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I am writing this comment with great hopes that my opposition towards the proposition to reinstate the North Fork Coal Mining area will be heard and highly considered. As someone who has considerable education on conservation and environmental issues, I foresee many issues that could derive from this proposed rule. Not only would the production of more coal lead to more greenhouse gas emissions; an issue we are trying to improve but the reinstatement could also harm recent conservation efforts for more than one specie that has range or potential range in the area.

Coal production is an activity that we should be moving away from, not encouraging due to its contribution to greenhouse gases and deforestation. If this proposed rule were to be implemented, coal production could annually produce over 6 million tons of methane emissions and 350 million tons of carbon dioxide due to extraction and shipping activities. We are already faced with grave issues as we continuously watch the amount of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere increase.

Coincidentally at the time of this comment, an article just broke news that carbon dioxide levels have reached an all-time high of 400 ppm, a number that is well above the safety limit deemed by scientists. We have seen sea levels rise and storms strengthen, we have seen people lose their families and their own lives, we are witnessing our landscape change and the death of many species. Even after all of this, we still continue to not make the right choice but we can here. We can finally set an example and say no.

If there is any doubt that carbon dioxide and methane aren't changing our planet, there is significant evidence to suggest otherwise. According to a study done on atmospheric methane, methane is more effective than carbon dioxide on both per molecule and mass basis as a greenhouse gas and its presence in the atmosphere has the potentiality of changing the chemistry of our ozone (Hayhoe & Wuebles, 2002). Methanes effect on warming the planet is greater than carbon dioxide and we have seen a temperature rise of nearly 2 degrees Celsius. Although it seems like a miniscule number, it could be a tipping point for many species. Also, the dissociation of methane eventually produces carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and its interaction with ozone molecules can be significantly altered, furthermore changing the environment that we live in. (Hayhoe & Wuebles, 2002) This creates a constant positive feedback loop in our atmosphere, a condition where things are only amplified not corrected. We are at a point in time where we realize and are starting to understand the devastating effects of this Anthropocene era, however we have only scratched the surface.

Another issue that needs to be strongly considered is the pressure this reinstatement could pose on wildlife in the area. Gunnison National Forest is home to some of the most unique species endemic to Colorado, particularly the American Pika. They once lived across North America but now their range is significantly shortened. Some range still exists throughout the Gunnison National Forest, ground zero for the proposed coal mining area. Pika's live in alpine terrain and have an extreme sensitivity to high temperatures (Erb et al., 2011). Concern has grown for the specie as climate change releases its wrath in these environments, changing weather patterns and temperature. A recent study published by the Ecological Society of America found that water, in the form of precipitation is the driving force behind the Pika's persistence in their habitat (Erb et al., 2011). Pika depend on moisture rich vegetation as well as the insulation from heavy snowpack to buffer subzero temperatures in their environment. Recent evidence also suggests that of the sites that historically housed Pika's but recently do not, were among the driest, further supporting the claim. There has been a recent push to list this specie under the endangered species act, however it has yet happen. Conservation plans are trying to help the survival of the specie but it may not be enough. Continuing on with this proposed rule will indefinitely infringe upon the survival of the American Pika throughout the Gunnison area by way of its contribution to global climate change as well as habitat destruction. This is the life of only one

specie but the story is the same for many others.

Not only will an increase in mining activity further exasperate our climate issue but a massive amount of habitat destruction and deforestation will also occur, affecting numerous species. The area of interest is home to numerous animals that could be put at risk. Eagles, Beavers, yellow-bellied marmots, Mule deers, Elk, Mountain Lions and possibly Canadian Lynx are just some of the species that bring people into these areas. Destroying their habitat could change the entire ecosystem, pushing populations closer to each other, resulting in heavy predation for some. Other species could change their behavior as well to avoid these circumstances and some may even be keystone species that the ecosystem completely depends on. On the same note of deforestation, cutting down more trees is the last thing we want to do if we even want this planet to have a chance as recovering from the overage of emissions that are in our atmosphere. According to the Colorado Tree Coalition, one tree can absorb 48 pounds of carbon a year. Clearing the acreage to exploit the coal could result in thousands of pounds of carbon being left in the atmosphere each year.

Lastly, the establishment of Colorado Roadless Areas was an idea that many people supported and enjoyed. Just the thought of walking through complete wilderness much like John Muir did enthralls most Coloradoans. It also seemed as though it was a sign of changing times for the state as they prioritized their land use with intrinsic value in mind. However, what started out as a plan to protect the little wilderness that is left has quickly turned into complete hypocrisy. Even allowing this to happen due to special interests has quickly tarnished the sincerity behind it. Now, to grant even more land that will be demolished and exploited inside this wilderness area is beyond a concept that I understand. I realize that I am just one voice but I am sure that many others stand behind me. Thank you for allowing this submission and I hope this letter finds you well.

Sincerely, Tamara Burke