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First name: Megan

Last name: Randall

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service Representative,

I've been a resident of Paonia, CO for the last eight years. I moved to this area due to the unique quality of the surrounding public lands. Maintaining the wild character of the lands is essential to maintaining the quality of life for local residents. The GMUG is truly a spectacular and rare gem. Its large aspen groves, habitat for wildlife such as lynx and sage grouse, and world-class fish and big-game populations are certainly a unique resource worth protecting. Thank you for taking the time to review public comments and take them into consideration. I'm writing in support of the USFS adopting recommendations from the Community Conservation Proposal within the GMUG planning process.

I am concerned about the substantive increase in land available for timber sales within the plan. I know that the USFS analyses the climate impacts of their planning decisions, and I thank you for that. Please continue to pay close attention to the climate-related impacts of proposed timber sales. It should be noted that a large increase in timber production reduces the carbon trapping capacity of our forests. Proposed cuts could be favored in fire-prone areas that need a decrease in fuel-load. Furthermore, close attention should be paid to wildlife impacts and habitat fragmentation due to timber sales in these areas, such as the impacts on migration corridors or on lynx habitat.

I am concerned about the lack of research in the plan regarding effects on ecosystems. Emphasis should be placed on conserving rare and unique ecosystems, especially those used by at-risk and endangered species. The wilderness areas and special management area recommendations in alternative D could be utilized to preserve the unique biodiversity and critical wildlife habitats that are present in the GMUG. Designating the Anthracite Creek as a Wild and Scenic River would also serve to preserve cutthroat habitat. Please do not overlook the importance of preserving wilderness areas as a mechanism for preserving critical habitats and biodiversity.

Thank you for taking the time to review public comments and take them into consideration in your planning process. I hope that your organization will act in what is the best interests of preserving the wild characteristics of the GMUG that makes it such a special place to recreate in, a significant carbon sink, and a critical habitat for countless species.

Sincerely,

Megan Randall