Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/9/2021 5:49:14 PM
First name: Shayleen
Last name: Ottman
Organization:
Title:
Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Forest Plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest. This forest plan revision is a key moment to shape the future and long-term health of not only our forests, but also our state.

However, as written, the alternatives in this plan fall short. I ask that you reexamine them through the lens of what would do the most good to ensure adequate, long-term health of the forest, as opposed to the current short-sighted nature of continued exploitation of these places.

As a result of climate change, increased recreation, and a multitude of other factors, this national forest is facing tremendous pressure. It is imperative that we protect places like the entirety of Kelso Mesa as recommended Wilderness, and other areas across the forest as Wildlife Management Areas. Not only do these designations capture the state of the landscapes now, they ensure they are managed for their best use in the future and maintain access.

In addition to robust land designations, it is important to examine the water resources on the forest and protect them for the surrounding communities. Waterways like Kannah Creek are critical to local municipal water supplies, as well as to agriculture, recreation, and wildlife. Designating lands as Watershed Protections Areas and individual waterway stream miles as Wild and Scenic are two important steps in ensuring these resources are adequately conserved.

Alternative D may do the best of capturing the breadth of protections needed and deserved on the Forest, but it falls short in many regards. The lack of designations for areas like Recommended Wilderness, Wildlife Management Areas, and Special Management Areas, along with increasing suitable timber acreage by 50% are examples of where Alternative D could be greatly improved.

Your inclusion of strong protections for the landscapes listed above, and all other areas deserving of protection, is how the Forest Service can best fulfill its mission, support Western Colorado, and leave a positive legacy for future generations. It is imperative that you make these commitments now to the landscapes that we all deeply treasure, and that make Colorado so unique.