

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/4/2021 3:26:44 AM

First name: Andrew

Last name: Arell

Organization:

Title:

Comments: GMUG Forest Manager,

Greetings!

I am writing to express my strong support for wilderness and special management area (SMA) recommendations in Alternative D, including areas recommended by the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI) and Community Conservation Proposal.

I support the concept of Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) in the Forest Plan, but ask that they be strengthened. This important management area designation could help protect habitat for a variety of wildlife species. However, in places where Alternative D's wilderness and SMA recommendations overlap with the WMA-base identified in Alternative B, I support the stronger wildlife conservation that Alternative D's wilderness and SMAs provide.

I support significantly reducing the size of the suitable timber base. Every alternative in the draft plan posits a significant increase in suitable timber, which is a designation that interferes with consideration of responsible management of the forests for uses other than timber production. The draft plan seems designed to maximize the possibility of future timber harvest, even though the GMUG National Forest is much more valuable for conserving biological diversity and recreation than it ever could be for timber production.

Also, there are several Crested Butte-area streams that have been left out of the revised draft Forest Plan that should be found eligible for Wild & Scenic River protection:

Slate River (Headwaters to Poverty Gulch, Poverty Gulch to Oh-Be-Joyful, and Oh-Be-Joyful to Town of Crested Butte)

Daisy Creek (Headwaters to Slate River confluence)

East River (Headwaters to Gothic Road Bridge, Gothic Road Bridge to Meanders, Meanders)

Upper Taylor River, Lower Taylor River (Taylor River Canyon)

Upper Brush Creek and West Brush Creek tributary

Cement Creek

The draft plan indicates the Forest Service will identify climate refugia, which I applaud. Protecting and connecting undeveloped areas is an important action that agencies can take to enhance climate change adaptation. However, the draft plan's objective is to identify these over a 10-year timeline; this is not soon enough given the speed at which the earth is warming and the climate is changing. I urge you to promptly enact protection of climate refugia, and not just merely monitor them.