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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Greetings,

I am writing to express concerns about the proposed Holland Lake Lodge project. Our family has been privileged to recreate on public lands in the Swan for the last two decades. Our youngest's first camping trip was on the shores of Holland Lake when she was only a few months old. We hike to the falls almost annually. As you likely know, it is a special place.

While I recognize the need to improve upon the existing facilities to make it a viable business, I do not believe an expansion of this proportion is in the best interest of the public. I believe it would have a detrimental impact on the perceived experience of those who recreate there (like my family) and the environment - including the wildlife and water quality.

I understand that the current lease has had little to no significant changes in almost 100 years. However, even in the last five years, we have seen dramatic changes in the volume and type of people recreating in the Holland Lake area. It is logical to encourage the USFS to take a critical look at how to update the lease to reflect the current needs of the community and land. I do not believe the existing lease, which would allow for such a large-scale project, aligns with the intended purposes of public land use.

I also think it is unwise to greatly expand services, thus inviting those who have little knowledge of backcountry practices, bear safety, and "leave no trace" principals into a place where they are expecting resort-style accommodations. Those of us that often recreate here understand the privilege and responsibility that comes with enjoying the wilderness. Holland Lake is a wild place. We have encountered bears often in the area. The type of visitor that this project sets out to entice will not be the veteran Montanan or outdoors-person, but instead vacationers who have little experience and knowledge of what it means to be bear aware. This naivety has had very damaging effects on local wildlife, lands, and national parks in the state. So much so that it has inspired a campaign to try to educate people on how to "recreate responsibly." Some places ought to be respected for their wildness. Holland Lake, though very accessible, is still wild. Let's try to keep it that way for a bit longer.

The Seeley/Swan Valley is a gem and one that is even more deeply treasured by the locals when so much of Montana is being privatized and marketed to the wealthy and connected. It would be a shame to sell out one of the remaining quiet, accessible places for ALL in the greater Missoula/Flathead Valleys.

A project of this magnitude would also have negative impacts during construction phases for all who camp, boat, fish, and hike in the area. While we cannot stop progress and growth in Montana, we can attempt to protect the public lands that have been set aside for its citizens. There is significant private land available to purchase in the state for yet another resort of this magnitude. There is not another Holland Lake in this valley.

Please reconsider this project, consider updating the lease agreement, and keep public lands, public, protected, and preserved for future generations rather than helping a non-public entity increase financial prosperity at the cost of one of our most treasured places.

Thank you for extending the public comment period and doing an extensive environmental impact study before any major decisions have been made.