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**Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida
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Delivered via Email To: Bruce.R.Sexauer@usace.army.mil

Bruce R. Sexauer, PE
Chief, Civil Works Project
United States Army Corps of Engineers
PO Box 6898
JBER, Alaska 99506

Dear Mr. Sexauer:

The Mendenhall Valley is a densely populated residential area within the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ). The area is currently at risk of flooding due to glacial lake outbursts, also known as Jökulhlaups (pronounced “Yah-cuh-laups”). Jökulhlaups occur when a glacial dammed lake drains rapidly, releasing a surge of water downstream. These outburst floods pose a significant threat to people and infrastructure in the region. The first glacial outburst event in the Mendenhall Valley was observed in 2009 and the surrounding community has been dealing with subsequent Jökulhlaups on almost an annual basis. The community has experienced 13 of its top 20 recorded floods from these events since 2011. On August 5, 2023, a glacial dam outburst from the Mendenhall Glacier’s Suicide Basin caused record flooding and riverbank destruction along the Mendenhall River, resulting in the destruction and damage of both private and public property. Subsequently, both the local and state governments declared disaster emergencies. Early on the morning of August 6, 2024, a glacial dam outburst crested at over one foot above the record event from 2023, causing widespread damage to private and public infrastructure. Almost 300 homes have been impacted; some of them having just recovered from the 2023 event. We are fortunate no one died as ice cold water filled homes and basement apartments in a matter of minutes. The community of Juneau is asking how to prevent this from happening next year.

Juneau needs federal assistance to answer that question. Suicide Basin is part of the Mendenhall Glacier on U.S. Forest Service land. An engineering solution will require a multijurisdictional approach with complex problem solving, permitting, and funding. Neither the City and Borough of Juneau, nor the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida, have the local expertise or experience for a project of this scale. The sense of urgency is imminent; evidence suggests that we can expect a flooding event with widespread devastation annually.

We are requesting federal participation in a working group tasked with brainstorming potential solutions and identifying resources to ground truth and execute them. We propose this group be made up of officials with decision making authority from:

- Army Corps of Engineers
- National Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- City and Borough of Juneau
- Central Council of Tlingit and Haida
- Alaska Department of Transportation
- Office of Senator Lisa Murkowski
- Office of Senator Dan Sullivan
- Office of Representative Mary Peltola

CBJ is happy to provide staff support for the working group and travel to meet in a convenient location for the participants. Advisory support will be needed from the University of Alaska Southeast who has studied Suicide Basin, the National Weather Service who is a key partner in predicting the events, and the Environmental Protection Agency who will have a regulatory role in any mitigation measures.

The working group would be tasked with investigating the feasibility of mitigation measures to prevent the massive flooding and destruction from Jökulhlaups on the Mendenhall River and identifying resources to implement mitigation measures in a timely manner.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Beth Weldon, Mayor
City and Borough of Juneau



Richard Peterson, President
Central Council Tribes of Tlingit and Haida

Cc: Governor Mike Dunleavy
Alan McBee, NRCS State Conservationist
Chad VanOrmer, USFS Alaska State Forester
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Dan Sullivan
Representative Mary Peltola
Casey Sixkiller, EPA Region 10 Regional Administrator
Chancellor Aparna Palmer, University of Alaska Southeast
Dr. Scott Lindsey, Regional Director of the National Weather Service Alaska Region