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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Forest Plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest.

I am pleased to see that U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has increased the size and scale of Wildlife Management Areas and provided a robust level of detail and attention to the impacts that recreation has across the forest. It is critical that we endeavor to protect Colorado's wildlife at a time where they are seeing unprecedented pressure from climate change, recreation use and continued habitat fragmentation.

However, there are also a number of aspects of the plan that require improvement. Foremost among them is the paltry level of acreage of recommended wilderness in the plan. In 2007, under the Bush Administration, USFS recommended 125,000 acres as wilderness. Just 14 years later, in Alternative B, or the preferred alternative, USFS is proposing to recommend just 34,000 acres in the over three million acre GMUG National Forest as wilderness. It is clear that as time goes on, lands that are untrammelled by humans become all the more valuable and irreplaceable and I urge USFS to recommend a vastly increased and more suitable acreage figure for recommended wilderness.

Similarly, the massive increase of timber that you deem suitable for logging is concerning. Alternative B, the clear preferred alternative, nearly doubles the acreage of timber suitable for harvest from 468,000 acres to 948,200 acres. Designating nearly one third of the forest for timber harvest while deeming just one tenth of the forest suitable for wilderness protection isn't aligned with Colorado's values. We must know the potential impacts of logging at such a scale, or any scale for that matter, on the climate, insect infestation, overall forest health, and the watersheds we depend on. It makes no sense to cut down live trees who sequester carbon at a time when we need to lower carbon in our atmosphere drastically. Also, the science does NOT support the Firewise prescriptions in the name of wildfire mitigation--protected (read not logged! or thinned) forests are less likely to burn and if they do, are more resilient and more likely to recover.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to provide my comment on the draft plan and look forward to continuing to engage in the planning process.