

Administrator

October 30, 2023

National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Habitat Conservation
Division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1315 East-West Highway, 14th Floor
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

The City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) supports the Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition (SAWC)'s application, "Restoring Pacific salmon habitat and reducing disaster risk from climate change-induced glacial outburst flooding, Mendenhall Watershed, Juneau, AK" for a 2023 NOAA Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience grant. If awarded, the approximately \$5.5 million dollar project would utilize nature-based solutions to mitigate the escalating disaster risk and resulting damage from glacial outburst flooding in Alaska's capital city, while restoring habitat for the region's Pacific Salmon resource.

In August 2023, a glacial dam outburst from Mendenhall Glacier's Suicide Basin caused record flooding and riverbank destruction along Mendenhall Lake and Mendenhall River, which flows through heavily populated neighborhoods. Significantly exceeding all previous glacial flood volumes and model predictions, the flood resulted in evacuations and displacement due to severe destruction of private property as well as damage to public infrastructure. The event ultimately led to a local disaster declaration and a state disaster declaration from the Governor of Alaska. Monitoring experts at the University of Alaska and the federal government indicate that a flood of this magnitude or greater could happen again in the future. This requires a coordinated and researched search for solutions, as is offered in the SAWC's proposal.

We are pleased that the SAWC project includes multi-phased public engagement as well as strong collaboration between local, state, and tribal agencies. The project would improve the community's understanding of the changed river through habitat surveys and the development of a hydraulic model to predict water velocity at varying discharges. The project would also help to protect selected public and private properties while enhancing fish habitat that benefits the entire community. CBJ is committed to contributing \$130,000 in staff engineering and design review over the four years of the project, in addition to \$70,000 in in-kind matching support as outlined in the SAWC's budget narrative.

We appreciate the SAWC's leadership in this nature-based response and look forward to engaging with them and partner organizations to better understand the new river dynamics and to help protect CBJ and private property.

[Sign off]

Katie Koester, City Manager

City & Borough of Juneau