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Comments: Holland Lake Lodge 15 acre lease: large expansion of the current facilities

This single USFS lease and its highly commercialized expansion should not dictate the future of all of Holland Lake. If allowed as presented, it will overwhelm the lake and its surrounding environments.

But let's hear it for the USFS! Thank you for extending the comment period on this sensitive topic of major commercial growth of private facilities at the water's edge of Holland Lake. The USFS is committed to protecting public lands entrusted to their care by the American people. That protection even extends to the scenic Holland Lake and its surroundings...no, that protection especially extends to Holland Lake. All public can visit its beauty, enjoy the peace and recreate on the waters and surrounding public lands. It was not set aside for the ownership/use of the few. Holland Lake was never meant to be used exclusively by the few.

In the 1910's, the USFS allowed leasing of its lands to entice people into the inaccessible forests, improving roads and ingress for the USFS. The program worked extremely well. Today, many private cabins exist on small parcels of leased USFS lands. The terms of the leases are very long, to accommodate the erection of roads and private structures. Ski resort leases consume many more acres, but usually limit months of use to snow season, not year-round. Many, many people can use ski resorts in winter. All of the public comes back hiking or even skiing, after the lifts close after the lifts close for the season.

This remake of the HLL (almost spells hell) is supposed to be a year-round facility. Did anyone see a diagram for where all the plowed snow will go? Did anyone see an estimate of the increase in the electrical load? Did anyone see the plan for recreation for the paying HLL visitors in the non-summer season? Or the summer season? How many motorized boats will the resort own to rent out, or non-motorized boats, hang gliders, snowmobiles, e- bikes? What is the capacity of their septic system, will it be buried deep enough to be winterized, what will be the capacity and security of the new septic system, and where are their wells and the USFS campground wells? These are a few questions in this non-transparent request. Where are the answers? Appraisals of some USFS lakeside lands have driven up lease costs, driving some individuals from their small acreage generational leases. That is sad. However, a 15 acre tract set up for money-making commercialization for a few targeted customers, is a very different consideration.

Estimate the value of this 15 acre tract at \$1.0 million/acre of pristine lakefront, if available to purchase and develop as private land. Probably the tract is worth much more, since POWDR has exclusive development rights and captive customers (if they come). One undeveloped acre on steep land on Flathead Lake can sell for \$1.0 million. That would put the value at \$15.0 million for this tract. The paltry 5% annual fee that the USFS/Department of Agriculture would get would be \$0.75 million dollars; that would be the annual cost to POWDR/HLL, Inc to lease this land, IF THE 15 ACRES WERE CORRECTLY APPRAISED. What is the annual lease cost to POWDR and HLL, INC for this Holland Lake acreage? A little transparency please. Historically, USFS leased lands are appraised at dramatically undervalued amounts, garnering 3% or less annually, of an undervalued appraisal.

The USFS typically is ill-equipped to evaluate its lease holdings in today's real estate markets or estimate the administrative costs of evaluating leasee requests for 'improvements and upgrades' to leases. The local districts do not see much, if any, of the revenue from these leases and lose personnel time to evaluating the impact of 'improvements and upgrade' requests. It is not their bailiwick and is a lose-lose to the local district (lost personnel time/no revenue). Larger commercialized lease-holders like HLL and POWDR need different evaluations than small tract cabins. Additionally, every successful ski resort on USFS lands ALWAYS requests to expand their lease size. Where would this POWDR lease expand to, I wonder.

Of course, this property is not undeveloped. The buildings belong to the leasee. The USFS/Department of Agriculture will make some amount of money off the annual revenue generated by the leasee...most of which will go directly to the coffers of the Department of Treasury, never to be seen or utilized by the local USFS district or state tax-payers. No property tax and no sales tax for this enterprise will enter Montana's tax revenue stream.

This particular enhancement of the existing infrastructure is dramatic. Parking for 130+ vehicles, 30+ new buildings, an enormous septic facility on the water's edge for the laundry, dishwashing, toilets, and showers for groups of 70+ people plus residential staff, removal of 200 large trees (forever), stationary docks, floating docks, the electricity upgrades to power these 30+ buildings, and the inherent light pollution with walkway lights, dock lights, building lights, and parking lot lights. Will the loons care much for these night lights? Or any wildlife? Of course, the USFS does have say in all these uses. Upgrades to cabins on small lease holds have rules for building color, septic, building footprints and size, satellite dishes, parking, tree removals, docks, use restrictions, fuel storage. Where are these rules being applied to this wealthy corporation that is riding into this lakeside and changing the views and uses of our public lands forever? We are all required to submit more details to authorities, say Missoula County, for any kind of expansion and enhancement on our private buildings. I would advocate that the USFS/US government pay to retrieve this 15 acre tract from the lease category. Tom Vilsack (Secretary of Agriculture) and Joe Biden can find \$4-5.0 million to buy back the lease and buildings from POWDR and HLL, reimburse them for the infrastructure and return the land to the people. Add the land to the Holland Falls Recreation Area. Tom and Joe find millions of dollars for other agriculture projects. The federal government continues to financially supports corn crops for ethanol production, long ago shown to be a net CO2 pollution producer, not a CO2 savior. They pay farmers to let their fields go fallow. Let's use our taxpayer dollars to pay POWDR/HLL to let this lease go fallow, forever.

This original lease was not meant to have 26 cabins accommodating 52+ people plus their parking lot and their human waste and water use footprint and their trash. It was not meant to accommodate 45 more rooms with 90+ people in a huge lodge expansion with their parking lot, human waste, water use footprint and trash. It was not meant to accommodate the appetites of 80+ campers from 40 campsites wanting a dinner or breakfast AND up to another 100 people from the group campsite. Maximum restaurant seating is for 150 people? 300? Or maybe 15 tables? Where is the food storage for the restaurant (it is a long way to the nearest supplies, especially in the winter)? How many more people, who will provide services, will live on site, adding their footprint to the above? The year-round sewage impact and the enormous increase in through-put is scary to imagine. Leaks will happen, as will new signage around the lake proclaiming 'Holland Lake waters are contaminated: NO SWIMMING.' Or worse, no notification of the polluted lake, just sick people. After all, who will regulate and test the lake waters and the septic system? Runoff is huge in the springtime: snow melt and rain. The gravel and boulder nature of ancient glacier outwash beside and under the lake can absorb and filter a lot. But the plan is to put roofs over large expanses and compact the rest of the 15 acres with paths and parking and remove the trees. Now the water will rapidly drain into the lake, carrying pollutants with it. This could affect water quality of the lake and the downstream creek and reach the Swan River. The potential pollution plume from this 'expanded' lease is huge.

In the beautiful Bridger Canyon area near Bozeman, the Bridger Bowl Ski area (a USFS lease) and its adjacent development has contributed to the high e coli count in Bridger Creek, not present above the resort, only below. These resorts on leased lands have good intentions, but the reality is 'dirtier'.

The Holland Falls Recreation Area and Trail does not allow bikes or motorized vehicles. Biking is allowed on the Foothills Trail, which has a start/finish at the lookout tower at the end of Rumble Creek. Otherwise, all the trail systems around the lake are hiking or horseback, uphill/downhill. The Holland Falls Trail already has a heavy use designation, from current day visitors and campers. What are all these paying customers going to do? The USFS concessionaire for the Holland Lake campground can already rent kayaks and SUPS. Will HLL and POWDR rent motorized boats, rent snowshoes and back-county skis, and guide trips all over the Swan Valley? Compete with the USFS concessionaire and other local established guides? Rent hang gliders? Floating trampolines? Jet skis? Will we even see the waters of Holland Lake? Instead of blue skies, trees and clouds reflected in its waters, it will be pock-marked with boats and will always be wave-rippled. There is a difference between use and abuse.

A lake of 400+ acres does seem large enough to absorb all the activity we can throw at it. Or can it? I think the USFS knows better than to allow this expansion. They need to think of the water and the land and for whom it is all preserved. What will the campground and posh new facilities do for drinking water and showers and laundry if the wells are all polluted? Invest in a purification facility? How much more development will have to occur to 'fix' issues caused by this expansion? Are we the people going to allow this to happen, just because HLL no longer

wants a viable business from 15 acres of virtually tax-free land. Wait, HLL is a partner in this expansion enterprise. HLL does want this expansion.

When will this increased footprint end? Let's stop the endless development and 'progress' before another beautiful piece of public lands gets used too much and is abused beyond its intent. When that happens, the governing entity will proclaim it beyond redemption and loosen the development floodgates. If HLL isn't economically viable at its current level, renting rooms at \$300/night, then release this lease. Don't make it more inaccessible to the general public. POWDR/HLL, offer to sell the lease and buildings back to the Department of Agriculture at your cost. Leave it go fallow. Let the people have their public land back.

Do we see the endless ripple effect? The current development of the 15 acre lease doesn't make sufficient income, says HLL. The big money corporations are brought in, they alter/'enhance' the development which alters acres of surrounding lands to the point that the governing entity allows further expansion and development out into those altered surrounding lands. The ripple does not stop. The USFS always allows more land to become 'recreation expansion' lands next to current developed recreation areas. See the new Custer/Gallatin USFS rules and designations next to Bridger Bowl.

The federal government can 'take' and condemn private lands for the sake of the public. It can further protect public lands by declaring them Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, etc. What about preserving Holland Lake by removing this large leased tract from private corporate hands and returning it to the USFS as public access lands? Stop the expansion and write to Tom Vilsack.

Thanks for allowing and listening to the public's comments and opinions,  
Hillary Hutchison