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Comments: I appreciate the opportunity to provide personal comments on the East Crazies Land Exchange. I have been hunting, hiking and camping in the Crazies for about 30 years and consider that land sacred. Not only have the Crazies provided me with a tremendous number of adventures, amazing time with family and friends and moments of being awestruck by nature, but they have also faithfully provided my family and I with game meat for many years.

I appreciate the collective efforts of the landowners and the company in Big Sky as well as the ongoing feedback and advice from the individual and organizational members of the Crazy Mountain Working Group. Because the challenges around land ownership and access will not go away after the completion of this project, it's critical to understand that this model of collaboration and cooperation on the part of many stakeholders is the best- if not the only- way to make progress over time in the Crazy mountains. Our job will by no means be done after this exchange is completed.

In terms of the proposal- on the positive side, conservation biologists tell us that large blocks of protected land are better than small, chopped up ones. In a checkerboarded landscape like the Crazies, consolidation is key. While the land being exchanged is not of 'like' habitat value, from an ecological and landscape protection perspective, consolidating public ownership into as big a block as possible is preferable, and the East Crazies Land Exchange does that.

Also on the positive side, the Smeller Lake section is included in the exchange. I've spent much time in that part of the country and am very glad that piece of ground will be in public ownership. I also appreciate that the lands being brought into the USFS system will be managed as non-motorized. I also ask that the Forest Service assure that the new trail segment to be built also specifies that trail will be non-mechanized only. That new trail will go into the heart of the range and the last thing the wildlife need is for a new use that is proven to impact sensitive species- mountain biking- to be introduced into an already small and stressed landscape.

I am disappointed- but understand why- access issues around Sweetgrass Creek were not resolved. That issue- unfortunately- was made significantly more difficult due to failures on the Forest Service side. However, I do understand that this land exchange is not the place to settle that issue. It is critical to note that the Forest Service has assured that the land exchange would do nothing to change the status quo of the Sweetgrass creek situation. I worry that there may be language within the draft document that could lead to a new interpretation of access there. PLEASE scour this document to assure there are no references that could be interpreted by some- - lawyers especially- that could cause a change in the status quo for Sweetgrass. If you aren't going to fix it thru this project, just don't make it worse.

Regarding the new 22 mile access- in light of the access problems with East Trunk that don't seem like they will be resolved, I think a new access route is a good 'plan B' solution that will provide public access to Sweetgrass.

This is the most important comment I have to make: I am gravely worried about the fate of the land being given up by the Forest Service. This is mostly lower elevation, high quality habitat. Not only is it critical for wildlife, it is also land that's prime for development. It is irresponsible for the Forest Service to give this land up without some sort of assurance that the new (or future) landowners will keep it whole. Nor is the potential solution rocket science. This is exactly what was worked into the Gallatin II Land Exchange 20+ years ago where lower elevation, high quality habitat lands had conservation easements put on them as part of that process. It is vital to the viability of this proposed exchange that the Forest Service work this deal to provide assurances that the 'public to private' lands won't be chopped up into homesites. If the agency is unsuccessful at securing some sort

of assurances regarding these lands, the eventual development on these lower elevation lands could undermine the ecological integrity of the entire range.

It is understood that in a situation we have in the Crazies where there's a mix of public and private lands, the public will have to give something up to get something back. What the Forest Service proposes in the East Crazies Land Exchange clearly provides net public benefit through consolidation of public lands, acquisition of the Smeller Lake section and a new public access route on the east side. However, without doing something that provides assurances the low elevation lands will be safeguarded from subdivision, the public concern over what we are getting vs. what we are giving up will remain.

Thanks so much for your hard work and for the opportunity to provide comment.