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First name: Misi
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: 12/21/2022

Custer Gallatin National Forest
Attn: Forest Supervisor, Mary Erickson
P.O. Box 130
Bozeman, MT 59771

RE: Preliminary Environmental Assessment for the East Crazy Inspiration Divide Land Exchange

Dear Ms. Erickson,

As a lifelong supporter, defender, and user of public lands, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this proposed land exchange. There are many complex issues being considered in this Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA) and I leave the vast majority of those to the people who are expert in the details. I appreciate the goal of consolidating federal lands in the Crazy Mountains but I feel that this proposal short-changes the weekend hiker, families, and those with limited means to access the beauty of the Crazy Mountains by eliminating access to low elevation lands and giving away historic trails and fishing streams.

- I oppose the loss of access to the Sweet Grass drainage. Access to such rich riparian areas more easily accessed by the general public should be protected.

-Easements should be imposed on lands being transferred to private ownership that restrict the possibility of future development by private landowners.

-I oppose the practice of permissive use that is managed by private landowners. To require prior permission is discriminatory and intimidating to the general public and it is unacceptable that the granting of such permission is in the hands of private parties. Sign-in kiosks with self-issued permits such as those found at Wilderness Boundaries can provide an acceptable record of use.

- I oppose the idea that consolidating high altitude lands as federal lands is an equal exchange for consolidating corresponding low elevation lands in private hands. In addition to traditional hunters, there are many other people who also enjoy and value the opportunity to observe wildlife in their natural habitat but the weekend hiker or family with children does not typically have the time or ability to hike to high altitudes. This proposal needs to consider the needs of the public, not just hunters, and should find ways to increase public access in low elevation lands, not diminish it. Concentrating access to one or two trailheads will lead to damaging overuse and degraded wild land experiences for all users.

- The inclusion of consideration of lands in the Madison Range in this PEA is inappropriate and confusing to the complex issues being addressed in the Crazy Mountain area. The two separate issues should not be combined under this proposal. And why are we even considering giving
away more public land to private owners?

While I sincerely appreciate the time and effort on the part of many that has gone into the work of trying to solve long-standing access issues in the Crazy Mountains, I do not believe this PEA is acceptable to the interests of the public landowners. In fact, this is the first opportunity the public has had to reflect on the proposal created by a select few. I hope this is just the beginning of a conversation that welcomes more voices to the discussion, and

not the final opportunity for the public to comment.

Thank you for your consideration,

Misi Ballard
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