

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/26/2021 11:59:01 PM

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Organization: Ouray Backcountry Alliance

Title: President

Comments: GMUG National Forest

Attn: Jonathan Tucker/GMUG Forest comments

2250 South Main Street

Delta, CO 81416

Dear Mr. Tucker:

The Ouray Backcountry Alliance appreciates the opportunity to submit our comments on the Grand Mesa Uncompahgre Gunnison Forest (GMUG) Management Plan draft, and also appreciates the extensive time that you have put into preparing the plan and meeting with stakeholders. We are a relatively new, grassroots organization representing outdoor recreational users in Ouray County - our members hike, bike, climb, trail run, backcountry ski and snowboard, cross-country ski, snowshoe, hunt, fish paddle all across the vast Ouray Ranger District of GMUG. While we do not have the ability to make more detailed comments, we would like to start by saying that we support the in-depth comments submitted by the Outdoor Alliance and Colorado Mountain Club. We do have some additional feedback we would like to submit that directly focuses on Ouray County.

We believe that Alternative D is the best option for Ouray County. This is particularly important that Option D is implemented on the North side of the Sneffels range for the Winter Opportunity Spectrum. Historically this area has been used primarily by cross country and backcountry skiers and snow shoers and motorized use has primarily been limited to existing roads. This area is adjacent to the Sneffels Wilderness Area and should be managed as Semi Primitive Non Motorized. Alternative C would be detrimental to the character of this quiet area. Alternative B is problematic in that the patch work of motorized and non-motorized use would be difficult for users to identify and even more difficult to enforce.

One of the issues we have with Alternative D is that we are concerned that a trail density of one linear mile per 1 square mile for both motorized and non-motorized trails may prove to be too limiting to allow for increased use of trails as the population in this area grows. Some areas of stacked loop trails and other high density trail systems along road corridors or other less pristine areas may be a needed tool to help accommodate increased demand. We believe that working with local partners to identify areas for higher density trail systems would be ideal.

We believe that the following Guidelines should be changed to Standards

MA-GDL-WLDN-11

MA-GDL-WLDN-13

FW-GDL-REC-12

FW-GDL-REC-13

FW-GDL-SPEC-15

We urge the planning team to consider changing the language in FW-GDL-REC-11 to banning fires in alpine ecosystems completely.

Additionally, we strongly support preservation of the following landscapes in Ouray County:

Bear Creek and Baldy as recommended wilderness (additions to the existing Uncompahgre Wilderness);

Hayden Mountain and Mount Abram as Special Interest Areas ;

Cow Creek and its tributaries, Bear Creek & Roubideau Creek as Wild & Scenic River eligible.

Regards,  
Trevor Peterson  
Ouray Backcountry Alliance  
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