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Title:

Comments: My name is Chelsea and I am a concerned Montana citizen that grew up in the Swan Valley near Holland Lake. I am sharing my story and perspective in hopes that it will make a difference in decisions being made regarding the proposed expansion at Holland Lake Lodge. I am against the expansion aspect proposed by Powdr due to the potential for a negative impact on the local ecosystem and community, as well as my personal love and respect for the natural beauty and atmosphere of the forest service land surrounding Holland Lake.

Looking at the proposed plans by Powdr, I completely understand the draw-I understand their desire to capitalize on the beauty of that spot and share it with the world. I don't blame them for that. However, the amount of access their large project would provide the public to Holland Lake's shores would also injure the very nature of what makes that spot so compelling and treasured to visitors and would harm the land itself, as well as its inhabitants.

As a youth in the Swan Valley, I volunteered time at the local Ecosystem Center in Condon. I along with other young people my age learned to measure pH balances in the local lakes and streams, documented wildlife and plants, and helped clear dying underbrush to preserve the forests and lakes as well as prevent forest fires. Those projects gave me the opportunity to see the affects high foot traffic and human population in more rural areas, and it led me to believe that the wilderness areas we have left in Montana are important to protect. There aren't many states in the U.S. that have so much untouched wilderness, and I believe that bringing a large, modern resort to the valley would negatively impact the local flora, fauna, and wildlife. Often, tourism brings in larger numbers of people who don't respect the land or wildlife, who litter and impact the health of the soil and water. It slowly forces the local wildlife out and chokes the natural beauty that drew people there in the first place.

I also recognize the potential for monetary growth due to a resort coming to that area, but would argue that it would more negatively impact the community than it could ever positively impact it. I have witnessed the positives and negatives of the speedy growth and pouring in of newcomers to the Kalispell area, but I can't imagine the Swan Valley undergoing and surviving similar growing pains. Kalispell was always set to expand with its large valley and vast, easily accessible/buildable acreage. Even so, the community has struggled to manage the influx of people. It has vastly changed the atmosphere, the housing market, and the service industry's ability to keep up with rising demands. It has certainly brought a potential for economic boom to the area, but has consequently made life more difficult for many native Montanans and locals in various ways-it's harder for the people who actually value the land itself and want to protect the nature and beauty of the area to live here and care for the land.

I believe that bringing a large resort to the Swan Valley would have a much more devastating impact on that community than Kalispell's massive, rapid growth could ever negatively impact the Flathead Valley. Holland Lake and the Swan Valley have long been a sanctuary for locals, travelers, and wildlife alike because it isn't busy and it offers a sense of natural wilderness and ruggedness. It already gets its own fair share of tourism in the summer, but not the onslaught seen in Glacier. The people who live there and the people who visit chose it because it offers an opportunity to experience a place that's almost entirely untouched by the fast pace and crowds of the rest of our world and they like it that way. And from my time studying the ecosystem in that area, I believe that the land and wildlife also depend on it staying that way.

Since much of the land in question regarding Powdr's expansion project is Forest service land, it is my request that the Forest Service take into account the environmental impact that this project will have on the local ecosystem. As a Montana citizen, I call for environmental impact studies and a recognition of the local community desires and how this project will affect their way of life before making any decisions to allow an out-of-state corporation to make decisions regarding land that we, as Montana locals, have the task of protecting. Montana is

known for its untouched wilderness areas, and I would argue that Holland Lake is a state treasure that allows people to experience what it feels like when nature is barely touched, and it would be a disservice to our state to alter its current state.

As for my personal feelings about that area-I grew up in the Swan Valley, just down the road from Holland Lake. One of my earliest memories of moving into that valley was hiking up to Holland Falls with my family and just taking in the grandeur of the lake view from up there. My parents moved me and my three siblings to Montana from Orlando, FL in an attempt to remove us from the rat race and help us get in touch with a more peaceful way of living without the bombardment of media and instant gratification entertainment. They specifically chose the Swan Valley because they wanted us to experience nature in its purest, quietest form, and I can honestly say that I am intensely grateful for that experience. As a 7-year-old girl with anxiety, Holland Lake was a healing space for me... it was relatively accessible compared to other lakes in the area that require a bit of a hike, but it was set back into the wilderness enough to be quiet, still, and intensely calm/peaceful. Every summer, there would be a few motor boats either fishing or pulling skiers/tubers, but not enough to touch that wilderness feel... which, if you were the skier or tuber, made it an incredible experience... as if you were skiing an untouched frontier on par with Glacier National Park. And honestly, due to its quiet wilderness atmosphere, it surprised me every summer to remember that motor boats were allowed on Holland Lake because it has always had a such similar feel to the protected lakes in Glacier.

To this day, I can close my eyes and envision the stillness of the lake as if I'm right there again... sitting in a canoe or on the dock off the peninsula by Holland Lodge... it was so quiet that it almost created a sense of reverence. As kids, even in our rowdiest stages, it brought a sense of awe to our hearts that captivated us on the edge of the lake, compelling us to quietly skip stones on the glassy surface of the water, or to speak in more hushed tones than we could ever be convinced to use in any other situation aside from church. And yet, it wasn't an oppressive feeling. It was my first chance to absorb the feeling that nature is big, beautiful, and can envelop your entire being. To have that be a continual part of my community shaped who I am today and my respect for all land... not just nationally protected parks.

Holland Lake became such a place of calm for our family that we would take all our guests there to hike as a rule. And every one of those guests found the same sense of calm and would talk about the memories we made there more than any others in The Valley for years to come. They would marvel over its beauty and the fact that it felt so untouched, yet was so easy to visit.

In fact, when my great aunt from the Dallas, Texas area learned that she had terminal pancreatic cancer, her first wish was to visit Holland Lake and stay in the Lodge to experience that peace and view one more time before she died... not Glacier National Park, not Whitefish... Holland Lake. She had visited us there years before with her own mother before her passing and never got over the quietude of the Holland Lodge Peninsula. She loved that it was a little more secluded and gave her time to think without the pressing crowds of tourists that pour into national parks and other such places.

When I first started dating my husband, we weren't currently living in Montana, but the first trip we took together was to Holland Lake to visit the lodge and the falls. He was a Cali boy, and I had to share what had become a gem of my childhood with him so he could experience what my young heart had fallen in love with... to show him why I mourned when my family had to move away in my teens.

I have known for quite some time that the Lodge was for sale... our family was close friends with the former owners, father and son. We were part of a small, intimate gathering invited to Christian's father's funeral in the lodge, and it was then that we knew the lodge would eventually sell. However, I never dreamed it would change hands in a way that would change the atmosphere of the lake entirely.

I'm not against necessary updates to buildings currently standing in the Holland Lake Lodge area, but feel very

strongly that further expansion would mar what is currently a sanctuary in the heart of Montana. I would be heartbroken to see such a change being permitted by our local Forest Service.