



Tongass National Forest

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Forest Service announces Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area prospectus awards

JUNEAU, Alaska—The Tongass National Forest has completed its evaluation of bid packages submitted during the prospectus for outfitter, guide and transport services for the Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area (MGRA). Bid packages were received from large, small, new and existing companies. All applicants have been notified of the award decision. The competitive process resulted in the division of nearly 239,000 service days amongst tourism businesses. Each service day represents a client participating in an activity, such as hiking, kayaking, or riding a bus.

“I am pleased to award service days to a mix of new companies and existing companies. The number of days requested was nearly three times that available!” said Juneau District Ranger Brad Orr. “The challenge was evaluating many compelling proposals and determining the best outcome. The ultimate goal is visitor satisfaction, business opportunity, and minimal impact to Mendenhall resources.”

This is the first prospectus opportunity for the MGRA in nearly two decades. In that time, visitation within the Visitor Center Unit has increased significantly from 200,000 in 1999 to over 450,000 in 2015. In addition, visitors have increasingly sought out guided services or commercial transport to help them experience the MGRA.

“Anyone interested in the future of Visitor Center Unit facilities should watch for our master planning project beginning this winter,” said Visitor Center Director, John Neary. The goal of this effort is to accommodate projected numbers of visitors, improve traffic flow, and reduce congestion. Facility developments could result in increased visitor capacity in the area, but the focus is on protecting resources and improving the experience of visitors and residents.

The next Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area prospectus, planned for 2020, will have a larger number of service days available for distribution as all permits are set to expire in the area at that time.

Information, as it becomes available, will be posted on the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/tongass/about-forest/offices/?cid=stelprdb5400800>. For more information about the prospectus awards, call Jessica Schalkowski at 907-789-6279, email jlschalkowski@fs.fed.us, or John Neary at 907-789-6637, email jneary@fs.fed.us.

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