

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/23/2022 4:22:58 PM

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Organization: Upper Swan Valley Historical Society, Inc.

Title: President

Comments:

September 22, 2022

Flathead National Forest

Attn: Kurt Steele, Forest Supervisor, Shelly Mavor, Project Leader

Dear Mr. Steele and Ms. Favor,

Please accept the following comments on the proposed Holland Lake Lodge Expansion Project on behalf of the Upper Swan Valley Historical Society, Inc. (USVHS)

The mission of the USVHS is to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the Swan Valley. The USVHS is concerned with retaining the historic and cultural integrity of the Holland Lake Lodge, gift shop, barn, and surrounding forest. The historic and rustic atmosphere of the Holland Lake Lodge would be jeopardized if the proposed plan were carried out.

In the past several years, an alarming trend has been occurring in the Swan Valley. Many new residents have destroyed or removed historic structures from their newly acquired properties, including homestead buildings and structures from the early-day settlement in the upper Swan Valley. The Holland Lake Lodge expansion proposal would continue this trend by destroying the oldest building on the site, the present-day gift shop building which originally was the first owner's house. Although the owner's log house built in 1924 had several modifications and additions throughout the years, the original log building should be preserved, preferably in its original location. A less desirable option would be to move it to a new location on the site. Any rotten timbers could be replaced. Several log home builders in the Swan Valley can perform that task. Swan Valley Logcrafters did a remarkable job on a homestead-era building at the Swan Valley Museum.

Also, the proposed 3,000-square-foot dining facility adjoining the lodge is not compatible with the historic integrity of the lodge. Based on the drawing in Figure 3, the Mission Mountains Restaurant appears to dwarf the lodge and completely changes the traditional character of the lodge. Instead, the Holland Lake Lodge and possibly other buildings should be considered for National Historic Register status.

The proposed Holland Lake Lodge expansion would also negatively impact the cultural integrity of the area. The traditional quiet setting that Holland Lake Lodge has offered since the 1920s would be undermined.

Our community's strong connection to Holland Lake Lodge is steeped in history. As early as the 1890s, Ben Holland (Holland Lake's namesake) offered horse pack trips into the wilderness from his homestead nearby. In 1924 Art and Ada White, along with Ada's brother Roria "Babe" Wilhelm built the original Mountain View Hotel (later known as the Holland Lake Lodge). Most of the lumber for the construction of the hotel was provided by Babe's sawmill. The Whites did the hotel work, while Babe did the horse packing and guiding into the South Fork Primitive area. Horse packing and backcountry camping attracted visitors from far and wide, yet, these time-honored traditions were a valued way of life. Today the many descendants of Babe Wilhelm who continue to live and work in the Swan Valley epitomize the traditional way of life, rooted in the past. Visitors to Holland Lake Lodge value these time-honored traditions.

The sheer size of the project with too many new buildings and too few trees left standing, with only a fraction of the original historic structures left standing jeopardizes the historic and cultural integrity of the lodge and its surroundings. If this expansion project moves forward, please consider a much-reduced version of the present proposal.

Sincerely,

Steve Lamar

USVHS President