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First name: Mary

Last name: Shaw

Organization:

Title:

Comments: General recommendation to Flathead National Forest:

Please stop trying to push plans through with the minimum public review required by law. Instead, become a partner with the community as the manager of our public lands. We see ourselves as stewards of the public lands we live near, recreate on, work in and hold dear. Please acknowledge that and respect us as a partner.

As a year-round resident of the Swan Valley, protection of this rare, wild ecosystem is of great importance to me. I believe strongly that we need to increase management of recreation as demand is increasing. We need more infrastructure, more trail maintenance, more public education and more enforcement of laws related to forest use by the public to maintain a sustainable level of recreation pressure and protect the land and native flora and fauna.

I feel that the current proposal for Holland Lake Lodge Facility Improvement and Expansion has a commendable focus on conservation and sustainable recreation but will inevitably have a substantial impact on the environment of Holland Lake and surrounding areas that needs to be identified, minimized and mitigated.

I am in support of many aspects of the proposal:

1. Powdr is a conservation and community-minded company that will likely be a good steward of the resources they control and impact.
2. Improved infrastructure to better manage current demand at Holland Lake Lodge is needed.
3. Greater public access to a restaurant, boat rentals, and other non-motorized recreation resources is a value add to the community.
4. I greatly appreciate conservation related elements: non-motorized, night sky protection, conservation education, energy efficiency, recycling, bear conflict management, wastewater management, wildfire risk management.
5. I appreciate the plan's attention to providing some affordable lodging - this promotes diversity in access to recreation and is of value to the community as such a resource is nearly nonexistent currently.
6. I support an expansion to provide adequate revenue for a sustainable business, affordable to a diverse customer base.

Concerns and Objections

I have concerns about the size of proposed expansion and feel that further environmental assessment or EIS is needed, specifically:

1. Endangered/threatened species impact and winter range impact for them and other species. Grizzly bears will be impacted along with Bull Trout and Loons and potentially Canada Lynx
2. Bear conflict increase - impact on wildlife, recreation and local resident safety. Even with bear proof trash containers, guest will fail to use them and will provide attractants and opportunities for conflict simply by nature of more people with lack of awareness on the landscape.
3. Quality of recreation impact by increased use of lake, trails and roads
4. Water quality including invasive species introduction, fishing pressure on bull trout and wastewater management
5. Shoreline, wildlife and quality of recreation experience impacts by potential increase in motorized use

For all these potential impacts, I am concerned about increased winter use which is a new use of the facility and surrounding area. Of particular concern is snow machine recreation which clearly would impact winter range for a variety of wildlife including Canada lynx and wolverine.

Questions:

1. Will winter recreation also be focused on non-motorized forms such as xc skiing and snowshoeing?
2. If not, where are the best opportunities for snow machine recreation in the area? Will impact on those areas be assessed?
3. Will snow machines be available for rent? Will parking be provided for private snow machine trailers?
4. Would/could Holland Lake Lodge consider facilitating heliskiing or other backcountry winter adventure sports in the area for their guests?
5. Will facilities for private motorized boat moorage and/or trailer parking be provided?
ATV facilities?

Recommendations:

1. Complete further environmental impact analysis including robust opportunities for community involvement.
2. Ensure that impacts found in that process will be adequately addressed through changes to the development plan or other actions by the Forest Service or appropriate agency to mitigate them including securement of funds necessary to do so.
3. Ensure that USFS revenue is directed to increased recreation management in the Holland Lake and surrounding impacted areas
4. Do not allow private motorized watercraft moorage.
5. Consider phased development of expansion
6. Provide as little as possible infrastructure that could support motorized recreation vehicle use.
7. Market this resort as quiet wilderness retreat, discourage motorized recreation of any kind.
8. Do not allow provision or facilitation of services for customers that might contribute to significant impacts not assessed through the scoping process. (e.g. heliskiing, snowcat touring)
9. Consider reduced capacity during winter to conserve energy and assess/reduce impacts.

Ideas:

1. Reduce the footprint a little by developing employee housing off site.
2. Develop a few units of family-sized housing for year-round employees. This would be an enormous benefit to the community!
3. If you plan to allow dogs, provide a dog walking potty place that will be cleaned or otherwise prevented from polluting water. Also provide pet waste bags for taking on trails as well as on site. Provide kennels so dogs don't always need to be taken on trails (especially winter).
4. Work around or replace trees removed for parking areas. Make the parking areas forested.
5. Encourage guests to close window coverings at night when lights are on to reduce light pollution from rooms.