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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Background

My family has been utilizing the Holland Lake area for 4 generations. We have observed the changes of adding the Larch Loop, Group Area, Public swimming area, improvements of the boat launch, and sewage system in the Bay Loop. Holland Falls trail improvements and addition of the packer's camp/trail head did much to reduce the interaction on the trails between hikers and horseback users. Twice we have split our family group as we grew in numbers and overburdened the facilities. We soon face another split. We have witnessed the changes in the wildlife, fowl, and fish. Deer and bear have always been active in the area. Eagles and loons are on a significant increase and provide wonderful opportunities for observation. Fish have slowly improved from very few to a fairly healthy number of perch and trout.

Kurt Steels justification of the Holland Lake Lodge expansion on the grounds the existing facilities are not keeping up with the significant demand for recreation amenities is not appropriate as there is significant demand for more campground sites also. There is significant competition for sites. A majority of the time there are no reserved sites available for even 6 months in advance. The constant traffic around the campground loops from campers hoping to find a walk in site also shows the demand far exceeds the availability. The question cannot be how high the demand is but must be how many users the area can accommodate without damage to the resource. Equal access for all types of users must also be a major consideration.

Proposal has significant impacts on lake

This Special Use Permit is not similar to those issued to snow ski resorts. Ski resorts are given use permits that apply to all lodges and buildings as well as the entire ski run area. Specific boundaries are established, signed, and policed to ensure the resort customers do not go off the resort area and the public does not enter the resort area. In the Holland Lake Lodge Special Use Permit there are no signed boundaries, and the resort customers definitely will leave the Permit area to utilize the lake. The lake and surrounding area must be included in the impact studies.

Today Holland is a multiple recreational use area. Area users utilize the lake and the surrounding trails. By far the most highly utilized trail is the one to Holland Falls.

Motorboats (water ski, wake board, surf, tube, fish), canoe, kayak, paddle board, and swim are all types of recreation accommodated by the lake. Observation of birds and wildlife on and around the lake are also very popular recreation. These different types of use have been for the most part accommodated without encroachment on each other.

In the mid 1980's when the wave runner use was at its peak there was very high use of the lake and numerous conflicts. Wave runner operators love to play on the wake of motorized boats which is not an issue unless the boat is towing someone behind (ski, wake board, surf, or tube). Then a very real safety concern arises as the skier may fall and has a good chance of being run over by the wave runner. When the paddle board and kayak became very popular the wave runner numbers went down significantly and so did the conflicts. Motorboats can easily swamp canoes, kayaks, and paddle boards. Ample room for the operators of all craft to maintain distance from each other is crucial for safety. The wave runner numbers in the past becoming a safety issue points out to me how critical the number of lake users is and how close we often come in the present situation. As long as the numbers of motorized boats, canoes, kayaks, and paddle boards stays in a reasonable balance Holland can accommodate all uses.

This last summer some of my family and myself were canoe/kayaking along the north shore of the lake and came upon a party that had rented two canoes from the lodge. With no experience using canoes they had stood up in one of them and capsized the boat. We took one of the dunked young ladies into our canoe, helped them move the capsized canoe to shallow water and emptied the water out. We gathered their personal gear and paddles which were strewn about the lake and helped them reenter the canoe. We gave them a little operating advice and sent them on their way a little shaken but hopefully to have a good experience in the end.

Risks are low of motorboats swamping non-motorized craft because ample room is available and operators can make efforts to avoid each other. Exceptions do occur such as the lodge guests with rented canoe/kayaks tend to navigate straight across the lake intersecting the "normal pattern" of other users making safe distance difficult at times.

This past summer two of our grandsons had kayaked near the lodge and were wading while fishing. A "lady from the lodge" confronted them and told them they had to leave. When they objected and stated as long as they stayed below the high water mark they could fish there she told them they were on private property and had to leave. This is a clear overreach of the Special Use Permit and demonstrates the type of conflicts that arise and will increase if the number of lake users significantly increases.

Overburdening of lake recreation opportunities can easily happen simply by providing an unacceptable number of users access to the lake at the same time. Tripling the capacity of the Holland Lake Lodge capacity will have this very effect. If the lodge is allowed to triple their capacity the management options will be to limit number or participants, eliminate use by type, or ignore it and accept the safety concerns and bad relationships then deal with them with law enforcement.

Proposal has significant impact on the surrounding area

Holland Lake today offers great opportunities to observe eagles soaring and fishing. Loons are a great delight to watch as broods swim and feed particularly in the shallow bays. Listening to them call in the mornings and evenings is also part of the overall experience. The shallow bays also provide wonderful opportunities to see turtles, frogs, small fish, and herons. Increased numbers of observers would jeopardize these experiences. The Holland Falls trail is by far the highest utilized trail in the area. Even today it needs serious maintenance to repair bridges, prevent and repair washed out sections, and repair expansion of stabilization sections. With increased use some type of stabilization at the falls site will have to be done to prevent significant damage.

Summary

I understand the changing expectations of area guests and therefore have no problem allowing for a well supervised remodel or replacement of existing accommodations. However, expansion of accommodations for increased numbers of area users significantly risks overburdening the resources and must be carefully and fully studied. In my opinion the expansion should not be allowed.