



DRAFT Agenda
Delta Public Participation Meeting
Roadless Areas Review Task Force
November 2, 2005
6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Bill Heddles Recreation Center
530 Gunnison River Drive
Delta, CO 81416

- 6:00 p.m.** **Welcome/Charge of Task Force**
Russell George, Director, Colorado Department of Natural Resources
- 6:10 p.m.** **Overview of the Grand Mesa-Uncompahgre-Gunnison Inventoried Roadless Areas**
Charles Richmond, Forest Supervisor
- 6:55 p.m.** **Question and Answer Period**
- 7:15 p.m.** **Public Comment Period**
- 8:30 p.m.** **Adjourn**



**Roadless Areas Review Task Force
GMUG - Public Comment Meeting
November 2, 2005
Delta, Colorado
Meeting Summary**

FOREST SERVICE PRESENTATION

Charlie Richmond, Forest Supervisor for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests and Carmine Lockwood, Planning Officer (involved with the Forest Plan revision process), presented general information on the Forests, the Forest Plan revision process, importance of roadless areas and proposed management for roadless areas.

General Information Presented:

- GMUG is the largest National Forest unit in Colorado at over 3 million acres (150 miles east to west, 115 miles north to south)
- Grand mesa has been called the highest elevation mesa in the world
- There are six peaks of 14,000 feet and another 56 peaks higher than 13,000 feet
- Gunnison basin is unique with its high elevation sagebrush communities and extensive lodge pole habitats
- GMUG is the head water for the Upper Colorado River basin and annual water production is 2.8 million acre-feet
- GMUG is ranked 12th (out of 155 National Forests) for the number of Forest visitors – hiking, hunting, fishing, sightseeing, boating, wildflower excursions, camping, mountain climbing, hangliding, snowmobiling, motorized trail use, horseback riding, cross country skiing, and more
- GMUG has more water related special uses than any other National Forest in the US
- GMUG plays a critical role in insuring one of the last remaining large sawmills remains viable to address forest health and fuels reduction issues
- GMUG has one of the largest rangeland programs in the US and won at least five national awards for excellence in rangeland management – annual cattle production is about 225,000 animal unit months
- Three coal mines in the North Folk Valley produce nearly 60% of all coal production in Colorado
- Natural gas exploration increases with proposals to drill 20 new wells in the next couple of years

Roadless Areas:

- represent nearly one-third of the Forest (nearly 900,000 acres)
- Provide backcountry experience for a wide range of uses
- Provide important travel corridors for many species, between critical habitats
- Inventory of roadless areas does not determine use, Forest Plan determines use
- Roadless area designation does not restrict uses – a large majority of current roadless areas have motorized uses
- Forest Plan revisions will not close any roads

- Forest Plan uses a zone system for allocating desired conditions (management themes, from national guidelines/prescription)
- Forest Plan revision used Forest Service definitions and not the Clinton rule
- Forest Plan restricts 3% of roadless areas (97% is available for roads)
- There are 10 designated wilderness areas (550,000 acres, 19% of the Forest)
- 770,000 acres of leaseable minerals were made available in 1993, 95% have been leased or pending – Forest Plan revision cannot disturb these

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The room was filled to over capacity, 136 people signed up to speak (20 people spoke) on topics including: energy development, wildlife protection, preservation of roadless areas, access for motorized recreation users (ATV, snowmobile, etc), hunting, watershed impacts, contiguous habitat, value of roadless areas, the importance of multiple use, recreation opportunities for senior citizens and the disabled, and economics – recreation, energy and timber. Those who wished to speak were predominately local and regional residents.

Speakers were selected to provide a broad range of perspectives on various topics; a cross section of public interests. All comments will be weighed the same regardless of the type (written or oral public).

The comments are recorded in summary and reflect issues, concerns, major themes, specific location and specific actions. The following bulleted list of issues is in no priority order, grouped by theme. For a list of speakers' names and affiliations please see appendix A.

Energy

- Sunset Trail area – has recoverable coal resources, environmentalists and the coal company have worked together to be able to access the coal while protecting roadless areas
 - *A copy of their joint letter sent to Forest Service*
- Access to the Coal Resources
 - Coal industry benefits local and regional communities – GMUG is home to 19 coal mines that produce \$35 million in taxes, provide employment and support suppliers and service providers in the area
 - History of coal for 100 years
 - North Fork Valley provides the highest quality coal in the state (current mine is in the top ten US coal mines)
- Access to surface areas to assess coal resources and mining activities for future development – assessment requires temporary road building and temporary drilling sites...access requires additional lands for safety (methane drainage and subsidence)
 - *Will send further information on the scale of disturbance and the size of the deposits in roadless areas*
- Lease coal reserves
- Consider current coal leases and rights and unleased coal in proximity to existing mines
 - *Will send information on where coal reserves exist*
- Areas where there existing development (road and pipelines) or a high potential for energy extraction, need to be removed from roadless designation
- Natural gas extraction provides for local and regional economies
 - *Provide a copy of Gunnison Energy Map for trails and road distinctions*

- Consider investments made in development of energy resources based on the current forest plan
- Access to energy resources
- National security

Recreation

- Local recreation access/needs
- Access to outdoor activities for seniors and disabled – motorized, four wheel
- Concern about loss of snowmobiling access
- Growing population creates pressure for more recreational opportunities on smaller parcels of public lands
 - *Provide information on what roadless areas would remain roadless and those areas opened up for snowmobiles*

Wilderness and Environmental Protection

- Protect the biological diversity in rare natural areas – mid-elevation areas (6000-10,000 feet)
- Consider leaving pristine areas pristine (cannot return an area to pristine) - native plant and bird species rely on the areas un-impacted by humans
- Protect wildlife
- Wildlife needs unfragmented areas
- Prioritize wildlife
- Restore and preserve natural character of the Forest
- Protect old growth and rare vegetation that is absent in the rest of the forest
- Difference between roadless and wilderness – wilderness is at higher elevations
- Protect old aspen stands (eastern half of Grande Mesa)
- Protect ponderosa pine forests (Kelso Mesa)
- Preserve existing pristine areas – preserve the wilderness that remains
- Road impacts on wildlife
- Impacts on drinking water from gas wells
- Protect municipal watershed areas
 - *Provide map that show watershed impacts*

Forest Management

- Economic benefit of the national forest
- Concern – roadless areas become prescriptive
- Roadless areas define “road” and “way” differently than Forest Service
- RARE II areas are not actually roadless
 - *Provide more information on this*
- Close ghost roads in Grand Mesa and Uncompahgre
- Forest Service has limited funding to close roads
- Not all trails used are shown on the maps

Multiple Use

- Support for multiple use
- Balance use and preservation

- Improve forest management by increasing multiple use and allowing timber harvest - limited funds to manage areas
- Concern for declining forest health
- Access to natural resources for a strong economy
- Future generations economic viability
- Promote a healthy mix of recreation (motorized) and wildlife protection – examples, Priest Mountain and High Tower, Battlement Mesa and Salt Creek
- Access for multiple uses – hunting, ranching, outfitters

Those unable to speak were provided an opportunity to submit written comments at the meeting or through a public comment form on the Roadless Areas Task Force web site, http://www.keystone.org/html/roadless_areas_task_force.html.

TASK FORCE

To learn about the Task Force and submit written comments go to www.dnr.state.co.us, click on Roadless Areas Task Force button.

APPENDIX A – Speakers

- Wayne Wolf, Delta County and Public Lands Partnership, resident of Cedaredge, CO
- Steve Wolcott, WSERC, resident of Paonia, CO
- Andrea Robinsong, biologist, resident of Hotchkiss, CO
- N.J. Fulmer, resident of White Water, CO
- Sandy Shea, HCCA, resident of Crested Butte, CO
- Bill Day, resident of Hotchkiss, CO
- Greg Schaffer, Arch Coal, Inc., resident of Gillette, WY
- Jim Cooper, Oxbow Mining, resident of Somerset, CO
- Jim Kiger, Oxbow Mining, resident of Somerset, CO
 - *Send TF details on the scale of “minimal disturbance” for assessment, building temporary roads, temporary drilling sites, and safety*
 - *Send TF information on the scale of the deposits in the roadless areas*
- Colin Stewart, Bowie Resources, resident of Paonia, CO
 - *Send TF more detail on where coal reserves exist (west of existing mines)*
- Diana Orf, Colorado Mining Association, resident of Denver, CO
- Jim Cheney, resident of Paonia, CO
- Royal Collard, Snowskippers (snowmobilers), resident of Grand Junction, CO
 - *Send TF information to provide more detail on areas where roadless designation should remain and where it should not and reasons*
- Brad Robinson, Gunnison Energy Corp., resident of Denver, CO
 - *Send TF information/map to provide more detail of the trails and road distinctions*
- Cindy Simms, resident of Grand Junction, CO
- Eirc Sorenson, Delta Timber, resident of Delta, CO
 - *Send TF information to provide more detail on roadless areas that need management for healthy forests*
- Kathy Hall, Colorado Oil and Gas Association, resident of Grand Junction, CO
- Kathy Welt, Gunnison Energy Corp., resident of Hotchkiss, CO
 - *Send TF more details about specific roadless areas that have roads and development*
- Matt Sura, WCC, resident of Grand Junction, CO
 - *Send TF more details about specific roadless areas that are sources for municipal water supply*
- Steve Chapel, Western Slope ATV Association, resident of Grand Junction, CO

Specific Locations Mentioned on Speaker Forms: Kelso Mesa, Grand Mesa, roads in Cimarron County, Minnesota Creek, Red Mountain Project, lack of pedestrian trails on Grand Mesa, Cochetopa Hills, winter roads on the Grand Mesa, Priest Mtn, High Tower Roadless areas, Salt Creek, Battlement Roadless Areas, Sunset Trail, Cochetopa Pass

Residents of, from Speaker forms: Grand Junction, Montrose, Denver, Fruita, Hotchkiss, Crested Butte, Delta, Crawford, Ridgeway, Telluride, Fort Collins, Eckert, Norwood, Olathe, Palisade, Ouray, Paonia, Cedaredge, Collbran, Loma, Parker, Placerville, Gunnison, Somerset, Thornton, White Water, Denver, ?(Idaho), Huouston (TX), Gillette (WY)

APPENDIX B – Summary of Written Comments Received at the Delta Public Comment Meeting

		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Number of responses:	88		
Number of CO residents	88		
Number of non-CO residents	0		
Responses by forest	General Comment	30	34%
	Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests	6	7%
	Grand Mesa-Uncompahgre-Gunnison National Forests	73	83%
	Manti-La Sal National Forests	7	8%
	Pike-San Isabel National Forests	6	7%
	Rio Grande National Forest	8	9%
	Routt National Forest	7	8%
	San Juan National Forest	10	11%
	White River National Forest	8	9%
Responses by topic of concern	Social and Economic Value	40	45%
	Special Designations	18	20%
	Recreation Management	46	52%
	Natural Resource Management	57	65%
	Other: See attached	18	20%

Comment Themes

Comment Theme	Number of Responses
General	8
Defer to Clinton Rule/Preserve Roadless Areas	39
Defer to Forest Management Plan	1
Public Involvement/Collaboration and Decision-Making Process	16
Environmental Emphasis	25
Multiple Use Management Emphasis	9
Retain Motorized Recreation	6
Retain Non-Motorized Recreation	17
Job Creation/Economic Stability of Rural Communities, States, and the Nation	15
Legacy Values	17
Quality of Life	9
Use of Roadless Areas to Promote or Subsidize Industry	18

Responses by Topic of Concern: Other, please specify

1. conserve roadless area
2. keep our roadless areas just as they are
3. keep roadless areas roadless and not open to motorized use or commercial development of any kind
4. valued resource should be protected
5. not decreasing roadless areas
6. preservation for future generations
7. multi-use
8. mining & needed gas wells
9. solitude & quiet-no motorized vehicles
10. water effects
11. water resource effects; domestic supplies & irrigation
12. biological integrity
13. fisheries
14. non-degradation of wilderness potential
15. wildlife habitat
16. wildlife habitat
17. wildlife habitat; pristine water source; conservation of wilderness; draw for tourism
18. all habitat protection