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Comments: Thank you for attempting to find a solution, once again, for disputes about public lands. We all recognize this is difficult, however this land swap proposal is bringing us back again to the interests of the Yellowstone Club. The club has specific interest in the Crazy Mountains because one of the current members owns a parcel that, if expanded by a land swap such as the one proposed, they will once again make what was public land, the exclusive playground for the wealthiest of people on earth.

It is no secret the lands being considered in this land swap do not have equitable value. The public is being asked to exchange thousands of acres foothill and creek bottom lands (prime habitat for elk and other game species), for thousands of acres of privately owned, high elevation, difficult to traverse mountain country. Most of this is not great habitat for a variety of species and much of it already has conservation easements. Why does the FS need rocky talus slopes that have Easements? In theory that land is already protected by those easements.

The reason for this is the YC club member and thus, the club, wishes to expand the land they privately own. The FS suggests a desire to do the same thing, but it is not trading for lands of equal value. FS will lose wildlife habitat and desirable public access, (as what exists now will be replaced by a new trail requiring users to hike an extra 20 plus miles). Sweet Grass Creek access is used for recreational opportunities, including hunting and fishing access, and is very well documented. As proposed, a new 22-mile East Trunk Trail would be constructed with only one access point from the south. This new route would not only eliminate a separate, existing public access point but would severely alter the nature of and use of the trail for compatible recreational opportunities. For the public to enjoy previously accessed property from the northern route, the public would need to hike at least 11 miles. Right now much of the contentious access is because of current landowners who illegally obstruct the trails.

It is well known that Yellowstone Club approached Sen. Tester years ago and sought a potential legislative solution and were told, no, they needed to go through a public process via the USFS which has led us here. This proposal is not a "local grassroots solution" approach. It has come from the Yellowstone Club from the start. Another discrepancy in this exchange is that 100% of the federally owned mineral rights would be transferred to the non-federal parties, and only 18% of non-federal mineral rights would be transferred to federal ownership in return. This would lead to a significant imbalance of monetary value and property rights, with the public getting the short end of the stick, again.

Finally, we read over and over that this land exchange would bring tribal access to lands these people have been blocked from accessing for traditional purposes. Do these people, who lived and survived and worshiped on these lands long before we ever even knew what existed out here, really need the label of public land to access their traditional spiritual grounds? They should have access no matter how the ownership is described and it should be written into any deed including private, corporate or public ownership.

It is admirable to attempt a solution to these public lands issues, but not at an overall big loss to the public.

Respectfully, Leslie Stoltz