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Comments: Regional Forester David E. Schmid

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June 26, 2023

Dear Mr. Schmid,

This letter represents my formal objection to the draft Record of Decision for the Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Visitor Facility Improvements project under the 36 CFR 218 Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process. I provided written comments in response to scoping on [3/18/2020], and on the DEIS (commenter #240) on [4/28/2022], which gives me standing to object to the project.

I appreciate the need for a welcome center at the Mendenhall Glacier. I do strongly object to 1) the placement of the visitor center which blocks the view and 2) the design/style which is way too modern and does not fit with the rock/timber Visitor Center that exists. I also object to removing the beautiful Pavilion which I visit often to accommodate the current plan. I do support a plan similar to the one submitted by Laurie Craig which is incorporated into the rock on the east side of the road behind the current Visitor Center. The modern design promoted by the MGRA staff violates "The Built Environment Image Guide" of the USDA FS which states "USFS facilities should respond to and be aesthetically integrated into their natural, cultural and experiential settings." per the Chief's introductory letter on BEIG. Also this same letter states "Rustic architecture has been a tradition in outdoor recreation settings for over a century. Across the eight provinces, note the use of natural or natural appearing materials, touch of craftsmanship, and the reflection of the scale of the landscape. Skillful use of these qualities fulfills people's expectations of facilities in natural settings". Why does Alternative 5 differ so far from these goals of the BEIG? Cost? The welcome center as it is designed in Alternative 5 looks more like it would fit in in a city (think Titanic Museum, Belfast). It also blocks the very thing that everyone has come to see: the glacier! I would support Alternative 6 or 7. Preferably Alternative 7.

My second objection is the incorporation of a lakeshore trail which pictured in the FS documents looks like a thoroughfare. I object to the use of electric bikes in the Dredge Lake Trail system as well. Various federal agencies (NPS, BLM, USDA-FS) have adopted rules to allow e-bikes to be allowed on non-motorized trails. This is a slippery slope and could lead to various other non-intended motorized vehicle use and is being challenged in court. My objection to e-bikes is 1) safety of walkers and non-motorized users and 2) speedier introduction of invasive plant species to the lakeshore.

Thirdly I would like to object to the number of cabins at the Mendenhall Campground. Five cabins seems excessive in such a small area. Such a high density of recreational cabins violates the USDA FS "Special Uses Handbook" for Recreation Resident Use that it imposes on recreational cabin users who need have to a RRU permit to maintain a cabin on USFS land. Specifically I refer to section b. "prevent urbanization of recreation residence tracks". At best such a density is hypocritical. Right now there are at least 5 other cabins proposed throughout Juneau by the Forest Service alone. The MGRA ROD allows for up to 5 cabins in a very small spot. I really advise caution here. Really feels like a party atmosphere to me.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate.

Carol Coyle

my signature is in attached file