

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/7/2022 1:24:43 PM

First name: Anne

Last name: Vandehey

Organization:

Title:

Comments: My husband and I, our kids and now grandkids have been visiting Holland Lake since the '90s. I am familiar with the Seeley Swan area and its abundant natural resources. As a wildlife biologist, I worked with the Flathead and Lolo forests on many projects to conserve wildlife habitat for endangered species. My comments regarding the impacts of the proposed POWDR resort on wildlife were submitted in a letter to the Flathead National Forest supervisor (10/7/22). In addition I agree with the comments submitted by the Montana Wildlife Federation (9/28/2022) regarding this project. I believe the letter succinctly but thoroughly summarizes the numerous negative impacts the development would have on sensitive wildlife species, including grizzly bears: "Approving this proposal will fail to abide by the spirit of the Conservation Strategy to manage public land in the NCDE recovery zone to assure the maintenance of a healthy grizzly bear populations in the face of increased private land development and ongoing climate change."

I also have concerns regarding the proposed POWDR resort's impacts on existing recreation experiences at and near Holland Lake, as well in the larger Seeley Swan region. The project would increase occupancy from 50 to 150, increase staffing levels, require additional acreage over the existing permit, and extend the season of operation.

Simply put, the proposed size and type of resort is not suited to and will jeopardize the existing rustic recreational experience enjoyed at Holland Lake's campground, existing lodge, cabins and trails.

As many comments on this proposed plan have so eloquently expressed, Holland Lake offers a rare outdoor recreation experience. It has touched the lives of many locals, Montanans and visiting tourists. Many people will never experienced a backcountry lake. Holland Lake offers visitors of all ages, abilities, economic status and experience a chance to enjoy a true pristine mountain lake, with its cold clean water, beautiful forested shoreline, towering mountains and the cry of loons as the sun sets, feelings of peace and solitude. Visitors can hike up to the falls that feeds the lake. This setting at Holland Lake is rare and currently experienced in simple ways through camping, cabin rentals, picnicking, hiking, kayaking, canoeing. The area around the lake is relatively developed, with high use of the Forest Service (FS) campground and the existing lodge, summer homes and cabins. However Holland Lake has somehow so far retained the unique atmosphere of a small, pristine, quiet mountain lake with rustic accommodations. Such recreational opportunities are rare, and becoming increasingly rare on our public lands.

On the other hand, the proposed new lodge, cabins, and facilities to be located on public lands, would offer visitors a resort-like setting with all the modern accommodations and amenities, amongst more than a hundred other patrons.

There is nothing inherently wrong with this experience. However this type of development and expansion will negatively affect the current rustic experience of enjoying the lake, its surroundings and feelings of wild lands and solitude. The proposed resort would significantly increase numbers of people using the immediate area, the lake, the trails and local roads. I would argue that the current levels of use at the lodge, FS campground, trails, at the falls, and at summer homes is already high, approaching a point (carrying capacity) that if exceeded will diminish the recreational experience for all, and damage the very wild lands, wildlife habitat, and other natural resources people enjoy.

This "destination" resort recreational experience is already available on public lands in Montana, such as Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks and Big Sky, and at numerous private lodges and resorts. Importantly, such accommodations are often priced out of reach of many Montana individuals and families and visiting tourists.

Through national advertising, POWDR will also likely attract additional visitors interested in recreational use of adjacent and surrounding public lands, as well as increase the demand for additional types of recreational uses. In addition, several knowledgeable commenters have described the potential for increased development on private land in the Seeley Swan as a result of the POWDR development. We have witnessed this over and over in Montana near destinations such as National Parks, Big Sky, etc. as well as elsewhere in the country. This sort of destination resort development affects the very nature of the communities and surrounding natural environment. Our public lands at Holland Lake should not be used to support corporate sponsored development that expands human use of an already highly used, fragile area. Rather, the FS ought ensure the permitted recreational use be maintained at levels and in ways that preserve the unique, rustic outdoor experience currently enjoyed at Holland Lake.

The Forest Service should produce an Environmental Assessment that includes the following amongst its considerations:

- Allow upgrades of existing lodging facilities, or allow replacements, with no increase in capacity . Limit lodging to cabins and campsites, and the existing lodge.
- A cumulative effects analysis of the impacts of the proposed POWDR resort on wildlife in the Holland Lake area and surrounding public lands in the Seeley Swan region.
- A cumulative effects analysis of the impacts of the proposed POWDR resort on existing recreational experiences at Holland Lake and surrounding public lands in the Seeley Swan region.