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Comments: As a hiker I've enjoyed many National Forests throughout my life, as well as the last 3 years since relocating to the GMUG area. This GMUG plan will directly impact my life as I am a resident and homeowner in the North Fork Valley. I love hiking and exploring the NF lands near my home where I see activities related to grazing, oil and gas extraction, logging and recreation on a weekly basis during outings to these GMUG lands. As a business owner involved in on-farm irrigation, I benefit from GMUG actions and activities related to water capture and diversion for local agriculture.

I enthusiastically appreciate the opportunity to comment on the GMUG plan, especially given that these plans tend to last for many years as the last plan has. Two things about the National Forest are notable to me, first that they belong to all Americans and second that NF lifespans are longer than the scale of a human life - they existed before my parents lives' started and will continue to be part of the fabric of American life after the ends of my children's lives.

I appreciate that GMUG administrators have facilitated public commenting on the 4 alternative plans developed and presented. Although I imagine there were good reasons to package the diverse pieces into alternatives, I find it very difficult to parse out the differences between the plans. For me, this leaves me vulnerable to the opinions of others who have deeper understanding of the specific regions and issues.

One problem I have learned about relates to the importance of the higher elevations in condensing atmospheric moisture for municipal water supplies. Many towns are dependent on water from snowmelt in National Forest high country. These springs and watersheds located in National Forests should receive the agency's highest forms of protections. In so doing, wildlife and environmental interests are also served. In specific, the expansion of wilderness designation to the Lamborn-Landsend high country should be a high priority. Recent climate data, indicates that just west of this uplift is an area more severely impacted by warming. These 'condensers' and watersheds are likely to be even more important in the future, than they have been in the past. The plan, regardless of alternative chosen, should increase protections for these and other springs and watersheds that serve as municipal water supply. Expansion of the existing Coal Mtn Wilderness to include the slopes of Lamborn and Landsend would also be consistent with recommendations of 'priority landscapes' in the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) SO3362. Since this highland includes nearly 5,000 ft of elevation (7,000 to 12,000 ft) it is an area with a unique role serving as connections for wildlife migrations.

Another problem is the issue of development versus preservation. I believe, if economic evaluations did a more diligent job of identifying, defining and quantifying externalities, then the value of conservation would rise relative to the value of developing extractive activities. We see that some of the plans value a cultural history of grazing and the economic benefit of new extracting technologies without full, detailed accounting of the costs of these developments. Costs for restoration and reclaim are minimized and impacts on communities are omitted as are impacts on wildlife and biodiversity. If these externalities are added to the value proposition a more accurate cost benefit analysis can be presented to the public for consideration.

I believe, if the National Forest plan identified, supported and promoted education and presentation of conflicting views, the National Forest Service would be leading as an unbiased agent and investing in their role as agents advocating for the best forest management practices. It is not sufficient to just publish notices in the Federal Register, the agency needs to help publicize events and act as an impartial agent presenting information and helping to educate the public on issues involving competition between conservation and extraction interests. A good example of the role of NFS is similar to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO). NFS should be sufficiently open and transparent that it is trusted by the public as a non-partisan agency. Due to lack of information, lack of expertise, lack of experience or intentional misinformation sometimes the NFS is perceived as an agent of a particular partisan interest. The NFS needs to pro-actively promote their independence both by being a trusted focal point for public education and pro-actively deleting and avoiding actions and opinions supportive of any particular partisan interest. Avoid subsidizing any and all partisan or corporate interests, such as, oil and gas, logging, hunting or recreation. Act so that the NFS is trusted, non-partisan, and not captive to any

short-term for-profit interests.

As the GMUG administrators develop a plan with strengthened economic evaluations and continue to embrace and enhance their role as stewards of a long-lived national treasure, preservation interests would more often be chosen over exploitation with the result that the value of these GMUG lands would increase for future generations of Americans.