



**ROCKY MOUNTAIN  
ELK FOUNDATION**

November 15, 2019

Mary Erickson, Forest Supervisor  
Custer-Gallatin National Forest  
PO Box 130  
Bozeman MT 59771

**RE: Proposed South Crazy Mountains Land Exchange**

Dear Supervisor Erickson,

The mission of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) is to ensure the future of elk, other wildlife, their habitat and our hunting heritage. RMEF represents over 234,000 members – including 13,900 members in Montana, many of whom are hunters that hunt exclusively on public land.

RMEF recognizes several positive aspects of the proposed South Crazy Mountains Land Exchange. Specifically, RMEF supports the Forest Service's efforts to secure permanent, legal easements to existing roads, trails and trailheads through this proposed land exchange. We also support the consolidation of public lands and the resulting benefits of improved land management regarding this proposal.

RMEF is concerned about the loss of Sections 4 and 8 (T2N R11E), and does not support this component of the proposed Land Exchange. While RMEF is generally supportive of land exchanges that improve the management of both private and public land, these two federally owned Sections are accessible via an access easement and an overlap at the Section corners. Additionally, the Sections provide high quality, mid-elevation wildlife habitat and constitute a major public land asset in this area. In our opinion, these Sections are not ideal candidates for an exchange.

RMEF believes the Forest Service should closely evaluate the impact and loss to existing public access that would result from the disposal of these Sections. We strongly feel that existing public access should always be a factor when disposing of federal lands and we urge the Custer-Gallatin National Forest to thoroughly analyze and heavily weigh the loss of existing public access to these two Sections.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed South Crazy Mountains Land Exchange, and commend the Custer-Gallatin National Forest for the continued work to resolve complex access issues in the Crazy Mountains.

Sincerely,

Blake Henning  
Chief Conservation Officer - RMEF