



TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST

Order No. 10-05-33-25-12

FOREST ORDER

Juneau, Alaska

Glacial Lake Outburst Flood Emergency Closure

Pursuant to 16 U.S.C. § 551 and 36 CFR 261.50 (a) & (b), the following acts are prohibited on National Forest System (NFS) lands, roads, and trails in the Tongass National Forest, Juneau Ranger District as shown on the attached map incorporated into this Order as **Attachment 1**.

PROHIBITIONS

1. Going into or being upon the Closure Area shown on Attachment 1 to this order.
36 CFR §§ 261.53(e); 261.54(e); 261.55(a).

EXEMPTIONS

Pursuant to 36 CFR § 261.50(e), the following are exempt from this Order:

1. Any Federal, State or local law enforcement officer, forest employee or volunteer in the performance of their official duties.
2. Persons with a permit specifically authorizing the otherwise prohibited activity (a permit for outfitting, guiding or transporting does not exempt the holder from this Order)

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Order is to protect the public health and safety by closing areas around Mendenhall Lake that are likely to be affected or inundated by the glacial outburst flood (GLOF).

IMPLEMENTATION

1. This Order will **go into effect upon signature** and will remain in effect until August 31, 2025.
2. The map identifying the Closure Area is attached and made part of this Order as Attachment 1.
3. **A Violation of this order is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000.00 for an individual and \$10,000 for an organization or imprisonment for not more than six (6) months, or both. 16 U.S.C. § 551 and 18 USC § 3559, 3571, and 3581.**
4. These prohibitions are in addition to the general prohibitions in 36 CFR part 261, subpart A.

Executed in Juneau, Alaska, this the 11 day of August 2025.

MONIQUE NELSON

Forest Supervisor

Tongass National Forest



Caring for the Land and Serving People

Printed on Recycled Paper



Juneau Ranger District, Tongass National Forest



File Code: 2320, 1010

Date: August 11, 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.

Suicide Basin, which has released the glacier lake outburst floods (GLOF) that cause inundation along Mendenhall Lake and River, is showing signs of being at capacity and overtopping. This means that the GLOF flooding will likely occur in the next several days. Portions of the Mendenhall Glacier Recreation area are inundated annually by waters from the GLOF. 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 Nugget Falls and Steep Creek.

This order closes all public use on the west side of MGRA, including Mendenhall Campground and Skater's Cabin. This Order shall be in effect from my signature, however, I am instructing the district ranger not to sign or post the order in or on the affected areas, roads, or trails until the National Weather Service issues a flood warning. The order will remain in effect until August 31, 2025, unless rescinded sooner. The NWS has stated that it will issue the flood warning from when it observes a fast drop in the Suicide Basin water levels, which will indicate a sub-glacier release. NWS has further stated that from when the release begins, the GLOF flooding event will take about 48 hours to peak. The August 31 end date is intended to account for the difficulty in predicting exactly when the GLOF will occur and to allow the Forest Service time to ready the area for reopening. This order also closes the east side of MGRA, but it does not currently include the Visitor Center.

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. **10-05-33-25-12**