

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/24/2022 7:18:12 PM

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Comments: The Southeast Alaska Conservation Council supports the withdrawal of 4,560 acres of National Forest System lands near Mendenhall Glacier from minerals leasing. The identified area includes a key part of the viewshed of the highly used Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area and mineral exploration is incompatible with existing recreational uses and tourism values.

In general, SEACC opposes the existing open-entry mineral claim staking system in place under the 1872 Mining Law. SEACC supports a transition to a leasing system similar to that anticipated in H.R. 7580, the Clean Energy Minerals Reform Act. The general mining law is antiquated and does not meet the needs of society. It should be modernized and a leasing regime adopted in order to allow for a more comprehensive planning approach and the mining law should include reasonable royalties for mineral resources on public lands.

The 20-year mineral withdrawal contemplated in this decision inadequately protects the recreational values in the area and an option should be available for permanent withdrawal.