

Date submitted (Mountain Standard Time): 5/15/2019 12:56:10 PM

First name: I. Edward

Last name: Sondeno

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1: 1704 Kenyon

Address2:

City: Bozeman

State: MT

Province/Region:

Zip/Postal Code: 59715

Country: United States

Email: czymtn@gmail.com

Phone:

Comments:

Dear USFS:

The Forest Service should endeavor to retain the present wilderness values and character of the Crazy Mountain area, particularly the southern portion, which is in the better condition and is the most alpine. We have few 'island ranges' in MT and the Crazies are arguably the finest. While island ranges have value as 'high-ground' refuges for wildlife, altitude-dependent plants and ecosystems, and are often more accessible for human visitation, they are also vulnerable due to that accessibility, often being surrounded by development and private ownership, with multiple demands being placed on the resident resources (which is the case with the Crazies).

The Crazies hold outstanding alpine values, with rugged peaks, numerous lakes (many with fish populations), and a nice variety of larger and smaller wildlife. The resident mountain goat population (one of the few in Montana's island ranges) has recovered from its low-point of past years, pika are common at the higher elevations, and there are good resident populations of elk, mule deer, bear, etc. I have personally seen wolverine, cougar and bobcat in the Crazies as well. This is an exceptional bounty of natural resources to be contained in a relatively-small range, especially one that is readily accessible to human visitors in the space of a weekend, due to its compact nature.

The Crazies are in a location near a rapidly-growing user population with a rapidly-growing appetite for outdoor recreation - we need to retain the natural values of the Crazies (as well as other areas) to 'spread the wear' from these growing user pressures. Much of the rapid population growth in the Gallatin Valley and upper Yellowstone Valley is because of exactly the outdoor amenities that the Crazies offer. There is additional user pressure from Billings and the smaller communities around all sides of the Crazies as well.

There are issues and challenges in managing the area to retain its present condition, of course, due to the 'checkerboard' land-ownership, private inholdings, and what seems to be increasingly-contested public access. I advocated long ago the pursuit of land consolidation within the USFS boundaries of the Crazies, particularly the south end, via purchase and/or trade, to help resolve this matter, but we are pretty much in the same situation today as then. Such efforts should still be sought and pursued, despite the changes in property values and land-ownership trends that have occurred in recent decades. Effort and resources should be dedicated to pursuing the acquisition of key roadless portions in the interior of the range that are presently privately-held - those areas have value primarily as 'headwaters', wildlife habitat, and as wild-lands (as opposed to agricultural, timber, etc. uses), and public ownership would be the most appropriate status for them. In the meantime, USFS should maintain their present wilderness values, while maintaining/acquiring key public-access points at the perimeter.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.