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Comments: These are my comments on the Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area Facility Improvements:

The EIS you have produced seems to have largely ignored the wishes and comments of the large majority of local residents who commented on previous iterations of this plan. It seems as though the writers of the plan are not personally familiar with the landscape or the natural wonder that they are "planning" for. Also, the large, essentially open-ended, increases in tourism use and permits are incompatible with maintaining an area established to celebrate a natural wonder.

You have devilishly constructed your alternatives so that every one of them includes some elements that will maximize adverse impacts to the natural area and turn the glacier environment into more of a theme park than what it should be, an opportunity to experience one of nature's wonders in as close to its natural state as possible. Therefore I cannot support any of your constructed "alternatives" as a whole. So, I will comment on the features individually, once again.

First among objections I have is the persistent proposal to put boats on the lake chasing the receding glacier with thousands of tourists aboard daily. Their presence will ruin the existing spectacular viewshed, the whine of their motors will make quiet contemplation of the scene impossible, the crowds debarking at the foot of the glacier will undoubtedly trash the area, disturb the remains of the interstadial forest, soil the environment with the contents and odors of human waste, and the facilities built to service them will mar the site and belittle the surrounding area. Also passenger rescue and boat salvage plans, necessary in case of an inevitable mishap, are not included for review in the EIS so the wisdom of the boat enterprise cannot be evaluated.

"Chasing the glacier" is a fool's errand. Instead, as the glacier recedes due to climate warming as a result of carbon emissions from cruise ships and tour buses, among others, the Forest Service needs to focus on the entire setting, the lake, the valley carved by the glacier, the imposing cliffs and mountains, the signs of plant progression through ecological stages of revegetation. Visitors' attention should be expanded and directed to the whole of the marvelous valley, not just the retreating ice that the unlimited tourism you champion and abet will doom sooner or later.

Second among my strong objections to the plans is that you seem to want to "pave paradise and put up a parking lot." Lots of lots.

I oppose building a new "welcome center" on the lake shore and having bus, van and auto traffic drive right up to it.

I support putting the proposed center back at the existing bus parking/snow storage area and requiring fossil fuel buses and tour vehicles to discharge their passengers there from which they would take non-polluting electric shuttles to the lake and current visitor center area.

I support improvement of trails and building new ones particularly in the west glacier area and to some extent in the Dredge Lakes area. However, I oppose a 12-foot wide hard surface lake shore trail. Why must the Forest Service always overbuild natural area visitor facilities? A 6 to 8-foot wide gravel trail is plenty adequate and retains some aspect of a natural surroundings. I have mixed feelings about the bridge over the river to the campground, especially if it reduces the number of campsites. Overall I think it is a bad idea and another example of overbuilding.

I am not in favor of making the Nugget Falls trail a loop trail using the "flats" as one of the routes. Again, that risks degrading that area by overuse. Keep the throngs on the existing trail.

Parking lots at trail heads should be limited to those in the alternatives with the smallest square footage and fewest spaces. Carving large paved areas out of the forest ruins the ambience of the trail heads. In over 40 years of using Dredge Lakes and Trail of Time trail areas I have never had a problem parking at trail heads or seen "overcrowding" in the trail head areas. You are planning for a problem that doesn't exist.

I am ambivalent about the Steep Creek Trail changes.

The Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area is a beloved place for Juneau residents and tourists as well. The chief reason behind that affection is that it is a place to easily access nature, to enjoy the proximity of birds, wildlife, and astonishingly beautiful scenery. Great portions of all the alternatives in the proposed plan recklessly ignore those attributes in favor of accommodating the most people through the area no matter their impact on it. The Forest Service risks the goodwill it has built up over many years with the public by predominantly catering to industrial tourism vendors and cruise ship operators and seeking to build a monument to development rather than respecting the existing values and beauty of the area with modest improvements that complement them and preserve the naturalness of the site as much as possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. And I hope you don't wreck the place.