

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/26/2021 4:44:21 AM

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Title:

Comments: November 25, 2021

Grand Mesa, Uncompaghre and Gunnison National Forests

Attn:Jonathan Tucker/GMUG Forest comments

2250 South Main Street

Delta, CO 81416

Re: GMUG Draft Revised Land Management Plan

Dear Forest Planning Team:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan of the Grand Mesa, Uncompaghre, and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests Plan Revision. I appreciate the amount of effort the Planning Team has dedicated to the Plan revision and am grateful for this chance to submit our comments.

I live in Ouray and serve on the boards of two citizen grassroots organizations that advocate for human-powered recreation: Ouray Climbers Alliance and Ouray Backcountry Alliance, but I am commenting here as a private citizen. I also volunteer for the Ouray Mountain Rescue Team. I have lived in Ouray for 10 years, and I love hiking, climbing rock and ice, backcountry and cross-country skiing, nature watching and scrambling rugged peaks around Uncompaghre National Forest. I love the abundance of recreational opportunities surrounding my home and the sense of relative solitude I get to enjoy in San Juan Mountains, and wish for my experiences in these areas to continue and to be preserved for future generations.

I urge the Forest Planning Team to adopt Alternative D with modifications allowing for stacked loops around roadways and Recreation Emphasis Corridors, I also support the inclusion of all recommended Wilderness and Special Management areas presented in the Community Conservation Proposal, specifically:

- 1.Bear Creek and Baldy Mountain as Recommended Wilderness (adding to existing Uncompaghre Wilderness);
- 2.Hayden Mountain and Mountain Abram as Special Management Areas;
- 3.Bear Creek as Wild and Scenic Eligible Rivers.

I am very concerned about substantial increase in Suitable Timber across the GMUG and request to remove areas on slopes greater than 40 percent from suitable timber base to protect watershed and soil.

Clean water, air and soil are extremely important to me, and I urge the Planning Team to adopt all the recommendations submitted by the US Environmental Protection Agency. I also support their recommendation to include standards or guidelines to minimize water quality impacts from future mining projects that may disturb mining waste and workings.

Again, I am grateful for your work on updating the forest plan for the GMUG National Forests. The revision is well overdue, and it is based on the facts and needs that are at least 20 years old. I would like to see the Plan to reflect concerns of today and tomorrow, and while I understand the constraints of the federal agency to be bold, I also feel that the role of government is to be the catalyst of changes. Specific forward-looking policies I would like to see reflected in the plan are:

- 1.Stronger stance to combat climate change, and promote renewable energy and carbon sequestration

industries.

2.Mine reclamation: as described in the Draft EIS, there are approximately 600 abandoned mine sites that have been inventoried and evaluated in the GMUG, 800 mine-related features such as waste rock dumps and mill tailings piles that could negatively affect environmental resources, and 49 to 60 miles of streams the GMUG boundaries that do not meet water quality standards due to metal concentrations likely related to historic mining activities. This is an opportunity for well-paying sustainable jobs in mine reclamation that would employ the same workforce that is currently employed by the mining industry.

3.Robust consultation with Tribal leaders.

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment and I wish that the Forest Planning Team prioritizes the protection of our incredible landscapes, wildlife, clean air and water in the revised plan.

Sincerely,  
Dolgio Nergui