

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/23/2021 3:56:19 PM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: GMUG National Forest

Attn: Jonathan Tucker/GMUG Forest comments

Dear Mr. Tucker,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the GMUG National Forest Draft Plan. I want to thank the USFS for finding Cow Creek, Wildhorse, Wetterhorn and Difficulty Creeks eligible as "wild".

I moved to Ouray in 2016 from New England, and though it is an incredibly beautiful and scenic area of the country, I could hardly believe what a gem you have here in the GMUG.. I spend an inordinate amount of time hiking in and around the GMUG including Bear Creek, Baldy Mountain, as well, I have hiked Mount Abram, Hayden and the Sneffels Wilderness areas. I would like to see these areas protected in many ways, mostly in ways for the public to enjoy as observers of nature. I am very concerned in our area, especially Ouray, about the surging increase in the use of motorized vehicles in the form of ORV (Off Road Vehicles). You cannot spend a Summer or Fall day in Ouray and not hear them buzzing up and down County Road 361. Unfortunately in the past few years, we have had an explosion of the use of these vehicles (very few of which abide by the speed limit). My greatest interest in the forest plan is to make some of the areas Recommended Wilderness and Special Management Areas and give priority to generations to come to enjoy the stunning beauty of the GMUG.

I would like to specifically address the Hayden Mountain, Mount Abram, Baldy and Bear Creek areas. All of these areas have Wildlife, Botanical Scenic and Recreation Values. Therefore, I encourage the GMUG Land Management Plan to prohibit road construction, keep the trails closed to motorized and mechanized uses year round and be withdrawn from mineral entry.

It is concerning to me that the Bear Creek was found eligible in the GMUG's 2005 Wild and Scenic Comprehensive Assessment, but is not in the current draft forest plan. The Bear Creek National Recreation Trail that follows the creek has gained popularity and is notable for its beauty of the cascading waters and waterfalls of Bear Creek. Bear Creek should be recognized as having a Recreation ORV.

As the USFS creates a plan to guide future management practices please consider that we need stronger protections for this incredible resource we have and I would appreciate if you would review Guidelines FW-GDL-REC-12, FW-GDL-REC-13, and FW-GDL-REC-14 and make them Standards instead of just guidelines. Thank you for your efforts and resources that are being put into developing this plan and the opportunity for the public to share their experiences and concerns.