

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/26/2021 1:20:04 AM

First name: Sue

Last name: Navy

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Planning team,

As this may be the last opportunity I have to comment on your draft Forest Plan, let me once again cover the issues that matter most to me.

First, Wilderness is paramount to not only my way of thinking, but to the health and integrity of our public lands, wildlife and waters. We need Wilderness to encompass the greatest amount of acreage possible, as Wilderness is the most protective designation we have. None of your alternatives fulfill my Wilderness aspirations. I am hopeful that in your final plan, you will greatly increase the acreage, fully including the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (endorsed by numerous Gunnison County stakeholders and elected officials), and the Community Conservation Proposal prescriptions. Our wildlife habitats and corridors are shrinking daily, with extractive industry taking a huge toll on our natural environment. Wildlife is threatened by human activity and climate change, and Wilderness is the best, and possibly the only way to save numerous species from extinction in a warming world. Climate refugia need to be identified, and protected, very quickly. We cannot afford to experiment with impacts and so-called mitigation any longer. Nor can we allow methane venting to continue unabated, as our air quality is of utmost importance. It's time for a shift in focus from extraction to sustainability and conservation.

Special Management Areas and Wildlife Management Areas need to be well thought-out, so as to protect the land and wildlife to the highest degree possible. I believe that the SMA's as proposed in GPLI, and in Alternative D, will be effective and respected, due to the intensive collaboration that went into creating them. WMA's are also an important management designation, and I'm glad to see their inclusion in the plan, but my preference is Wilderness, wherever the two may coincide. I am also encouraged to see Snodgrass Mountain recommended as General Forest. This will effectively put an end to any community divisiveness regarding its future. However, managing it as a WMA would provide important connectivity, as we know it is suitable habitat for lynx and other species.

Next is timber. Forests on the GMUG are largely away from population centers, and don't pose a universal fire hazard to people. They do provide habitat, soil retention, and the all-important carbon sequestration. In this day and age, we can't afford to decimate our forests in the interest of logging companies. This is a downward spiral, not a way to a sustainable planet. I request that you severely cut the number of "suitable" acres for timber from the final plan.

Always in my thoughts is the Gunnison sage-grouse, a threatened bird with almost nowhere left to go. By allowing the possibility of additional trails in sage-grouse habitat (i.e. Flat Top Mountain), you could be further decreasing their chances of survival in the coming years. I have served on the Gunnison Sage-Grouse Strategic Committee for many years, and the population numbers resulting from our efforts have not been particularly encouraging. I have been involved with on-the-ground efforts to restore streambank and wet meadow habitat on Flat Top, and although these have shown promising vegetative results, so much of our work could be counteracted, even rendered useless, if trails were to traverse this essential habitat stronghold. Physical disturbance and cheatgrass invasion are two factors to consider. I urge you to remove the possibility of new trails in this area, in the hopes of finding healthy Gunnison sage-grouse populations on Flat Top when the next Forest Plan is written, many years hence. A WMA designation would be wise for this area.

The all-important water. As the Forest Plan will include Wild & Scenic River eligibility, let me state that the following stream stretches are important to aquatic health and forest habitat in the area where I live: Slate River, Daisy Creek, East River, Taylor River, Brush Creek, West Brush Creek, Cement Creek. With the ever-increasing impacts of recreational visitation in its many forms, we need to elevate the status of our waters in order to heighten the protections we provide them. Water quality is important for aquatic species as well as for people who recreate. Wild & Scenic is an important tool in the protection of our streams and our communities. I see no downside to a liberal application of this designation.

I do hope that travel management planning will begin soon after this Forest Plan is adopted. Although multiple-

use is a requisite, motorized uses often make other uses less viable or enjoyable on trails, and should be limited. E-bikes should be restricted to motorized trails, as should any newly-invented motorized devices. With more Wilderness included, conflicting use areas will be lessened, so again, I encourage you to substantially increase the Wilderness acreage in your ROD.

Our ecosystems are in crisis mode at present, with no end to climate change in sight. Recreational impacts are growing, even as we try to mitigate them. We can't afford to miss an opportunity to protect our natural resources to the best of our abilities through this Forest Plan, as we may not have a viable opportunity again. While Alternative D is better than the other options, I urge you to further increase protections for our public lands, waters and wildlife-I know you'll be glad you did.

Thank you for incorporating my recommendations, as I hope you will. In addition, I support the comments of High Country Conservation Advocates.

Sincerely,

Sue Navy