



**Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre & Gunnison
National Forests 2014 Annual Report**

**Forest Supervisor: Scott Armentrout
Deputy Forest Supervisor: Russ Bacon**



A Message from the Forest Supervisor

This past year, 2014 has been full of lots of activities and accomplishments on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests. We have experienced retirements of key staff and the excitement of bringing in new employees and perspectives.

I continue to be impressed by the commitment and support of our partners, communities and volunteers who contribute so much to help us manage these amazing landscapes and to accomplish our Mission of "Caring for the Land and Serving People."

My staff and I continue to work to restore Healthy and Resilient forests, provide Public Service, implement our work safely and to provide a climate of inclusivity in our workforce. We are excited about the work ahead in 2015 and look forward to continuing our programs and services to citizens and natural resources management.

This is a summary report to highlight some of the Forests' accomplishments. I hope you find it informative and useful. For additional information on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, visit us at: www.fs.usda.gov/gmug

On behalf of the employees on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests...Scott Armentrout, Forest Supervisor

Forest Facts for Fiscal Year 2014

Headquarters:	2250 Highway 50 Delta, CO 970.874.6600
Number of Employees:	156 Permanent Employees 139 Temporary Employees
Ranger Districts:	Grand Valley (Grand Junction) Gunnison Norwood Paonia Ouray (Montrose)
Elevations:	6,000 to 14,000
Total NFS Acres:	2,975,647
Wilderness Acres:	556,936
Roadless Acres:	901,100
Annual Visitors:	2,285,800
Miles of NFS Trails:	3,531
Miles of Motorized Trails:	1,027
Miles of NFS Roads:	3,731
Miles of Streams:	3,600
Number of Campgrounds:	58+
Ski Resorts:	Crested Butte, Powderhorn, Telluride
Counties:	Delta, Garfield, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray, Saguache, San Juan, San Miguel

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Recreation

The GMUG celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act. Activities included providing workshops on Wilderness for teens and public opportunities including: programs in libraries, wilderness hikes, backpacking trips, minimum tool demonstrations and volunteer projects to remove invasive weeds from Wilderness.

Other notable accomplishments in recreation include:

- Completion of the third round of NVUM surveys.
- Completion of paving and construction of the new parking area, restrooms and changing facilities at County Line Trailhead on Grand Mesa.

Heritage Resources

The GMUG in partnership, hosted the excavation of a historic homestead on the Uncompahgre Plateau, mitigating impacts to the sites. The project provided historical data about small family homesteads in the early 1900s and allowed the public to join in the activities and learn more about historic sites.

Also in partnership, the Forest conducted inventories of ecosystem restoration projects and scientific investigations and training to advance archaeological knowledge on over 11,000 acres as part of the CFLRP project.

Conservation Education

The GMUG provided over 42 conservation education programs contacting over 9,300 individuals and working with 61 partners.

The Forest partnered to implement the More Kids in the Woods grant for winter ecology. Students experienced nordic skiing; learned about snowpack and water content; snow science investigation/observations; animal adaptations to survive winter; avalanche safety and natural resource careers.

The GMUG hosted three YCC students providing visitor information and two YCC crews-performing trail work, restoring wetlands and learning about natural resources.

Land Acquisition

The GMUG completed the sale of the Coon Creek Administrative Site, selling 160 acres (4 parcels) at a realized value of \$400,000. The Forest also completed a sale analysis for the Crested Butte dwelling to determine its need and sale potential.



The Forest completed: land exchanges for Fossil Ridge #1 land exchange (300 acres of private for 700 acres NFS) and Hotchkiss Reservoir (726 acres private for 794 acres NFS); a Small Tracts Act case to address a cemetery encroachment on NFS lands; the Ophir Valley LWCF purchase project, 1150 acres and \$8.3 million in 7 allocations.

Rangeland Management & Invasive Species

The Forest continued to administer livestock allotments through permittees to avoid management conflicts during the grazing season and to provide for range improvements.

The Forest continued to work with partners to treat invasive species completing:

- Treatment on 1900 acres for invasive species.
- Restoring 55 acres of native ecosystems.
- Inventoried 555 acres of current invasive species.

Forest Management and Timber

The Forest worked to increase capacity to provide restoration activities and promote resiliency-offering a 20-year high sale volume of 60,739 ccf in 12 timber sales.

Other program accomplishments include:

- Improved 789 acres of forest vegetation (974% of target).
- Established vegetation on 1,510 acres through a combination of planting, certification of natural regeneration and prescribed fire.
- Filled vacant positions of: Timber Program Lead, North Zone TMA, Gunnison Ranger District TMA; filled a detail for the South Zone Timber Contracting Officer and advertised the permanent position; filled two District Archeologist and four biologist positions to help support the timber and other program areas on the Forest.
- Fuels treatment: 6,812 acres (100% target); Awarded/executed 2 stewardship contracts/agreements.

The Forest continues to move forward with the SBEADMR project and associated extensive public involvement, workshops, a science meeting and a field trip for stakeholders.

Uncompahgre CFLRP

The Uncompahgre CFLRP is in its 5th year of implementation. In 2014, the Forest accomplished: 765 acres of forested vegetation improvement; Nearly 2000 acres of fuels treatment through mechanical and Rx fire methods; 2000 acres of terrestrial habitat improvement/restoration; 400 acres of noxious weed treatment; maintained 88 miles of trails; harvested 4,897 ccf of timber which was utilized at local mills; Continued the monitoring partnership with Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI) and Colorado State University; Conducted two, 2-day collaborative partnership field trips to look at past and future projects.



Fire Preparedness and Planning

The Forest implemented realignment of the North Zone Fire Organization, filled two critical fire leadership and engine module positions and hired a Forest Fire Mgt. Officer.

The GMUG continues to strongly foster and support its relationship as host Forest to the Collbran Job Corps including hiring an assistant FMO stationed at the Job Corps Center to work with the youth, train and lead staffing for fuels treatment, prescribed burning and wildland fires.

In FY 14, the Job Corps Fire Crew worked on: 3 prescribed burns; performed fuels treatment on 1600 acres; trained 50 students in S-130/190 basic fire training; hired 50 students as AD firefighters and 5 students as GS-1 firefighters, participating on 3, Type II Fire Crew assignments.



Wildlife and Fisheries Management

The GMUG completed the first Stewardship Agreement with a third party partner in Region 2. The Agreement with Mule Deer Foundation treats 52 acres of ponderosa pine and 100 acres of pinion-juniper. Outyear work includes assisting with marking pine treatments within the Escalante Project planning area and Supplemental Project Agreements in the future.

The GMUG continues to develop the Pilot project for best practices to transition the 1991 Forest Plan monitoring program to the 2012 Planning Rule in partnership with Colorado Forest Restoration Institute.

The GMUG expanded the Youth and Science Internship Program to include Delta, Montrose and Norwood high schools. This program hosts 2-3 youth and a teacher who job shadow and perform field work with natural resource professionals. Each develops an area of research and field measurements dealing with natural resources and presents their project and findings.



Soil and Water Restoration

The GMUG along with Mesa County responded to a catastrophic mudslide event. The mudslide originated on National Forest System lands when unstable slopes on the north side of the Grand Mesa experienced super-saturation. The Forest helped the County set up and staff a joint incident command and supported efforts to ensure public safety and determine additional threats/potential for additional slides, flooding and damage on private lands below. The Forest supported other federal agency involvement (e.g. USGS) and specialized equipment and assisted in the installation of monitoring equipment and communication devices.



Energy, Abandoned Mines and Minerals

Forest resource specialists completed a review of the Plan of Operation proposed for baseline studies associated with Mt. Emmons Molybdenum Mine development (submitted by US Energy Corporation). The review was done to determine if sufficient information and clarity was provided to form the basis for a proposed action to initiate scoping under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The GMUG provides critical energy resources in the form of oil and gas leasing and coal production, managing: 17 oil and gas wells capable of producing; analyzing applications for permit to drill and working on a 50-well Master Development Plan.

The Forest works closely with other federal agencies and the State to analyze and oversee surface management of three underground coal mines within the North Fork area. These mines:

- Produce 15-17 million tons of coal annually
- Provide 40% of coal production in the State, valued at \$300-400 million.
- Contribute compliant and super-compliant coal to support energy production.
- Provide jobs to 1000 people, locally.

Partnerships

The Forest has an active and prosperous partnership program that involves 98 active cooperator groups who contribute over \$2 million in funding and in-kind services annually. Some notable accomplishments include:

- Construction of the County Line Trailhead Winter Parking facility on the Grand Mesa.
- The purchase and installation of a 60-ft (8 ton) steel bridge spanning Leon Creek and abutments to accommodate ATVs.

In 2014, the GMUG volunteer efforts resulted in 23.6 person-years (42,393 hours) of donated time and services that are valued at \$ 955,951.

Benefits to Colorado

The GMUG provides millions of dollars to Colorado's economy annually. The Forest Service makes payments to the State that are then distributed to the counties in which national forest lands lie. Payments through the Secure Rural School Act support schools, roads, and environmental protection. In FY2014, payments to GMUG RAC counties were:

- Total FY14 payment-\$193,500
- FY14 Title II projects-11 projects totaling \$193,500
- Title II projects completed: 37 projects, \$1,192,378

