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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I live and recreate in the Gunnison Valley and will therefore comment more in-depth about the specific areas of concern in my area.

I have previously submitted comments regarding the GMUG Forest Plan Revision and would like to update my voiced concerns by writing this letter. After doing more research, I feel strongly in support of upholding the current Plan A that is in effect or for adopting the new Plan C. I would really like to see some crossover for several of the plans.

Notably, I am in strong favor of reducing the size of timber base areas. Each plan increases the size of timber production when these lands are much more inherently valuable as wildlife preservation and viewshed areas. They are also areas with heavy recreational use and should remain that way.

There are several watersheds that need to be addressed, protected from development, and recognized as recreational areas. These areas must remain in tact as-is and with all types of users allowed to enjoy them:

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

I would also like to voice my concerns regarding the closing of large areas that are currently available for multi-use recreation and limiting those areas so that over-snow vehicles would not be allowed to use them. This will have unintended negative effects by way of forcing users to crowd into areas that remain available for snowmobile use. It will cause these areas to become far too busy for all users, which will ultimately be unpleasant for non-motorized and motorized users alike. It will create unsafe conditions in the backcountry during high avalanche conditions. I would like to strongly advocate that the GMUG implement a plan that allows for users to spread out in a way that is safe and accommodating for all types of recreation. Plans B & D outline far too many limitations of motorized recreationists in the winter and I would like to strongly oppose these proposals.

Poverty Gulch and Baxter Gulch are areas that I often access for backcountry skiing by way of a snowmobile. Plan D's boundary of the primitive designation will eliminate OSV access and will cause users to take the northern road route that is prone to avalanches. The proposed boundary closes a safe access point and forces snowmobilers to use an avalanche-prone slope. I would like to advocate for moving the northern edge of the Poverty Gulch Wilderness to the northeast ridge in order to maintain safe access for the backcountry snowmobiling and skiing that I and many others enjoy throughout the winter. If it can't be moved, I would like to advocate for the southern border to be moved to meet the Poverty Gulch Wilderness Boundary so that

snowmobiling on the road does not create a dangerous situation for users. Moving the southern edge further south would make sure that safe motorized access is maintained to the Baxter Gulch area. Plan D is very concerning regarding this issue and I would like to voice my strong opposition to adopting this plan as-is.

Next, I would like to make comments regarding Brush Creek. The current use of Brush Creek as described in Plan A is designated as semi-primitive non-motorized access, but many people, including myself, travel up the main Brush Creek drainage to West Creek drainage using a snowmobile. There is information published by the Forest Service that shows the roads are open to winter motorized use. The current plan and all future proposed plans must make it clear that the West Brush Creek Road is open to OSV use. I am in strong favor of ensuring OSV access to the West Brush Creek drainage is maintained and provides backcountry skiing opportunities that would be very difficult to access without snowmobiles.

I would also like to voice my strong favor of having winter motorized access to Pearl Pass as there are many unique and beautiful opportunities to recreate in that area. The current Plan A shows that motorized access on Pearl Pass Road and Brush Creek Drainage is closed, but these areas are easily accessible for a few weeks each year and provide incredible backcountry skiing. This area is motorized in the summer, and I would like to support the maintenance of access to this corridor via the motorized path. GMUG should also allow lower portions of East Brush Creek to be open to OSV use as it provides safe access to the Pearl Pass Road and Brush Creek Drainage..

I would also like to address Crystal Pass / Tilton Pass access that is currently available for snowmobile access to Aspen. While I have never personally done this ride, my husband is very fond of it and I would like to advocate for its access to remain available to OSV users. I hope to one day join him on the journey, and it is already designated as semi-primitive motorized. The access is maintained in Plan B & C, which is great. Plan D restricts the backcountry access to Aspen in the winter as well as skiing access to Star and Taylor Peaks.

The current plan A shows the Oh Be Joyful drainage designated as semi-primitive motorized and I would like to advocate that this area remains open to all winter recreational users, both snowmobilers and backcountry skiers. Plan D proposes the OBJ area as non-motorized, but this is one of my absolute favorite areas for enjoying snowmobile access for backcountry skiing. I have had so many amazing days skiing out the Slate River Drainage and especially with snowmobile access to the Oh Be Joyful area.

Let's talk about the economic impact: snowmobile recreation surely has a positive impact on our local economy. Snowmobile tours, recreationists, everyday users all greatly contribute to the purchase of gas, oil, food, lodging, shopping, etc. in our area.

Furthermore, snowmobiling provides a great way to enjoy nature and to connect with the beauty that surrounds us. There are so many incredible landscapes that can only be accessed in the winter via snowmobile. Plan D would limit way too many of those options and make it near impossible to visit them.

I strongly feel in opposition to Plan D's closures for snowmobile access. The Draft Plan cites that one of the goals of the GMUG National Forest is to "encourage visitors to recreate in a variety of settings throughout the national forests, not just in currently popular or concentrated areas." Closing so much of our winter motorized terrain will do exactly the opposite by crowding the only areas that are left OSV for recreation. The GMUG should continue to include the open areas that currently allow snowmobile and hybrid recreation.

Thank you for your consideration of all recreationists as we move forward to adopt a future plan that will ensure access and enjoyment of the Gunnison National Forest for myself, my friends, our visitors, etc.

Sincerely, - Lydia Stern