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Comments: Mendenhall Recreation Area comments Feb 15, 2023

I appreciate the opportunity to comment yet again on proposed development of the Mendenhall Recreation Area, and I also appreciate that the USFS has made the attempt to listen to concerns about the original proposal and offer some alternatives. My preferred alternative is #1 - no changes, but there is some merit in some of the suggestions in other alternatives so I will list the things that appear to be helpful changes and also the things I find harmful to the quality of visitor experience, whether resident or tourist, and harmful to the health, character, beauty and integrity of the natural area that the MRA is part of. I also want to reiterate that I reject the premise that Juneau and the Forest Service need to cater to the wishes of industrial tourism to the detriment of Juneau residents lives and experiences. Many local residents already avoid the Visitor Center area during the summer because of the crowds. Instead of enlarging the area of impact as much of this plan does, it makes more sense to limit the number of visitors. Many parks across the country have already found ways to do this.

First of all no motorized boats of any kind should be allowed. Both the boats and the supporting infrastructure would be far too intrusive. You would think that with all the examples of overdeveloped parks we have in this country planners would realize that the disneyfication of natural areas is not the answer. This whole idea of chasing the ice up the mountain with more infrastructure is ridiculous. If people want an amusement park experience have them go to an amusement park instead of disrespecting natural areas. There are too few of them left. So no boats and no remote glacier visiting area.

I don't think the current parking areas near the visitor center should be enlarged. Leave them much as they are. Cruise ship passengers can be accommodated by being dropped off by their buses in the current commercial lot, with electric shuttles to take them to the visitor center. A trail (no concrete or asphalt please) that would take them from the parking lot to the visitor center is an even better idea. They're supposedly here to see the area, and they are going to see a lot more walking than riding a shuttle bus. Have a plan that encourages that walk. A small welcome center with bathrooms and information would be OK in the bus parking lot, but I see no need for a cafe or the sale of any kind of food or drink. It's just an invitation for creating problems with bears. People can survive without a place to buy food for an hour or two. They should also come prepared for the weather.

Glacier Spur Rd. Trailheads. _It was not clear to me whether you were talking about 20 parking spaces at each of the three sites or 20 total, but if it's 20 at each that is really excessive. I'm not sure why they would need to be paved either.

Dredge Lakes-Mendenhall Lakeshore Trails. I strongly oppose the whole pedestrian bridge across the Mendenhall from the campground -12 foot wide developed trail along the lakeshore - bike trail loop around the outside of the whole Dredge Lakes area plan. It is one of the more blatant examples of how this plan is primarily about industrial tourism with little to no concern about resident and transient wildlife that depend on this area. It will bring thousands of more people into an area that has served as an unofficial wildlife refuge for animals that have already been pushed out of much of the Mendenhall Valley by development. I have seen bears, wolves, goshawks, beavers, otters, deer and other wildlife, particularly in the less traveled parts of Dredge Lakes. Connecting the campground via a pedestrian bridge to Dredge Lakes and creating a pedestrian and bike highway that will bring thousands of cruise ships passengers from the visitor center to these remoter parts of Dredge Lakes will diminish the value of this area to wildlife and to local residents who use it to hunt, fish, hike, bird watch and find a quiet place away from the hustle and bustle of the neighborhoods and the crowded craziness of the visitor center area during the summer. Bear and wildlife viewing is one of the major draws of the

glacier. Increasing pressures that may cause them to leave, make themselves scarce or force them into conflicts with visitors seems counterproductive. I don't support any added trails in Dredge Lakes. Maybe make minor improvements/ maintenance to the major trails in the area, but keep all the unofficial trails off the trail maps and don't maintain them. I also think the time has come for the USFS to consider making some areas of Dredge Lakes off limits for dogs to take some pressure off wildlife.

I do support the idea of creating a trail to connect the campground area with Montana Creek. A very modest increase in the number of parking spots at Skater's cabin seems ok as well, perhaps the size of the lot currently across the road from Skaters Cabin. There is already plenty of parking at the West Glacier Trailhead and it is connected to the campground by a trail.

Let's not pave paradise for a parking lot and the increased wealth of cruise companies.