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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Greetings:

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

1. Thank you for heeding the comments on the earlier version of this draft statement, and proposing new alternatives.

2. Preliminarily, I would like to challenge the purpose of, need for, and advisability of some of the proposed improvements. Certainly the original proposal seemed 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 possible actual result the reviewer must consider effects of several of the alternatives. Once those are examined, it seems likely that the 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 some of the alternatives make clear the danger that accommodating all future visitors - no matter how many - could be 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.

3. No matter in which alternative they appear, I urge you to categorically reject motorboats on the lake, and the construction of extensive new docks. However, if motorized boats are allowed, they absolutely should be electrified, rather than operating on fossil fuels.

4. I urge you to reject hugely expanded parking lots that would bury wetlands. A excellent approach is the proposal that, as put in Laurie Craig's February 3, 2023, piece in the Juneau Empire, would have tour buses load and unload "in an improved bus lot, build a welcome center there, and create an electric circulator shuttle to quietly and cleanly move guests closer to the front."

5. Relatedly, I urge you to follow the suggestion in alternative 6 to locate the new welcome center in the current bus parking area. While a welcome center may be a useful addition to the area, it should not be sited smack in the middle of one of the best views, and should be designed so that it fits into rather than looms over and distracts from the area.

6. Please limit wide, paved new trails, which would be out-of-character with the area. Especially, again as stated by Laure Craig in her Empire piece, it is critically important with respect to Steep Creek to "limit platforms or trails that [could] surround the mouth of the creek and [could] force wild bears to become encircled by humans."

7. Please do not allow any food or beverages to be served in the welcome center or elsewhere; habituation to human food can only lead to trouble for and with bears, one of the area's assets of great value to visitors and

residents alike.

8. 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.

Larri Spengler

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