

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/21/2021 9:31:12 PM

First name: Zack

Last name: Scott

Organization: Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan. I am a member of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers and have recreated on BLM lands managed by the Rock Springs Field office for the past 15 years.

I respectfully request that the agency adopt language and management directives in the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan that strengthen protections for wildlife, migration corridors, and critical habitat for mule deer, elk, moose, greater sage-grouse, pronghorn antelope, and Colorado River cutthroat trout.

I am disappointed and angered to learn that this plan has the potential to engage in more oil and gas development. Energy development on public lands that does not consider migration corridors, critical habitat, winter range or downstream impacts from pollution in waterways will have significant impacts to wildlife and recreation opportunities. These impacts will be difficult if not impossible to reverse and the important resources effected will be lost forever.

I believe there is other relevant science and information that should be considered. In a recent study published in the Journal of Wildlife Management, researchers found that when energy development exceeds 3% of the land, mule deer avoid that area during migration. The impact to elk and deer herds is being felt throughout the state from increased development, habitat degradation and fragmentation and increased traffic. If allowed, energy development here would forever alter the landscape. While there are protections and special designations overlapping this area that protect wildlife, there needs to be appropriate leasing restrictions put in place near these protected areas. Failure to do so would jeopardize critical habitat, big game connectivity, and have dire unintended consequences. More importantly, it would threaten my values and the access my family and I have to high quality public lands.

Hunters and anglers know better than anyone how the quality of habitat is inextricably linked to the health of our wildlife, which supports carrying on the tradition of hunting and fishing to future generations. Beyond hunting, wildlife health is crucial for quality of life and happiness of the people that share this planet with them. I urge you to consider the recommendations put forth by BHA and sportspeople. This management plan should be based on the most recent and relevant science that considers how energy development contemplated in the plan will impact wildlife, the recreation community, and the values and opportunities for hunters and anglers, which is fundamental to being a Coloradan.

I strongly encourage the agency to mitigate energy development and/or put in place strong regulations that consider wildlife in the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan.