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Comments:
Subject: North Fork Coal Mining Area Exception of the Colorado Roadless Rule

Dear Mr. Jiron:

Please accept our comments in support of reinstating the North Fork Coal Mining Area Exception of the Colorado Roadless Rule.

On September 11, 2014, the U.S. District Court of Colorado vacated the North Fork Coal Mining Area Exception of the Colorado Roadless Rule (CRR). On April 1, 2015, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service initiated scoping for a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement to reinstate the North Fork Coal Mining Area Exception of the CRR.

The CRR represents a collaborative effort between divergent stakeholders ? communities, multiple industries, and conservation groups - to maintain Colorado?s rural economy, to facilitate exploration and development of the area?s coal resources, and to conserve the roadless characteristics of the region. A viable plan required concessions and compromise on all sides. The North Fork Coal Mining Area Exception was a critical component of the acceptance of CRR; the Court?s decision undermines the balance behind the approval of CRR.

Activities of mining companies on Forest Service land are closely regulated and monitored. Any proposed disturbance must first be permitted and then bonded to guarantee the eventual reclamation of any disturbed land. As a matter of note, there are areas within the North Fork Coal Mining Area Exception lands that have historical roads that will be reclaimed, resulting in more acres of actual roadless area once mining is completed than there were before mining occurred.

It is extremely important that the CRR be restored to its original scope so that responsible resource identification and development can resume in the areas impacted by the Court?s decision. Mine permitting and leasing require significant amounts of time and resources; additional delays jeopardize the viability of the reserves.

Coal mining is crucial to the economies of rural Colorado. We respectfully request that the North Fork Coal Mining Area Exception of the Colorado Roadless Rule be reinstated.

Very truly yours,

The Directors of the Mount Gunnison Fuel Company