

**DATE:** September 14, 2022

**TO:** U.S. Department of Agriculture

**FROM:** Wade S. Mostoller, A Concerned U. S. Citizen and Montana Resident



**SUBJECT:** Holland Lake Lodge Facility Improvement & Expansion Project #61746

Hello,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed Holland Lake Lodge Facility Improvement & Expansion Project #61746.

I find the proposed project an interesting one. Yet no matter how interesting or how much money is spent or expected to be received in the form of temporary construction jobs to the community, additional jobs to the community to run the proposed facility after the construction has been completed, or even the revenue that may come as the result of the proposed project, this project is lacking careful and thoughtful consideration of **PUBLIC** resources in what appears as the desire for a hasty and predetermined decision. I say hasty because of the **LACK of PUBLIC** knowledge about and of this project proposal up until it first appeared on the U.S. Forest Service's website Sept 01, 2022 for public comment that was to end on Sept 21, 2022. And, I say predetermined decision because, it has been reported and printed in an article by the nearby local Montana Missoula Current News that, and I quote, "Public comment might not do much to change the project. Flathead National Forest Supervisor Kurtis Steele indicated that he would probably use a categorical exclusion to approve the project, because the proposal involves construction on a recreation site that already has buildings on it." (Refer to Missoula Current News article easily found by clicking on this link: <https://missoulacurrent.com/holland-lake-lodge/> )

Those that know are aware that **IF** the comment given by Flathead National Forest Supervisor Kurtis Steele indeed happens and a categorical exclusion is granted to this project, as he has already said that he may do, then the Forest Service won't conduct an environmental assessment or impact statement, and the scoping period will be the only opportunity for the public to provide comment. For Mr. Steele to publicly making such a comment to be published clearly appears as if he DOES NOT have the best interest of the public in mind. Furthermore, his comment, knowing full well of its potential impact on this project, makes this citizen question his stewardship of public resources as well as wonder if he is the best person for the job of being the Flathead National Forest Supervisor. I consider Mr. Steele's quoted comment as reckless for his position in the U.S. Forest Service and **FURTHER** evidence that a hasty decision looms as the direction that this project is going to take regardless of what the public may request or want over this and maybe other public lands.

The above referenced article further mentions comments made by Justin Sibley, CEO of POWDR, said the changes to the existing Holland Lake complex, would be soulful. POWDR is the company who partnered with Holland Lake Lodge, Inc., and came up with a development plan that they submitted to the Forest Service in April 2022. It was reported that "POWDR has built its brand on the premise of delivering soulful experiences that matter to guests and reflect the local community. Holland Lake Lodge is a soulful place, where families

spend time in the outdoors with the people they love. We look forward to continuing this legacy.” It is without a doubt that not taking the time to perform an environmental assessment AND provide an economic impact statement that the published comment from POWDR about wanting to deliver soulful experiences that matter to the local community as well as its guests would be blatantly not a true statement.

**I URGE THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE** to act in a professional manner and in the public’s best interest with regard to the decision-making process going forward about the Holland Lake Lodge Facility Improvement & Expansion Project #61746 and insist on the production of a full disclosure environmental assessment, transportation impact assessment, and economic impact assessment with regard to this project. I also urge to U.S. Forest Service to act responsibly and to continue to act in the good faith of the people of the United States and Montana as the steward of our precious public resources knowing that those resources are not limitless. The residents of Montana and the people from other states that visit this Holland Lake area of Montana value that “soulful experience” and continue to want to experience it. I am not against thoughtful improvements and upgrades but am against hasty, reckless decisions without regard to consideration being taken to public comment nor justifiable assessments being done. Once the peaceful and tranquil environment that the Holland Lake facilities now have along with the area surrounding it is altered, and it will be unequivocally altered by the current sheer breadth of scope of this proposed project, it will no doubt require former visitors and future visitors, if this project is approved as it currently is proposed, to redefine a new definition of what a peace and tranquil mean. That redefinition absolutely would not be in alignment with the “soulful experience” people now experience while visiting there. It is clear to me that making a hasty uninformed decision, without the assessments I urgently recommend herein, is **NOT** in the best stewardship of the public land here in the State of Montana nor is it in the best interest of the overall public as a whole.

I hope you are willing to read and take my comments as written here into account in your future decisions regarding the Holland Lake Lodge Facility Improvement & Expansion Project #61746.

Respectfully,

Wade S. Mostoller