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First name: Allison

Last name: Elliot

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to let you know that I support of the proposed administrative mineral withdrawal for the Thompson Divide. For over a decade, protection of the Thompson Divide has been a priority for our community, there is support from a diverse and bipartisan coalition of ranchers, hunters, elected officials, business owners, hikers, mountain bikers, skiers, snowmobilers and conservationists. The draft environmental assessment reflects the community-held values for the resources in the Thompson Divide.

Current recreation opportunities in the Thompson Divide contribute to the livelihoods and quality of life for surrounding communities. Many residents choose to live and work here because of the access to recreation in places like the Thompson Divide, where locals and visitors can find opportunities for hiking, hunting, fishing, climbing, mountain biking, skiing, snowmobiling and more. Not only do these opportunities in the Thompson Divide contribute to the overall quality of life for many residents, they also play an important role in the region's recreation economy.

Watersheds in the Thompson Divide provide clean water to local farmers and ranchers, many of whom depend on these public lands for summer grazing allotments. These working ranches contribute to the local economy, provide a source of food and help define the region's rural character.

The Thompson Divide is one of the most biologically significant and at-risk landscapes in the US, linking wildlands on the Western Slope to the Elk Mountains, the area is a known important migration corridor for lynx, moose, elk, deer, bear and mountain lions. It is important to our community to maintain ecological health on the landscape, as climate change and development continue to increase pressures on wildlife populations throughout the West.

The relatively small potential profits from mineral development are not worth the trade-off of damaging the existing recreation, agricultural and economic values that depend on existing ecological conditions in the Thompson Divide.

Our society and many other people on the planet are slowly coming to understand that clean air and clean water come from wild lands. Recreation on those wild lands are our birthright.

Please work quickly to finalize the proposed administrative withdrawal for Thompson Divide!