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Comments: With respect to the most recent draft forest plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forest, I am greatly pleased that USDA Forest Service has increased the proposed size of wildlife management areas and also provided a robust level of detail and attention to the effects that recreation has had on the forest. It is crucial that we all endeavor to further the viability of Colorado's wildlife populations at a time when they are seeing unprecedented existential threats from climate change, recreation impacts, and ongoing habitat fragmentation.

However, there are a number of aspects of the proposed forest plan that require what I see as improvements. Foremost among these is the far-too-little acreage recommended for wilderness designation. In 2007, the Forest Service recommended that 125,000 acres be formally set aside as wilderness. And yet, 14 years later in Alternative B--the preferred alternative--the Forest Service is now proposing to recommend a mere 34,000 acres of the more than 3-million-acre GMUG National Forest for such protection. It is clear that, as time goes on, lands that are untrammelled by man become all the more valuable and irreplaceable, so I urge the Forest Service to recommend a much larger area of suitable acreage for designated wilderness status.

Similarly, the massive increase of GMUG forest area that you deem suitable for logging under the proposed Alternative B is beyond acceptable. Nearly doubling the acreage available for timber harvest from 468,000 acres to 948,200 acres would be a travesty. "Locking away" nearly one third of this forest for private, corporate timber operations while deeming merely one tenth or less suitable for wilderness protection just does not accord with "Colorado values". Further, we must have made public the results of comprehensive environmental studies in order to grasp the potential effects of logging at such a scale on climate and on the health of the forest watersheds on which we all depend.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide my comments on the draft plan and look forward to continuing to engage in the Forest Service's GMUG planning process.