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Comments:

We Care For The Country

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USDA Forest Service, Northern Region; Custer Gallatin National Forest; Yellowstone and Bozeman Ranger Districts; Park, Sweet Grass and Madison Counties, Montana

Attn: Anna Ball - Realty Specialist

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Re: East Crazy Inspiration Divide Land Exchange; Preliminary Environmental Assessment

The Montana Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) is a grassroots agricultural organization, representing over 20,000 member families across the state, including landowners in the Crazy Mountains included in this land exchange. Farm Bureau members are farmers and ranchers, producing many kinds of commodities, including but not limited to wheat, barley, pulse crop, cattle, and other livestock. Our farmers and ranchers have diverse backgrounds and specialties. Private property rights and their interaction with public lands and recreation are a priority for our members.

This Land Exchange proposal offers landowners an equal exchange in property, both in land and in rights. This is a key part of the exchange that allows landowners to continue operating their business without interruption.

Montana Farm Bureau and its members statewide, including in the specific areas in this proposal see value in reducing checkerboard sections of land. This can mitigate risks involved with allowing the public to utilize parts of private lands. Consolidating sections of federal lands for the entirety of the Sweet Grass Trail No. 122 (Sweet Grass) and East Trunk Trail No. 136 (East Trunk) will allow for public recreationalists to stay on public lands.

Land management both for private and public landowners and users will be more effective and beneficial for all. Wildlife, habitat, public use, forest service roads and more will be able to have access with less interruption. In addition, ranchers will face less risk of disruption that could be caused by the public using their lands.

The Montana Farm Bureau stands in strong support of this East Crazy Inspiration Divide Land Exchange to benefit both the public land users as well as the private landowners. We appreciate the willingness for the USDA Forest Service to find viable solutions for an equal value basis to exchange federal lands with private lands to decrease checkerboarding lands and create more consistency and reduce risk for all.

Thank you,

Scott Kulbeck

Executive Vice President

Montana Farm Bureau

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