Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/19/2022 8:30:55 PM
First name: Scott
Last name: Bischke
Organization:
Title:
Comments: Hello,

I am writing to state my concerns and interests as part of the CGNF / USFS efforts under the environmental assessment (EA) of the project known as "East Crazy Inspiration Divide Land Exchange #63115".

The EA states a number of USFS-declared benefits of the land exchange. These include to i) "conserve the existing character of the Crazy Mountains", ii) "improve public recreational access", and iii) "increase protection of important traditional cultural areas".

I very much want those outcomes, as well. To achieve them, I recommend the CGNF do the following:

1) Analyze impacts of "reasonably foreseeable" development on wildlife, habitat, and cultural resources on all lands that would become private after the land exchange takes place (i.e., take this action *before* agreeing to the land exchange);
2) Ensure that important habitat and cultural sites are protected with permanent deed restrictions or conservation easements preventing residential, commercial, industrial, and mineral development;
3) Reserve public and administrative access or any existing easements on Sweetgrass Road and Trail;
4) Provide clarity -- again before the agreement is finalized -- to the public on how, when, and where permission can be obtained for accessing Sweetgrass via Rein Lane;
5) Before the release of any final decision, consult with all regional Indigenous Nations that identify as being connected to the Crazy Mountains, and listen to, innumerate, and address in writing and in public forum the concerns and opportunities those Indigenous Nations bring forward;
6) Preserve and enhance the quiet, undeveloped, unroaded characteristics of the Crazy Mountains by a) taking steps towards permanent designation of the South Crazy Recommended Wilderness, Crazy Mountains Backcountry Area and the Crazy Mountain Inventoried Roadless Area, and b) in all USFS-controlled areas of the Crazies eliminate motorized (be it gasoline or electric) transportation and minimize mountain bike travel (which should only occur in front-country areas, even if not federally designated wilderness areas) ;
7) Consider alternatives that allow for the Eagle Park and the riparian public lands in Sections 8 and 10 be retained or exchanged for lands with comparable ecological and recreational value.

Additionally, I would like to express my concern that the land exchange unduly seems to benefit landowners in that they receive, per mapping I've reviewed, the best lowland areas. I love the high country, but please recognize that lowland areas, especially lowland riparian areas, are of incredible importance to critters for habitat, food, and refuge, as well as to people for recreational endeavors including hunting, fishing, wildlife watching, food collection, tranquility, and more. Please work towards any last minute improvement in the land exchange that assures that the general public *also* has access to, and ownership of, some of the important bottom lands in the Crazies.

Thank you CGNF/USFS for your important work on this challenging public lands and access issue.