

Jul 23, 2023

San Carlos Ranger District
Pike-San Isabel National Forests & Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands
Attn: Destiny Chapman
3028 East Main Street
Canon City, CO 81212

Dear Destiny,

We are writing to you to express our support for the Locke Park Land Exchange in Fremont and Custer Counties. Based on the information provided on the exchange website and the detailed map documents provided, we believe the National Forest system and Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp will benefit from the exchange.

We are in favor of this proposal for several reasons. First, the exchange will be significantly beneficial to the ecology of the Locke Park area. By converting the Locke Park Non-Federal Parcel to NFS land, lynx, cutthroat trout, and spotted owl populations will gain additional protected habitat, as well as wetlands and other significant vegetative communities. Additionally, the headwaters of Newland Creek, the municipal watershed for Canon City, would become NFS land, protecting its future vitality.

Second, Rainbow Trail will continue to be a good steward of their land, which is located on the edge of the National Forest. They intend to voluntarily grant a conservation easement on the Federal Parcel to Colorado Open Lands simultaneously with the land exchange closing. This easement would restrict future uses of the land to mitigate impacts to surrounding NFS lands, establishing no-development buffers. The Forest Service will retain a right of way along Forest Service Road 198 allowing continued public access to adjacent National Forest Service lands west of the parcel allowing the land to continue to benefit the American public.

Third, the land exchange would be beneficial to Rainbow Trail. Having personally taken part in the ministry on Rainbow Trail's land, the exchange will allow them to continue their impactful work for generations to come. This would improve the safety of campers, as it would allow the camp to control access to the site. It would also improve the process to make improvements to the camp as it would eliminate the permitting process that is time consuming and costly for both Rainbow Trail and the NFS.

Finally, we believe the private lands offered in the exchange represent a good faith trade and are in the best interest of the American people. The trade provides the forest service with the last privately owned holding in the Locke Park area in exchange for land on the edge of the forest that has been developed with privately owned structures for over 100 years. This will preclude the possibility of a 7.5-mile long winter vehicular route being maintained in the future, as there are no other private inholdings in the vicinity of the Non-Federal Parcel. It is in the

public interest to create a larger and more cohesive natural habitat for wildlife and recreation in the Locke Park region.

Thank you for carrying this land exchange forward. Please, after hearing public input, finalize this land exchange as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at (319) 743-8485 or smith.austenj@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
Christina & Austen Smith