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Comments: Montana's Crazy Mountains are one of the continent's younger, more dramatic, and subsequently awe-inspiring mountain ranges we have the luxury of accessing here in the Rocky Mountain West. I have heard stories, both published and by word-of-mouth, that have shrouded these mountains in a veil of mystery and fascination; from the origin of its namesake, to accounts of wildlife interactions, and witnessing first hand the growth and shedding of these shear formations, each visit to the Crazies leaves me more intrigued than the last.

From my understanding, the Crazy Mountains are also one of the more densely privately-owned ranges in the United States: a quick look at a map reveals a game of Connect Four between Custer Gallatin NF and the various ranches and other privatizations that are lucky enough to own a chunk of this unique and inhospitable landscape. This checker-boarding of public and private land renders recreational opportunities spotty and introduces complications with access, particularly stream access for anglers. For example, Big Timber Creek Trail dodges in-and-out of private land, and though the trail may run within feet of the stream itself in some places, access would require leaving the trail and passing through private land to get below the high water mark. Private land also limits access to alpine lake shoreline on several of the Crazy Mountain's tarns.

It is obvious that the Crazy Mountain Range and the public's utilization of its resources are challenged by these land ownership implications, and further complications of the situation should be avoided. Upon reviewing BHA's opposition to the PEA of the ECIDLE, it is apparent that the private sector involved has hedged their bets on flying under the public radar; the possibility of public approval of these proposals and negotiations is unfathomable. This land swap complicates public access to the Sweet Grass Creek drainage, initiates zero federal action to reestablish disrupted access here, and fails to provide any incentive for public approval of this exchange. It also endangers a multitude of natural resources by replacing federal conservation and protection with the potential for privatized over-utilization of an inherently unique and critically delicate ecology. There is simply not enough give and far too much take in this proposal. Therefore, the East Crazy Mountain Land Swap must be opposed by the public at large.