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Comments: This proposal for land exchange in the Crazy Mountains leaves much to be desired on the end of public users. While continued access is seemingly granted to the public with the construction of a new trail linking parts of wilderness in the Crazies, it is compromised by the loss of historical access on the east side of the Crazies. This compromise only serves to focus pressure on already limited access to even fewer trailheads on the east side for recreational users. What is the plan to handle this funneling of users into reduced entry points? I have already seen the overcrowding at the Sweet Grass trailhead area and how use has changed over the years since the 1990s in this area, and taking away access points does not seem to address the problem, even with the promise of a newly constructed trail.

Beyond access, perhaps the more concerning pieces within this land swap proposal lie within the loss of public rights to water and mineral access, as well as habitat conservation. Turning over water rights, mineral rights, and key wildlife habitat to private hands is NOT the answer to addressing continued protection of important habitat areas of connectivity for wildlife in this island mountain range. Loss of public opportunities to hunt, fish, and partake in other recreational pursuits is not good business for the USFS; loss of habitat protection due to further fragmentation by privatization is flat-out irreversible and sets a bad precedent for how the USFS does business in this state. Please consider re-examining this land swap proposal and, if anything, constructing additional alternatives for the stakeholders to discuss that would not be as one-sided to the benefit of one party (private landowners) at the cost of another (the public land user).