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First name: Ted

Last name: Muhs

Organization:

Title:

Comments: The Forest Service's proposal to greatly expand Holland Lake Lodge's footprint as described in the USFS' Facility Expansion Project scoping document seems incongruent with FS's mission and mandate to be, above all else, responsible stewards of our federal wildlands. The proposed project also appears to have progressed in a manner that lacks transparency which also seems out of character with the FS's commitment to being responsive to those concerns shared by all stakeholders.

Some, but not all, of the following concerns have been insufficiently addressed in the Proposed Facility Expansion Project:

-The proposed 13,000 sq. ft. lodge and 3,000 sq. ft. restaurant would dominate Holland Lake's shoreline and be highly visible from many otherwise pristine vantage points.

-A resort-sized complex is simply out of character with Holland Lake's natural beauty, and its residents' vision of a wild valley.

-Increased noise pollution concerns have not been adequately addressed. Noise from large gatherings at the existing lodge often carries across the lake to the Day Use Area.

-The impacts to Holland Lake's wintering grounds for elk and deer have not been adequately addressed, especially if a 4-seasons resort is considered in the future. A 4-seasons resort would increase winter recreation such as snowmobiling that could impact sensitive wildlife, especially when concentrated near the lake during those months.

-The Valley serves as home and a vital corridor for wildlife including species of concern and those under federal protection for connectivity between two designated wilderness areas.

-Many full and part-time residents are themselves active stewards of their land, some having placed a considerable percentage of the Swan Valley's private lands in conservation easement status. Such a resort would attract an even greater influx of visitors to an already maxed out valley.

-Human/bear encounters and conflicts would increase.

-Employee housing and its impact on the surrounding forest lands and watershed have not been adequately addressed.

-A seasonally-based transient employee population would not necessarily share Swan Valley residents' values with respect to responsible, low impact recreation.

-Holland Lake lies within a watershed that supports a federally protected bull trout population. What would impacts be on water quality both within and flowing from Holland Lake?

-Aside from trailhead parking expansion and improved trailhead waste facilities, what consideration has been given to increased pressure on established trails including the Holland Falls trail? (The Falls overlook is badly eroded)

-The proposed expansion and increased guest and employee capacity would require refuse and sanitation

considerations that could negatively impact wildlife and tourism experiences including increased bear conflicts and foul smells emanating from settling ponds.

-The Valley enjoys very low light pollution - To what degree would a greatly expanded facility impact our night viewing?

-With no apparent Environmental Impact Assessment planned, how would you address the possibility of effluent that may increase pollution and turbidity which could influence the health of Swan River's aquatic ecosystems and its proposed future designation as a Wild and Scenic river?

-The vast majority of public comments from both full-time and part-time residents are thus far opposed to an expansion project of this magnitude - How are these concerns being addressed? Will there be an extended comment period and future venues for public input? Will all voices be heard and considered including those of SKCT Peoples who also have a stake in this matter?

-To what degree have Missoula County commissioners been informed of this proposal? What are their responsibilities and role in this process? How could additional infrastructure development such as road improvements necessitate an increase in our property taxes?

-The Valley's highway takes a significant toll on wildlife and poses hazards for motorists. How would increased traffic entering and exiting HWY 83 exacerbate this existing problem?

Considering that many of the above-mentioned concerns have not been adequately addressed, an Environmental Impact Assessment is critical prior to any further advancement of this expansion project.

The mystique and allure of the Swan Valley lie in its remoteness, its abundant nature, its diverse and considerably intact ecosystems, and its rustic charm. These qualities have drawn locals and tourists alike to Holland Lake and the Swan Valley for over 100 years. The vast majority of full-time and part-time residents do not want the Valley developed in a resort-style manner, especially by out-of-state interests who put profits above maintaining the natural integrity of the Swan Valley, specifically that of Holland Lake and its surrounding ecosystems. For those seeking a country club experience we have Big Fork and Whitefish not far away. Such a grandiose development scheme would forever change the character of Holland Lake, a jewel in the crown of our Swan Valley; it would diminish the Swan's rustic charm with potentially negative impacts on its waters and surrounding wildlands at a time when the Valley is already suffering the stress of increased development and tourism.

The existing lodge and infrastructure are in obvious need of repairs, maintenance and upgrades. A scaled down plan in keeping with our values and vision of the Swan Valley would maintain the charm of Holland Lake and avoid the irrevocable impacts created by a vastly expanded resort such as the USFS' proposed Facility Expansion Project.

Sincerely,

Ted L. Muhs