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Comments: Dear Ms. Erickson:(406) 932-5662email: jesp@mcn.netThank you for the opportunity to comment on the East Crazy Inspiration Divide Land Exchange. Myfamily settled in this area in the 1880s, and as a life-long resident of Sweet Grass County, I write insupport of the land exchange. This land exchange is the culmination of years of work by a dedicatedgroup of people in trying to find solutions to the issues of private property interests, public access,checkerboarded lands and resource management in the East Crazies. Getting the participation of 6different landowners, each of whom brings something integral to the exchange, is very unique.Listed below are a few of the reasons I support the exchange:1. This exchange consolidates 20 sections of public land, and eliminates some of thecheckerboarded ownership in both public and private hands. The consolidation of lands, be theypublic or private, reduces a lot of the inherent conflicts in access, boundaries, resourcemanagement decisions, noxious weed control, conservation of habitat, ranching operations andwild lands.2. The exchange recognizes private property rights, too often just given lip service, byacknowledging it has no written or adjudicated easements to Sweet Grass Canyon, and that thelandowners have allowed access across their private lands, but by permission, for decades. Thisexchange proposes a new public trail, located primarily on public land post-exchange, which trailwill be paid for by the private party not at taxpayer expense. The public will gain dedicatedaccess, as well as continuation of the permissive access as long as private property is respected.3. The Custer Gallatin National Forest recently adopted a new Forest Plan. In that revision, TheCuster Gallatin National Forest determined that significant portions of the East Crazies should bein a backcountry designation and an area in the southeastern portion of the range is nowrecommended wilderness. The new proposed access route, which provides for non-motorizedand non-mechanized access, is the access compatible with those designations.4. The exchange results in a net gain of public land acreage by more than 20% of the totalexchanged lands. I know that some complain the private interests get "lower" lands (althoughthere really are no low lands in the Crazies), but to do any exchange in this area any other waywould not accomplish the goals of consolidating lands and eliminating checkerboarding, facilitating management of property or reducing access conflicts. I also suspect some of theperceived values of the lower lands are overstated by opponents who have never been there.5. Switchback Ranch has committed to a conservation easement on Crazy Peak and no residentialdevelopment there. The private landowners in Sweet Grass Canyon already have their land in avoluntary citizen initiated zoning district (the only one in the County)} that restricts divisionsunder 160 acres. The East Crazy Mountain landowners are not landowners interested insubdivision, but multi-generational ranches who wish to continue their historic family operationsand steward the land.6. The proposed exchange provides for wildlife connectivity and provides opportunities for theCrow and others who seek the high mountains for quiet recreation and spiritual purposes. It alsoopens up hunting opportunities that do not presently exist.7. Yellowstone Club is paying for a trail and offering Smeller Lake in the exchange, both benefits tothe public. Yellowstone Club is not acquiring anything in the East Crazies in this exchange.8. Finally, by choosing to address these issues through collaboration and compromise rather thanlitigation, the Forest Service demonstrates that it wishes to be a partner with private landownersin solving some of these unique challenges.John Esp, Senator SD 30