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Russell George, Chair  
Roadless Areas Review Task Force  
1628 Sts. John Road  
Keystone, CO 80435

Dear Mr. George:

We would like to express our personal and individual support for the protection of all current existing roadless areas located in La Plata County. The areas proposed for protection in La Plata County are significant for the following reasons:

- a. **Hermosa:** The Hermosa Roadless Area is the largest remaining roadless area in the San Juan National Forest and in La Plata County. This entire roadless area drains into the Animas River which is of critical importance to the vitality of the agricultural community of La Plata County as well as recreation and tourism. The Hermosa harbors spectacular habitat for wildlife which is vital to the economic health of our county.
- b. **HD Mountains:** The HD Mountains southeast of Bayfield, Colorado, provide outstanding opportunities for backcountry recreation, such as hunting, horseback riding, backpacking hiking, camping, bird watching, and solitude. These uses contribute significantly to the local economy. The HD Mountains represent a unique forest ecosystem, the last of its kind in Southwest Colorado, which is home to a high level of biological diversity, including some of the last stands of old-growth ponderosa pine in the San Juan National Forest. The HD's also harbor some of the best remaining lowland wildlife habitat left in the San Juan National Forest and should remain a protected area.
- c. **La Plata:** The La Plata Roadless Area is close to Durango and offers numerous recreational opportunities to locals and tourists alike, supporting the way of life that draws people to La Plata County. The La Plata River is another important water source for agriculturalists and is fed by the watershed in the La Plata Roadless Area.


- d. East Animas and West Needle: The East Animas and West Needle Roadless Areas feed the Animas River, which as previously mentioned, is of utmost importance to the economy and lifestyle of La Plata County. The Durango Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad travels along the border of both these roadless areas and is one of the most important economic stimulants in the County.
- e. Baldy and Florida River: These two roadless areas feed into the Florida River, another important source for both agriculture and fishing interests in La Plata County.
- f. Weminuche Adjacent, Runlett Park, and Piedra Area Adjacent: These three areas drain into Vallecito Reservoir and the Los Pinos River, important for agricultural and domestic uses in both the Durango and Bayfield areas as well as the south eastern portion of La Plata County.

We support the protection of the above-mentioned areas, and that management should prohibit the construction or reconstruction of roads required for development activities such as logging, mineral development, or any kind of residential or commercial development. Furthermore, we support the protection of the undeveloped, roadless portion of the HD Mountains and thus oppose surface impacts from gas development in the roadless portion of the HD Mountains, as stated in La Plata County Resolution No. 2004-28, adopted on October 12, 2004.

Therefore, we urge the Roadless Areas Review Task Force to recommend that Governor Bill Owens petition the United States Forest Service to protect all existing roadless areas in the San Juan National Forest. Please note that this is not a formal position of the La Plata County Board of County Commissioners, but rather our personal and individual perspectives on this matter.

Sincerely,

LA PLATA COUNTY  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

  
Wallace "Wally" White  
Chair

  
Robert A. Lieb  
Vice Chair