

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/3/2022 10:45:18 PM

First name: Valeri

Last name: Marquart

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I'm writing to you in regards to the proposed development and expansion of Holland Lake Lodge. I have close family in Montana. I visit 1-2 times a year and plan to move up there in the next year to be close to them. From my very first visit, my family took me to Holland Lake and I was in awe of its pristine beauty. I've been going to Holland Lake every year since. I was just camping there less than a month ago when I found out HLL was finally sold. Years ago, I spoke to the lodge owner who told me he was trying to find the right people to buy the lodge. I was hopeful he was trying to find the right people to carry on the historic beauty of both the lodge and the environment around it, but he and I must have different definitions of the right people.

I've traveled to many countries and this is my favorite place on earth. Although I run the risk of commenting as an outsider, I can't let this go. As an outsider, let me give some insight. I currently live in Texas. Texas has a population of 30 million people and only 4% of its vast 268,000 square miles is set aside for the public land. Finding any wild and unspoiled parts of Texas is nearly impossible. Montana has a population of 2 million people and over 35% of its land is available to the public. The people of Montana provide a strong community committed to preserving their access to public land. This is what I love about this state.

Giving POWDR category exclusion to get around an EIS, is a very slippery slope in giving them ownership of public land. What they are allowed to do now cannot be undone and they most likely won't stop at the lodge. The USFS and the people of Montana must hold them accountable. An extensive environmental impact statement must be done.

The proposed lodge expansion is said to be in the name of progress. While I agree the lodge needs a lot of improvements and updating, there is no reason these improvements can't be done on the existing acreage. Expansion is only necessary if they want to draw more visitors and make a profit, which will impact the entire lake and wilderness around it. There have been comments submitted by area historians, former USFS employees, and members of the Montana Wildlife Federation who agree that this expansion is not environmentally or historically sustainable. There have been thousands of comments submitted by Montana residents stating specific reasons why this expansion is not in the best interest of the public. It appears the USFS has more than they need to justify an EIS.

The scope of this expansion on a lake this size will change it drastically. The fact that Holland Lake has remained unspoiled for this long is the definition of progress. Don't lose that.