

From: [Laurie Craig](#)
To: [Airport Board](#); [Patty Wahto](#)
Subject: Cut branches, not trees
Date: Saturday, July 29, 2023 7:23:22 PM

Airport board members,

As some of you know I walk the airport dike trail (EVAR) several times per week. Recently I have noticed entire sections of trees being cut down. This is potentially not the best solution for safety. I understand some tree removal is required, but I urge thoughtful decisions that preserve public access and protection for the airport.

In essence, please cut branches, not trees. The exception is the visibility gained by brushing shrubs at the access gate by the river so ARFF drivers can see clearly to enter and exit the restricted area. Limited cutting makes the best choice.

What is truly needed for safety is a clear understanding of the unique landscape at JIA. Discussions occurred during the airport EIS that may not have been conveyed to newer employees. The trees form a natural barrier between the wetlands and the float pond and airport. The woodland prevents an average of 900 Canada Geese and 2,000 wintering mallards from crossing the runway during the dark winter months. The birds forage close to the channel. The resident eagle pair near the river also defend the woodland and mostly keep other eagles away. They are steadfast in holding their territory. When the salmon came into the river this week, there were 53 eagles on sandbars downstream from the airport. The airport's wildlife hazards team has been vigilant. I notify them if I see a problem that may not be visible from their monitoring patrol inside the fence.

I recognize the need to manage vegetation along the EVAR. To assist in that endeavor I have hand-cut woody growth from the chain link fence to save our airport staff from the time consuming effort that cannot be performed with machinery. I do my best to help keep the airport safe, keep dog owners behaving politely to others and keep the trail as clear and clean as possible for the enjoyment of all. The horse manure has been a topic of considerable interest to those who carefully remove their dog's waste.

Mostly I am aware of the airport's need to provide safety for aircraft. That is why I urge the staff to focus on cutting branches, not trees.

- 1) the dense woodland blocks massive numbers of waterfowl from intersecting the runway and float pond
- 2) increased winds, as we had with damaging microbursts during the October 1, 2021 storm, can take out large forested portions. The stronger and wider the forest, the more likely it is to withstand significant losses from excessive winds
- 3) more frequent training trips with the ARFF on the dike are breaking down the dike; I encourage negotiations with CCFR to train on the new interior road surface with the heavy trucks as an alternative to preserve longevity of the dike
- 4) large trees and their root systems provide strength and stability to the dike. Do not remove the trees that would render the EVAR unusable in an emergency

On a separate topic, I am pleased to inform you that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has reinstated the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge Citizens Advisory Committee. I am a member again as I was in the early 2000s. We have met several times and are following key issues that affect the Refuge as well as the airport.

My familiarity with airport issues gives me a voice to speak to the group about concerns we share. One of the efforts currently before the community is the Second Crossing. I have been following news of both Delta and Alaska being concerned about a structure potentially being erected in the flight path over Gastineau Channel, notably near Sunny Point. That parallels my own worry of inappropriate placement. I welcome inclusion in any public discussion of the airport board that will inform me and fellow committee members on options for a safer Second Crossing.

Thank you for being responsive. Your staff has been helpful when problems arise.

Best regards,

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Sent from my iPhone