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First name: Barbara
Last name: Frase
Organization:
Title:
Comments: I support Alternative A regarding the Thompson Divide proposed withdrawal from mineral extraction. This withdrawal will prevent mining in areas of high quality. It includes Roadless Areas and is contiguous with both the Ragged and West Elk Wilderness. It contains the headwaters of the North Fork of the Gunnison River, migratory corridors and winter habitat for elk and deer, high quality stream reaches, habitat for lynx and other uncommon species. Large, undisturbed tracts of land are crucial to maintain high quality ecosystems.

Multiple use of public lands does not mean that all allowed uses are acceptable on all USFS and BLM lands. The Thompson Divide is used currently for grazing, hunting, fishing, skiing, biking, hiking and a multitude of other recreational uses. These uses provide significant economic benefits to the counties involved, bringing in millions of dollars and employing many people. The Thompson Divide contributes to the quality of life for residents, most of whom live where they do because of the surrounding glorious natural landscapes and the myriad opportunities these lands provide for recreation, contemplation, and employment. These values are worth preserving! The values are degraded with new roads, noise, lights, groundwater contamination and other effects of extractive mining.

The proposed withdrawal duration is 20 years, and at the end of that time, all the minerals, gas and oil will still be there. There seems no good reason to permit mining now or in the foreseeable future; the costs, monetary and intangible, far outweigh the benefits.