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Organization:

Title:

Comments: RE: Holland Lake Lodge Facility Expansion

FROM: Connie Poten

Holland Lake is a sacred place for most Montanans. It is a last refuge in the Lower 48 for rare and iconic species like grizzly, wolverine, wolf, lynx, fish, loon and more. Upper Holland Lake has the clearest water in the world. I have a photo of my golden retriever swimming and you can see even his fur and toenails through the water. This watershed is a breathtaking place on the edge of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. I can't think of anywhere more inappropriate for a mega resort.

Tripling the size of the current buildings, covering the landscape with parking lots, and housing 156 guests plus employees year-round in the heart of arguably the most pristine, intact wild place in the nation would bring a crushing impact on rare and sensitive-and endangered-species.

This is habitat for endangered grizzly bears and lynx. It is also habitat for wolverine, soon to be listed endangered. Human activities are restricted in ecosystems that support one endangered species, and here there are three endangered species. The size of POWDR's proposal and impact on and exploitation of the wildlife is unacceptable.

Pat Tabor's disreputable Swan Mountain Outfitters has made a deal to be the outfitter here, hence his enthusiastic support for the expansion. After being cited for five violations, including trashing trails and lands, and bullying other trail users, Swan Mountain Outfitters found its permit denied by DNRC. To sidestep that problem, Pat Tabor simply transferred ownership to his son. He is pursuing a monopoly of the entire Swan Range to conduct trophy hunts. Spring bear hunting with hounds through June 15, as grizzlies emerge from dens, will launch successful lawsuits, no doubt about it.

Tabor was on the board of the Safari Club International, a notorious trophy hunting organization whose record book allows illegally taken trophy animals-and there are thousands. Members pay tens of thousands of dollars competing to bag elk, bighorn sheep, bear, deer, wolf, mountain goat and other species. Consider the impact of these hunters, housed in luxe accommodations right in the heart of protected species' habitat, on the land and wildlife around Holland Lake, with Swan Mountain Outfitters leading multiple clients from fall to June. It's a gold mine for Swan Mountain Outfitters, and a living hell for publicly owned wildlife and for people. POWDR owns a helicopter company. In ten years, they can apply to build a helipad. When the helicopters start arriving, the noise and human impact will complete the destruction of any wildness or livable habitat in a last refuge for endangered species.

We've all seen this happen before in beautiful places-the solitude and joy of being small in a big natural landscape, the peace and thrill of it overtaken and degraded by overcrowding and the attendant lights, equipment, noise, trash, congestion, and loss of connection to the natural world.

An EIS must be required for any development in such a sensitive area. Fast tracking this expansion is irresponsible. To avoid years of litigation, the USFS, Mr. Wohlfeil and POWDR need to address long-term consequences or part ways. This means a major scaling back, and a better fit than Swan Mountain Outfitters. It may not be such a quick and big return, but it would be a legacy much larger and infinitely more valuable.

