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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern,

I have a deep love for public lands and all the potential good that the Forest Service has to offer for the environment. I have worked for the Forest Service and love the organization as a whole which makes me even more critical of this poor management on the Seely Lake Ranger District. I am deeply saddened by the decisions the Forest Service has been making in this particular case for many reasons.

Regardless of my biases for keeping Holland Lake a pristine and accessible space for local communities, I feel an Environmental Assessment is needed for the proposed expansion of the Holland Lake Lodge. Due to the nature of this expansion there will be significant environmental impacts that cannot or should not be overlooked. Holland Lake provides habitat for loons, bears, mountain lions, beavers, and many more which will be negatively affected by this expansion. Even if logical reasoning points to this, the Forest Service is responsible for determining exactly how much of an impact would occur even if it turns out to be negligible. The Forest Service has a duty to the public to make sure that, if this project were to happen, that the impacts would be insignificant, rather than go through with this to determine in the future it has been detrimental to already threatened populations. The Forest Service is almost guaranteed to be sued for this project if there are negative impacts in the future. That being said, a NEPA assessment is more than necessary in this case.

Aside from the impacts to wildlife, water contamination is also a concern with the large expansion of the sewage systems in such close proximity to the lake. Having to support sewage systems for cabins around the lake of which numbers exceed the established campsites around the lake is sure to have an impact on the watershed. I am deeply concerned for the water quality of this pristine lake, especially because so few like it still exist.

Additionally, I also am drawn to question who this decision benefits. According to the local community, it will certainly not benefit them. And even if the community did see economic growth from this project, that is not what the community is looking for. People in the Swam Valley care much more about the health of their surrounding environment than receiving money from the exploitation of it. It has been shown that POWDR hardly employs local community members. Many of POWDR staff come from various places, which is not bad in itself. However, I feel that the argument of adding economic growth to the community is far fetched, seeing that locals are not looking for this type of economic growth coupled with POWDR's tendency to bring in employees from other places. Why is the Forest Service so adamant about going through with this expansion when it does not bring in money for the Forest Service or the local community, only a large corporation. The Forest Service is not setting a good example for our communities by showing that money overrides what is best for the people and the environment. This feels like an uphill battle for the Forest Service with no solid ground to back up the reasonings behind the decisions made.

Public lands are meant to be accessible to all, but this proposed project is making it so that only people with outrageous income are able to recreate on Holland Lake. The outdoors and especially Forest Service public lands should be accessible to all regardless of income. This project is a step in the wrong direction in terms of getting people outside and investing in keeping natural public spaces healthy. If only the rich can afford to recreate on public lands, what kind of society are we creating? Certainly not one where anyone feels welcome to enjoy the spaces that they are entitled to as citizens of the United States. Public spaces are meant to be exactly that and not places that have a pay wall to get through.

To reiterate, I love the Forest Service, but have been feeling extra disappointed with the poor leadership and decision making shown in this case and many others. I support the Forest Service and only want success for our

public lands. However, when the Forest Service continues to make decisions that are not in the best interest of our environment and local communities, I cannot help but understand why so many have distrust for the organization.

I please urge you to listen to the people who are standing up for the land because that is what the organization is supposed to do. This is a very important matter that will negatively effect people and there will be serious consequences if the Forest Service is not receptive to local concerns.

Sincerely,  
Anna Gibson