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Comments: The Forest Service and BLM needs to know that hunting, fishing, ranching, and recreation in the Thompson Divide area support nearly 300 jobs and \$30 million in annual economic output for local communities. These are sustainable uses and are much better than destructive practices of mining and fossil fuel extraction on our publicly owned lands.

Once lands are irretrievably damaged with toxic waste and other impacts from mining, it is very hard to restore them.

The Forest Service and BLM should close the Thompson Divide area to oil and gas leasing and mining for at least 20 years. The proposed Mineral Withdrawal would protect 225,000 acres of public lands from future oil and gas leasing, as well as mining.

There will be enormous benefits to:

- * air quality
- * wildlife habitat
- * watersheds
- * wilderness corridors and
- * mitigating our climate crisis