

File Code: 5460/2300

Date: September 19, 2013

Several months ago you were involved in and provided input regarding a potential exchange of easements in the North Fork drainage, north of Big Sky. We have read and re-read your comments and tried to digest all that you told us. We also told you that we would correspond with you about what we heard and how we were considering our next steps.

The Forest received over 120 individual comments about the potential exchange of road easements for trail access. Comments received were mixed (in support of and opposed to the proposal): Of those who expressed opposition, nearly 60% focused on the private home encroachment, rather than commenting on the proposal itself. Through reviewing these public responses and subsequent contact with interested groups and individuals, it has become evident to the Forest Service that the encroachment on Forest Road 166B must be resolved before the public and Forest Service can objectively evaluate any benefits of a community trail option in place of the current road access to National Forest system lands.

To this end, the Forest Service is suspending its work on the trail proposal to focus on working with the landowner to resolve the encroachment. There has been a lot of work on the part of the Forest Service, local land owners, and the Big Sky community over the last 11 years to try to find a public interest solution to these access issues. We understand the amount of time, energy and effort many people have put into resolving the encroachment and developing a trail proposal, and extend our gratitude for their continued involvement and patience. We also extend our thanks to you for participating in the public process, sharing valuable information with us, and being involved in important issues on your public lands. As always, we remain available if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,



Lisa M. Stoeffler
District Ranger

