

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/15/2022 2:07:40 PM

First name: Mike

Last name: Young

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the proposed expansion of the Holland Lake Lodge.

I'm a fairly recent arrival to Montana, having retired here about 3 years ago, but I've hiked to Holland Falls several times and have enjoyed the relative quiet and scenic beauty of the area. Tellingly, I don't even recall noticing the Lodge as I drove in to the trailhead - so its footprint is currently pretty unobtrusive! I was surprised to learn of the proposed project, which sounds like a major expansion of the current lodge, and was even more surprised to hear that the Forest Service is even considering advancing the project under a Categorical Exclusion. Having looked through the documentation describing the kinds of activities that would be appropriate for a Categorical Exclusion, particularly item (22) dealing with "construction, ....., or improvements at an existing recreation site", it seems that this designation is intended only for relatively minor updates to existing features, not for the construction of large new buildings or multiple new cabins. I strongly encourage the Forest Service to conduct a full Environmental Assessment of the project which, after all, lies in close proximity to the wild Swan Front and the Bob Marshall Wilderness area. To me, this doesn't seem like an appropriate location for a substantially expanded "resort".

While I know that the Covid pandemic has led to increased use of many recreational sites and that some expansion of recreational infrastructure may be inevitable, this appears to be a short-sighted attempt to push through a development that would primarily benefit the lodge/resort owners at the expense of significant public interest in keeping the site only minimally developed. I'd much prefer to see a forest-wide strategic plan put together to respond to increased recreational use in ways that would limit the impact on special places like Holland Lake.