

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/23/2021 5:45:47 PM

First name: Kent

Last name: Borges

Organization:

Title:

Comments: As a concerned Coloradan who care deeply about the public lands in our state, I have the following comments on the Draft Forest Plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest.

I am pleased to see that U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has increased the size and scale of Wildlife Management Areas and provided a robust level of detail and attention to the impacts that recreation has across the forest. It is absolutely crucial to protect Colorados wildlife at a time where they are seeing unprecedented pressure from climate change, recreation use and continued habitat fragmentation.

There are several aspects of the Draft Forest Plan, however, that I believe require improvement. First and foremost among them is the incredibly small level of acreage of recommended wilderness in the plan. In 2007, under the Bush Administration, USFS recommended 125,000 acres as wilderness. Just 14 years later, in Alternative B, or the preferred alternative, USFS is proposing to recommend just 34,000 acres in the over three million acre GMUG National Forest as wilderness. It is clear that as time goes on, lands that are untrammelled by man become all the more valuable and irreplaceable. I strongly urge USFS to recommend an increased and more suitable acreage figure for recommended wilderness.

Similarly, the massive increase of timber that you deem suitable for logging is concerning. Alternative B, the clear preferred alternative, nearly doubles the acreage of timber suitable for harvest from 468,000 acres to 948,200 acres. Designating nearly one third of the forest for timber harvest while deeming just one tenth of the forest suitable for wilderness protection is clearly not aligned with Colorados values. We also need to know the potential impacts of logging at such a scale on the climate and the watersheds we depend on.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide my comments on the draft plan and look forward to continuing to engage in the planning process.