Bear Habitat Disturbance at Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center

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Introduction

Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center, Juneau, Alaska

Glacier with over 700,000 tourist visits
 per year and gaining. (Mendenhall
 Glacier Master Plan, 2019)

- Purpose

 To analyze the costs and benefits of solutions to the proposed Mendenhall
 Glacier Master Plan in relation to the disturbance of bear habitat.



The Environmental Problem

- Master Plan affects Bears

- Sows with cubs rely on this area to avoid boar interaction.
 - Takes away safe access to vital nutrition.
 - Added stress on sows and cubs
 - Construction and additional tourists will increase bear/human interaction

Master Plan affects Sockeye

Construction of Sockeye viewing area will expand and demolish natural creek bed, vegetation, and



habitat.

Factors that increase disturbance

- Berry and foraging areas will be destroyed during construction.
- Sow and cub safe haven will be lost and they will be forced to enter city limits and interact with boars and human population.
- Sockeye stream will be destroyed during construction and potentially impact the natural spawning and return of subsequent sockeye runs. (ADF&G, 2014)

- Bear issues

- Boar interaction with sows and cubs can cause deaths and injury
- Loss of vital food source will make bears leave the park in search of food.
- Increased human/bear contact (ADF&G, 2014)



Solution 1

Deny the Master Plan

Preserve the natural raw beauty of the Mendenhall
 Glacier Visitor Center.

- Prioritize protecting natural bear
 - habitat for rearing cubs
 - ensure vegetation is not disturbed
 - Preserve wild, natural sockeye run
- Avoid increasing human/bear interaction (ADF&G, 2014).



Solution 2

Modify Master Plan

Deny salmon viewing station
Use eco-friendly D1 gravel for maintaining trails off season
Deny additional trail creation
Deny additional outbuildings
Invest in upgrading current visitor center only



Receding Glacier

- Within 50 years the Mendenhall Glacier will not be visible from the center. (Glacier Hub, 2019)
- Accessibility to and around the glacier will not be improved.
- Saves over \$80 million in proposed construction costs.

(Glacier Hub, 2019)



* Jobs

- * Loss of contracted jobs for improvements.
- * Less Forest Service Ranger job positions will be available.
- * Tourism Job loss or decrease
 - kayak rentals, white water rafting trips, biking tours



Tourism

- Glacier center currently has over 700,000 visitors per year.
- As glacier recedes there is a potential loss of tourism revenue with fewer visitors.





* Cruise Ship Destination

- * Juneau has many appealing attractions, but the Mendenhall Glacier is an affordable and quick way for people to see a glacier.
 - Loss of main attraction could impact Juneau's standing as a tourist destination

Visitor Center

- Update center to accommodate more people
 - Include a global warming/climate change wing for public education
- Additional Park Ranger positions will be created





* Trail Improvements

- * D1 gravel maintenance on current trails during off season to avoid animal interaction
- * Doesn't address improving wheel chair/handicap accessibility

– Launch new study

- Create another study about the environmental impact of the Master Plan
 - Expanding locations are in the habitat of:
 - Bears, seagulls, beavers, eagles, sockeye, etc.
 (Mendenhall Glacier Master Plan, 2019)





Finances

- * Trail maintenance costs
 - * D1 gravel, manpower, irrigation
- Additional funding to cover cost of the new study
- * Updating Visitor Center with educational environmental wing



* Bear habitat

- Sows and cubs have continued access to sanctuary from boars.
- Higher probability of keeping wild bears
 from becoming nuisance trash bears
- Less risk of human/bear interaction (ADF&G, 2014).

– Sockeye

- Preserve salmon run of around 1000 fish
- Most valuable fish in state
 - Important to bears (ADF&G, 2014).





* Saves Finances

- Saves a proposed \$80 million dollars
- * Less long term building maintenance
- Less trail maintenance
- Less Ranger positions required

– Preserving landscape

- Natural untouched Alaskan beauty
- Preserving vegetation (U.S. Forest Service, 2020)
- Less runoff/flooding issues
- Local population satisfied



– Climate change

- New presentation on climate change
 - Educate tourists regarding pollution, carbon cycle, receding glacier, facilitates continued local school education partnership





* Updated Visitor Center

- * Additional seating for seminars
 - * Fireside chats, school trips
 - Additional Ranger positions needed
 - * Less than proposed \$80 million dollars

– Preserved Sockeye

- Salmon will not be disturbed
- Spawning is safeguarded
- No ecological disturbances





Preserved Bear habitat

- Bears will keep their safe haven for cub rearing
 - Less chance for bears to become nuisance trash bears creating problems for locals and ADF&G (ADF&G, 2014).

Recommended Solution

- Deny the Master Plan
 - Master plan will contribute substantial carbon pollution
 - Master Plan detracts from the natural landscape of Alaska that tourists are paying to see and that locals want to preserve
 - Greenest choice is not creating buildings, construction, a hotel, and added traffic (Calculation Method, 2020)
 - Prioritize NATURE over capital gains by preserving habitats for bears, sockeye, eagles, gulls, beavers, and community.
 - Preserves the spawning grounds of sockeye salmon
- Deny motorized boat traffic on Mendenhall Lake
 - Less natural disturbances with already approved paddle only
- Ensures LOCAL voice counts more than Federal Governments plan
 - Which are substantially less costly and preserves natural habitat for wildlife and local community

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