

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/18/2019 2:55:52 AM

First name: Sheila

Last name: Royston

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

Dear Supervisor Erickson,

I reside in Wilsall, Montana. I have hiked and backpacked the Crazy Mountains for the past 16 years.

I would like to make a preliminary statement on the issue of the South Crazy Mountains Land Exchange legal notice. The Forest Service published legal notices in the Big Timber Pioneer, Bozeman Daily Chronicle, and Livingston Enterprise. Subsequently, the Forest Service hosted informational meetings in these same locations. Because the Crazy Mountains are an identified area of tribal importance primarily to the Crow Tribe, the Forest Service should have published legal notices in the Billings Gazette and Big Horn County News, then held informational meetings in Billings and Crow Agency. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) mandates that federal agencies consult with any Indian tribe that attaches religious and cultural significance to historic properties that may be affected by the agency's undertakings.

The above being stated, based on the preliminary environmental assessment, I support Alternative A - No Action, and here's why. The public involvement process for this project is non-existent. A public scoping notice outlining the project proposal was not provided to any group, individual, agency, or organization nor posted on the Forest Service's website. A public scoping for this project is required under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and should include a 30-day comment period. In addition, it appears other procedural and process steps have not been completed and the land exchange legal notice was premature, which renders the preliminary environmental assessment premature, as well.

The absence of public scoping is highly prejudicial to the public because it allows the Forest Service to list its anticipated benefits of the proposed land exchange without having to list any negative aspects or issues that might have been raised by the public.

The Forest Service is asked to initiate the required public scoping with a 30-day comment period, address the issues raised during scoping, and provide a second preliminary environmental assessment for public comment for this project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sheila Royston