**Auto Tour with GMUG Forest Supervisor Chad Stewart &**

**Ouray District Ranger Dana Gardunio;**

**Ridgway to Ironton along Hwy 550 August 1, 2019**

*Please note: The responses in blue are from minimal notes and memory gleaned while enroute. If anything doesn’t make sense, better to inquire with curiosity rather than make a statement that something was said!!!*

**Robyn C:**

Feelings about permitted races in designated areas? Chad: typically a concern when considering wilderness designation

Permitted helitrax?

Avalanche mitigation? necessary

Domestic sheep allotments – suitability analysis in DEIS Chad: during Scoping, grazing was not ID’d as an issue so the GMUG just rolled over the range/grazing management from the previous plan. Best to contact Claire in Supervisor’s office re: decision at scoping.

Timber on >30 degree slope. Concern re: wildfire Chad not opposed to logging on steeper slopes given aerial technology that minimizes impact on ground. Chad’s experience as a firefighter informs his opinion.

**Robin N.:** What if any pressure has GMUG received from the administration to emphasize and promote extraction and energy development over conservation? Chad: see the BLM UFO RMP as an example. ie DC is engaged & influential

**Mark P:** Address the potential need for an “intermediate” category of management between their roadless area prescription and the general forest prescription (which is what they intend to apply to all that country along Hwy 550). We discussed the Wildlife Management designation and I expressed that this MA needed more standards to be effective. Chad was a bit hesitant to rely heavily on this MA type since it is new and untested.

Because none of the unroaded lands along 550 like Abrams and Hayden are official Colorado roadless areas, they don’t get that prescription in the plan and just fall into the general forest category. A backcountry prescription along the lines of what Outdoor Alliance might be a solution. We didn’t discuss this in detail because neither Chad nor Dana has read the OA Vision yet. I hope this topic will be discussed at Tuesday, Aug 27 meeting

**Rocky:** ask them about suitability of lands for timber production - how can the GMUG fail to consider economic factors as the law requires, and how can they find land on steep slopes suitable? And how can areas full of dead spruce be suitable, when these areas won't have mature trees for 125+ years? Chad: silviculturists struggle with issues related to succession (especially with climate change.) Please see the write-up on pp. 47-52 of our final comments on timber suitability issues. Chad: economic factors are not part of the filter required of the FS. FS defers to industry regarding timber; while the FS manages the land. During the filter exercise required during the planning process, the planning team tends to include acreage rather exclude. Note some of this was going over my head!! Chad referred us to the last paragraph of the attachment to the working draft re: timber suitability. Other comments from Chad: Use $ from timber sales to replant trees. Without logging, can expect conversion of forest to grassland over time. Need to cut now to have an impact ~ reference to Taylor ?Park? He talked about endemic transitioning to epidemic without logging and some reference to acidic soils… sorry this is not my forte!! worthy of further discussion at Aug. 27 meeting

**Julie:**   
1) Is the GMUG staff considering additional priority watersheds for inclusion in the final FP? Beth Anderson at supervisor office conducted this analysis as a separate process. If analyzed in the past and not prioritized, a watershed would be taken off the list.  
2) Is the Forest Planning Team going to provide additional detail on why (or why not)

certain rivers were found to be eligible for wild and scenic (there is currently a lack of supporting analysis)? Chad: it’s likely a third party will coordinate/lead the public process re: W & S.

3.) A related question would be whether they have added any eligible reaches.

Some other notable comments/conversations:

* Chad – opposes chainsaws in wilderness
* Dana & Chad concur with my concerns re: adaptive management (that too often damage to the resource occurs before attention is given to the resource and then the process is mitigation – not protection.) However they both expressed they don't want the forest plan to limit their options to manage and referenced “protect vs conserve”
* Dana: the Center for Snow and Avalanche weather station is not incompatible with recommended wilderness. It can be accommodated.
* Dana’s concern with recommended wilderness in the plan are three-fold: 1. her desire for flexibility and options in management, 2. topography can limit recreation and therefore need for designation may be less, 3. designations can draw public attention to a landscape and cause more negative impact than if left without a designation.