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Date: August 12, 2025

Route To: File

Subject: Forest Order – Glacier Lake Outburst Flood – Juneau Ranger District, Alaska
From: Monique Nelson – Forest Supervisor

I have decided to issue an order to close areas near the Mendenhall Lake, as shown on Attachment 1 to the order, Juneau Ranger District, Tongass National Forest to protect public health and safety.

This order supersedes Forest Order 10-05-33-25-12 signed on August 11, 2025. That forest order also closed NFS lands near Mendenhall Lake because of the GLOF flooding. However, based on the projection that the GLOF, along with recent heavy rainfall, will result in Mendenhall Lake reaching a record level of 16.6 feet during the GLOF event, I have determined that it is necessary to expand the closure area. This Forest Order expands the closure area from Forest Order 10-05-33-25-12 to include the Visitor Center, Glacier Spur Road, and some additional NFS lands and trails to the east of Glacier Spur Road. Attachment 1 to the updated forest order shows the exact scope of the closure. The additional closures are necessary to keep the public, including large numbers of cruise ship visitors and permitted operators, away from floodwaters that may result from the GLOF.

Suicide Basin, which has released the glacier lake outburst floods (GLOF) that cause inundation along Mendenhall Lake and River, is currently releasing. Moreover, the Mendenhall River is elevated and is currently in Moderate Flood Stage due to an ongoing release as well as a long duration moderate to heavy rainfall from the previous 3 days. The GLOF flooding will occur during the next 24-48 hours, with the Mendenhall River expected to crest sometime on Wednesday afternoon and eventually falling out of Flood Stage sometime on Thursday morning. This GLOF flooding will inundate portions of the Mendenhall Glacier Recreation area. The flooding affects multiple recreation facilities, including Mendenhall Campground and Skaters Cabin and other areas near the Visitor Center, as well as inundating trails on both sides of the lake, including highly travelled trails such as Steep Creek.

This order closes all public use on the west side of MGRA, including Mendenhall Campground and Skater's Cabin, as well as areas on the east side of the MGRA, including the Visitor Center. This Order shall be in effect from my signature because the National Weather Service has already issued (as of approximately 9:20 AKDT on August 12, 2025) a flood warning indicating that the sub-glacier release has begun. The order will remain in effect until August 20, 2025, unless rescinded sooner. The August 20 end date is intended to allow the Forest Service time to ready the area for reopening.

As noted, the order is necessary to ensure public health and safety. As part of flood response and mitigation, highly travelled areas in the predicted flood zone must be closed and evacuated. Any public access to these areas that may or will be inundated by floodwaters poses an obvious risk, particularly since the GLOF can result in rapid water rise. Thus, the Order is intended to prevent access by the public to certain areas in the Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area that are likely to be affected by the GLOF flooding.

I have concluded that this decision is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act. This action falls within the category identified in 7 CFR 1b.4(c)(19) – prohibitions to provide short-term resource protection or to protect public health and safety – and does not require documentation in a decision memo, decision notice or record of decision. I have determined that there are no extraordinary circumstances associated with this temporary closure. Implementation of the decision may begin immediately.

This Order includes an exemption for persons with a permit from the Forest Service specifically authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission. As the Order itself makes clear, this exemption does not allow the holders of current outfitting/guiding or transporting special use permits to disregard this closure order. Instead, any permit must *specifically* authorize the holder to be in the Closure Area *notwithstanding* this Closure Order.

All requests for a permit authorized by this exemption must be submitted to the District Ranger at 8510 Mendenhall Loop Rd, Juneau, AK 99801. The criteria for granting written authorization from the use restrictions will be as follows:

1. The applicant must provide a reasonable explanation for the need for an exemption from the use restrictions.
2. I or my delegate must determine that the risk to public health and safety is reasonable considering the circumstances of the request.
3. Whether the exemption will benefit the Forest Service or the public in general.

The written authorization may only exempt the applicant from certain use restrictions or from a circumscribed portion of the use restriction area. If I am unavailable at the time a request is received, I hereby grant the Deputy Forest Supervisor and the Juneau District Ranger the authority to sign any written authorizations exempting persons from the closure. Examples of permissible exemptions may include: scientific research related to flooding or utility companies checking infrastructure.

Monique Nelson
Forest Supervisor
Tongass National Forest

Enclosure- Forest Order No. **10-05-33-25-13**