

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/25/2021 7:38:30 PM

First name: Robert

Last name: Dickinson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hello,

I am a 13 year resident of Gunnison County, backcountry ski enthusiast, and owner of a local business that employs 25-30 local residents. I feel as though I get a good look into the views of the working person here in our valley. Furthermore, I personally am an enthusiast of both purely human powered recreational interests as well as those aided by motors. I understand and advocate for wild places where folks can go and escape from the sight and sound of motorized use.

That said, I am writing in strong opposition of Alternative D in the GMUG Draft Forest Plan.

Access to backcountry areas here, particularly as it concerns backcountry skiing and snowboarding, is unique when compared to that of other communities in Colorado and the Mountain West. Winter road closures offer a unique backcountry skiing experience where users can push deeper into our local backcountry with the aid of snow machines and disperse crowds for an improved backcountry experience that takes place farther from the automobile accessed trailheads. In other areas in the state and country that are popular among backcountry skiers, we are seeing a density of use within nonmotorized reach that is both much less enjoyable and less safe due to overcrowding. Snowmobile access has allowed us to avoid this problem in our backcountry skiing community.

Furthermore, we have a very unique situation in regards to snowpack here. The areas in reach of nonmotorized use are in areas close to town that are less favored in terms of snowfall and thus have a shallower, more avalanche-prone snowpack, whereas areas further away from winter trailheads that require the aid of snowmobiles to access are more orographically fortunate and collect a deeper, more stable snowpack that is less avalanche prone.

Lastly, a factor that may seem frivolous but is a factor nonetheless is that our valley is in a time of change where more and more folks are visiting and moving here. Closing down access or making access more difficult denies us our respite from the crowds in our towns and in areas closer to towns. Please think of Teton Pass near Jackson, WY, and various winter trailheads near Salt Lake City and Lake Tahoe, for examples of areas that are overcrowded inside the reach of the many users on foot. Motor assisted access is a great tool that we here in the Gunnison Valley use to avoid these problems and one that would likely help our backcountry disperse crowds even as we see more and more users in the years to come.

Thanks for reading and considering my comments.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rob Dickinson