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Deal would increase river access

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Rafters and other sportsmen may get a new access point to the Poudre River if a U.S. Forest Service land exchange goes through.

Roosevelt National Forest is working on a deal with a private landowner to acquire 41 acres of private land along the Poudre and Colorado Highway 14 less than a mile east of the Mishawaka Inn, in exchange for three small parcels of Forest Service land near Cherokee Park.

According to a Forest Service letter announcing the proposal last summer, the purpose of the land exchange is for the agency to make public a major private inholding within the Cache la Poudre Wild and Scenic River corridor.

The exchange will provide another public access point to the river while helping to consolidate private land interspersed with public land in the Cherokee Park area.

"Public access to the Poudre River is a good thing," said Gary Wockner of the Save the Poudre Coalition. "The more we can use, value and connect with the river, the more we will try to protect it."

A public comment period on the exchange may be announced in March. A final decision is expected in August, Forest Service spokes-man John Bustos said.