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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Over the years, our family has day hiked in the Crazies numerous times. For decades, I've had an itch to backpack the length of the range, but just never got around to it. My son decided it was time to check it off my Bucket list and we spent 3 days traveling from Big Timber creek to Sunlight Creek. Wow! I've driven past the Crazies thousands of times, I've watched the sunrise roll down the east side every year while antelope hunting, but I always assumed it was a skinny island range with civilization visible from the top. In fact, it's a wide, steep, rocky, spectacular, awe inspiring, goat filled range. If only, I'd taken this trip sooner...

Now I know why you have suggested this area for possible wilderness designation. Thank you, Mary.

I have several concerns regarding the proposed land swap. Absolutely, I support resolving the contentious checkerboard issue, but this partial solution has some flaws.

First, and by far the most important, is that trail access on Sweet Grass Creek MUST be a part of any solution on the east side. Absolutely. Giving up this crucial access point is a deal breaker. Relying on good wishes and promises that may be ignored by future land owners is not sufficient. There are many reasons why this access must be maintained, but I am confident you understand them. Get your back up, draw a line in the sand, hire the world's best negotiator, but certain, permanent access via Sweet Grass Creek is an absolutely necessary part of any solution.

As part of this, I recommend you not trade away Section 8 T4NR11E. Ideally not at all, but certainly not without access farther upstream on Sweet Grass Creek.

Second, there is a cabin on the NW corner of Section 1 T3NR11E, located unfortunately on the shores of Upper Twin Lake. This is an extremely popular camping spot, though the fishing sucks. Acquisition of this portion of the Crazies and removal of this cabin should be a priority.

Third, there are a couple of commercial campgrounds on privately held and not involved in this swap section 15 T4NR11E. These are not currently an issue, but more substantial development should be prohibited as this is an intersection area with travelers from several directions using the area.

Worse, Campground Lake is apparently being used as a helicopter-in commercial campground, and this is clearly not compatible with wilderness. Included in any negotiations should be a 'no fly' access agreement. Best would be to get section 29 T4NR11E swapped to USFS land, so you can truly manage this use.

Fourth, the Corner Crossing debate needs to get resolved with this method of access accepted by private land owners. Take it to the Supreme Court if you have to. I'll build stiles for all the corners in the Crazies if necessary.

These latter issues may not be directly relevant to the East Crazies land swap proposal, but they are integral to a comprehensive Crazy Mountains solution.

Thanks for listening.