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Organization:

Title:

Comments: The East Crazy Inspiration Divide Land Exchange #63115 project is an excellent example of a strong, thoughtful and well developed collaborative approach to solving the East Crazy Mountains access issues. In today's modern world collaborative projects which are developed locally with the support of a wide variety of stakeholders including landowners, sportsmen and women, private corporations, land trusts, agricultural interests, etc. must be considered to be a very important means of addressing public land access issues and must have standing above and beyond the litigation channels of the past.

I have recreated in the Crazy Mountains since the 1970s and over this time have become acquainted with many of the historic landowner families on the east and west sides of the Crazy Mountains. As a result, I understand their concerns about allowing what is essentially unrestricted public access across their properties. As a public land user and hunter I also understand the need for public access to trails with perfected easements as well as those with prescribed easements.

Various organizations have opposed community collaborative solutions because they fear the USFS will abandon the legal option of ultimately perfecting prescribed easements. These groups have resorted to litigation against the USFS as was the case with the Porcupine Ibex trail in which case the judge ruled against BHA, et. al. These groups have significant memberships which spawn the "cut and paste" form letters which are filling the comments mailbox on this project. People who have never been in the Crazy Mountains simply cut and paste comments because the organization tells them to do so.

I am writing this personal letter because I have been there in the Crazy Mountains and recreated there for a half-century and know the complexity of the access issues. The Forest Service MUST have the option of electing to approve collaborative solutions over litigation on a case by case basis. This project is one where the collaborative process has great merit and validity and I support it 100%.

The addition of the Smeller Lake parcel by the Yellowstone Club is a significant benefit to the overall quality of the project. The South Crazy Mountain Land Exchange originally included the Smeller Lake parcel but it was excluded for a number of reasons. Including the Smeller Lake parcel in this land exchange is a huge win for conservationists.

I do not support the unilateral conservation easements being proposed by various organizations and those posting the form letters requiring such. The proposal, as is, is well thought out, balanced and needs to go forward.

We have a choice....collaborate and work together or continue to litigate and fight. It is my hope that collaboration will win in this case as I will not live long enough to ever see the end of the litigation that some support when it comes to perfecting easements on federal land.

Sincerely,  
George A. Bettas