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Comments: GMUG Forest Plan Working Draft Comments

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United StatesEmailbrilliot@gmail.comIntroductionRE: Letter Submittal # 000430-ElliotA-20161027

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. CommentsI protest the Draft RMP due to the fact that the matters of Wildlife corridors was not adequately addressed. The mitigations is sketchy at best. The elk populations in this area have been dropping. There is an on-going study currently being conducted. We must first understand why the populations are going down before adding any more stress and disturbance to the local herds. The Working Draft only specifies one desired condition and one standard for wildlife management areas on the GMUG. It is unclear, when looking at the Working Draft, how specifically Wildlife Management Areas will be managed for the wildlife within them, apart from road and trail density. Furthermore, more Wildlife Management Areas should be included in the draft EIS, specifically in the North Fork region, to protect the critical wildlife habitat and range, as well as recreation opportunities in Game Units 411, 52, 521, 52, and 54, which are major economic drivers for our community. ConclusionIn conclusion, introducing an Option E at this in the process is likely to cause a law suit. It is not fair to be introducing a new option now.

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.