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U..S. Forest Service, Swan Lake Ranger District

200 Range Station Road

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Re: Holland Lake Lodge Facility Expansion #61746

There are many eloquent and substantive letters and comments submitted detailing numerous concerns as well as incongruities, inaccuracies and vacant details of the proposed expansion. Concerns that address subsequent irreversible extended construction and operational impacts on the ecosystem, wildlife, regional infrastructure and communities. My submission does not readdress these substantive significant material problems, and is offered as an additional voice to the overwhelming chorus against this proposed development.

The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Forest Service motto, "Caring for the Land and Serving People," captures the spirit of your mission, which is accomplished through five main activities: Protection and management of natural resources on lands you manage. Research on all aspects of forestry, rangeland management, and forest resource utilization.

In light of the avalanche of the comments received over just a few weeks, there is ample evidence that thousands, perhaps 10's of thousands of people over multiple generations have come to Holland Lake over the years. They have come to enjoy hiking, camping, bird watching, nature watching, hunting, fishing, and just relaxing, and have done so in a sustainable manner for more than a century. In light of the numbers and depth of these varied experiences from the public, please take a step back from the confines of bureaucratic rhetoric, and ask yourselves some basic but focused questions:

How will this development benefit the health, diversity and productivity of the forest? How will the tripling of a footprint and operational capacity improve the visitor experience and protect the security of this diverse and fragile ecosystem? How will the felling of 200+ mature trees on a 10+ acre plot benefit the health, diversity, productivity of the forest, wet land and grassland? How will the construction and operational extension into a winter benefit the wildlife? How will this development provide improved access to the majority of low and middle income taxpaying public and communities around Holland Lake? How will digging up a mile or more of earth (when satellite technology is available) to lay fiber optic cable improve the health, diversity and productivity of forest and grasslands and experience for the general public who come there to camp?

Take a moment and refresh yourself, immerse yourself in the spirit of why you ever started working for the Forest Service. Holland Lake embodies all the best of the Forest Service's goals, its diversity of habitat, wildlife and proven sustainability over 100+ years of generations of campers, bird watchers, nature lovers, hunters and explorers. Its raw beauty and relative wildness nurtures the public's soul, and continues to foster and inspire respect of nature and each other. The people and surrounding communities are what make Holland Lake a success story, as it has been maintained as a cherished relatively unspoiled gateway to the surrounding wildness. Supporting one of the most diverse thriving ecosystems in northwest Montana. It is inhabited and utilized by grizzly, black bears, wolves, mountain lion, lynx, badgers, assorted fur bearing wildlife, deer, elk and moose, as well as eagles and loons. It's an important winter habitat and corridor for ungulates, and the carnivores dependent upon them. There has evolved a delicate balance of coexistence with the general public, and they have taken ownership and responsibility to insure the security of the forest and landscape. What more could the Forest Service ever hope for, than to have a sustainable diverse ecosystem thriving with continued generations

of compatible affordable recreational accesses. It is an iconic touch stone in Montana, one of the surviving relatively pristine areas where the general public come generation after generation and learn to appreciate nature, and in so doing, work to protect this place. The public's buy in and support is an extraordinary and an intangible phenomena that cannot be overvalued. Make no miscalculation it's not just the old Lodge but, the sheer natural beauty and remaining relative wildness of the area that brings people in and fosters a respectful devotion and endearment for Holland Lake. How can you improve upon near perfection? The public has taken ownership and responsible stewardship to a level that manifests itself in reverence. The general public comes to immerse themselves, and be part of the environment. They aren't coming to watch cable TV or the internet from an expensive balcony room with a picturesque view. Nor are they coming to enjoy an expensive dinner, or drinks. Even those few that can afford such consumptive activities still come to be part of this place, not to act upon, but come to be one with it, and hopefully learn from it. Holland Lake embodies the soul of wilderness and benefits from the love of the community and all who visit. It has for generations, and should be allowed to remain a sustainable bastion of the natural world where the general public can enjoy, learn and respect it with unfettered access.

The Forest Service should review the comments, take time reflect upon them. Spend some time on a trail or two, and learn what we have in hand already, and protect it for generations to come.

Respectfully,

Laura Gerstein