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Comments: I love the Manti-La Sal National Forest. I know it well through my work and recreation. The revision of the forest plan provides an opportunity to protect the natural beauty of these mountains and to improve management in places that have been negatively impacted.

I ask you to include the Conservation Alternative that has been developed by a number of conservation groups, including me in my conservation work.

The new plan needs to prioritize conservation of forests, streams, riparian areas, old-growth forests, native vegetation and rare species. So many of the natural areas have been damaged therefore we need to protect what remains natural and restore areas where possible.

Livestock grazing is one of the significant management activities on the Manti-La Sal. I urge you to reduce utilization to 30% so that vegetation can recover after it has been grazed. The current level of livestock grazing is reducing native species cover and increasing non-native grasses and forbs. Livestock also negatively impact aspen regeneration and has eliminated much of the native understory vegetation (wildflowers in particular) of aspen forests. Maintaining and protecting the Grove of Aspen Giants will help protect aspen forests.

Streams and riparian areas have also been negatively impacted by excessive livestock grazing. The 4-inch stubble height is not enforced and that results in damage to streambanks and loss of riparian habitat. More and better monitoring of riparian areas needs to be done. One riparian area that is in great condition is Left Fork Huntinging Creek, which needs to be permanaently protected from livestock and roads. It should be recommended as a research natural area. In the meantime it should be protected as a geographic area or whatever will protect this special place and the national recreation trail.

Mountain goats are causing much damage in the La Sal Mountains by eating plants and digging in the soil. This unique and important area, with its endemic alpine plants, needs to be protected. The most valuable thing that can be done to protect that alpine area is to remove the mountain goats.

A way to protect some of the small amount of old-growth ponderosa forest is to designat the Andy Mesa Red Towers Ponderosa forest as a botanical area. Any old-growth ponderosa in other parts of the forest, such as Elk Ridge and the southern Wasatch Plateau, need to be protected as well.

Rare species need to be better monitored and protected. This includes the Heliotrope milkvetch which needs a management plan, monitoring and protection. Ths can be done by designating its subalpine and alpine habitat as a botanical area.

I also urge you to work closer with Tribes to understand and meet their needs and desires to protect and steward their ancestral homelands.

Thanks for your efforts to maintainand protect the Manti-La Sal National Forest. I look forward to spending much more time there, and to seeing improvements in natural conditions and processes under the revised forest plan.