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Title:

Comments: I am writing to express my feelings on the proposed developments at the Mendenhall Recreation Area. I have been a Juneau resident since 1997 and lived close to the glacier since 2003. I have a PhD in ecology and have great concerns about proposed developments impacting fish and wildlife in a very negative way. I use the Forest Service area around the Mendenhall several times a week year-round, hiking the east and west Glacier Trails and exploring Dredge Lakes, watching bears, beavers and birds, kayaking on the lake in summer and skiing the trails in winter. I have observed visitors from many countries and backgrounds sharing joy with each other when they see their first bear, even though they speak different languages. I fear this unique experience for many will disappear due to the extensive developments proposed because new buildings, trails, boat docks and platforms are planned to be built in areas that are currently natural habitat for salmon and bears. Only a limited number of people can fit into a space close to a salmon stream safely in summer where bears are trying to feed their young. Beaver ponds and wetlands that provide habitat for wildlife should not be filled in to make room for more buses. A circulating pick up and drop off electric transport system should be used with time entry scheduled to reduce congestion. There are plenty other activities in Juneau that can be enjoyed while people wait their turn to enjoy the area with fewer people around. The current bus parking lot could then be used to accommodate more cars when needed.

The large proposed welcome centre has only one design and location and I believe more than one alternative from other companies should be included in the process to meet legal requirements. The one "alternative" given is a large building on the lakeshore that would take up a large part of the view and spoil the natural beauty that is the attraction to begin with. More restrooms are needed to meet current demand, but why not extend the current visitor centre into the hillside - toilets and cinema don't need window.

A cafe is unwise given the proximity to a salmon stream where bears congregate and would likely be an attraction to bears that would lead to bears being euthanized. It also takes up space on wildlife habitat. The proposed new bridge over Steep Creek near the stream's mouth opens up access for people into bear habitat - having an elevated walkway here would again impose on the view. Bears need places to get away from people and feed in peace, but the new trails and proposed platforms push further into bear refuge areas. The platform proposed near the first waterfall on Steep Creek gives bears no place to escape crowds. There should be no commercial groups in Dredge Lakes for the same reason that bears go into this area to rest and there is a likelihood of meeting rather grumpy bears on narrow trails. Bears need space and continuing to encroach on them will push them out. The Mendenhall area has the potential to offer world class wildlife viewing, which could be important to tour operators once the glacier has melted from view. Keeping development to a minimum can help insure the unique attraction survives much longer than the ice.

The proposed bridge to replace a culvert under Glacier Spur Road is a good improvement, but planning for both bears and people to pass under the road is unwise due to close confrontation with bears. It would be best overall to find a planning company with some knowledge of bear and human interactions or at least consult with expertise on this within the Forest Service.

Please do not allow motorized traffic into Dredge Lakes as there is too much danger to people walking on the narrow, twisty roads. We already have to move very quickly out of the way of mountain bikers speeding along some trails and appearing suddenly around a corner.

Please do not allow motorized boats on Mendenhall Lake. The lake is sockeye salmon rearing habitat and there are salmon in Steep Creek, the unnamed creeks along the west side of the lake and a new stream recently uncovered by ice near the ice caves. Petrochemicals are likely to get into the lake and be detrimental to fish. Motorized boats would create wakes that would impact nesting birds on the shore like arctic terns and sandpipers as well as being dangerous to kayakers, some of whom have never kayaked before.

Boat docks and ramps and the activity around them would impact fish and wildlife nearby likely reducing the salmon population. The boats are proposed so that people can touch the ice because that is what some people want, but the Forest Service has been warning us for years not to go out to the ice itself due to danger of ice

falling and killing people. The newly uncovered gravel left after the ice melts is also highly unstable with steep cliffs hiding under loose gravel and the roof of ice caves hidden under gravel - it is a dangerous place to take 1000 people a day.

I would like to see electric buses used instead of diesel not only because it is better for the climate but to avoid breathing in the diesel fumes already unpleasant at the glacier in summer.

I hope you will take a little time to consider my comments and see that there are more possibilities for accommodating all users to the area that will give everyone a positive experience there for many years to come.