

From:
To: [FS-comments-alaska-tongass-juneau](#)
Subject: MGRA
Date: Thursday, March 19, 2020 7:29:57 AM

Hello,
My comments are below:

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for providing the opportunity for the community to comment on the Forest Services planed changes to the MGRA. After attending the public NEPA meeting in early March and having spent hundreds of hours at this site, I have a few main concerns about this plan:

1. I heard over and over again from the presenters that my questions were "management questions" and this project is currently in the infrastructure-planning phase. This really concerns me because management questions such as, "Will you have the funds in place to hire more Forest Service rangers to staff these extra facilities?", "How will you handle the influx of food onsite and still keep a healthy, not food-habituated bear population?", and "how will you control how many people go over to the remote visitor center?" are really important to how you plan infrastructure. If you build it first, it is very likely that you'll come to a point later where you have to shoehorn your management plan into fitting what you spent billions of dollars to build. This might lead to some non-ideal management issues that the staff of the future has no way to avoid. To me, it seems a lot more logical and cost effective to make sure your ideas make management sense before charging ahead with building.
2. I have grave concerns for the wildlife at this site. Some additions will be positive for bears and other creatures, such as a continuous boardwalk on Steep Creek. However others, such as the filling in of the pond (which is often inhabited by beavers and river otters) to make a new bus parking lot, will be very negative both for wildlife heath and visitor viewing opportunities. I think the extension of the Steep Creek boardwalk across the road and to Dipper Falls is also a bad idea because it will reroute a ton of visitors to the end of that boardwalk and an intersection with Trail of Time where is very difficult to manage large numbers of visitors and bears. Additionally, more thought should be given to providing bears locations along the creek where they are not being watched. The changes to the boardwalk to hug the creek much more closely may inhibit more skittish bears from feeling comfortable enough to fully access their food source. The priority should be maintaining the bears' food source, because if the food is not there, neither will the bears....There also must be plans in place for where the bears will go ideally, and what safeguards will be in place for when they don't follow our rules. Black bears are curious and great climbers; they will get into pedestrian

zones and they need to have an obvious exit that they can either find themselves or rangers can easily direct them towards.

3. This will be short, but I feel I need to pose the question: With the glacier receding due to climate change, why are we planning to spend so much to chase the glacier with boats and remote visitor centers and so little on infrastructure changes that could make the site carbon neutral or even carbon negative? It feels to me that these plans are, in a way, a desperate attempt to cling to a vanishing resource for a few more years instead of investing in a sustainable site that could be an example of what infrastructure should be if we want to stop glaciers everywhere from disappearing.

4. The fish viewing window is a not a good idea. It would be expensive, a monster to clean, would lead to unsafe crowding, and would negatively impact the stream ecosystem. A glass bottomed bridge or periscopes would be much easier, with the same effect.

5. Finally, I feel I need to comment on the staffing that was at the Public meeting. Most of the staff was great. They were patient and answered all my questions kindly. However, the man presenting the poster for the boats (last name King, not sure about his first name) did not have the same grace. He was condescending and seemed incredibly bored to be talking with the public. I understand being proud of a project and not taking questions and criticism well, but this was a meeting for the public. It was his job at that moment to converse with me, and his tone and somewhat snarky responses did not make me feel welcome on my public lands.

6.

Again, thank you for having being open for comments and I look forward to seeing what portions of the plan successfully make it through the NEPA process.

Thank you for your time,
Colleen Laird