



July 14, 2021

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bennet,

We are writing you regarding the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI), and our hope is that some very important lands be added to the proposal. We have followed the discussions around GPLI for some time and believe that the process has been transparent and collaborative, in no small part due to your and your staff's involvement. The current GPLI proposal is very much a community-based effort.

There are several possible additions to the existing Uncompahgre Wilderness that are very familiar to Ridgway residents and that we believe are worthy additions to the proposal. These are the proposed Turret Ridge, Little Cimarron, and Failes Creek/Soldier Creek additions, totaling near 15,000 acres of some of the most spectacular landforms in the region. Some of these can be seen from Highway 550 just north of Ridgway, and are a stunning sight. Their ruggedness and lack of trails ensures solitude for visitors, and they provide important migration areas for elk moving between the higher San Juan Mountains to wintering grounds near Blue Mesa Reservoir, as well as habitat for wildlife including lynx and moose.

Although the lands lie primarily in Gunnison County, the main access is from Ridgway, and our residents routinely visit these areas. A number of local residents have made their desire for protection of these areas known to us. We request that, with the support of Gunnison County, the proposed Uncompahgre additions be included in the final GPLI package. We are glad to help in any way and wish to thank you again for your work in protecting the many diverse and important lands in the region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John I. Clark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "C".

John I. Clark
Mayor
On behalf of the Ridgway Town Council