



Public Notice Proposed Dana Ranch Land Exchange

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is evaluating a potential exchange of lands with the owners of the Dana Ranch. The Dana Ranch is located 33 miles south of Great Falls in Cascade and Meagher Counties. The school trust lands located within the boundary of the Dana Ranch are high quality grazing lands existing in a checkerboard pattern interspersed with adjacent private land. One school trust parcel of 320 acres has legal access via a county road; all other parcels, totaling 13,816 acres, are not legally accessible. These state lands have an estimated value of \$9,674,100 and currently produce \$67,125.00 in annual revenue. 11,249 acres are held in trust for the common school system and 2,887 acres are held in trust for MSU Morrill, for a total of 14,136 acres.

The private lands offered for exchange are located in Fergus County 10 miles southeast of the town of Winifred. The 14,405 acre farm / ranch consists of two separate and legally-accessible parcels, a smaller 1,280 acre parcel located along Highway 236 and a larger 13,125 acre parcel four miles due east. An additional 3,600 acres of public lands managed by the state and BLM would be made accessible through the exchange. The Dana Ranch has entered into a buy /sell agreement with the current owner, the X Hanging Diamond Ranch. If acquired by DNRC, the newly acquired lands would be leased back to the X Hanging Diamond Ranch at market rates. The property would continue to be managed for agriculture and livestock production and would be open to recreational use. The lands proposed for acquisition have an estimated value of \$12,500,000 and are projected to return \$200,000.00 annually to the respective trusts.

Lands initially considered for exchange area are displayed on the attached maps. Legal descriptions of the lands initially considered for exchange are displayed on the DNRC webpage @ <http://dnrc.mt.gov/Trust/REMB/Exchange/DanaRanch.asp>

At this time the DNRC invites public comment to identify potential issues of concern that merit review as this proposal is further considered by agency decision-makers. The DNRC will utilize comments received during this scoping process to help identify issues, and determine the appropriate level of environmental analysis necessary for the proposed land exchange. Note that if an exchange proceeds for further consideration and more detailed evaluation, then there will be multiple additional opportunities for public comment and participation, including public hearings in each effected county and the opportunity to comment on the environmental review and recommendation to the Montana State Land Board.

Please send written comments to:

Montana Dept. of Natural Resources
Attn: Dana Land Exchange
PO Box 201601
Helena, MT 59620-1601
or email DNRCDanaLandExchange@mt.gov

Comments on this scoping notice must be received by February 28, 2014.