

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/4/2024 6:10:55 PM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to support the proposed administrative withdrawal for the Thompson Divide Area. I have lived in the Roaring Fork Valley since 1979 and have worked for local governments as a land planner and town/city manager. These local governments include Garfield County, Town of Carbondale, Town of Basalt, Town of New Castle, Town of Silt, City of Rifle and many other entities. In addition, I have been a private consultant for local governments and private entities in Colorado since 1995. I am very familiar with the Thompson Divide area having visited it for recreation purposes as well as visiting the area in my professional capacity.

The Thompson Divide withdrawal lands identified by the US Forest Service and BLM comprise approximately 225,000 acres of outstanding natural and cultural resources. The area has few roads, excellent wildlife habitat. It serves as an important high-quality watershed for agriculture, wildlife and people. This water resource is vital to maintain and sustain agricultural operations important to protect the open character of the Valley and regional economic diversity.

This area is essential to our recreation and tourist economy. It is a critical part of the open and rural character that is enormously important to our local population. Thompson Divide directly and indirectly contributes to thousands of local jobs necessary for our economy. Millions of dollars are generated by our visitors and local residents that are important to our local/regional communities and the Divide is a key component of that. Protection of this resource through the proposed administrative withdrawal is critical to our economies and quality of life. The open rural character of our region, our clean water, clean air, diverse wildlife and healthy communities are the life-blood of our residents and visitors. Thompson Divide in a protected status is a major part of these ideals.

There is strong support by our local governments for protection of the Thompson Divide and the administrative withdrawal process. This is evidenced by their letters and public testimony. Our communities recognize the contributions of this resource to their vitality and sustainability which is so necessary to their populations.

The quality-of-life benefits, economic contributions, wildlife values, agricultural benefits and preservation of our rural character dwarf any short-term financial return derived from resource extraction in Thompson Divide. The long-term damage and impact from resource extraction through construction of roads, drilling pads, habitat destruction, water resource injury and associated impacts will undermine the principles that our local residents cherish and which are necessary for our long-term sustenance.

In closing, I ask you to support and pursue the administrative mineral withdrawal for the Thompson Divide because it is the right thing to do, it preserves our community, is strongly supported by our local governments and our area population.