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Comments: We are writing to you in response to the request for public comment on the proposed major development at Holland Lake.

Like many Montanans and non-Montana visitors to Holland Lake, we have enjoyed the unique environment of the quiet and pristine lake, hiking trails, and Holland Falls. As reported in the Seeley Swan Pathfinder, the proposed development is designed to accommodate as many as 156 overnight visitors, a lodge with 28 rooms, 10 lake cabins, 16 studio cabins, a welcome center, a restaurant constructed next to the existing lodge with seating for up to 130 guests, a new watersport building, a maintenance building, and housing for up to 12 employees, with associated parking for 126 vehicles. The sheer size of the proposed expansion will transform Holland Lake into a commercial enterprise in which the fundamental character of Holland Lake will be irretrievably lost.

What is particularly distressing is that the Forest Service intends to fast track any meaningful environmental review with a categorical assessment, which, as you know, is appropriate if the action of approving the project does not have a significant effect on the human environment. "Human environment" is defined as "comprehensively the natural and physical environment and the relationship of present and future generations of Americans with that environment." 40 C.F.R. 1508.1(m). We have concerns that the proposed development will have a significant impact as contemplated by applicable law. As Wildlife Biologist Katie Mally of the Swan Lake Ranger District noted, again as reported in the Pathfinder, "Holland is a really unique place for the loons." She went on to say, "This is a very highly used recreational lake. That trail gets a lot of recreation use, and the loon nest right by the trail." If, as Ms. Mally notes, Holland Lake is already a popular and highly used area, with high bear activity, the return of loons, and wildlife habitat, the substantial expansion of facilities will only exacerbate her concerns with the impacts on wildlife. We suggest that an Environmental Assessment would be the appropriate means for the Forest Service to evaluate the extent of the impacts on wildlife, the lake itself, and the ecosystem of the area. Only after a more thorough environmental analysis can a decision document be produced which evaluates the purpose and need for the proposed development, the alternatives as required by NEPA, and the environmental impacts of the proposed development and alternatives. And, as noted earlier in these comments, a substantial increase in the number of visitors and recreationists around the lake will have an impact not only now, but also on future generations.

In conclusion, before a project of this magnitude is permitted to go forward, we believe it is incumbent on the Forest Service to undertake a more thorough and rigorous evaluation of the pending proposal and any alternatives.