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Title:

Comments: As a Pagosa Springs resident I frequently recreate in the HD Mountains to hike, hunt, and camp. I was particularly upset when the construction for the gas leases began in the Goose Creek drainage a few years ago as they were placed directly into a highly used and well documented Mule Deer migration route and critical wintering zone. Also, from my observations and frequent findings of Native American ruins and artifacts while hiking in the Goose Creek drainage, that a proper Archeological assessment of the area was not done prior to the approval of Oil and Gas extraction in the area. The same can probably be said for the rest of the HD's as it has a rich Archeological History. This habitat fragmentation has completely altered that pristine area of Goose Creek and what was once a good place to hunt and a refuge for wildlife now has permanent roads, drilling equipment, noise and lights from loud machinery. Any further intrusion into the HD Mountains should be halted and the only part of this proposal that, as an area resident, I support is the use of periodic controlled burns which have been successful there in the past. The HD Mountains, from my observations, is also a poor choice for the existence of cattle. Water is so scarce in those mountains that this will undoubtedly place undue stress on the existing wildlife, not to mention further degrade the wilderness experience. Adding or opening OHV routes in the HD's is also another degradation of the wild nature of the area and seems unnecessary considering the amount of existing OHV opportunities in the Columbine and Pagosa Ranger Districts. Timber extraction would also erode the nature of the area and compared to other forests in the region seem very healthy and not nearly as affected by beetle-kill or overgrowth. In summary, it is my opinion as a longtime recreational user that the HD Mountains are best left alone and untrammeled by further human interference. The Wilderness qualities of the HD's is very high and there are very few low elevation roadless or wilderness areas left in Colorado that provide the type of wildlife refuge and critical overwintering range and opportunities for quiet solitude as the HD's. It is truly a special place and unique place that needs to be protected and left alone. Thank you for your time and concern regarding this matter.