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First name: Jim

Last name: Matusoff

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Re: Support for the Conservation and Alternative D Plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) Forest draft plan.

Dear Forest Service Planner,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit comments on the Draft Plan of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest Plan revision. We in the North Fork Valley greatly value our GMUG National Forest which supplies us with precious drinking water, irrigation water, solitude to enjoy and in which to recreate as well as the income brought to the North Fork Valley through hunting and tourism. After reviewing the GMUG Plan, I realized how much time and work was involved. Thank you for that.

My wife and I moved to Paonia about 6 years ago. We value our North Fork Valley community. I have often volunteered on work days with the Paonia Forest Service, Western Slope Conservation Center, BLM and CPW. I helped the Forest Service with projects such as trail work on the Dark Canyon, Munsey Creek, Bell Creek and Lost Lake. I also helped with pine sapling restoration near Overland Reservoir where there had once been logging. I helped with grouse protection near the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, CPW. In addition, I helped with fence removal from abandoned orchards near Paonia to aid with migration of deer and elk.

In working with these organizations I increased my sense of how important and unique the GMUG forest is to so many. I observed first hand the hard work these folks do daily, whether in the field or office. They all educated me about our GMUG from trail work to building zeedyk structures. They demonstrated to me their dedication towards the GMUG.

I hope we can arrive at a GMUG Plan that benefits our forests and water sheds. That's why I support the recommended wilderness designations included in alternative D, as well as support the inclusion of all recommended wilderness areas presented in the Community Conversation Proposal and Gunnison Public Lands Initiative.

We should all be seriously interested in the outcome of the GMUG Plan. I have hiked on many of it's trails. When I come across heavy equipment and materials used for gas and oil on Forest Rd. 265, my heart sinks. This also happens when I head up to Overland Reservoir and witness extensive logging near the site where we just replaced pine saplings this summer. I would hope to see areas such as Deep Creek and Ruby Fork of the Anthrocite Creek included in the protection of the GMUG Plan. It would also be nice to see Anthrocite Creek designated as wild and scenic river in the GMUG Plan. I hike in this area often and wonder why it has not been considered as a wild and scenic river as it so deserves.

My wife and I chose to live in the North Fork Valley, being surrounded by the GMUG forest with the beauty and serenity the forest offers. While living here, we rely on the quality of our water sheds and would not like to see them negatively impacted.

I recognize that with the support of USFS's management of the GMUG Plan we can keep our forests, water sheds, wildlife and wilderness healthy.

Thank you for your time and work on updating the forest plan for the GMUG.

