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Comments on GMUG Forest Plan Revision

These comments are on the Irwin area, outside of Crested Butte, in Gunnison County.

There seems to be little in the plan about uses in the Irwin area. Other areas are getting mentioned for limiting recreational use and dispersed camping. Irwin has seen a flood of visitors since 2015 and little has been done. With year round trespassing and noise from recreational snowmobile use around residences, the Irwin area needs more attention in the plan as its popularity grows.

Irwin does provide a wide spectrum of recreational opportunities but this should not have to occur on private land or be a burden on the landowners and residents. Designating Irwin as a Special Interest Area should be considered for the reasons of being a Riparian area, preserving the scenic value, the increasing popularity of the area, and the Historic Value of the area.

Irwin is the headwaters to the Gunnison River; which is a tributary to the Colorado, through both the Gunnison and Paonia Ranger districts. Preserving this riparian environment is important to the public for generations to come. Excessive use will cause harm to our waters and environment and will cause damage to this area for lifetimes.

The footprint of the public seems to double every year in the Irwin area and probably is happening at an exponentially faster rate than that. The plan should place emphasis in its Environmental Impact studies of this area on acceptable numbers of users in this area, without degrading the scenic value. This should be monitored, and restrictions should be put in place when the threshold is met. (Which probably is the current number!). Noxious weeds should also be considered in a sensitive environment with so many rare high alpine plants that exist and could be threatened by increased vehicular use that can spread noxious weeds and degrade the scenic value.

Increasing popularity is happening throughout all of the GMUG. However, the Lake Irwin area has seen more public visits than most areas due to Gunnison County's marketing, it's close proximity to Crested Butte and of the lake and other recreational offerings in the vicinity. Private lands have increasingly been trespassed on over the recent years, with private land treated as though it were public. If the public is to use private land it should be on approved routes that already have a legal mechanism in place as defined in the 2010 Travel Management Plan. Therefore enforcement of landowner rights should be addressed in the plan revision.

The Ruby mining district has historic patented mining claims that predate the formation of public land. These private parcels both are out of the public domain and have mineral resources that belong to the claim owners and the public should be made aware of all boundaries of private land in the area.

I hope that these topics can be considered and that the Forest Service will expand information, infrastructure and Influence in the Irwin area.