

Crazy Mountain Access Project public comment period extended

OUTLAW
MAGAZINE

Published 3 years ago on August 18, 2020

Posted By [Admin](#)



A portion of the land that the U.S. Forest Service would receive in the Crazy Mountain Access Project from the Yellowstone Club. PHOTO BY BRANDON WALKER

By Brandon Walker *EBS STAFF*

BIG SKY – The East Crazy Mountains and Inspiration Divide Public Access Improvement Land Exchange public comment period was recently extended, now running through the entire month of August. After receiving an influx of public comment, representatives for the exchange, also known as the Crazy Mountain Access Project, decided to extend the original public comment deadline of Aug. 7.

CMAP is a possible multi-part land swap that would exchange lands between the Yellowstone Club, a collective of private landowners in the Crazy Mountains and the U.S. Forest Service. If accepted, YC would receive roughly 500 acres of Forest Service

land in exchange for 558 acres near Cedar Mountain that would create contiguous public lands boundaries on the western side of the Inspiration Divide trail.

The land acquired by YC is intended to provide greater expert skiing and riding opportunities for YC members and would be designated with a conservation easement calling for no development outside of that necessary for skiing and riding operations.



A portion of the land that the Yellowstone Club would acquire from the U.S. Forest Service if the Crazy Mountain Access Project were accepted. PHOTO BY BRANDON WALKER

“It was great to see members of our community come out to participate in the open house. The desire to increase and improve public access is encouraging. The Crazy Mountain Access Project will compile the feedback received at the Big Sky town hall, along with the feedback received at the Big Timber, Livingston, and Bozeman open houses,” said Vice President of Development at the Yellowstone Club Mike DuCuennois in a statement provided to EBS. “The Crazy Mountain Access Project has also extended the comment period through the end of August and we all encourage Montanans to review details of the current proposal on the website and continue to offer feedback.”

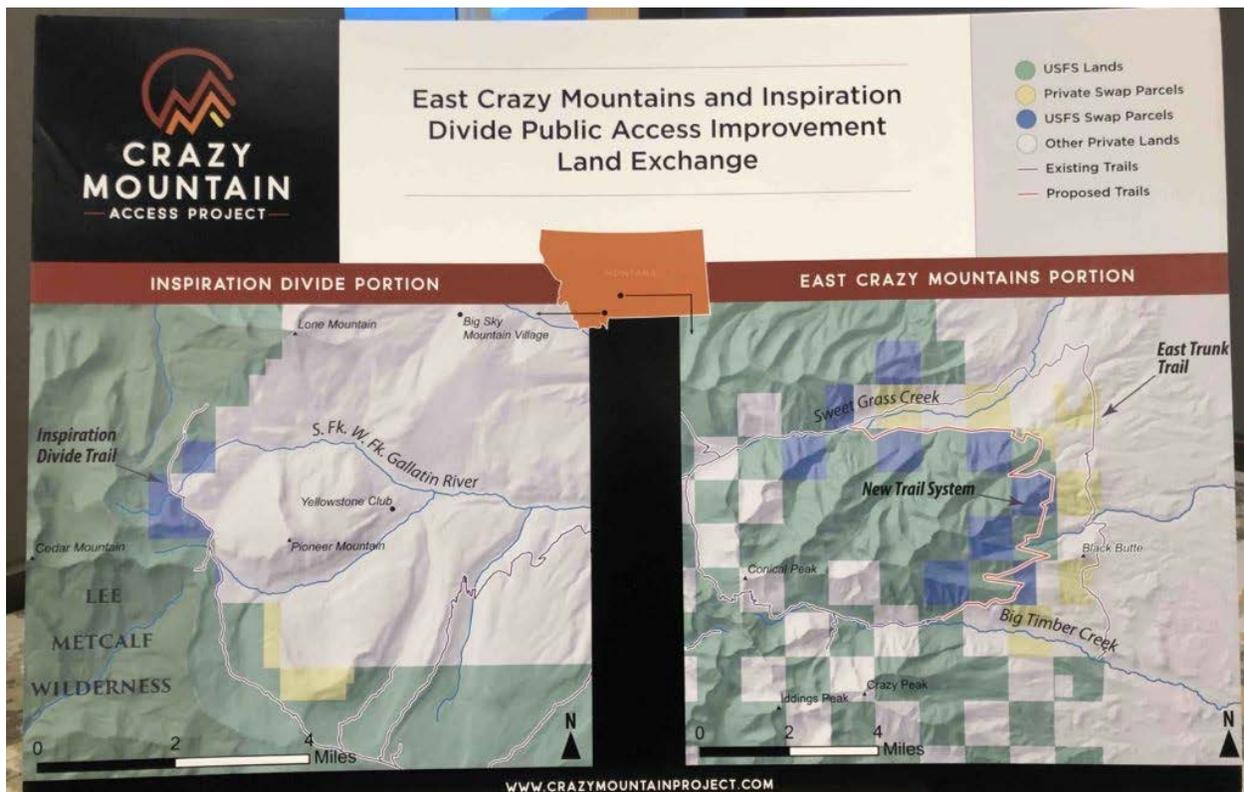
Based on feedback, CMAP representatives began to revise the original proposal, factoring public comment into their revisions. The rescheduled Big Sky open house

took place on Aug. 13, instead of the originally scheduled date, Aug. 6, to continue acquiring public feedback and allowing representatives to answer questions. Other open houses previously occurred in Livingston, Big Timber and Bozeman in July.

“People seemed to be in agreement with what was happening in the Crazies, [they] liked the opportunity for access there, but really wanted to see more in the Big Sky area,” said Deputy Director for the Park County Environmental Council Erica Lighthiser. She added that some people believed the largest public benefit of the project was the access in the Crazy Mountains rather than in Big Sky.

“And then some good suggestions as to potentially some other ways or ideas ... for Yellowstone Club to potentially sweeten the deal I guess, for the Big Sky community,” Lighthiser said.

In addition to the exchange of parcels near the Lee Metcalf Wilderness, CMAP would create a contiguous, nearly 30 square mile portion of public land in the Crazy Mountains through the acquisition of 5,205 privately owned acres by the Forest Service. In return the private landowners collective would be provided 3,614 acres around the border of the newly formed, contiguous public land.



A map depicting the exact parcels of land to be exchange in the Crazy Mountain Access Project. PHOTO BY BRANDON WALKER

The renewed public access to Crazy Peak would also be of great spiritual importance to the Apsáalooke Nation—formerly known as the Crow. Crazy Peak was granted private ownership when Crow Reservation boundaries were relocated in the 1870s.

“There are some places that just mean so much to so many people that they deserve their own place throughout time, so that everyone has that opportunity to experience what our ancestors sacrificed and really cooperated with each other to achieve and those are things that we can’t afford as a species to ignore,” said Apsáalooke Nation member Shane Doyle. “I mean we have enough crises and obstacles in our way and you know if we want to be around for the next 1,200 years like the native people have been here then we need to get ahold of our humility and it’s places like Crazy Peak that allow us to do that.”

When the exchange is complete, YC would pay \$1 million for the construction of a 22-mile public trail from Half Moon campground to an established trail at Sweet Grass Creek in the Crazy Mountains.

“I’m psyched about the peak of course, but I’m also really happy that I can take my family there, we can go on the new trail, it’s something that I’m looking forward to doing,” Doyle said.

After all public comment is reviewed CMAP will present their proposal to the Forest Service and Montana’s Congressional Delegation this fall.

“There’s just a ton of value for folks to weigh in and take a close look,” Lighthiser said. “Because that’s how we’ll make better decisions and put a better proposal forward.”

To view the lands that would be exchanged or submit public comment visit crazymountainproject.com