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Comments: Good Afternoon,

I have recently moved to the area from Massachusetts. The reason we moved to this beautiful land is the public access to rivers, mountains, trails and hunting. Coming from a very congested area where dozens of hunters fight to hunt small parcels of land, people get into altercations over fishing in the canal, and rivers are merely small creeks. Open space is very important to me.

The Crazies are a pristine area that already have complicated access. However, there is access to low lands where Elk resides, which allows for incredible hunting.

After reading articles on the land swap this is not a proposal that enhances public access.

First, the public (via the USFS) gives up any claim of the historic access up Sweet Grass Trail and lower drainage. This will result in an outdoor enthusiasts being funneled through a single trailhead in the southeastern portion of the Crazies. The public will moved off the lower productive elevations and moved into the steep, high terrain largely consisting of rock and ice. The landowners, however, receive the valuable and productive low land. If a hunter is able to find an elk in the higher elevations the chances of he or she being able to retrieve a kill without the animal falling into the lower elevation that the private land owner now owns is almost impossible.

The proposal asks the public to give up 100% of mineral rights on land going to the landowners. In return, however, the public receives only mineral rights on two of the 11 sections it is receiving. In Montana, mineral rights supersede surface rights. What happens if the the owners of these claims decide to assert these valuable rights in the future? According to Montana law, those owners would have the ability to disrupt the surface by building roads, cutting down trees, diverting water, and using any and all legal means they choose to develop their mineral rights.

The proposal asks the public to give up all water rights on land it is giving to the landowners, while it does not receive the water rights on all the land it receives. Another loss for the public.

The proposal asks the public to give up 52 acres of wetlands and receives only 7.8 acres in return, meaning the public stands to lose 44.6 acres of wetlands.

The USFS fails to provide land and timber value analysis prior to conclusion of the public comment period.

To summarize this is a win for the private land owners and a huge loss for the public.

Cathy Kovago