

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/8/2022 1:43:50 AM

First name: Beth

Last name: Hutchinson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern: I am writing to vigorously object to the proposed expansion of the Holland Lake Lodge facility on Holland Lake, Montana.

I have spent hours randomly reading letters of protest on the USFS project website and applaud the thousands of citizens who took the time to share technical, documented information; personal experience; philosophical beliefs and simple love for place. All of these expressions should have value in convincing forest service decision-makers that the proposed alterations to site use are out of line and that the project should be rejected.

Five broad conceptual areas stand out to me when it comes to my own objections:

- 1) the honesty and/or straightforwardness of the applicants' position,
- 2) the strange role taken by the Flathead Forest Service administration in bending over to "support" the project prior to comprehensive, objective analysis and evaluation,
- 3) issues regarding the carrying capacity for the permitted space, for utilization of the lake, trails and larger adjacent environment/wildlife home/corridors as well as human expectations for security and safety.
- 4) issues regarding endangered/threatened animals, landscapes and cultural patterns, and
- 5) issues pitting economic opportunism versus community and public security and safety.

(Sorry, the topic that follows should be last. Working on tablet with hotspot and can see only a few lines of text at a time. Something slipped.)

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNISM VS COMMUNITY SECURITY AND SAFETY

If the current lodge and support buildings are in such dire condition as has been suggested by the "partnership" that is careless neglect. Focus on essential maintenance, develop a maintenance schedule and budget. When did the American citizenry promise that leaseholders had a right to a particular income derived from exploiting our public land? Go online and take a look at the Trailing Yew, a beloved inn on Monhegan Island 12 miles off the coast of Maine. Similarities and differences stand out. The facilities' age corresponds very well to HLL, as does the size...and it is sustainable and well cared for! Not only that but it costs a heck of a lot more to haul everything out there by boat...and to take waste off. Look at the room with breakfast rates. Throw in another generous \$75 for lunch and dinner. Also, they pay high coastal property taxes on both the land and improvements. I'm pretty sure the owner who took over about 30 years ago has been fulfilling a mortgage. The place is an institution and supports the owners and sustains. It also operates from May to mid-October (without the benefit of a hunting season). By-the-way, guests have no electricity in their rooms or common areas. Many come for the ambiance; others learn to adjust.

HLL is an institution that needs a bit of TLC and realistic ownership expectations, not expansion. Worst case scenario, it could be turned into a very acceptable hostel and provide an actually needed lodging solution for people who really want to experience a grounded Montana.

The Seeley Swan community can scarcely support necessary infrastructure and services. HLL expanded will end up costing local residents while probably allowing POWDER to take \$\$\$ out of the state.

Highway 83 needs experienced drivers in the winter. County land use plans limit the size of subdivided properties due to limitations on egress should there be wildfires. Others have noted the challenges of accessing emergency health services from the location...or law enforcement at times.

Neither the forest nor the community needs expansion under POWDER.

Beginning of text on comments...

Any one of these areas might be enough to raise citizens' hackles, but the vast number and the powerful inter-relatedness of their impacts, stuns.

HONESTY/STRAIGHTFORWARDNESS of applicants

The incompletely revealed relationship between site lessee Wohlfeil and corporate entrant POWDR appears to have broken the rules on the lease, thus making the site permit invalid. The applicants present statements regarding the condition of the extant facilities in a way that must be negatively exaggerated or no one would be staying there and certainly not paying the already high rates being charged. Actually, those repeated statements make one wonder if many maintenance necessities were blown off over the 24 year run of the lease. So, we are left with the myth of poor, sad lease holder of two decades and wonderful sugar daddy corporation coming to the rescue for the future welfare of dedicated naturalist tourists (whose numbers are planned to at least triple in number...corporate VP said in 10/7 update on this comment page "not significant impact" showing "skill" playing with numbers only two days after promising the moon to local residents during a public meeting), and so on, and on, and on.

STRANGE ROLE of FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST ADMINISTRATION

"The Flathead National Forest is proposing facility expansion of Holland Lake Lodge.....", spreads the wording at the head of the FNF's website project page. Oh, really? FNF is the agent for the private partnership? FNF has already reached a decision to support expansion? Again, on and on and on with mysterious process machinations that have raised the ire of a portion of the public which usually respects the FS. Tens and tens of former and retired FS, as well as elected officials have expressed concern/dismay when they recognized this betrayal of expectations.

Now we the public (wondering more and more what public ownership of "our forests" means) have the "24,000 sq ft outhouse" to add to the previously infamous \$600 toilet seat. So, the FNS thinks it's a good idea to fast track its baby with a "categorical exclusion" (CE)? Well, that remains to be seen. Even Missoula County commissioners who are reputed to like growth in the tax base (the buildings on the site get taxed, but not the leased land...which apparently has by far the greatest value to the would be permit purchasers/developers....was that roughly \$13,000,000 to the long term permit holder?)...YES...the commissioners have questioned the whole process.

CARRYING CAPACITY

The forest service is accustomed to studying carrying capacity when it comes to flora and fauna. How about considering the concept as it applies to people living on a parcel of land along a rather pure waterbody? And possibly straying out into the home turf for the native residents?"

While there seems to be some confusion over whether the lease site is some 15 acres or a mere 10.5 acres, sound sources suggest the latter. That means that the density of humans on site acre to about 17.5/acre with lots more parking, cars, wastewater, demand for showers, etc. Montana has a density of 7 persons per acre. Let's go to the woods to have "FUN" crammed together. But POWDER promised to not chase off the average Joe/Joy and the VP noted that huge camping ground adjacent, so it's not really expansion that means anything in their eyes. How many commenters so far have noted the heavily used trails. Do you really think the expanded

HLLers won't find ways to get their hands on snowmobiles and power boats? From a stress perspective the number of humans at HLL seems acceptable historically and currently. Will squeezing in 3 times more erode the peace traditionally associated with "Ah, Holland Lake, I love the serenity there." ???

ENDANGERED/THREATENED ANIMALS and LANDSCAPE

The animals are there. See what the other comments cover. POWDER's solution...treat the surrounding territory like a zoo with signage and wildlife appreciation classes. We Montanans see how well that works with affluent tourists in Yellowstone. Doing real due diligence rather than the greased slide of that CE might make it clear that enough is enough and expansion is not in the interest of much besides sewn pockets.

Read "ECONOMIC..." here.

Sincerely