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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing in support of the East Crazy Inspiration Divide Land Exchange #63115. My family has lived and ranched in Sweet Grass County near Springdale since 1882. In 1908 as our family grew, my great-great grandfather purchased an additional ranch closer to the Crazy Mountains on Duck Creek and this is where I grew up. Much has changed on the south side of the Crazies since my childhood but our family has been able to hang on to this land. I hope to pass it on to my children - the 7th generation.

In 2022, our ranch and one other small, neighboring ranch are the only ones not owned by wealthy, out-of- state landowners. The flavor and tenor of our once close-knit, rural community has completely changed. It's no surprise as this sad song is being sung all over the inter-mountain west.

Access to once hunted acres has been cut off, no trespassing signs are everywhere and folks are frustrated trying to find places to hunt, fish and recreate. Tensions have gotten even higher as more people have moved here for the outdoors only to find that public land is crowded and inaccessible. As a landowner who still allows hunting and fishing with permission, we are overwhelmed with calls from an increasingly entitled public. Gates are left open. We find tracks all over from people who have gained unauthorized access. We dread hunting season every year although we realize the value of having deer and elk harvested from our place as the population of both has skyrocketed due to wealthy landowners all around us who do not allow hunting. There is palpable resentment toward private landowners from the public.

My firsthand knowledge of this increasingly adversarial relationship is what drives my support of this land exchange. I was so heartened to hear about all of these competing interest groups, governmental entities, and private landowners coming together in an attempt to identify common ground and possible solutions. I have watched as this process played out over a number of years and have been completely impressed with the amount of dedication and time that participants have put forth in an attempt to create a win/win solution. We could use much, much more of this type of attitude and behavior in our world today.

Inherent in any deal is compromise. No one, absolutely no one, gets everything they want when you put together an exchange of this magnitude. I have been dismayed at the special interest groups and other landowners who have been vocal about their opposition. If you are invited to the table and refuse to participate, you may be the problem. If you didn't get everything you wanted and now you're mad, you may be the problem. I can guarantee that no one will win in a protracted legal battle that will take years and cost millions of dollars.