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Comments: Greetings:

These are my initial comments on the draft environmental impact statement for the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Facility Improvements Project.

1. First and foremost I would like to challenge the purpose of, need for, and advisability of these kind of improvements. The overall proposal - especially the preferred alternative (number 2) - seems premised on the perceived desirability of providing for as many people as the cruise industry brings to Juneau, no matter the diminution of quality that follows.

The reason for this project is stated on page S-4, but to understand the actual purpose the reviewer must consider effects of the preferred alternative, number 2. Once that is examined, the obvious intention is to "accommodate projected future visitor use .... to provide ... opportunities for all visitors to enjoy the recreation area, ... to meet the demand of the visitor industry." Emphasis added.

In the statement of purpose on page S-4, lip service is given to "protecting the unique characteristics and outstanding beauty of the area" and to emphasizing "the area's outstanding scenery and wildlife resources." Yet some of the choices contained within the preferred alternative make clear that accommodating all future visitors is being prioritized over guarding the "outstanding beauty," "scenery," and "wildlife" of the area.

I urge you instead to protect the quality of the experience for both visitors and locals by capping visitor numbers to maintain high value experiences.

2. Secondly, I urge you to reject the preferred alternative, number 2. Some of the problems with this alternative are motorboats on the lake and hugely expanded parking lots that would bury wetlands, rather than use of clean mass transit to transport people to the site.

3. Thirdly, I urge you to get rid of the proposed view-blocking welcome center which appears in all the alternatives other than the no-action one (alternative number 1). While a welcome center may be a useful addition to the area, it should be moved so that it is not smack in the middle of one of the best views, and should be redesigned so that it fits into rather than looms over and distracts from the area.

4. Fourthly, of the proposed alternatives I believe number 4 (if the ill-placed welcome center is relocated and reimagined) best provides for both locals and visitors, by protecting the quality of how they will be able to experience the Mendenhall Glacier area. Alternative 4 eliminates boats and docks, reduces size of parking lots, reduces Steep Creek trail intrusions on bears, and restricts under-bridge passage to bears only, not bears and people. However, again let me emphasize that alternative 4 is only acceptable if the welcome center is relocated (so as not to block one of the best available views) and redesigned so that it fits into the landscape.

5. Lastly, I applaud your efforts to make the facilities better for the area and the world by providing for approaches to heating that do not rely on fossil fuels,

Thank you.