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First name: Larry

Last name: Russell

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

October 1, 2022

Kurtis E. Steele

Flathead National Forest Supervisor

Re: Holland Lake Lodge Facility Expansion

Dear Mr. Steele,

I have been visiting the Holland Lake area for over 25 years and return there repeatedly for the sheer beauty and peace that I feel when I am there. The Holland Lake Lodge has always been there; although, I have never felt that it was a good fit for this beautiful place. Now, Christian Wohlfeil, the permit holder, is proposing an expansion with the help of the out-of-state POWDR Master Development Plan, to include a new 13,000 sq. foot lodge directly on the shoreline, along with 26 additional cabins, a Welcome Center, floating docks, employee housing and many more additional structures. This upscale, four-season resort expansion does not belong at Holland Lake!

I worked for the U.S. Forest Service for 34 years and served as an ID team member on numerous large and small projects. Your intentions "to categorically exclude the proposed project from an EIS or EA assessment" from proper NEPA analysis with full public involvement is at best very poor judgement on your part. You need a reminder that public lands do not belong to the U.S. Forest Service, and that they are owned by the American people and are to be managed and protected by your Agency for the greater good. A full EA, at a minimum, is the required NEPA for this scale of proposed development. The potential effects on existing extraordinary circumstances such as multiple threatened, proposed, and sensitive fish and wildlife species, and the effects on critical habitat (especially considering this entity's proposal for expanding winter use and anticipated additional proposals). I also urge that you develop an alternative to the POWDR proposal that maintains the current existing footprint of the historic Holland Lake Lodge.

I am vehemently opposed to any expansion of the Holland Lake Lodge for the following reasons:

1. Water quality degradation from increased black and gray water disposal. The ground water in this location directly adjacent to Holland Lake is very high and likely is 10 feet or less below the surface. With the current and expected increase in more extreme swings in weather, brought on by global warming, there is a very high probability of a sewer lagoon failure and a catastrophic flow of contaminated sewer into Holland Lake.
2. A four-season resort will obviously have negative impacts on threatened and endangered species and other wildlife and their habitat in the surrounding area; such as Grizzlies, Lynx, Bull Trout, nesting loons and the turtles in the lake. Global warming has already placed extreme stress on animal habitat, and this development will only increase that stress.
3. Air quality on the lake is already very bad due to the gravel and dirt road that accesses the Lodge, campground, and trailhead. There is a layer of dust on the lake and in the campground that, at times, can create a significant health hazard. The road dust also degrades the water quality of the lake.
4. This project will only increase recreational opportunities for the wealthy and privileged. 90% of American citizens won't be able to afford a stay at this resort. This is why so many Americans choose to utilize public campgrounds provided by federal land management agencies. This Holland Lake lease should be eliminated and the current campground should be expanded for the greater good.

5. Building large structures located directly on the lakeshore will have an incredible negative visual impact from the lake for kayakers, paddle boarders, and boaters. One Hundred and fifty-six (156) privileged guests sitting along the shore and watching me paddle by in my kayak will be a negative impact on my feeling of peace and serenity.

6. The peace and quiet in the adjacent campground are already negatively impacted by the existing lodge with the people staying there, the wedding parties, and other group events held on the grounds. The proposed Holland Lake Lodge expansion will destroy the campground experience completely.

7. Adding the floating docks along the shoreline and out in the lake falls outside the proposed expansion land base. The lake water is not owned by the Lodge nor the Forest Service and is for public use only. The docks will only increase the visual distraction that will be created by the elitist lodge expansion. There should never be docks allowed.

8. There is no prudent reason why the Lodge shouldn't be required to stay within its current existing footprint. It would be more than adequate to serve the purpose for customers who want to stay in the Lodge.

In closing, I expect that you will consider all my talking points. You have already heard from thousands of commenters that have concerns very similar to what I have shared about this expansion proposal's effects to wildlife, water, and the social element. This is no time to attempt to rush a very suspect NEPA document, that in no way will address the huge and everlasting depth of this proposal. Your obligation as a decision maker is to the greater public good, not corporate interests, and you and the U.S. Forest Service will long be remembered in the community by this proposal's decision.

Sincerely,

Larry Russell, Retired USFS