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First name: Fred

Last name: Hiltner

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To: MGRA SDEIS Committee.

2-20-23

From: Fred Hiltner

Greetings, and thank you for the opportunity to comment on the MGRA SDEIS process.

I am a 42-year resident of Juneau and an avid outdoor recreation enthusiast. During my first trip to Juneau in 1978 (a month-long mountaineering and sea kayaking expedition). My three friends and I arrived in Juneau on the state ferry Matanuska during September in the dark, and transferred our kayaks and climbing gear onto the MV Glacier Seal while it was still dark. So we didn't see Juneau until we returned from our trip a month later.

It was a complete shock when we approached Juneau. When I saw the incredible mountains dropped off the icefield right into the sea, I made up my mind to move to Juneau. I have never for a moment regretted that decision.

My outdoor pursuits included much time in the MGRA. I worked all over Alaska as a wilderness guide, and taught mountaineering for the University of Alaska for many years. Much of that time was based out of the MGRA, including accessing the Juneau Icefield up the West Glacier Trail to teach mountaineering courses, sometimes helicoptering up to the icefield teaching, and many guided hikes up onto the snout of the Mendenhall Glacier.

The MGRA is a beautiful, absolutely unique outdoor treasure that changes many lives forever- for one-time visitors, as well as local Juneau residents. It has been well managed, and yes, it is time to re-dream the best steps forward. I thank you for your time on this enormous undertaking and appreciate your reaching out to those who also love the MGRA. My comments will be brief, and largely focused on non-motorized recreation opportunities for locals and visitors.

Nordic Trails- Nordic and cross-country skiing has exploded in Juneau over recent years. With the local Nordic ski club approaching one thousand members this month, it is important to expand opportunities to meet current and future demand for cross country skiers. I fully support the bridge across from the campground to the Dredge Lakes area, especially building it wide enough for ski grooming equipment to access the Dredge Lake area for grooming. I also think it is time for the USFS to financially support the grooming done by the local cross-country ski club. I encourage you to create the largest Nordic trail system possible, including the Lakeshore Trail as described in Alternative 6. Also I highly support the Juneau Nordic Ski Club's high loop ski trail addition. Connectivity with the wide range of cross-country ski trails just might make this a destination "World Class" Nordic ski area. What a great addition to the many MGRA users in the winter!

Boats- I support boats on Mendenhall Lake if they are electric only. Let's keep the noise and pollution as low as possible while continuing glacier viewing opportunities for locals and visitors after the glacier retreats beyond view from the visitor center. It's long been a source of pride for Juneau locals to share "our" treasured glacier with visitors.

Dredge Lakes- Then commercial hiking on the Ecology trail near the visitor center allows for visitors to explore the unique ecology of a recently retreated glacier. I support this opportunity for local guiding companies, but do not want to expand it further. Let's leave the rest of the fragile Dredge Lake area to local residents and visitors

free from commercial groups.

Again, I thank you and appreciate your time and energy, and offering us the opportunity to comment on this large project.

Fred Hiltner