

February 26, 2026

Monique Nelson, Forest Supervisor
Tongass National Forest
8510 Mendenhall Loop Road
Juneau, AK 99801

Subject: Objection to Draft Decision Notice – Herbert Glacier Cabin Project (PALS #67953)

Dear Reviewing Officer,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the review of the Herbert Glacier Cabin Project. I recreate frequently in the Herbert Glacier area and appreciate the Forest Service's work to improve recreation infrastructure and solicit public input on decisions that affect places so important to the community. I previously submitted timely written comments in support of the Herbert Glacier Cabin and respectfully submit this objection to the Draft Decision Notice (DDN). The Draft Decision removes the proposed cabin from the project, citing site complexity and ongoing capacity challenges. However, the DDN does not explain what specific complexities or capacity constraints resulted in this change. I am in favor of the trail reroute and overlook—a much needed safety improvement for the badly eroding trail—but I fail to see how the purpose and need are met with the cabin removed or how the administrative record supports such a change.

The Environmental Assessment analyzed construction of the Herbert Glacier cabin in full and confirmed:

- No significant environmental impacts
- Consistency with the Forest Plan
- Alignment with the Tongass Sustainable Cabin Strategy
- Response to documented demand for accessible cabins near Juneau
- Location was the top public choice near Juneau during the Alaska Cabins Project engagement process.

A review of public comments further found “After reviewing comments, no key issues were identified. Therefore, the Juneau Ranger District determined no alternatives to the Proposed Action are needed.”^[1] Despite these findings, the Draft Decision Notice removes the cabin, stating only that: “The cabin build was not authorized under this decision because the complexity of the cabin location and ongoing capacity challenges led the Forest Service to focus on other popular cabin locations identified by the Alaska Cabins Project.”^[1] No analysis in the EA identifies site complexity or agency capacity as barriers to implementation. No new information is disclosed explaining why a project fully analyzed and found not to cause significant impacts is now infeasible.

Public comments during the scoping period were overwhelmingly in favor. The only comments opposed that are specifically mentioned in the EA or DDN are concerned with the location proximity to a mining claim. The DDN states that “Comments that referenced future federal mining activity were considered.” However it continues “...there is no approved Plan of

Operations for mining activity in the immediate vicinity of the cabin.”^[1] Local reporting in the Juneau Empire on Feb 5th, 2026 further clarifies that “Though the area where the cabin is proposed is under federal mining claims, the Forest Service says that those claims did not influence the decision not to move forward with the cabin.” The article continues to say that factors influencing the decision were “the cabin site’s distance from both the road and trail, steep elevation, complicated design requirements and the need to transport construction materials through difficult terrain.”^[2] However, all of those factors were analyzed in the EA and none were found to pose significant barriers. Given the lack of specificity, it is hard to see the Draft Decision as anything but arbitrary and capricious. The public desperately needs clarity.

If mining-related legal or operational concerns influenced the decision to remove the cabin, that rationale should be clearly disclosed and explained. If they did not, the Responsible Official should identify the specific technical or administrative constraints that led to removal. Without this clarification, the public cannot meaningfully evaluate the basis for the change.

Accordingly, I respectfully request that the Forest Service either (1) proceed with authorization of the cabin consistent with the Environmental Assessment and its findings, or (2) provide clarification on the basis for removing the cabin so the public can understand what specific factors are limiting recreation development at this location. Clear explanation is essential for meaningful public participation and informed future recreation planning.

Thank you very much for your time,
Paul Leininger

1. United States Forest Service. (January 2026). *Herbert Glacier Cabin Project; Environmental Assessment, Finding of No Significant Impact, and Draft Decision Notice*
2. Juneau Empire. (February 5th, 2026). *Forest Service drops Herbert Glacier cabin plans, proposes trail reroute and scenic overlook instead*
<https://www.juneauempire.com/2026/02/05/forest-service-drops-herbert-glacier-cabin-plans-proposes-trail-reroute-and-scenic-overlook-instead/>