



The Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation

Cramer Creek Land Exchange

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the project?

A land exchange proposal between The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) and MPG Ranch (MPG) that will exchange approximately 1,804.85 acres of legally inaccessible state trust lands for approximately 8,139.94 acres of legally accessible private forest lands that MPG would acquire from the Montana Checkerboard LLC. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is the managing member of the Montana Checkerboard LLC.

Where is the project located?

Missoula County (see the map for specific locations)

Who is involved in the project?

DNRC, MPG, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

How is The Nature Conservancy (TNC) involved?

For nearly twenty years, TNC has managed the Montana Checkerboard LLC property, approximately 8,139.94 acres that were historically corporate timber lands. If the Land Board approves of the exchange, MPG would purchase the 8,139.94 acres of land from the Montana Checkerboard LLC and simultaneously exchange it to DNRC. The land exchange between DNRC and MPG helps to facilitate TNC's goals of conservation and public ownership while ensuring that public access is guaranteed and ongoing forest management practices are continued.

Will DNRC develop the lands?

DNRC does not have any plans for development or sale of the lands. If the land exchange proceeds, DNRC would classify the lands as forested and actively manage the forest for health and wood products, leased grazing, and other revenue generating uses, to sustainably generate revenue for the trust beneficiaries.

Who are the trust beneficiaries?

The trust beneficiaries will be a combination of Common Schools and Capitol Buildings.

Will there be any management restrictions on the lands to be acquired?

Public recreation is often allowed on state trust lands with a conservation license from Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks. Recreational use rules for state trust lands will apply. More information can be found at <https://dnrc.mt.gov/TrustLand/public-use/>.

How can the public get involved?

The public will have up to six opportunities to provide public comment, as outlined below:

<u>Type of Public Involvement</u>	<u>Method to Comment</u>	<u>When it occurs?</u>
Initial Public Scoping	Email and written letters	Now
Public Meeting (If Deemed Necessary)	In-person comment and written statements	After initial scoping comments are reviewed
Land Board Preliminary Approval	In-person comment, letters and email written to the board prior to the meeting	After initial scoping (to be scheduled)
EA Scoping	Email and written letters	After Preliminary approval if granted
Public Hearing	In person comment and written statements	As part of the EA process
Land Board Final Approval	In-person comment, letters and email written to the Land Board prior to the meeting	After the EA is finalized, the exchange would be placed on the next available agenda

The public can see proposed maps and land exchange criteria at:

<https://dnrc.mt.gov/TrustLand/land-transactions-easements/LandExchanges/CRAMER-CREEK-LEX-2010> and provide comment via email to DNRCLandExchangePublic@mt.gov.

Who can the public reach out to with questions?

Send questions or concerns via email to DNRCLandExchangePublic@mt.gov

What is the benefit to the public?

The current proposal would exchange approximately 1,804.85 acres of legally *inaccessible* land for approximately 8,139.94 acres of what will be legally *accessible* land. If the exchange is completed, there would be an increase of 8,139.94 acres of legally accessible state trust land available for public recreation, with the purchase of a conservation license.

How does it benefit the state?

The proposed exchange preliminarily meets or exceeds several of the land exchange criteria, including an increase in land value, potential for greater income to the trust beneficiaries, a consolidation of land resulting in decreased management costs, the potential for long-term appreciation of the land, as well as an increase in access to lands for management purposes.

Why is the state receiving so much land?

The exchange is designed to both meet and exceed the criteria of the Land Board's land exchange policy. The goal is to promote exchanges which produce an advantage to the state trust funds. A good rule of thumb is that a proposal should be a "good deal" for the state.

What are state trust lands and how do they benefit Montana?

State trust lands were granted to Montana at statehood to generate revenue that supports Montana schools and other institutions. Under direction of the State Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board), the DNRC manages state trust lands to generate income through agriculture, grazing, timber, minerals, real estate, renewable energy leases and recreation licenses. The income is distributed to K-12 schools and other institutions.

What is the process for the exchange to be considered by the Land Board?

The Land Board has adopted a Land Exchange Policy which outlines the requirements of land exchanges and guides the DNRC in processing and reviewing of land exchange proposals. After initial public scoping, the land exchange proposal will be presented to the Land Board for consideration. If the exchange receives preliminary approval, DNRC will proceed with due diligence. Afterwards, the Land Board will make the final decision to complete the land exchange.

What else should we know about this topic?

State trust lands are managed under specific requirements to maximize revenue for trust beneficiaries and often have multiple uses with different rules and regulations than general public lands.