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Organization:

Title:

Comments: This is a follow up to my previous comment.

I am disappointed that the Forest Service did not take the opportunity to ensure protection against over development on exchanged lands on the East side of the range on lands contiguous with public property. Private ownership on land adjacent to public lands historically leads to increased fencing, threats to wildlife and conflicts with public land users. The 2019 lawsuit demonstrates what happens when the Forest Service fails to anticipate the foreseeable consequences of relying on an assumption that private land owners will not take actions which can and often do create conflicts with the public which can lead to lawsuits. Therefore, I support the objections raised by Wild Montana and incorporate them here as my own.

The Crazy Mountains are important to me. I value this unique island range for its wildlife habitat, its cultural and historical significance to the Apsaalooke people, and the opportunity it provides for solitude.

While I appreciate your efforts to address the public and private checkerboarding of the range, I request that, as a condition of the land exchange, conservation easements or other binding assurances are put on public lands going into private ownership. The current deed restrictions in Sweetgrass Canyon do not provide adequate assurance that the wild character will remain. Without meaningful conservation measures in place, there is no guarantee that existing low-elevation wildlife habitat will remain undeveloped and intact. Consolidation could end up harming wildlife by opening the door to private development within the existing Forest boundary. Please include full development restrictions as a condition of the exchange, as you did for the South Crazy Mountains Land Exchange.

I also request that the Forest Service analyze potential environmental impacts from the proposal if lands going into private ownership were to be developed. This is a reasonably foreseeable outcome of the proposal and legally needs to be considered.