Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/23/2022 12:42:41 AM
First name: Chance
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the East Crazy Inspiration Divide Land Exchange.

After reviewing the PEA, I am opposed to the project in it's current form for the following reasons:

1) With the exception of Section 7 (which is NOT being conveyed to the public as part of this transfer), conservation easements will not be placed on land transferred from federal into private ownership. This has been an integral part of previous land exchanges and ensures that the habitat transferred into private ownership is kept free from development. Any development on the transferred sections will have the potential to disrupt wildlife movement, destroy riparian habitat, and permanently displace wildlife from critical winter range areas (specifically elk and mule deer)..

2) As acknowledged in the PEA, Federal land sections transferred into private ownership will result in a net loss of wildlife habitat, riparian areas, and recreational opportunity. The sections gained by the public are largely steep, rocky, and snow covered for 8 to 9 months of the year. The Crazy Mountain sections that would be transferred into private ownership offer prime habitat for big game, as well as riparian corridors along Sweet Grass and Big Timber creeks that provide additional hunting, angling, trapping, and foraging opportunity.

On an average year, it is highly likely that big game (specifically elk) will migrate from higher elevation summer range into the lower sections during or before general rifle season opens in late October (this is acknowledged in the PEA as a loss of -1254 acres of winter habitat). Transfer of these federal sections into private ownership will result in reduced hunt quality and harvest opportunity for the public in MT Unit 580.

In addition, the public will lose access to an important stream access point on Section 2 (parcel 7) along Big Timber creek. This access point currently provides prime stream angling opportunity.

3) The transfer would relinquish all public claims to currently disputed access points within the project area. This sets an inequitable precedent for any future public-private disputes involving easement or land access. The USFS should perform additional due diligence to these historical access points, specifically the Rein Lane access on Sweetgrass Creek.

If historical public access to the project area is reestablished in areas other than Big Timber Canyon Rd, the need for a new East Trunk trail in mid-elevation rugged terrain will be nullified. As currently planned, this trail routing would not be conducive to overnight recreational activities due to the topography and exposure of the trail route.

Again, for these reasons, I am opposed to the East Crazy Inspiration Divide Land Exchange in its current form. Please continue to solicit public feedback and involvement in the project.

Thanks,

Chance Collins