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**To:** FS-comments-rocky-mountain-san-juan-columbine  
**Subject:** Comments on EIS on grazing in Weminuche Landscape  
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Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

I was born in Colorado's Otero County, and reared in Denver, but had the great pleasure of fishing, hunting, and climbing mountains all over Colorado, including Uncompahgre Peak in Hinsdale County. I pursued graduate studies in Forest Recreation and Wildlife Management at Colorado State University, then enjoyed a 36-year career with the National Park Service. The capping experience of that career was helping to restore wolves to Yellowstone. Studies there and elsewhere in the last 20 years have solidly confirmed the essential role of large predators in maintaining the health and integrity of wild ecosystems.

Effective management of the Weminuche Wilderness must consider how the presence of livestock affects the landscape for large carnivores, including bears, cougars, coyotes, and gray wolves that might return to western Colorado. I am well acquainted with the Forest Service's multiple-use mandate and restoration directives under the Endangered Species Act that plainly state that livestock should not have precedence over native wildlife. That non-lethal control of large carnivores can reduce conflicts and promote coexistence has been shown to build healthy ecosystems, viable ranching opportunities, and sustainable carnivore populations. Compliance with best practices for reducing conflicts and coexistence with carnivores should be a requirement for grazing on public land. I hope your plan will insure the survival of native bighorn sheep, as well. Here in Montana, a local herd had to be depopulated recently because of a persistent disease related to domestic sheep.

At Colorado State U., my professors acquainted me with the works of Aldo Leopold, considered the father of game management in America. Some of my homework was in his 1933 classic, *Game Management*. Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* contains an essay that all public lands managers, particularly in the Southwest, should read. It is "Thinking Like A Mountain." After Leopold shot a wolf and watched it die, he came to recognize the essential role of wolves. Here is a bit of the essay: "We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then and have known ever since that there was something new to me in those eyes, something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view." \* \* \* "Since then I have lived to see state after state extirpate its wolves. I have watched the face of many a newly-wolfless mountain, and seen the south-facing slopes wrinkle with a maze of new deer trails. I have seen every edible bush and seedling browsed, first to anaemic desuetude, and then to death. I have seen every edible tree defoliated to the height of a saddlehorn. Such a mountain looks as if someone had given God a new pruning shears, and forbidden Him all other exercise. In the end, the starved bones of the hoped-for deer herd, dead of its own too-much, bleach with the bones of the dead sage, or molder under the high-ined junipers."

We could honor Leopold's legacy by making sure that western Colorado's wilderness areas might once again provide habitat for wolves and other strongly interacting carnivores.

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