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First name: Robyn

Last name: Cascade

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dearest Bear Creek,

How I adore your deep gorge, sparkling cascades, and the towering volcanic ash pinnacles of your basin. You begin at 12,500 feet adjacent to the Uncompahgre Wilderness. You nourish a plethora of wildflowers in alpine basins - vermilion paintbrush, violet larkspur, periwinkle lupine and all those yellow composites I can never identify (except the Old Man of the Mountain that reminds me of hiking with dear Justine.) In the cobbled narrow creek adjacent to my favorite campsite, you foster the most extraordinary patch of blue columbine where Laurie, who died too young, sings her heart's delight. Your waterfall at the confluence of the South Fork thrills my eyes and ears surrounded by lush forbs and a conifer canopy through which rays dance on your waters in a magnificent light show. Along the South Fork where few venture, your mineralized waters remind me of the Little Colorado River or Havasu - aqua blue wonder with salt encrusted boulders. I have sat in awe at the gifts you bestow and question why you are not yet designated Wild & Scenic and your adjacent lands protected as Wilderness.

Some would say you are most magnificent within your deep dark gorge where you plummet and spray, crash and erode. I love this place too, for its mystery and power, yet I also cherish the slower moving segments where water bubbles under melting spring ice, gurgling like children at play, before early summer sun turns you entirely liquid. Here too is where I watched the golden black bear feed on cow parsnip, gobbling juicy leaves and stems to nourish the next generation. I wonder in amazement at your secret trickles reflecting sunlight in silver hues that emerge miraculously from pecan-colored stone and give rise to hidden moss-covered crevices of vibrant green against otherwise dry rock. On ridges above your tumbling tango, live bighorn sheep, elk, deer, weasels and many unseen species. Golden eagles and red-tail hawks soar over you. No doubt your drainage harbors a plethora of raptor nests clinging to cliff ledges harkening future flight.

There is something ancient and wise about you. Perhaps it is the rock worn deep by your passage over millennia or the ripple marks from Precambrian shallow seas fossilized in twice-metamorphosed mud a mere 1.7 billion years ago! Maybe it's the sense I have every time I enter your drainage that Indigenous people traveled alongside your current through the ages, hunted, gathered, prayed in ceremony. You are ever changing and yet enduring. Speaking of old, I treasure the gnarly, tenacious branches of limber pine that curve and twist above your banks on their way skyward, how their trunks lean and roots cling to slate slopes. One of my favorite snags - no longer bearing bark nor needles - appears silhouetted against cobalt sky just as I ascend out of the trees and catch my first glimpse of your gorge cut by a life time of your flow.

What glory to behold you in autumn flanked by *Populus tremuloides* afire in magnificent gold, chartreuse and saffron, waving and chattering in the breeze. These trees are the same boles that slip and slide and tumble - tops over trunks - under the force of avalanches eventually to lay piled like pick up sticks in your path creating obstacles or bridges depending upon perspective.

Oh Bear Creek, how could one not find something divine amidst your rumble, your gurgle, your peaceful flow? No matter how many times I visit, I long to return and will work tirelessly to protect you as Wild & Scenic for present and future generations. Wildly grateful to you!!!

Love,  
Robyn