

# Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre & Gunnison National Forests Plan Revision

## *We're Starting Where We Left Off: Background*

The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, in partnership with the public, completed [comprehensive assessments in 2006](#) as part of the previous Forest Plan Revision effort. Much of the information in these assessments remain relevant today, but in some cases changed conditions, new information, and new policy requirements in the 2012 Planning Rule compel the GMUG to update these former assessments in order to provide a thorough but concise snapshot of the Forests today. These are some of the updates the planning team has identified.

## *Your feedback matters*

As you review the former assessments, are there additional updates the GMUG should be considering? Email us at [gmugforestplan@fs.fed.us](mailto:gmugforestplan@fs.fed.us) and tell us what you think.

TOPIC AREA	Updates to reflect changed environmental, social, economic conditions	Updates due to new data	Updates required by the 2012 planning rule
<i>Ecosystems, including Drivers and Stressors</i>	Widespread spruce and aspen mortality affecting 1/3 of both of these cover types on the GMUG.	Identify streams for which potential future instream flow rights may be one of an appropriate suite of administrative tools to protect streamflow and aquatic habitat.	Identify key ecosystem characteristics and assess the trends of these characteristics under current management.
	How have the epidemics changed the structural/seral stages, and what are the resulting species composition in these affected areas?	Consider recent scientific research which models potential plant species shifts due to climate change in the region.  Incorporate Gunnison Basin Climate Change Working Group work regarding potential ecosystem and species vulnerability and corresponding adaptation strategies.	Incorporate the anticipated effects of climate change on the Forests' ecosystems. Consider different climate change scenarios.
		Identify streams for which potential future instream flow rights may be one	Identify key ecosystem characteristics and assess the trends of these

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<i>Species</i>		of an appropriate suite of administrative tools to protect streamflow and aquatic habitat.	characteristics under current management.
	Habitat conditions for wildlife species have changed due to drought, widespread insect and disease, and management activities, including travel management implementation.	Incorporate new information on species distribution and population trends. We have accumulated more information since 2006 on species occurrences and distributions. Sources of information include CPW species activity mapping, Colorado Natural Heritage Program.	Incorporate changes to species' status under the Endangered Species Act (i.e., Gunnison Sage-grouse). Consider the Gunnison Sage-grouse Candidate Conservation Agreement for the Gunnison Basin.
	The Forests' implementation of Travel Management Plans and associated road decommissioning has changed how the public accesses and uses the Forest. The changed use affects habitat quality and species distribution.	Consider best available science regarding native cutthroat trout genetics; how does this information potentially affect management of populations on the GMUG?	Identify potential species of conservation concern in accordance with the 2012 planning rule.
<i>Soil and Water</i>		Identify streams currently listed on the state 303 (d) list of impaired streams.	Identify which fish, wildlife, and plant species are commonly enjoyed/used by the public for hunting, fishing, collecting, etc. What are the habitat conditions and trends for these species?
			Identify whether maintaining key ecosystem characteristics are sufficient to conserve vulnerable species, or are there species-specific requirements?
			Incorporate information about springs, riparian areas, wetlands and fens. Incorporate information about public water supplies and geologic hazards, including landslide-prone soils. Incorporate information on watershed condition based on the Watershed Condition Framework.

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			Address whether soil productivity is being maintained by current management direction.
<i>Carbon Stock</i>	Identify the baseline level of carbon stocks on the GMUG.		
<i>Air Quality</i>	Update the air quality of airsheds relevant to the GMUG. Update current and potential emissions under current management.		
<i>Social and economic contributions, including ecosystem services</i>	Update industry condition and trends for timber, ranching, mineral and energy resources, and recreation markets. In post-recession era, update general economic conditions: employment, income level, etc. Update population trends and other demographic information.		Explicitly consider the Forests' contributions to the plan area's social and economic sustainability. Explicitly identify the fiscal capability of the GMUG to manage existing resources.  Identify key benefits and uses of the GMUG that have not traditionally considered/assessed (ecosystem services).
<i>Timber</i>	Currently, there is high demand for dead spruce as salvaged timber.  Is there potential for new timber/forest product markets that the GMUG should plan for?	Update records of past timber outputs and projections into the future to determine sustainable yield. Revisit timber suitability designations and update.	
<i>Recreation</i>	The population of Colorado is growing rapidly, and people are willing to travel further for recreational experiences. More and more visitors are arriving from the Front Range. What's the increase in recreation use, and how does this increase affect recreation on the GMUG and other Forest resources?  New recreation technologies have emerged, including drones and fat bikes. How do these uses mix with existing uses and resources?	Incorporate information from two National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) reports completed on the GMUG in recent years. The report provides comprehensive data on recreation use.	The sustainability of recreation needs to be addressed from environmental, social, and fiscal angles.  How is the current Forest Plan consistent with recreational goals in approved plans for pertinent local governments and the state of Colorado?

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<i>Range</i>	Ski areas are increasingly more popular as summer tourism destinations, which results in increasing summer use of nearby trails, more dispersed camping, etc.		Incorporate how the Colorado Roadless Rule affected recreation settings and uses in designated Roadless areas.
	There is an increasing demand for recreation events on the GMUG, including extreme recreation events.		
	The Forests' implementation of Travel Management Plans and associated road decommissioning has changed how the public accesses and uses the Forest, and has changed the recreation settings in some portions of the Forest.		
	The recreation settings on the GMUG have changed due to continued timber and fuels management and other development. What are the settings today?		
	Update the present number of active grazing allotments, permittees, and/or permitted livestock on the GMUG. Identify current range condition and trends. Update the present extent and trends of invasives.	Incorporate the Forests' risk assessment for invasive species which identifies areas of higher, moderate, and low risk for spread of invasive plants. Incorporate current collar data for bighorn and domestic sheep use patterns on the GMUG.	
<i>Minerals &amp; Energy Resources</i>	More oil and gas infrastructure has been developed in the Paonia and Grand Valley Ranger Districts. Technology for recovering oil and gas resources has advanced, potentially rendering more areas of the Forests desirable for oil and gas development than previously considered.	Incorporate information in a 2016 USGS report regarding higher estimates of recoverable oil shale resources in the Piceance Basin* than have previously been estimated.	Incorporate how the Colorado Roadless Rule affected potential fluid minerals development (including geothermal) in designated Roadless areas.
	Coal production in the Paonia Ranger District has markedly declined.	*(Including portions of the Grand Valley and Paonia Ranger Districts)	Identify whether potential renewable energy resources exist on the GMUG.

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<i>Paleontological Resources</i>		No previous assessment for paleontological resources has been completed on the GMUG, despite being host to world-famous resources such as the Dry Mesa Dinosaur Quarry (Grand Valley Ranger District).	
<i>Cultural and Historic Resources</i>	The spruce beetle epidemic has exposed more cultural sites to increased erosion and visibility, while at the same time the resultant salvage timber work has accelerated cultural resource inventories in these areas. Aspen decline and downfall may be resulting in loss of historic aspen tree carvings.	Incorporate most recent archaeological site condition assessments as well as vandalism reports. Incorporate 2012 report regarding the current condition and location of museum collections sourced from the GMUG.	How do cultural and historic resources on the GMUG contribute to social and economic sustainability of local communities?
	Historic administrative facilities are less used by the GMUG/the public; some may no longer be maintained nor be within the fiscal capability of the GMUG to continue to maintain.		Are there Areas of Tribal Importance on the GMUG?
<i>Infrastructure</i>	Additional water storage continues to be a demand on Forest resources; how will that demand increase in the context of climate change, population growth, and the resulting projected regional shortfalls in water supply?		Address the impacts of current and anticipated infrastructure on social, economic, and environmental sustainability for the plan area and local communities.
	Update extent of present and proposed utility corridors and transmission lines.		
	What infrastructure needs have emerged, i.e., broadband for rural communities in the planning area?		
<i>Lands &amp; Access</i>	There is increasing demand for affordable housing in resort communities on the GMUG, as well as immediate recreation access from residential developments. Is the existing pattern of NFS land		How does the current pattern and trend of land ownership on or near the GMUG impact social, cultural, economic, and

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<i>Scenic Resources</i>	ownership for areas adjacent to ski areas and resort communities sustainable?		ecological conditions on the GMUG and in the broader landscape?
	Update NFS ownership to reflect land adjustments since 1983, including areas near Red Mountain Pass (Ouray Ranger District).  The Wildland Urban Interface has grown since 1983; what are the patterns of growth, and what does that mean for adjacent Forest management?		Identify existing public access to the GMUG and any current/trending issues related to public access.
<i>Potential Special Designations, including Wilderness</i>	Scenic resources on the GMUG have changed due to vegetation management, insect and disease, and other development. What are the conditions today?  Address work done by communities, the state of Colorado, tribes, and other local governments that identifies a potential need or opportunity for specific designated areas on the GMUG (i.e., Gunnison Public Lands Initiative).		Use the current Scenery Management System to update the Forests' picture of the current condition of its scenic resources. This system replaced the former Visual Resource Management system used in the 1983 LRMP.  The 2012 Planning Rule requires the Forest to complete a new inventory and evaluation process to identify potential Wilderness areas.  Identify if there are known opportunities to highlight unique recreational or scenic resources, specific educational, historical, cultural, or research opportunities? Would special area designations support specific ecological needs of species at risk?  Validate the 2007 Wild & Scenic Rivers eligibility report to confirm whether there any pertinent conditions have changed.