

I am writing to share my objection to the East Crazy Inspiration Divide Land Exchange. I object to Alternative B, the proposed exchange.

The following are my major concerns with the current proposal:

**Access:** I object to the eternal forfeiture of the Sweetgrass Creek Road/trail 122. This road has been used by the public for generations and was maintained by the Forest Service within its boundaries. Access to USFS land was well established on the portions of the road through Sweetgrass county and on private lands leading to public land in Sweetgrass Canyon. There must be plenty of evidence to prove this access was the “open, notorious, adverse, continuous and uninterrupted use of the claimed easement for the full statutory period”. I will include an attachment from the State of Montana website listing roads by county, specifically Sweetgrass County. As you will see on this map from 2008, Sweetgrass Creek road is not listed as private, it is listed as a city/county road leading to a USFS road. ([http://nris.mt.gov/gis/gisdata/lib/downloads/Maps\\_Final/County\\_Road/2008/road2008\\_SWEET\\_GRASS.pdf](http://nris.mt.gov/gis/gisdata/lib/downloads/Maps_Final/County_Road/2008/road2008_SWEET_GRASS.pdf))

**Habitat Loss and Conservation:** In the Pre-EA section in *Anticipated Benefits* and in the *Need For Action*, the desire to consolidate land for easier and more efficient land management is mentioned. I agree with this concept, but I take issue with the way it may be implemented here. Any and all federal land traded to private landowners must be completely protected with conservation easements before any deal is made. In *Need for Action*, the sixth purpose is “To conserve wildlife connectivity and protect key habitat”.

We public landowners can not give away our productive and relatively less steep lowlands without guarantee of no future development. These parcels are clearly the most likely areas to be developed in the future, not the current parcels lying within federal lands that are very steep and would be counterproductive to access. If these swapped federal lands are developed to any extent, they are no longer providing key wildlife habitat and connectivity leading a detriment to conservation, habitat, biodiversity and wildness.

**Corner Crossing:** This land swap should not take place at all now that the Wyoming corner crossing case has turned a new page in the public land access fight. *IRON BAR HOLDINGS, LLC v. BRADLEY H. CAPE, et al.* heard in the US District Court in Wyoming has settled corner crossing in that district. This case will likely be tried in other district courts and potentially the Supreme Court. This land swap should not take place until corner crossing is settled law. Currently, in Montana, corner crossing is not illegal. The USFS should survey each corner and post legal means of crossing at each shared corner.

What are the private landowners giving up here? It seems to me, they are not compromising, but the public is giving up a great deal. We may be receiving a larger number of acres, but those acres are not even close to equal in value by many measures.

At the very least, I can accept the land consolidation, but only if further access is discussed and secured in Sweetgrass Creek drainage. A permanent trailhead in that drainage that allows foot and stock travel is not too much to ask for when we are giving up some of the most prime public land on the east side of the Crazy Mountains. Permanent conservation easements on every acre of traded federal land should be non-negotiable and must be legally binding before any land is traded.

Thank you