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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am strongly opposed to the proposal to expand the Holland Lake Lodge. I am a Montanan with family in the Swan Valley, and spend the vast majority of my time in the Swan Valley when not in Missoula. The Swan Valley, located in between two of our country's largest and most pristine wildernesses, is and always has been characterized by its wildness. In a state witnessing, in the face of growing tourism and immigration, rapid transformation and development, the Swan's wildness remains its most precious asset - an asset which CANNOT be improved upon through the expansion of tourist facilities.

I cannot see how the land or its inhabitants can benefit from the expansion of luxury tourist facilities in the Swan. This is a policy directly benefitting wealthy tourists at the expense of locals. When I say locals bear the expense, I mean in terms of increased traffic, pollution, and ecological strain placed on the natural resources in and around the Holland Lake area. Additionally, I fear that this expansion would herald the development of a tourist industry in the Swan that we have heretofore avoided, but have observed time and time again throughout our state - in Missoula, Bozeman, and the nearby Flathead Valley. While the ways increased tourism and immigration from out-of-state have impacted these communities have not all been bad, it is clear that, at the very least, they have disrupted the way of life of many local people. We have seen this movie before: first the tourist industry, then the transplants, property taxes and rent rise, and local people, financially constrained, are compelled to leave their homes.

I am not such a protectionist that I will advocate denying all outsiders access to our state. Montana's wilderness is a resource we are lucky to have, and I am proud to share it with others. However, this can be done in ways that are minimally disruptive to our fragile, pristine ecosystems and our traditional ways of life. Expanding camping access and trail maintenance are fine; enabling high impact luxury development is a travesty. I do not ask you to discourage would-be visitors, only that you do not enable and encourage development that serves outsiders at the expense of Montanans. Please, leave the luxury resorts to Big Sky and Whitefish. If we do not remain vigilant to preserve Montana's remaining wild places, before we know it, the greatest resource we have will disappear.

I ask you to stop plans to expand the Holland Lake Lodge as a Montanan and a conservationist. Better yet, terminate the lease the lodge holds and use the site to re-establish Holland Lake as a resource for the PUBLIC, not for a select few of wealthy tourists. Please, do not enable the selling out of our state's wild places. My deep thanks are with you for attending to the concerns of myself and other Montanans.