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First name: Dolgio

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Organization: Ouray Climbers Alliance

Title: Chair

Comments: USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region
Attn: Reviewing Officer
C/O Director of Strategic Planning
2nd floor
1617 Cole Blvd. Building 17
Lakewood, CO 80401
Submitted electronically via <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=49606>
Re: Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests Plan Revision #51806 objection
Dear Reviewing Officer:
I am writing to you on behalf of Ouray Climbers Alliance to file this objection to the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests (GMUG) Forest Plan, Draft Record of Decision (draft ROD), and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), noticed August 31, 2023. Chad Stewart, GMUG National Forests Supervisor is the Responsible Official. Our organization has submitted comments on the draft plan (November 25, 2021) as well as endorsed the Community Conservation Plan via Northern San Juan Chapter of Great Old Broads for Wilderness.
Objection 1: The categorization of Hayden Mountain as General Forest is inadequate to protect the wildlife, scenic and other natural values of the landscape and should be changed to Special Interest Area or Special Management Area. We previously endorsed the Community Conservation Plan's recommendation to designate Hayden Mountain as a Special Management Area. Given the significant wilderness characteristics within the CCP's proposed Hayden Mountain SIA, particularly its outstanding wildlife and scenic values, coupled with recreational, geologic and botanical values and cultural and historic resources, referenced in the in the CCP, the Hayden Mountain landscape deserves greater protection than afforded by the General Forest category in the preferred alternative. This current plan revision process constitutes a critical opportunity to elevate protection for Hayden Mountain with its expansive wildlife habitat and stunning scenery. Protective status would also ensure preservation of the scenic view shed along the Highway 550 corridor - a popular section of the San Juan Skyway Scenic and Historic Byway.
Suggested Remedies: Designate Hayden Mountain, with boundaries consistent with the CCP, as a Special Interest Area or Special Management Area in the final forest plan. Within three years of plan adoption, develop a management plan that protects the area's values. Or, at a minimum, designate Hayden Mountain as a WMA to protect its wildlife values.
Objection 2: Summer ROS for the entire CCP-proposed Hayden Mountain SIA should be Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized
We vehemently object to the Summer ROS of Semi-Primitive Motorized from Spirit Gulch to McIntyre Gulch in Ouray County East of US-550 within the proposed SIA boundary. This is a material change from the Alternative B of the Summer ROS of 2021, and may have precluded many user groups, citizens and governments from commenting on the draft plan. The motorized route up Commodore Gulch to the Barstow Mine and the jeep road to Greyhound Mine are currently designated for Administrative use by the Colorado Mine and the Forest Service. The jeep road between these two mines and adjacent to Spirit Gulch is abandoned and undergoing natural revegetation. It has been historically used for hiking by many users and public motorized use will put a pressure on the wildlife habitat and will diminish the hunting opportunities in the area.
Suggested Remedies: restore the Summer ROS map for the Hayden Mountain Area to the 2021 Summer ROS designation of Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized.
Thank you very much for your consideration of the above objections. We look forward to the final forest plan.
Sincerely, Dolgio Nergui
Chair, Ouray Climbers Alliance
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