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Comments: March 2020 comments on proposed Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Facility Improvement Project

First, thank you for taking steps to address the congestion that occurs around Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center. As a resident who avoided the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center area for years in the summer, I appreciate the effort. Some of the proposed actions can improve visitor experience. Others will detract from the overall feel of the place.

Glacier Spur Road parking access - I like the idea of creating official parking lots for the three trailheads in the proposal. Based on casual observations while driving down Glacier Spur Road, these parking lots could be 2/3 the size proposed and still meet the current needs. It's hard to say if having actual parking lot rather than road-side parking will increase parking demand.

Welcome Center - I approve of the concept of a welcome center that is visible as people arrive on site. In addition to the items listed in the Welcome Center Design Complex Summary, please make sure this facility includes 1 or more family restrooms, a space the public can rent after hours, and office spaces for both Forest Service staff and cooperators or contractors.

Visitor center parking - The overall design of the parking lot looks functional, however it does nothing to show the Forest Service a forward-thinking agency. At the beginning of this process, there was an idea to provide an electric tram/trolley that vastly decreased the amount of combustion emissions in the heart of the arrival zone. An electric tram/trolley would provide a pleasant arrival experience into an area many visitors view as wilderness (with a lower-case w) and well as provide healthier work environment for anyone working in the arrival zone.

Steep Creek - I like the idea of creating space between Steep Creek and the road/parking lots as well as increasing the amount of boardwalk and viewing platforms. This provides more opportunities for views and can decrease the congestion on Steep Creek Trail with the adult salmon are in the creek. Replacing the culverts with a bridge, thereby creating an underpass for pedestrians and wildlife is a good idea. An underwater fish/creek viewing window that requires redirecting the creek or moving fish to make them visible is not something I would like to see. I would prefer a lower tech/lower maintenance underwater fish viewing opportunity that provided less disturbance to the fish.

Regarding the west side of the lake and access to the glacier - I am in favor of creating a loop trail from west glacier trail to the glacier itself. This could decrease the number of people who get lost finding their way to/from the glacier. I am not in favor of motorized traffic on the lake.

This would greatly detract from the 'wild' experience of Mendenhall. One of the greatest pleasures at Mendenhall is coming to the edge of the lake or of a crowd and not having a view full of people! Motorized boats would detract from the experience by putting people into the viewshed, introducing sounds not natural to the environment, and possibly introducing oil/fuel/litter into the lake. It would make the Mendenhall area feel like an urban park. Find a better way to bring people to the glacier.

Visitor Center Expansion - I am in favor of this concept. I believe it can improve the flow of people inside the visitor center on busy days. The extra restrooms for women is also a good idea. Be sure a family restroom inside the visitor center stays part of the plan.

Laurie Lamm