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First name: Nick

Last name: Gevock

Organization: Montana Wildlife Federation

Title:

Comments: Please accept these official comments from the Montana Wildlife Federation on the proposed South Crazy Mountains Land Exchange. Letter is attached.

Copied from attachment:

Oct. 7, 2019

Mary Erickson, Forest Supervisor

Custer-Gallatin National Forest

P.O. Box 130

Bozeman, MT 59771

RE: Proposed South Crazy Mountains Land Exchange

Dear Supervisor Erickson,

The Montana Wildlife Federation is our state's oldest wildlife conservation organization. We were founded in 1936 when hunters joined landowners to restore depleted wildlife in Montana and have worked for 83 years to resolve the difficult issues around wildlife management.

MWF supports much of the proposed South Crazy Mountains Lands Exchange, however, we do not support the proposal as put forward. Specifically, MWF does not support the loss of public ownership of sections 4 and 8, Township 2 North, Range 11 East in the southern end of the range in exchange for sections 11, 13 and 21 at the higher elevations in the Crazies.

Both section 4 and 8 are excellent wildlife habitat. They sit along Rock Creek and offer quality hunting, particularly for elk and mule deer. Both offer public fishing on Rock Creek. Finally, both are quality habitat for numerous non-game species of mammals and birds that offer incredible wildlife watching and mid-elevation hiking opportunities. These are high quality wildlife lands that would be a major loss for the public.

In addition, these sections are currently accessible for walk-in access through Forest Service Trails 270 and 272. The overlap of roughly 20 feet between the sections establishes a public access between the two sections.

MWF understands the difficult position the Forest Service is in with so many inholdings of private land in the Crazy Mountains. However, we do not support trading lands that are quality wildlife habitat even when public access does not exist to them. In this instance, the access is there, and MWF sees it as in the best interest of the public to retain sections 4 and 8. We disagree with the assertion in the draft Environmental Assessment that this trade would improve public hunting and fishing opportunities.

With that said, we do support the other land trades in this proposal. We commend the Forest Service for continuing to attempt to resolve access issues in the Crazies.

Sincerely,