

**From:**  
**To:** [FS-comments-alaska-tongass-juneau](#)  
**Subject:** MGRA NEPA  
**Date:** Thursday, March 19, 2020 6:12:53 PM  
**Attachments:**

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Attached is a document with comments on the *Mendenhall Glacier* Visitor Facility Improvement Project.

Jos Bakker

## To whom it may concern

My name is Jos Bakker.

For about 6 years I was a volunteer for the Forest Service.

With 4 other volunteers we talked to people about bears and made sure the bears could safely navigate through the area.

I am a photographer.

I know the area very well and go the Mendenhall Area 4 or 5 times a week for wildlife photography and the scenery.

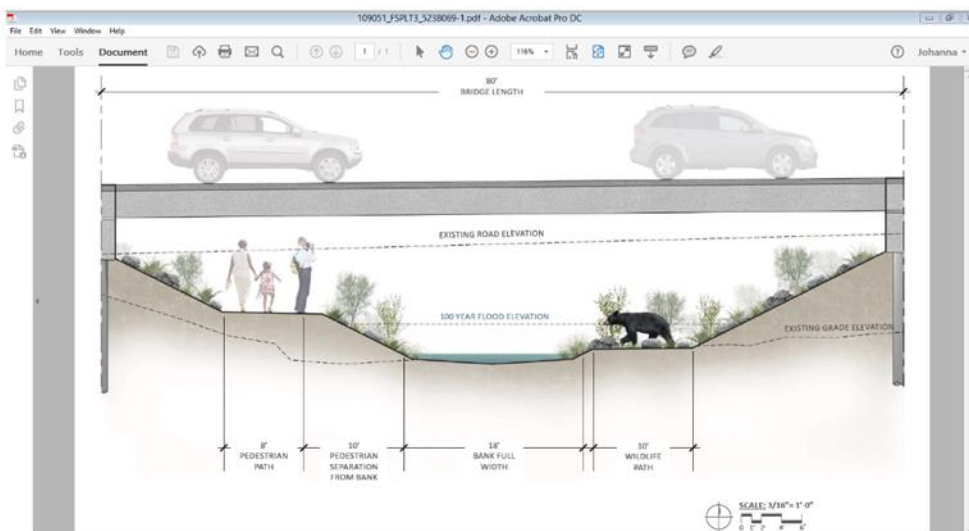
I am a member of the Beaver Patrol.

I am a 40-year Juneau resident.

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For years bears had a space (on the backside of Steep Creek) where they could get away from people. In the new Forest Service plans there is a trail, right through their habitat, for people. Even if these are elevated platforms bears will have no chance to get away from people. Beach area along the Mendenhall lake will have elevated walks and concrete docks and would block views of the glacier. No consideration was given to the fact they block known bear trails. With the larger parking areas bears will have to navigate more concrete, more busses and more visitors.

Removing the double culverts and replacing them with a bridge is the only good idea I have seen in this Forest Service plan, however



the idea of people sharing the same space as bears is a pretty crazy and is making a lot of assumptions.

1. Bears will stay on their side of the creek. (They will happily share the trails)
2. People will stay on their own side of the creek. (They will not) As a volunteer I have seen tourists and local photographers join the bears in the creek, while bears are chasing fish.
3. Expecting that somebody, who has never seen a bear, knows what to do when approached by a bear.

4. Expecting bears to be able to read the signs.

Bears are opportunistic and will use whatever side of the creek is easiest for them to fish from or walk. Let's separate people from the bears and have our visitors view the bears from the bridge or a viewing platform in safety.

**We need a study done to better understand the impact the construction of new trails and docks etc. will have on bears.**

Visitors are very often more interested in bears and beavers. Very often that is the reason they come to the Visitor Center.

The glacier will be gone in the next couple of years and we should treasure our bears and make sure they can keep coming to Steep Creek to feed on salmon and raise their cubs.

Docks along the lake, boats on the lake and new trails along the lake will destroy the scenic views.

A remote visitor center will be even worse.

Boats will cause noise and pollution unless they are powered by electricity.

A pond will be filled in to create parking for tour busses. This pond is rearing habitat for salmon and beavers use the pond all summer.

What will happen to the Pond of Time? In one of the plans it was a grassy knoll. This pond is also rearing habitat for salmon and a home pond for beavers. How will the Pond of Time drain if Steep Creek is moved away from the road? Or will this pond also become parking.

After so many years of following the development of this plan to improve the MGRA I am utterly disappointed about the phase we are in: a concept or a general idea. So, what does that mean? Answer: they can do anything they want as long as it is sort of.

**We can do better.**

For needed improvements we can use the bus parking lot.

Thank you,

Jos Bakker