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Comments: The Draft Plan for the GMUG is a step in the right direction, but it does not go far enough, in my opinion, to protect our resources of trees and water.

I do not give credence to the 'the world is ending if we don't destroy our way of life' climate hysteria, but I do believe in natural cycles of climate, and at this point we are in a drought. The West is experiencing devastating forest fire activity, much of which we caused by letting unmanaged forests become full of dead and dying trees. At this point, we need to correct our mistakes and return to sensible forest management. We can do that best by making sure that as much of our Forest as possible is in designations that allow active management.

Forests need to be managed for resilience to changing conditions of climate, recreational usage, residential influx, etc. Static solutions, such as Wilderness and Roadless designations, allow no flexibility in management and endanger tree, wildlife, air, and water resources. These designations don't work in changing environments. We need the flexibility to put roads in and take biofuels out when necessary.

I support Draft Alternative B,
which sets a timber target of 55,000 ccf/year.

I believe it is essential to remove trees from the GMUG to improve forest health. There are those who will say that we need those trees to protect from 'climate change'. I believe that what works best for the climate is young, growing trees which lock up carbon (and create oxygen for us) at an accelerated rate. When trees start decaying, they release that carbon. Harvesting trees before they start the decay cycle is best for the environment, I believe, as long as enough older trees are left for wildlife and scenic needs.

I urge the GMUG to increase active management of the forests. I believe active management, including logging, thinning, and prescribed burns, should be considered an urgent priority to protect the Forest and those who live in and around it. In addition, check dams should be installed in some places, especially in Surface Creek above Cedaredge. We need to prepare for the eventuality of fire, and to do what we can to keep ash and silt out of our drinking water supplies and protect water quality.

Wildfires do more than burn our trees. They can sterilize soils and, when living vegetation is removed, let whole hillsides wash to the bottom. They can drastically pollute our watersheds, filling streams and lakes with silt and ash. One of the founding reasons for the National Forest system was to protect and increase clean water supplies. The National Forest system nationwide has not been giving sufficient attention to that mandate to guard and improve waterflows. I hope the GMUG will take the lead in restoring water resource improvement to the forefront.

Since we may be facing natural temperature increases, which raise the risks of catastrophic fires, it behooves us to plan for that in any sensible ways possible. One of these ways is to reduce the number of trees and the fuel overloads in our forests.

Most Forest Service personnel understand that overcrowded forests lead to decreased water, nutrients, and sunlight for each tree, and that trees deprived of these needs often become stunted, unhealthy, and susceptible to insects and disease. When those trees die, they become tinder for forest fires. When they burn, the crowded conditions mean that the blaze is harder to control. Overthick forests also mean that less water makes it to the springs and streams, and soil is often so dry that water goes straight down instead of running off to replenish streams.

Unfortunately, many other people don't understand that logging and thinning, when done correctly, help to preserve forests, increase water flows, and even improve wildlife habitat. No doubt you receive a lot of comments saying: 'Lock up more land and keep the loggers out.' Many of those comments come from people who do not understand ecology and natural cycles. Some come from people who do not live near the GMUG and don't depend on it for their water supplies.

I know that all National Forests are subjected to a lot of pressure to increase Wilderness and Roadless Areas, designations that put forests and watersheds at risk. We have far too much land in these 'off limits to management' areas already. We definitely do not need more. I would be in favor of reducing the acreage in those designations, but I doubt that will ever happen. I would like to see 10% or less of the landmass in Wilderness, Roadless, and Wilderness Study Area-type designations. The maximum amount per Forest, I believe, to be able to manage for Forest protection, should be 20%. I know the GMUG has much more than that, so I urge the GMUG to resist any pressure to add to that acreage.

Healthy forests contain healthy trees spaced enough so that they can easily obtain the necessities for health life, fire protection devices (fire breaks, meadows, ladder-fuels removed, and ROADS), varying age-class and types of trees and shrubs for wildlife habitat, and methods and structures to protect watersheds. We can have all that and still have plenty of opportunities for recreation and solitude. But if we let our Forest be ravaged by fire, we destroy trees, wildlife, habitat, recreational opportunities, and air quality - unnecessarily.

I urge GMUG managers to do what is best for the Forest and local communities that depend on its resources, and actively manage the Forest to minimize fire danger and maximize forest health. This can be done without negatively impacting recreation. Protect our precious resources by managing to reduce fires and increase water flows.