, however some changes are needed. Most importantly, more management area protections are needed for the incredible wildlife, wilderness, water quality, and recreation values the GMUG National Forests provide surrounding the North Fork Valley. Our community survives based on the values encompassed within the National Forests that surround us, and our ability to access those public lands. I would like those values to be protected in the GMUG Forest Plan.