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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest Plan Revision

Dear GMUG National Forest Planning Team:

Thank you for releasing a working draft of the GMUG forest plan to the public and seeking feedback on it. I care about the future of western Colorado's public lands, rivers, and wildlife. It is important to me that the U.S. Forest Service responsibly balance development and conservation across the GMUG planning area.

I recommend that the USFS consider additional areas proposed for recommended wilderness by local conservation and recreation groups. I am concerned that the working draft contains only 22,400 acres of areas to be analyzed for recommended wilderness, leaving out many places deserving to be conserved as wilderness for their ecological, scientific, and wildlife values. This includes the expansive and remote woodlands and red rock canyons of Kelso Mesa, the important summer range for deer and elk in the upper North Fork Valley's Electric Mountain, and proposed additions to the popular Uncompahgre Wilderness outside of Ouray.

In addition, I urge the USFS to include Special Interest Areas (SIAs) and other designations proposed by local conservation and recreation groups to safeguard key wildlife linkages and other important habitat, outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation, and watersheds critical to local communities. Finally, in moving forward with the GMUG planning process, I encourage the USFS to protect all rivers that qualify as eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation.

The working draft contains only vague management direction for protecting important forest resources. I also urge the USFS to identify more plan components, such as mandatory standards, for protecting the values that make the GMUG such a special place.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the GMUG working draft.

Sincerely,

Shawn Elliott

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