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Comments: Botello, Dowling and Flathead National Forest Staff,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed issuance of a 20-year special use permit to Holland Peak, LLC for the continued operation of Holland Lake Lodge. While this proposal differs from the previous proposals in scope and intent, it remains essential that the Forest Service exercise full transparency, scientific rigor, and accountability in its review process-especially in light of strong public interest and past procedural concerns.

I support the continued operation of Holland Lake Lodge under local ownership, provided the following conditions and expectations are met.

Full Environmental Review & Public Transparency. Although the Forest Service has indicated this proposal qualifies for a categorical exclusion under 36 CFR 220.6(d)(11), I urge the agency to conduct and publish a clear, public determination of whether any extraordinary circumstances exist that would require a more detailed environmental assessment. Given Holland Lake's ecological sensitivity and public significance, even minor administrative changes warrant careful review and public accountability.

Limit the Permit to the Existing Footprint and Uses. The new permit should explicitly prohibit expansion beyond the current physical footprint or scope of services. This includes limitations on the number of structures, guest capacity, parking, utilities, and operating season. Any future proposals to expand the lodge or modify operations should require a new, separate application process and environmental review.

Preserve Public Access and Stewardship. The permit must preserve and, ideally, enhance public access to Holland Lake and adjacent trails. Holland Lake is a cherished public resource, and any commercial use on public land must prioritize public benefit and resource protection above private profit.

Cumulative Impact Consideration. Although the current proposal does not include expansion, it is essential to evaluate cumulative impacts on water quality, wildlife, traffic, waste management, and recreational crowding. Even operations within an existing footprint can degrade the environment over time if not properly monitored and regulated.

Permit Terms Should Include Strict Environmental Conditions. The permit should include enforceable provisions for wastewater management, stormwater control, wildlife protection, fire mitigation, and noise/light pollution. Annual inspections and regular compliance checks should be required.

Acknowledge and Address Public Concerns from the POWDR Proposal. Given the prior controversy and erosion of public trust related to the previous POWDR expansion proposal, the Forest Service must go above and beyond to ensure transparent, responsive communication with the public on this new permit, even if the scope appears more limited.

In summary, while I appreciate the scaled-back nature of this new proposal, I urge the Forest Service to apply the same level of scrutiny and public accountability that would be required for a more expansive project. I support sustainable, small-scale use of public lands-provided it is carefully managed and truly serves the public interest.