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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Please accept my comments concerning the proposed Holland Lake Lodge expansion project:

The proposed expansion of Holland Lake Lodge as described in POWDR's Master Development plan is a huge departure from the historic and traditional quiet recreational uses of Holland Lake and the surrounding area. This project should be analyzed carefully because the effects of increased human use will extend beyond the 15-acre property. Categorical exclusion for this project would ignore the ecological, historical, and cultural concerns of this major expansion. The size of the project and the human impact on the environment warrants an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

Over 46 years ago I moved to Swan Valley and have been recreating at Holland Lake ever since. Local folks and visitors alike appreciate the quiet solitude that Holland Lake and the surrounding forest offer. People value traditional recreational uses of the lake such as swimming, canoeing, fishing, camping, picnicking, ice-skating, and cross-country skiing. The sheer size of the proposed expansion would diminish the cultural and historic value of the Holland Lake area, as well as negatively impact the environment.

As stewards of our public lands, the Flathead National Forest staff are obligated to"sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nations forests"... as stated in the mission of the USFS. Specifically, FNF staff have the responsibility to the public to analyze the effects of the proposed expansion on traditional historic uses, endangered species, indicator species, water quality, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area, and the Swan Front recommended wilderness. The following impacts require thoughtful analysis and must not be overlooked:

*The Holland Lake Lodge is historic and rightfully must be preserved. However, the proposed adjoining restaurant would alter the historic integrity of the lodge. As the drawing in Figure 3 indicates, it would dominate and overshadow the historic lodge. The present-day gift shop must also be preserved. Built in 1924, this log building was the dwelling of the first owners of the lodge. Any attachments to the structure could be removed so that the original log building is retained.

*The human impact on the environment will be tripled. The increased human activity will negatively affect all wildlife, especially for listed species and indicator species. Grizzly bears frequent the area and the surrounding lands are habitat for Canada lynx. Holland Lake and Creek are designated as critical habitat for bull trout. Other species such as the wolverine, common loon, black swift, and western toad also inhabit the area. Environmental impacts must be analyzed, and plans for mitigation in place before moving forward.

*The scale of the project would compromise the water quality of Holland Lake, Holland Creek, and Swan River. It is questionable whether the current wastewater treatment system can be sufficiently upgraded to handle the three-fold increase in use. A rigorous analysis of the viability of the wastewater treatment system must be completed. A monitoring system needs to be in place to ensure the groundwater and Holland Lake are not contaminated.

*The effects of increased human use of the trail leading to the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area will negatively impact the wilderness experience of hikers and horseback riders alike. The Forest Service needs to carefully analyze the impacts on non-resort visitors at Holland Lake and the surrounding forest. The proposed parking lot at the trailhead needs to be scaled back. Building an oversized parking lot encourages increased use of trails that are already overused and crowded. An updated plan needs to focus on dispersing visitors to other trailheads and recreational opportunities in the area, rather than promoting this overused site.

I understand the need to upgrade some of the buildings and construct a few modern cabins. I'm in favor of the emphasis on non-motorized watersports, energy conservation measures, and employee housing. Nevertheless, the proposed mega-expansion would increase human impact threefold and needs to be scaled back. The proposed new restaurant and new lodge are oversized. And the number of cabins needs to be reduced.

Sincerely,
Sharon Lamar