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First name: Daniel

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Forest Supervisor : Mary Erickson

Custer Gallatin N.F.

RE: East Crazies Inspiration Divide Land Exchange PEA

Dear Mary Erickson,

These are my comments on the proposed exchange:

Permanent Conservation Easements on lands swapped to private landowners are necessary. Assurances and stated intents are not enough to guarantee those lands stay free from commercial or residential development. Environmental impact estimates appear to have been based on the non-development of swapped parcels, but there is no guarantee of that in the current plan.

Mineral rights need to be secured on parcels swapped to the public.

The valuations of the swapped parcels are unstated and thus it is impossible to make an informed comment. But certainly the land received by private entities is extremely valuable.

The section the Yellowstone Club would receive is the only section on planet earth that has the location and terrain to expand their ski area. If a private entity was offering it for sale, the asking price would be astronomical. The low land parcels the ranches would receive are extraordinarily valuable from monetary, real estate, wildlife habitat, riparian, water right, hunting, and agricultural production standpoints. If developed, the parcels would be worth tens of millions of dollars by today's real estate values, which will only increase in the future. Once again there is nothing in the plan to prevent future development.

Is the public receiving an equitable exchange in this plan?

The seeming abandonment of historic access to Sweet Grass Creek sets a dangerous precedent. Other landowners could see that aggressive action against historic public access will be rewarded.

Building of the Sweet Trunk Trail will certainly impact wildlife security. It could also drive game downhill on to the private land below, including the potential newly privatized swapped sections, negating hunting access.

This plan was "sold" on many different attributes, such as seasonal access to Sweet Grass Creek Trail, conservation easements on swapped parcels, tribal access to Crazy Peak, an increase in overall and hunting access, and an increase in wildlife security. But the plan doesn't seem to guarantee many of these ideas in its current form.

While it has some positive points such as checkerboard consolidation, as is, it looks like a great plan for the Yellowstone Club, a great plan for the ranches, but not yet a great plan for the public. It could use much improvement.

Thanks much to you and all who have put much time and effort into this so far and in the future.

Respectfully,

Dan Thums