

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/9/2022 8:00:00 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: May 9, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: USFS DEIS comments on MGRA planning

I am writing to express my personal thoughts on several aspects of the MGRA DEIS plan suggestions. As a long time Juneau resident, I want to voice support for the full inclusion of expanded cross country ski trails in the MGRA Master Plan. If this plan includes the development of additional connected ski trails, linking the east side of the Mendenhall Valley to a new bridge crossing the Mendenhall River to the Campground, the interests of local residents will be supported.

I also think there are some holes in the suggested options because the dates of April to October, the high cruise ship visitor times, were used for validating the need to consider doing any of these projects. This left planners to focus on the east side of the valley leaving the west side to vie for the crumbs. For instance, the suggestion to create an entirely new facility to replace the current shelter looking at the glacier face, while very nice, isn't a necessity. Improving the west side recreation opportunities, as capacity, especially in winter on the trails is probably reached at this time, is a higher need.

This planning effort missed the opportunity to understand the capacity issues of local use. The April-October numbers veil the need to consider the importance of West Valley upgrades to accommodate local usage. For instance, a commitment to improve and widen the roadway, from the skater's cabin area to the end of the road by the trailhead to McGinnis, to provide safe shoulder parking is an obvious and positive opportunity to acknowledge the capacity needs of the local user community. This should be accomplished before any parking is created inside the campground as proposed by the idea of 30 parking spaces that would take out the walk in camping sites. Building five cabins in the campground will result in an over crowding outcome. Why not improve the roadway and if the opportunity to build five cabins, or four or three or two or one, becomes a financial reality, locate them along the roadway instead of inside the campground? Why not work on the USFS philosophy of multiuser as a way to maximize the efficient use of project dollars? For instance, trails that are sanctioned for mountain bikers can often serve as ski trails during winter if properly designed. There are reams of design standards for both nordic ski trails and mountain bike or single track trails.

Thank you for considering my comments. I appreciate the tremendous amount of information and thought put into this DEIS. Please let me know if you have any questions regarding my comments.

Regards,

Frankie Pillifant