

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/26/2019 5:36:02 PM

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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: I frequently enjoy the forest surroundings near me, which include the West Elk Wilderness, Gunnison National Forest, Grand Mesa and other parts around the North Fork Valley. I love hiking, fishing, boating, snow shoeing and nordic skiing. Each time I go out, I enjoy seeing wildlife, their tracks and beautiful, unspoiled scenery. My main concern is that much of the surrounding forest areas are not being designated for additional protection and management. The wildlife corridors and habitat protections should be strengthened. I urge caution with excessive oil and gas drilling. The watershed component is good but could use specific standards to help maintain the watershed quality as well as the ecosystems of which they are a part. Finally, the clear cutting of 100 acre aspen stands rather than 40 acres (of other species) could disrupt habitats for our wildlife--a large part of the local economy. Thank you for considering my comments and continuing to work on this draft. I sincerely wish you well in upholding your mission statement: "Sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." 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.