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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison Forest (the "Forest") Plan Revision #51806 (the "Plan").

Our family is privileged to have a home next to part of the Forest. We visit the Forest regularly in all seasons of the year. We believe the health, safety, and preservation of the Forest are essential for all of us, and for future generations. Consequently, we strongly support Alternative D in the Plan, and strongly believe that Alternatives A, B, and C are unacceptable because those alternatives provide insufficient protection for the Forest.

In this regard, we are members of High Country Conservation Advocates ("HCCA"), and have had the opportunity to carefully review the comments on the Plan prepared by HCCA. We believe those comments to be extremely well taken and respectfully urge you to reflect them in the Plan.

In particular:

*Wilderness Areas need to be significantly expanded. In contrast to prior administrations, the Biden Administration has made explicit promises to the public to address climate change and protect the natural environment. A stated purpose of the CORE Act is also to provide for increased designations of wilderness and conservation areas. It is indefensible, in our view, for the Plan to protect less wilderness acreage than the wilderness areas recommended for protection in the 2007 plan for the Forest developed by the Bush administration. Therefore, Alternative D is the only acceptable option in the Plan as drafted, and we would urge you to strongly consider the recommendation of even larger wilderness areas than the approximately 261,000 acres recommended in Alternative D.

*We understand that Gunnison, San Miguel, and Ouray counties have all supported the Special Management Areas ("SMA") recommendations contained in Alternative D. We also support the SMA recommendations contained in Alternative D and urge that each SMA be removed from the area suitable for timber production.

*It is crystal clear that wildlife habitat is under extreme pressure, and that species extinctions are escalating. Therefore, please retain and strengthen all existing Wildlife Management Areas in the Forest, including by maintaining habitat blocks of at least 500 acres in size for all Wildlife Management Areas. In places where Alternative D's wilderness and SMA recommendations overlap with the Wildlife Management Area-base identified in Alternative B, we support the stronger management prescriptions that Alternative D's wilderness and SMA's provide.

*Please reconsider the omission of Bighorn Sheep, the American Marten, Northern Goshawk, Boreal Owl, Lewis' Woodpecker, Flammulated Owl and Western Bumblebee from the list of species designated as Species of Conservation Concern ("SCC"). Each of these species are imperiled, and should be designated as SCC.

*To protect species and to preserve natural areas in the Forest for those who come after us, primitive settings, and semi-primitive, non-motorized settings in the Forest should be expanded and enforced.

*We strongly oppose any increase in suitable timber in the Plan.

*Last but not least, please prioritize the protection of watersheds and water resources in the Plan. The Plan must protect watersheds and we urge you to examine watersheds beyond the single priority watershed identified in the Plan for inclusion as priority watersheds.

In our view, the Forest must be managed first and foremost for wildlife and watershed protection and long-term sustainability, not short-term exploitation of the Forest's resources. Consequently, we respectfully request that you select Alternative D in the Plan as the preferred alternative and that you also reflect the other comments to the Plan submitted by HCCA.

Thank you for your review and consideration of our comment.