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First name: Lilly

Last name: Tuholske

Organization:

Title:

Comments: When my late husband and I moved from Missoula to the Blackfoot Valley six years ago, we added the Seeley-Swan area to our already rich list of Montana places to recreate. Previously, we had spent countless days hiking, climbing and backcountry skiing in the Bitterroot and Beartooth Mountains, as well as in the Pintlars, the Rocky Mountain front range and many other of Montana's treasured wilderness and recreation areas. Our love of Montana's wild places ran deep.

After moving to the Blackfoot Valley in 2016, we took a hike to Upper Holland Lake. We had our new dog in tow, and we were joined by my sister and her husband, who were visiting from Vermont, and our son, who was born and raised in Montana. I don't recall ever being as proud of Montana as I was that day, all of us awed by the gorgeous terrain, tall trees and Holland and Upper Holland lakes. It was an early September day and we had the place to ourselves.

Previously, we had attended a lovely wedding at Holland Lake Lodge, and we confided in one another how wonderful it would be to someday witness one our sons' marriage in that simple but stunning facility. The day of our hike to Upper Holland, we recalled how we had fallen in love with the area at our friends' wedding years back.

Since then, I have hiked to Holland Falls with a friend. Our sole goal that day was to view the stunning yellow larch that decorated the mountains on a cool fall day. Other times, I camped on Holland Lake with my children and grandchildren, with the kids swimming until darkness overtook the beachfront and we retreated to the campground as the air turned too cool.

Hearing of the fast track that POWDR's proposed Holland Lake project is on, the extent of the proposed new lodge, cabins on the lakeshore and probable traffic, not only on the Blackfoot Highway (Highway 200) but more than likely overhead (already my peaceful Blackfoot Valley property is disrupted by helicopters flying clients to the Paws Up facility), I am left alarmed and baffled and at present, deeply opposed to this project. Certainly, given the sensitive nature of the lake itself, the numerous species of wildlife and plants, and the placid feel the area currently holds, a categorical exclusion to the Environmental Policy Act seems wildly inappropriate, if not in direct violation. I urge the U.S. Forest Service to slow down and take a hard look with deep analysis before letting this project go further. What is more, allow time for thoughtful public comment on all aspects of the proposal.