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First name: Sally

Last name: Rue

Organization: NA

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the DEIS for the Mendenhall Visitor Facility Improvements Project and the surrounding area. I appreciate the extension of the comment period until May 9.

My family and I have made extensive year-round use of the Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area and surrounding areas since 1977. At that time, the glacier was perched on top of the ridge that juts out from the west side of the lake, and Nugget Creek disappeared into a large hole in the glacier that had its terminus toward the Visitor Center. Over the years our family has hiked, dog-walked, hunted, skied, skated, canoed, kayaked, swum, picnicked, bear-watched, and biked in the Dredge Lakes, West Glacier, Nugget Creek and Mendenhall Visitor Center area. This is a unique area that is highly valued by Juneau residents and visitors alike.

I have several top-level comments that I feel strongly should drive the project from top to bottom:

1) Indigenous history and culture should be a major theme and focus of the facility improvements. This should be developed in respectful partnership with Native Elders and the Native community; they must be integral to the project from the very beginning. It needs to include an honest look at the history of the Forest Service in its dealings with Indigenous peoples in Lingit Aani.

2) The other guiding theme and focus should be on climate change, adaptation to climate change, and sustainability since the Mendenhall Glacier is a stark and spectacular example that can serve to educate the public and demonstrate effective ways to address it and adapt to it. This theme, including human-caused climate change, should inform and guide the design, layout, construction, and management of the whole facility and recreation area. This would mean eliminating the continued use of fossil fuels for transporting visitors within the site and the use and promotion of renewable fuel technologies, and construction technologies that minimize the carbon footprint and showcase sustainability and effective climate adaptation strategies.

3) The third major comment I have is that the visitor capacity projections for Alternatives 2 and 3 are too high to maintain a reasonable balance of a high-quality experience for visitors and maintaining the essential character and value of the area for local residents. I believe that the projection in Alt. 4 of 752,000 visitors should be used as the maximum 30-year capacity target.

I do not see that the current four alternatives adequately address the first two issues. I also don't see meaningful alternative visions presented for the welcome center or the visitor center among the four alternatives. There is the No Action Alternative 1, and only one option offered for the new welcome center and for the visitor center. I do not support the location of the welcome center as proposed in Alts. 2, 3 and 4. It destroys one of the most scenic and special parts of the site by paving it over and putting a big box of a building on it. I would like to see the welcome center moved back from the lake into the current bus overflow area (see additional comments below).

I hope that when all the public comments are considered, the project team will work to address them effectively with a modified alternative that takes a forward-looking approach that will preserve the unique character of the area, provide visitors and residents alike with a high-quality experience, protect and improve the fish and wildlife habitat even as the human use increases, and take advantage of the unparalleled opportunity to tell the compelling story of climate change in Alaska.

My comments by area and category are as follows.

**Parking Access.** Parking Access should be associated with a relocated Welcome Center in the area of the current bus overflow parking area.

**Parking Access and Expansion.** This should be scaled to meet the needs for a reduced visitor capacity of

752,000 in 30 years (see #3 above), and should have plenty of EV and electric bus charging stations.

Welcome Center. Should be scaled to the visitor capacity of 752,000 in 30 years, and should be located away from the Lake and placed in the current overflow bus parking area.

Welcome Center Complex, Plaza Area. I prefer Alternative 4.

Welcome Center, Photo Point loop. I support Alternative 2.

Visitor Center Improvements. I would like to see a more visionary alternative than the minor changes of Alternative 2. It is a great site and view, and it seems like more could be done to accommodate visitor growth that would reflect my comments 1-3 above.

Glacier Spur Road Trailheads. I support Alternative 2.

Lake Shore Trail, main alignment. I prefer Alternative 4; the main trail should be located away from the beach with spur trails out to the beach. But I would like to see a modification to extend it to a bridge across the river to the campground.

Lake Shore Trail, Campground changes. I support Alternative 2, as long as it will allow the winter xc skiing activities that are so important to many Juneauites.

Lake Shore Trail, Dredge Lakes Outer Loop. I prefer Alternative 2, except I do not think there should be motorized tour boats on the lake, so there should be no need to connect the Dredge Lakes trails to a boat dock.

Public Use Cabins. I support Alternative 2 as long as there is not a conflict in the winter with cross country skiing and other winter uses of the current campground.

Nugget Falls. I support Alternative 2.

Steep Creek Habitat Restoration. I support Alternative 2's proposal to restore and improve fish habitat, but I am concerned that the design drawings show a drainage ditch more than a restored and natural stream. Have restoration specialists work with ADF&G to design the relocated creek. Also, redesign alignment to accommodate pedestrian access from a Welcome Center located in the existing overflow bus parking area.  
Steep Creek Trail Expansion. I prefer Alternative 2.

Steep Creek Trail, Dipper Falls. I prefer Alternative 2.

Dredge Lakes Multiuse trails. I support Alternative 2.

Boat Docks Welcome Center Docks. I prefer Alternative 1. There should be NO motorized tour boats on the lake.

Boat Docks, Remote Glacier Access. I prefer Alternative 1. There should be NO motorized tour boats on the lake.

Remote Glacier Visitor Area. I prefer Alternative 1. Improved trails will give access to the retreating glacier.

West Glacier Unit Trails. I prefer Alternative 2. Fixing up the West Glacier access trails is a good idea and will be important to increasing access to the glacier, and to accommodating more visitors.

Visitor Capacity and Commercial Use Management. I prefer Alternative 4 as a projection/goal of approximately 38% growth in use over 30 years, not 15 years. I do not support doubling the use of the area in 30 years as

projected in Alternative 2, the preferred action, as it would likely degrade the quality of visitors' and residents' experiences to a significant degree. maintain the resource values of the area and have a high-quality visitor and local resident experience.

I don't know enough about the last three management-oriented components to provide a comment.

Thank you for considering these comments.