



Tongass National Forest

NEWS RELEASE
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Possible Mendenhall campground, road, and trail closures

JUNEAU, Alaska– The water level is continuing to rise in Suicide Basin along the east flank of the Mendenhall Glacier. A sensor installed by the University of Alaska Southeast is monitoring the water level. A sudden release of water from behind the glacier, a jökulhlaup, is possible, and may close the Mendenhall Campground and Nugget Falls Trail. If the level of Mendenhall Lake rises high enough, the Photo Point Trail and the road to Skaters Cabin may also be closed. Since floodwaters generally rise gradually in the lake over the course of one or two days, according to the National Weather Service (NWS); users will be notified in time to ensure public safety.

“This is a great opportunity to watch a glacier in action” says Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center Director John Neary. “Some people think glaciers are slow and predictable, until you realize how much we DON’T know about how they work, in this case, their mysterious plumbing system.”

Forest Service officials ask recreationists to be aware of potential flooding. Kayakers and rafters should stay away from the glacier face and out of Steep Creek. Hikers should watch for waves from calving.

The NWS is monitoring the water level of Suicide Basin as seen in the gauge at the following URL: <http://water.weather.gov/ahps2/hydrograph.php?wfo=pajk&gage=jsba2>. The NWS is communicating with the City and Borough of Juneau and the U.S. Forest Service who will respond appropriately.

For more information about the U.S. Forest Service response, call the Juneau Ranger District at 907-586-8800 or the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center at 907-789-6637.

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