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First name: Jan
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Organization: Grand Mesa Back Country Horsemen
Title: Past President and Board Member
Comments: November 17, 2021

Samantha Staley, Forest Planner
GMUG National Forests

Re: Comments on the Draft GMUG Forest Plan from Jan Potterveld, Grand Mesa Back Country Horsemen.

Thank You and all of your team for the tremendous effort you have put into this Plan over the past five years. It is amazing how you have been able to balance all the wishes and needs of the various interest groups with the absolute needs for preservation and use of the forest. We are basically satisfied with Alternative B in the draft with the exception of the treatment of Wilderness. There is such a large difference between Alternatives B and D that I feel some compromise should be reached. I can only speak for the areas I know something about and that would be the northwest corner of the Uncompahgre and Kelso Mesa. Others may have an informed interest in some of the other areas in Alternative D.

Uncompahgre - Northwest Corner

This area largely below route 2601 and bordered by the edge of the Forest is identified as Semi-Primitive, Non-Motorized in Alt B and as Primitive in Alternative D from an ROS perspective.. It is largely forested and without roads or designated trails. This area is also designated as Roadless by the State of Colorado. It would seem to meet almost all of the requirements for Wilderness Treatment, including wildlife, naturalness, scenic beauty, isolation. The only thing missing is local government positive endorsement and this is always a variable. I would highly recommend this area as Wilderness for Congressional designation and as a Study Area for the current timeframe, including a Primitive ROS identification.

Kelso Mesa

This area east of Divide Road in the Uncompahgre and clearly identified on the planning maps meets most of the same criteria described above but with a few non-motorized summer trails to be considered. I am not familiar with the winter use but I see that it is designated as Semi-Primitive Motorized for the winter. This seems very strange to me. Why would we want motorized in an area that should be considered for Wilderness treatment? At a minimum this area should be considered as Primitive for both Summer and Winter ROS. Access is very limited due to the private land terminating most of the existing trails. More thought needs to be given to this area including a Congressional Wilderness designation. Please designate Kelso Mesa as a Wilderness Study Area and manage it accordingly.

Jan P. Potterveld