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Organization:

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Comments: Forest Supervisor, Tongass National Forest

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Dear Forest Supervisor Sherman,

I noticed a number of alternatives are being considered and I applaud the leadership of the Forest Service for compromising and listening to the residents of Juneau. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the SEIS 2023.

I have lived in Juneau since 1982 and have always enjoyed spending time on the Mendenhall trails and on the lake during winter freezes, along the platforms to watch bears and at the Visitor Center. Typically I avoid the entire area during summer months due to the insane number of visitors. I urge the agency to limit visitation numbers as many National Parks do to provide a more enriching experience. Allowing 800,000 visits is a reasonable 30-year estimate.

I support Alternative 7 (2.3.8.2 Welcome Center) of the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement January 2023 page 2-60 where the Welcome center is located on the NW corner of the commercial overflow Parking lot. I support incorporating a shuttle/train from the remote parking area to efficiently transport visitors to the end of the road. Efficient, renewable-energy powered public transit solutions are good for everyone.

I oppose the use of boats on the lake, with the exception of people powered watercraft, such as the currently awarded companies who paddle Tlingit styled canoes.

Please do not create a loop trail to Nugget Falls, however the Photo Point trail could be designed as a loop, returning visitors along the edge of the water and over a bridge, facilitating a more efficient and comfortable flow of bodies.

Expanding the campground parking lot near Skaters Cabin to the north is much needed and a better idea than expanded parking within the campground. New walking access trails within the campground also make sense to allow walkers and their dogs an alternative to tromping down the freshly groomed ski trails along the campground roads. New cabins in the campground make sense only to some extent, but not where they will encourage walkers along the groomed roads such as along the RV loop.

As an active member of Juneau Nordic Skiers, I support Steep Creek Intertie - A connection between the Dredge Lake trail system and the Powerline & Under Thunder Trails would allow for seamless skiing along the east side of the valley, through Dredge Lake, across the Mendenhall River, on up to the Montana Creek valley, and into Spaulding Meadows.

Lake Shore Trail - Make this trail wide enough for grooming machines.

Mendenhall River Bridge - Please keep it in the plan.

Dredge Lakes Loop - a 12' wide trail would enable winter grooming for skiers, bikers, and walkers alike. This is only in alternative 6, but the JNSC is advocating for its full inclusion in all alternatives.

Mendenhall Campground Cabins - the JNSC suggests the proposed caretaker's cabin at the entrance double as a winter-time warming hut for skiers. The JNSC remains concerned about the impact the other campground cabins will have on deteriorating grooming conditions by non-skiers accessing cabins on foot, and suggest placing cabins elsewhere on the west side of the lake where there is road access.

Skater's Cabin Parking - the additional parking lots in alternatives 5 - 7 are preferred over adding parking inside the campground (alternatives 2 & 3) near the proposed Mendenhall Bridge.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Judy O. Neary