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Organization: CPR and ?

Title:

Comments: Thank you for your diligence in developing the alternative plans for the GMUG National Forests and especially thank you for the opportunities to comment on the plans. The national forests surrounding my home in the North Fork Valley near Paonia are treasured for recreation as well as economic drivers for the area for recreation, hunting, fishing, wildlife watching and birdwatching.

I moved to the North Fork Valley in 2007 because I could hunt elk within 30-45 minutes of my home and still have an organic garden. I regularly hunt, hike, cross-country ski, mushroom hunt, and bird and wildlife watching in the GMUG. Specifically, the Stephen's Gulch area is an area I regularly hike, hunt and mushroom hunt in. I cross-country ski on the Grand Mesa. I hike on Kebler Pass. I've elk hunted and hiked up Stephen's Gulch since 2008 when I moved to the North Fork Valley (NFV). I've skied the County Line and Skyway trails on the Mesa since 2008-2009 and hiked on Kebler Pass since 2010. These public lands are so important to my lifestyle and mental health that I've wondered if I would move from the valley I love if these areas were destroyed by fire or inaccessible due to a management decision.

I'm a member of Grand Mesa Nordic Council, Western Slope Conservation Center and Citizens for a Healthy Community. I'm a member of these organizations because of the service and advocacy for health and access to public lands these organizations support.

In general, I support Alternative D with some modifications and additions of protections and standards.

As a hunter, wildlife watcher and bird watcher, I support the Wildlife Management Area concept in Alternative D. However, as big horn sheep hunter, I would like to see more protections for the disease-vulnerable big horns, Colorado's state mammal. Grazing by domestic sheep can transmit deadly diseases and seriously impact populations.

I've hiked Terror Trail in June and seen nursery herds of elk. This seems to be a preferred area for the cow elk at that time of year. I recommend that this be a special management area to protect the nursery herds. Plus, if the nursery herds are protected, it will help other species thrive.

I fish Overland Reservoir.

Cross-country skiing is important to my mental health and fitness in the winter. I ski every week to get out in the woods. When I'm in the forest, my heart literally feels lighter. I treasure the peace and quiet and beauty of the winter woods. I don't want to hear snowmobiles when I'm skiing at County Line and Skyway. Please include all of the Skyway and County Line trails in the non-motorized areas.

The CORE Act (Colorado Outdoor and Recreation Act) represents 10 years of collaboration with communities, a broad spectrum of stakeholders and interest groups. Please respect the efforts put forth by the public. Also, please include the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative as a special management area, another citizen effort.

Covid-19 and the incumbent supply-chain problems has made me appreciate even more the farmers, orchardists and ranchers of the North Fork Valley. Organic food is important to me for health reasons. I grow a variety of vegetables in my home garden. Also, I am a member of 2 CSA's (community supported agriculture) and can buy pasture-raised beef, chicken, pork, organic vegetables and fruit close to my home in Paonia. This reduces my reliance on corporate food supply chains. These producers rely on a clean water supply from the Grand Mesa and West Elk Mountains. Thank for designating Riparian Management Zones. These zones would be more impactful if there were more standards and protections. I would like to see Deep Creek and Anthracite Creek's Ruby Fork included in the riparian Management Zones, however.

I am deeply concerned about climate change. My home area is warming faster than the rest of the country. My irrigation water often comes on late in April or May and stops by the middle of July. The management plan must include more rapid monitoring of climate refugia and more protection of them.