Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/14/2022 5:57:51 AM
First name: Andrea
Last name: Matos
Organization:
Title:
Comments: I oppose this land exchange because:

Recreation/hiking/hunting/fishing:

-The swap abandons disputed Forest access points, which the Forest is currently working to secure. This goes against the public interest, as well as the Forest's interest.
-It results in the loss of two important and historic trails and four administrative roads in return for one new trail. Notably, the trails we lose are much more accessible to more people with different abilities than the one trail we'd gain.
-The public loses miles of fishable streams
-The public trades high quality, low elevation wildlife habitat for higher elevation, steeper, and probably less productive habitat. Elk and deer habitat is primarily in the sections we'll give up, and not as much in the high elevation sections.
-The public loses hunting and angling opportunity (as acknowledged in the USFS's PEA)
-We may abandon future access opportunity (corner crossing). If we advance this proposal before the nation, or the State of Montana resolves the legality of corner crossing (stepping across a corner from public to public, crossing a small airspace over private land) we may be giving up lands future generations may have been able to visit. I don't care if I never get to see some of these blocks of land, but I'm willing to protect them so others can enjoy them.

Development and wildlife habitat:

This issue is the most important to me in this swap. I would like to go here someday, but even if I never do, I want it to be protected for our wildlife species. We would be losing the low elevation, much more gentle terrain covered by grass and coniferous forests, riparian areas, and the lower reaches of Sweetgrass Creek, in exchange for very steep, rocky lands. Here, I am not speaking to the exchange in the Big Sky area because I don't know it well enough, and it should be a separate proposed exchange.

-The public gives 100% of mineral rights and receives only 18% in return. This is concerning because the landowners will retain mineral rights up high, which means they could still use those rights (in other words, mining) in the future, on what would become USFS land, and as currently written, we can't stop it from happening.
-The lands we lose are much more attractive to developers than the scree fields and mountainsides we'll receive. If we want to curb development, keep the lowlands, and know that it will remain difficult to develop the high elevation, even as private lands (mining can happen up there whether or not this exchange occurs, thanks to an old and problematic mining act).
-Without requiring a conservation easement and/or deed restriction to prevent development, there is absolutely no guarantee the landowners won't someday develop this land.
-The public loses over 40 acres of wetlands, and water rights.
-The PEA does not disclose the value of land or timber value lost by the public. These low sections we stand to lose contain stands of Douglas-fir and other tree species of timber value. This adds to the benefit of the landowners involved in this exchange, and is another place where the public gets shorted.