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Comments: I urge the Forest Service to reject approval of this proposal for an increase in the level and footprint of development of the Holland Lake Lodge property. As this site now exists, it is accessible and affordable by many local Montanans, as well as middle class visitors to the area. While many of the proposed environmental education and information features proposed by the developers in their proposal are commendable, the basic fact that the proposed development will significantly change the character of the lake and its environment is a serious problem. When developments like this occur, there are inevitably displacement of native wildlife and alteration of their habitats. In addition to what is proposed, I strongly believe that we will see additional requests from the developers to further expand the facility if they are approved, with the attendant displacement and conflict with local wildlife.

During my 32-year career as the Wildlife Program Manager with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (1989-2021), my staff and I often monitored the movements across the Seeley-Swan Valley from the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area to the Mission Mountains by radio-collared grizzly bears. It was absolutely clear that these bears ranged over large areas and required those areas for survival and recovery. Our concerns required that we needed to be aware of the entire range of habitat of these bears to maintain the Mission Mountains grizzly bear population segment. I firmly believe that approval of the proposed development proposal will have adverse impacts upon this grizzly bear population.

The Forest Service has indicated that the proposed development will be possible merely by using categorical exclusion to speed the approval of it. Given the level of public opposition to it and the wildlife and other concerns about the proposal, I suggest that consideration of it should be the subject of a wider environmental analysis, such as an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement to clearly and definitively assess the impacts of the proposal.