Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/9/2021 5:06:10 PM
First name: James
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: To the GMUG National Forest Office: I am writing to express my support for the views laid out in Share the Slate's letter to you regarding your draft forest plan. As a hybrid snowmobiler/backcountry skier, I value both the motorized and the human powered experience of our public lands. Share the Slate has done a great job going into detail so I will try to be brief here. I am strongly AGAINST option D of your draft plans. Option D further restricts motorized access in the valley which is already quite restricted by our existing wilderness areas. Implementing Option D will cause increased congestion and impact in areas that remain motorized. I think it is worth noting that ALL winter sports (both motorized and non-motorized) are growing; Option D unfairly targets motorized users and reduces their access to our public lands. I think it is also worth noting that no change to our forest's management may be neccessary, per research cited in the Share the Slate letter the vast majority of all users report a satisfactory experience in our public lands. The closures proposed in Option D in the Poverty Gulch area are particularly concerning as this area is a backcountry skiing gem that would be impractical and unsafe to access purely by foot given its location many miles from the end of the plowed road. In the case of an accident a snowmobile provides a significant safety net for the party involved as a fast means of egress during a self-rescue. Lastly, I would like to point out a subtler reality of snowmobiling in the Gunnison Valley; much of the motorized acreage in the surrounding public lands lies in the Brush Creek and Cement Creek drainages. While these drainages offer great dirt biking in the summer, they do not see much snowmobiling in the winter because of their leaner snowpack. The deep snow zone lies at the north end of the valley in the Kebler, Slate, and Gothic drainages. This reality is reflected in the Crested Butte Avalanche Center's split forecasting zones (please see their website for more detail on this matter). The deep snowpack zone is already quite restricted to motorized access by the West Elk, Raggeds, and Maroon Bells Wilderness areas. Further restrictions in the Poverty Gulch area are therefore felt even more keenly. Sincerely, Jamie Salter