

CRESTONE SPIRITUAL ALLIANCE

C/O CHRISTIAN DILLO
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Dan Dallas, Supervisor
Rio Grande National Forest
1803 W. Highway 160
Monte Vista, CO 81144

August 1, 2017

Dear Supervisor Dallas:

Thank you for seeking input on the revision of the Rio Grande National Forest management plan. And thank you for your continued stewardship of these extraordinary lands.

The Crestone Spiritual Alliance (see the list of organizations explicitly endorsing this letter on page 3) strongly supports wilderness designations for the 17 areas recommended by the San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council, the Wilderness Society, Defenders of Wildlife, Rocky Mountain Wild and others as summarized in the attached handout. We especially support to add the "Kit Carson Peak" and the "Cotton Creek-Crestone" areas to the existing Sangre de Cristo Wilderness.

The Crestone Spiritual Alliance was founded in 2005 to represent 24 spiritual, practice and religious organizations in the Crestone-Baca area. Our organizations are nestled against the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountain range between Willow Creek and Deadman Creek, that is directly adjacent to the Kit Carson Peak area recommended for wilderness. We came to this area (some of us as early as the late 70s) for the solitude and the pristine qualities of its wild lands. Now this area is unique not only for its wildness and beauty but also as the home of a greater diversity of meditative, spiritual and religious organizations than in any comparable area in the world.

The sanctuaries and practice centers we have built attract approx. 25,000 persons annually who come to enjoy the spectacular vistas, clean water, and clean air that these lands provide. Each of these practitioners - individually and in groups - benefits from the palpable sense of wildness that emerges from the vitality of a diverse ecosystem of plants and animals and the undisturbed elemental qualities of this place. Therefore, we have an ongoing and enduring interest in a management plan that emphasizes the highest levels of conservation and ecosystem health.

We urge you to recommend the aforementioned 17 areas for wilderness in the revised plan and Record of Decision. In these times of continuing and accelerating ecological degradation, you have the great opportunity to ensure that this extraordinary National Forest will maintain its capacity to provide clean water and air, beauty and

enjoyment - now and into the future. As human beings have become a major if not the most powerful influence on the world's ecosystems, it is now also our responsibility to protect the future of the countless animal and plant species that inhabit the region and that, as we know, can only truly thrive in landscapes that are sufficiently connected and as much as possible undisturbed by invasive human activities.

The Kit Carson Peak and Cotton Creek-Crestone areas are of special interest to our organizations. Our Centers depend on Spanish Creek and Cottonwood Creek for drinking water. Some of our students and guests use the Kit Carson Peak area for wilderness practices and vision quests. For example, Crestone Mountain Zen Center offers an annual 5-day "Wild Dharma" expedition up Cotton Creek via Rito Alto and San Isabel Lakes to the North Fork of the North Crestone Creek.

We would like to see the management prescriptions for these two areas and for all 17 areas to be as protective as possible. Wilderness designations and other high-level conservation prescriptions preserve ecosystem health and qualities of pristine wildness for future generations. Development, mining, and motorized access put these qualities in jeopardy or destroy them outright.

Please make your best effort to manage these lands as conservatively as possible. In the area that is our home, our spiritual practice activities depend on it. In the whole of your jurisdiction, future generations depend on it for their opportunity to enjoy and make use of the richness of the Rio Grande National Forest as we do now.

We live here in this forest. We breathe its air, drink its water, let it nourish our senses and our minds. This forest is, in fact, our larger body. Therefore, we should protect it and keep it healthy as we do with our individual bodies.

Thank you for considering our views and suggestions.

Sincerely,



Christian Dillo

Crestone Mountain Zen Center
Director, Resident Teacher
Crestone Spiritual Alliance, Member



Matthew Crowley

Shumei International Institute
Operations Manager
Crestone Spiritual Alliance, Chairman

List of member organizations that could be reached in a timely manner to explicitly endorse this letter:

1. Chamma Ling
2. Crestone End of Life Project
3. Crestone Mountain Zen Center
4. Haidakhandi Universal Ashram
5. Karma Thegsum Tashi Gomang
6. Mangala Sri Bhuti
7. Manitou Foundation
8. Manitou Institute & Conservancy
9. No Old Age & Death
10. Nur Ashki Jerrahi Sufi Community
11. Pundarika Foundation
12. Shakti Sharanam Yoga Shala
13. Shumei International Institute
14. Sri Aurobindo Learning Center
15. Subud SLV
16. Way of Nature
17. Yeshe Khorlo