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First name: Ammie

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Good Day,

I am very concerned with the proposed Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center Master Plan. Part of what makes our community special is the ability to go to places that don't show human influence wherever you look. The raw, natural beauty of Alaska is what draws people to live here and to visit. We aren't the natural version of Disney Land. Congestion at the glacier is a great concern, especially because I avoid the area during cruise ship season like the plague. However, I'd rather cut down my personal visitation during the summer months than see the land get developed. The trails that are being looked at to allow visitors more access are the trails that locals use to avoid the crowds. The local Juneau population needs areas to remain quiet and untouched for our personal enjoyment. If the trails are built up, with more access, and signage, the crowds will seep into our sanctuary areas where our kids can hike without being run over by tourists, our dogs can walk happily without people imposing on personal space, our wildlife can have quiet areas away from the crowds, and we can actually mountain bike without tourists creating a human wall on our trails.

I have enclosed a powerpoint presentation that I compiled for my Environmental Science class that sums up my personal views regarding the proposed development of our glacier center, please take it into consideration along with my comments above.

v/r

Ammie Parker

Bear Habitat Disturbance at Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center

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Professor: Mr. John Rouu

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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

Costs of Solution 1

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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)

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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

Costs of Solution 1

- 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.

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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

Costs of Solution 2

- 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

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Trail Improvements

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

Costs of Solution 2

- 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)

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Finances

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

Benefits of Solution 1

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

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Bear habitat

- * Sows and cubs have continued access to sanctuary from bears.

- * Higher probability of keeping wild bears from becoming nuisance trash bears
 - * Less risk of human/bear interaction
- (ADF&G, 2014).

Benefits of Solution 1

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Preserving landscape

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

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Saves Finances

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

Benefits of Solution 2

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

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Updated Visitor Center

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

Benefits of Solution 2

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

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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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