



**PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING AGENDA  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2020  
5:30 P.M.  
ZOOM WEBINAR**

This meeting will take place virtually via **Zoom Webinar**. To join the Zoom Webinar, go to <https://juneau.zoom.us/j/94808107925> or call: 1-346-248-7799. **Webinar ID: 948 0810 7925**. Members of the public wishing to provide public comment during the meeting can do so by clicking the "Raise Hand" button (online Zoom Webinar) or press \*9 (telephone).

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Presenter</b>	<b>Action Requested</b>
<b>I. Call to Order</b>	C. Mertl	
<b>II. Approval of Agenda</b>  Agenda Changes	C. Mertl	<i>If no changes: Motion to approve</i>
<b>III. Approval of Minutes</b> Meeting of January 7, 2020 Meeting of March 3, 2020		
<b>IV. Public Participation on Non-Agenda Items</b>	C. Mertl	
<b>V. New Business</b> Montana Creek Road	G. Schaaf	
<b>VI. Unfinished Business</b>		
<b>VII. Information Items</b> Infrastructure Bond Biathlon Course	G. Schaaf M. Elfers	
<b>VIII. Committee, Liaison, and Board Member Reports</b>  Chair Report Liaison to the Assembly Board Member Liaisons Other Board Member Business	C. Mertl Wade Bryson Liaisons All	
<b>IX. Adjournment</b>	C. Mertl	

*If you are calling into the meeting, please call the CBJ Bridge Line at 789-2014 at the start time listed above.*



**TO:** Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee  
**FROM:** George Schaaf, Parks & Recreation Director  
**DATE:** July 31, 2020  
**RE:** August 4, 2020 Meeting

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### DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Please find enclosed the information supporting your agenda topics for this meeting. The meeting is anticipated to last 90 minutes and will take place via **Zoom Webinar**. To join the Zoom Webinar, go to <https://juneau.zoom.us/j/94808107925> or call: 1-346-248-7799. **Webinar ID: 948 0810 7925**.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Montana Creek Road** – *Requested by G. Schaaf [Page 10-225 & Red Folder Comments Page 238-250]*  
 A large number of people have reached out to us regarding management of Montana Creek Road beyond the Hank Harmon Rifle Range. The requests generally focus on whether this section of Montana Creek Road should be closed to motorized vehicles, either seasonally or year-round. The attached memo contains additional background information about this issue, including previous actions taken to manage motorized use.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS** – *None*

#### **INFORMATION ITEMS**

- A. Infrastructure Bond** – *Requested by G. Schaaf [Page 226-237]*  
 The Assembly Finance Committee has referred to the full Assembly a \$15 million general obligation bond package that includes a number of Parks & Recreation projects. If approved by the Assembly at their meeting on August 3, 2020, the bond will be included on the October municipal election ballot. In addition to repairs and improvements to parks and recreation facilities, the package also includes repairs to school facilities, street improvements, and deferred building maintenance. The Finance Department estimates that the bond package will not increase property taxes above current levels. Annual debt service would cost approximately \$16.75 per \$100,000 of assessed value. For a \$400,000 home, the cost would be \$67 per year (\$5.58 per month).

**B. Biathlon Course** – *Requested by M. Elfers*

Deputy Director Michele Elfers will provide an update on a biathlon range proposed for Montana Creek Natural Area Park.

**DRAFT MEETING MINUTES****PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2020 – 5:30 PM

CITY HALL CHAMBERS

**I. Call to Order at 5:31 p.m. – C. Mertl, Chair****Present:** Josh Anderson, Edric Carrillo, Kirk Duncan (t), Chris Mertl, Will Muldoon, Tom Rutecki**Absent:** Jon Gellings, Emily Palmer, Kirsten Shelton**Staff Present:** George Schaaf, Director; Michele Elfers, Deputy Director; Lauren Verrelli, Staff Liaison; Dan Bleidorn, Lands Manager**II. Agenda Changes – None****III. Approval of Meeting Minutes****A. From November 5, 2019 – W. Muldoon moves to approve minutes; no objection.*****Minutes adopted.*****IV. Public Participation on Non-Agenda Items – None****V. New Business –****A. Request for Stephen Richards Roundabout Property**

G. Schaaf: DOT&PF has submitted an application to the Lands Department for the Mendenhall Loop Rd. improvement project. The state is requesting to purchase land and acquire easements from CBJ. This request includes a portion of the Duck Creek Greenbelt, which is managed by Parks & Rec as a Conservation Area.

M. Elfers: The land they are requesting is 1.3 acres and classified as a conservation area. Duck Creek runs through the property. In this area the land functions primarily as a riparian habitat, wetlands/greenbelt and adjacent to an anadromous stream corridor. Duck Creek is categorized as a 4A impaired waterbody and water quality standards identified include residues, fecal coliform, bacteria, turbidity, dissolved gas, toxic and other deleterious organic and inorganic substances. It is still considered good habitat for juvenile overwintering salmon.

D. Bleidorn: The property DOT&PF is trying to acquire is ~7,800 sq. ft., the temporarily construction easement is 1,500 s. ft. and the permanent easement is 450 sq. ft.

M. Elfers: Staff invited John Hudson who is a habitat biologist with Southeast Wildlife Council to help us better understand the impacts to this property. As well as, helped us put together some ideas on how we can mitigate impacts to the property with these easements and acquisitions. Staff Recommendations include:

1. Any fill placed in this area will be placed at a 1:1 slope to minimize the fill footprint and loss of habitat.

2. Construct a shallow wetland pond area to provide rearing and overwintering juvenile Coho and other fish habitat adjacent to the creek with surface connection to the creek. This pond can be on CBJ property and it will serve to mitigate the loss of habitat in impacted areas.

3. Remove pavement and fill in the road corridor along the north end of the property in the area where the permanent easement is being requested. A 6' gravel trail can be maintained. Topsoil shall be placed in the remaining disturbed areas and native vegetation appropriate for the anadromous stream corridor shall be planted and maintained for a calendar year to establish growth.

4. Implement green infrastructure for storm water control along this park property. No piped storm water shall enter the property from the road.

Christopher (DOT&PF): in this process, there has been some concern from F&G about overwintering ponds onsite.

J. Anderson: What does Parks & Rec get out of this?

M. Elfers: The benefits that are coming to PR land that will improve the habitat there.

W. Muldoon: What are your concerns about the trail in recommendation 3?

Christopher (DOT&PF): Concerned that we won't be able to do it with the project but maybe through another mechanism with the city that we will discuss in negotiations as a possible alternative.

M. Elfers: Some of the work that is directly tied to the construction may be performed by DOT. Some of the other work that is not directly tied to the construction (1&3) maybe performed by someone else. That would happen in negotiations.

T. Rutecki: I don't see enough information to make the decision today. I want to see what is in the creek now and in the past.

C. Mertl: I support the project and taking an impaired water body and making improvements to it. My caution is that we remove the word "may" and instead use "shall" and "will" so there are arguments that we can stand behind once we go through negotiations and the intent of what PRAC and the department are looking for doesn't get watered down or lost. In concept, I think this is a good idea.

T. Rutecki: I would like to see this come back to us with more information.

Christopher (DOT&PF): The scope of the project was to deal with congestion from Nancy St. to Backloop Rd. The roundabouts created the least amount of land impact throughout the area.

J. Anderson: If we do not get you an answer tonight, will that hold the project up?

Christopher (DOT&PF): We would need to move forward with bidding the project; we aim to breaking ground in April.

C. Mertl: Can we give an answer at our February meeting?

G. Schaaf: We are making a recommendation to the Assembly for these sale/easements.

The timing is a little awkward and there is not much to get around that. We are working in good faith that we will both find a good spot to move this forward. This is our opportunity to try to do something more than just the value of the land but to advance the conservation values of the parcel. The recommendation we are looking for is whether you

would like to recommend us to move forward with the negotiations.

M. Elfers: With this request to acquire conservation parkland, we were thinking more creatively to see what we could do that is more meaningful and makes sense for the area.

W. Muldoon: I move that staff requests that the PRAC provided a recommendation supporting that the Assembly dispose of 7,878 square feet to the DOT&PF with the conditions outlined in this memo and upon approval of the Parks & Recreation Director.

*Nay: T. Rutecki*

*Aye: C. Mertl, J. Anderson, E. Carrillo, W. Muldoon, K. Duncan*

***Motion Passes.***

W. Muldoon: I move that staff requests that the PRAC provide a recommendation of support to the Assembly to grant a permanent construction and maintenance easement of 459 sq. ft. and grant a temporary construction easement of 1,543 sq. ft. of Parks managed property upon approval from the Parks & Recreation Director to the DOT&PF.

***Motion passes unanimously.***

**VI. Unfinished Business – None**

**VII. Information Items –**

**A. Commercial Use Regulation Update**

G. Schaaf: Wanted to give a quick update on where we are at in the process of our commercial use regulation updates. In December we held a public meeting and had a good turnout. We have received positive input throughout the process. We held 5 stakeholder meetings with permittees and a meeting with users. The public comment period closes on January 15. After this closes, we will compile a final draft of the regulation and put it back out to the public for a final 21-day comment period. After that period closes, we will compile all those comments and make any changes. We expect this will be going to the Assembly in early March.

**VIII. Committee, Liaison, and Board Member Reports**

**A. Chair Report— None**

**B. Liaison to the Assembly Report—** Field House contract is coming up. They are discussing if it makes sense the Eaglecrest Director is running it. I am working with George to create an OHV ordinance, trying to find a piece of land to get the discussion going again.

**C. Liaison Reports—**

Aquatics – W. Muldoon: Discussing finances and commercial use.

YAB – T. Rutecki: None.

Eaglecrest – E. Palmer: None.

Jensen-Olson Arboretum – E. Carrillo: None.

JNU Urban Forestry – J. Gellings: None.

Lands – C. Mertl: Creating an easement for Twilight Café; land swap with Aurora Arms to get a driveway to access CBJ land behind it to create long-term housing.

Park Foundation— C. Mertl: Talking about cabin coordination at Amalga.

Treadwell Arena Board – K. Duncan: None.

Trail Mix— K. Shelton: None.

1% for Art— J. Anderson: None.

**Other Member Business –**

M. Elfers: We have a handful of public meetings coming up – January 22 is a public meeting on Chicken Yard Park. January 29 will be a public meeting with JMBA about a bike skills park at Cope. February 11 we are hosting a meeting to discuss the Eagle Valley Center & Amalga Meadows master plan.

**Adjournment – 7:06 p.m. *Having no other business before the board.***

Respectfully submitted by Lauren Verrelli, Recreation & Public Services Manager, 8/1/2020

DRAFT



**PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2020 – 5:30 PM

CITY HALL CHAMBERS

**I. Call to Order at 5:30 p.m. – J. Anderson, Co-Chair**

**Present:** Josh Anderson, Edric Carrillo, Kirk Duncan (t), Will Muldoon (t), Emily Palmer, Tom Rutecki, Kirsten Shelton

**Absent:** Chris Mertl

**Staff Present:** George Schaaf, Director; Michele Elfers, Deputy Director; Lauren Verrelli, Staff Liaison; Dan Bleidorn, Lands Manager

**II. Agenda Changes – None**

**III. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

**A. From December 3, 2019 – E. Palmer moves to approve minutes; no objection. *Minutes adopted.***

**IV. Public Participation on Non-Agenda Items –**

**A. Martin Phelan (Mountainside Dr.):** I am representing the Capital Kennel Club and want to know the future of Mt. Jumbo Gym. Many user groups rely on that facility.  
**M. Elfers:** There is no plan to discontinue use of Mt. Jumbo Gym. We have some roof and building issues. We are doing regular maintenance that it is structurally sound. At this point, we do not have money allocated to fix those issues. We appreciate your comments about the need for the facility.

**V. New Business –**

**A. Eagle's Edge Playground Donation:**

**M. Elfers:** The Department was approached by the Eagles Edge Homeowner Association asking if we would be interested in accepting a park parcel for use as a city park. The parcel is 0.2 acres in the Lemon Creek area near JPD. The Homeowner Association would like to dissolve and along with the donation of the park, they want to contribute around \$100,000 to upgrade it. The park needs work to bring it up to industry and CBJ standards. In 2012, voters approved \$250,000 for design and construction of a new neighborhood park in Lemon Creek. There is sufficient funding to upgrade this park to CBJ standard. The Homeowners Association has been talking to the Park Foundation to accept the \$100,000 that would be dedicated to the park.

**E. Palmer:** Is there an estimate of how much it would cost to bring it up to standard?

**M. Elfers:** Yes, it needs \$225,000 to bring it up to CBJ standard.

**K. Shelton:** Do you know the usage of the park?

**M. Elfers:** We do not have any actual numbers but the families in the area heavily use it.

**K. Shelton:** I move that the PRAC recommend to the Assembly to accept the donation of

the Eagle's Edge Playground and that this property be designated a Neighborhood Park to be managed by the Parks & Rec Dept.

***Motion passes unanimously.***

**VI. Unfinished Business – None**

**VII. Information Items –**

**A. Downtown Summer Shelter:**

M. Elfers: We manage and maintain the Thane Campground which is a seasonal campground where most campers are experiencing homelessness. Last summer we had increased criminal and safety issues. The site location is difficult for maintenance and management. We are looking at relocating it to a new location called the Downtown Summer Shelter that is above the Franklin Dock and Twisted Fish. We are working out a management plan that will include daily visits by JPD, Park Maintenance staff, Park Rangers and CBJ's homelessness coordinator.

E. Palmer: How much work is going into developing the new campsite?

M. Elfers: We will be relocating some items and we will be collaborating with the UAS Construction Technology program to build new tent platforms.

**VIII. Committee, Liaison, and Board Member Reports**

**A. Chair Report—** None.

**B. Liaison to the Assembly Report—** None.

**C. Liaison Reports—**

Aquatics – W. Muldoon: Introduced commercial use policy; completed budget work.

YAB – T. Rutecki: Went over grant application process, about 200 applicants attended.

Eaglecrest – E. Palmer: Having a great season; looking at deferred maintenance.

Jensen-Olson Arboretum – E. Carrillo: Discussed commercial use policy.

Lands – C. Mertl: None.

Park Foundation – G. Schaaf in place of C. Mertl: Starting fundraising for Chicken Yard Park, goal is to raise \$10,000; planning a fundraiser for Amalga Cabin in May.

Treadwell Arena Board – K. Duncan: None

TrailMix – K. Shelton: They hired Ryan O'Shaughnessy as the new Director.

1% for Art – J. Anderson: None.

**Other Member Business –**

E. Palmer: Just got back from Southern Patagonia on a hut-to-hut hike. Its a huge economic driver for them, and brings people all over the world. I think it would be a great economic driver for independent travelers.

E. Carrillo: Thank you for hosting the Dive in Movie and having the Filipino Community sponsor it.

**Adjournment – 6:13 p.m. *Having no other business before the board.***

Respectfully submitted by Lauren Verrelli, Recreation & Public Services Manager, 8/2/2020



**TO:** Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee  
**FROM:** George Schaaf, Parks & Recreation Director  
**DATE:** July 31, 2020  
**RE:** Use of Montana Creek Road by Motorized Vehicles

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### **Background**

Montana Creek Natural Area Park is one of Juneau's largest parks, consisting of forests, muskeg, and waterways that support some of the most productive salmon habitat in Southeast Alaska. The area also offers a wide range of recreational activities throughout the year.

The State of Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities transferred a portion of Montana Creek Road to the City & Borough of Juneau in 2007. The section of road transferred to CBJ ends at the abutment of the timber foot bridge across Montana Creek; that bridge is still owned by DOT&PF, and it is unclear which agency (DOT&PF, DNR, or CBJ) manages the road/trail beyond the bridge. The section of road transferred to the CBJ in 2007 is considered a city street, and is managed by the CBJ Engineering & Public Works Department. Winter maintenance historically has not been provided beyond the Hank Harmon Rifle Range. Summer maintenance is shared between the Department of Engineering & Public Works and the Parks and Recreation Department: Public Works maintains the road surface, drainage structures, and signage; Parks & Recreation removes garbage and supports recreational facilities such as parking areas, gates, and trails.

Montana Creek Road passes through and provides access to lands and facilities managed by the CBJ Parks & Recreation Department, including Montana Creek Natural Area Park, Hank Harmon Rifle Range, Juneau Community Garden, and the Juneau Archery Range. It also provides access to lands managed by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, the Montana Creek Trail, Tongass National Forest, and a number of private mining claims. The road itself has a history of legal use by snowmachines in winter.

The section of road between the Hank Harmon Rifle Range and the timber bridge has a history of problems, including illegal dumping, abandoned vehicles, illegal camping, arson, drug activity, illegal shooting, theft of resources (including of peat moss), and illegal use of motorized vehicles. These problems resulted in significant damage to natural resources, and became an increasingly expensive burden for the Parks & Recreation Department. In 2012, the Department installed several cameras along the road to deter and prosecute illegal dumping. These efforts successfully reduced the frequency of illegal dumping along the road, but illegal motorized use continued to damage the adjacent muskeg.

The existing gate was installed by CBJ in 2014 after extensive consultations with stakeholders, including the U.S. Forest Service, Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources, Juneau Archery Club, off-road vehicle users, and the owners of mining claims in the area. These stakeholders agreed that the gate should be closed nightly during the summer and 24 hours per day in winter. The gate was approved by the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee and the Assembly Public Works & Facilities Committee. Illegal dumping and other problems decreased significantly after the gate was installed, and the road quickly became popular with Nordic skiers. The Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC) began setting tracks the following winter, and today Montana Creek Road is one of the most popular Nordic skiing destinations in Juneau.

### **Municipal Code and State Statute**

It is illegal to operate a motor-driven vehicle in Montana Creek Natural Area Park, except on Montana Creek Road or within designated parking areas (CBJ 67.01.090(e)):

#### **CBJ 67.01.090 - Prohibited uses.**

- (e) *Motor-driven vehicles prohibited.* No person shall operate any motor-driven vehicle within any recreation area except on the roadways and parking areas designated for such motor vehicles and no person shall allow a motor vehicle owned or controlled by him or her to be so operated.

Snowmachines and ATVs may be driven on Montana Creek Road when it is impassable to other vehicles due to ice and/or snow (13 AAC 02.455 and CBJ 72.02.455(a)(2)):

#### **CBJ 72.02.455 - Operation on highways and other locations.**

- (a) A snowmobile or an off-highway vehicle may be driven on a roadway or shoulder of a highway only under the following circumstances:
  - (2) When use of the highway by other motor vehicles is impossible because of snow or ice accumulation or other natural conditions or when the highway is posted or otherwise designated as being open to travel by off-highway vehicles;

**13 AAC 02.455 - Operation on highways and other locations.**

- (a) A snowmobile or an off-highway vehicle may be driven on a roadway or shoulder of a highway only under the following circumstances:
- (2) When use of the highway by other motor vehicles is impossible because of snow or ice accumulation or other natural conditions or when the highway is posted or otherwise designated as being open to travel by off-highway vehicles;

The City Manager may close a street to vehicles (CBJ 72.01.090):

**72.01.090 - Street closed to traffic.**

- (a) The manager is authorized to close streets to vehicle or pedestrian traffic.
- (b) Whenever any street is closed to the use of traffic and the same so indicated by authorized signs or barriers, no vehicle shall proceed into the street or any portion thereof except as directed by the signs. Whenever a street is closed, notice shall immediately be given to the fire chief and manager.

**Current Situation**

The new gate at the Hank Harmon Rifle Range, combined with cameras and increased enforcement, has reduced illegal activity and resource damage in Montana Creek Natural Area Park. The gate also changed how people use the area for winter recreation. As the area has become more popular with Nordic skiers, there has been an increase in conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users during the winter:

- Due to limited parking, the parking lot for the Hank Harmon Rifle Range is often filled with skiers who have nowhere else to park. This creates a conflict between range users and skiers.
- Snowmachines and ATVs using the road during the winter destroy Nordic ski tracks set by JNSC. This creates a conflict between skiers and motorized users.

Summer sees fewer conflicts in use, and illegal operation of ATVs within Montana Creek Natural Area Park has generally ceased (visible damage to the muskeg alongside Montana Creek Road today is the result of people harvesting peat for use in their gardens). Resource damage is evident on state lands north of Montana Creek, where ATVs are a generally allowed use under state law. To the best of our knowledge, the state-owned portion of the Montana Creek Trail is one of only two places in Juneau where ATVs may be ridden legally (the other is located on the Tongass National Forest near 25-mile).

Since June, the Parks & Recreation Department has been contacted by a number of citizens requesting that a portion of Montana Creek Road be closed to motorized vehicles, either seasonally or year-round. The Juneau Nordic Ski Club has also asked that the road be closed to motorized vehicles in the winter. All of these communications are contained in the packet for tonight's meeting.

### **Next Steps**

Public comments received by the Department over the last few weeks focus on two main issues:

- 1) Whether a portion of Montana Creek Road should be closed to motorized vehicles during the winter; and
- 2) Whether a portion of Montana Creek Road should be closed to motorized vehicles year-round.

The first issue is relatively straightforward and can probably be addressed before user conflicts between winter users become an issue again. Juneau's municipal code authorizes the city manager to close a street to motorized vehicles, and a robust public process should inform that decision. To begin this process, the Department will consult with known stakeholders, as well as CBJ Public Works, the U.S. Forest Service and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. We will also invite the public to submit written comments before seeking a recommendation from the PRAC later this fall (comments already received will be included in the record).

The second issue is more complicated. Closing a portion of Montana Creek Road to motorized vehicles year-round would not only have a large impact on public use of the area, but would also affect lands managed by other state and federal agencies. As a first step, the Department will reach out to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Forest Service to share the concerns we've heard from the public, and develop a plan to collaboratively review our joint management of the area. This will likely be a complicated process, and staff will keep the PRAC updated on our discussions with agencies and stakeholders as we chart a way forward.



## State of Alaska

### **ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC FACILITIES**

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### **COMMISSIONER'S QUIT CLAIM DEED AND ASSIGNMENT**

### **STP-000S(52)**

THE GRANTOR; State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, 6860 Glacier Highway, P.O. Box 112506, Juneau, Alaska, 99811-2506, hereinafter called DOT&PF, for and in consideration of good and other valuable consideration in hand paid, grants, conveys and quitclaims, as authorized by Alaska Statute 19.05.040, to the GRANTEE, City and Borough of Juneau, whose address is 155 South Seward Street, Juneau, Alaska 99801, all rights, title and interests which it has, if any, in the following described right of way, consisting of two parcels, located in the State of Alaska, to wit:

Montana Creek Road from Mendenhall Loop Road extending 2.0 miles northwesterly to the abutment of the foot bridge near the end of the pavement, more particularly described as follows;

That portion of the Montana Creek Road right of way beginning at its intersection with the northwesterly right of way limit of Mendenhall Loop Road, thence passing through U.S. Survey 1796 with a right of way width of 60.00 feet, thence passing through U.S. Survey 2178 with a variable right of way width as shown on the Right of Way Plans for Project STP-000S(52), Montana Creek Road and Skaters Cabin Road, recorded as Plat 2006-65, thence passing through U.S. Survey 2079 with a right of way width of 60.00 feet as shown on the plat of Glacier Lands Subdivision, recorded as Plat 2003-27, thence passing through Alaska State Land Survey 98-06, Tract A, a subdivision of U.S. Survey 10242 with a right of way width of 100.00 feet as shown on the Right of Way Plans for Project STP-0964(1), Montana Creek Road Reconstruction, recorded as Plat 96-63, thence passing through U.S. Survey 2337 and U.S. Survey 2271 with a right of way width of 60.00 feet as shown on the Right of Way Plans for Project STP-0964(1), Montana Creek Road Reconstruction, recorded as Plat 96-63, thence passing through Alaska State Land Survey 98-06, Tract A, a subdivision of U.S. Survey 10242 with a right of way width of 100.00 feet, portions of which are shown on the Right of Way Plans for Project STP-0964(1), Montana Creek Road Reconstruction, recorded as Plat 96-63, and terminating at the southeasterly abutment of the Montana Creek foot bridge as shown on the plat of Alaska State Land Survey 98-06, recorded as Plat 2001-48, Juneau Recording District, First Judicial District, State of Alaska.

Skaters Cabin Road from the intersection of Montana Creek Road extending northeasterly 0.4 mile to the Tongass National Forest boundary, more particularly described as follows;

That portion of Skaters Cabin Road beginning at its intersection with Montana Creek Road within U.S. Survey 2178 and U.S. Survey 2079 with a right of way width of 60.00 feet and terminating at the Tongass National Forest boundary as shown on the Right of Way Plans for Project STP-000S(52), Montana Creek Road and Skaters Cabin Road, recorded as Plat 2006-65, Juneau Recording District, First Judicial District, State of Alaska.

Dated this <sup>20<sup>th</sup></sup> day of *June*, 2007.

The interests in the above described right of way are hereby conveyed by the State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities subject to all valid and existing rights.

In addition to the conveyance described above, the State hereby assigns all rights, powers, interests and privileges in or arising from the improvements made to Montana Creek Road and Skaters Cabin Road and each and every one of the Utility Permits, Driveway Permits and Encroachment Permits, if any, associated with these roads.

Upon acceptance of this right of way interest by the City and Borough of Juneau, the State shall cease maintenance and operation of the above described roads, and the City and Borough of Juneau shall be responsible for the maintenance and operation of the above described roads.

The Grantee shall hold the State, its officers, employees, and agents (collectively, the "State") harmless from and defend and indemnify the State for liability, claims, or causes of action arising out of this Deed and Assignment or relating to the property and facilities being deeded and the obligations being assigned.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Grantee shall have no obligation to hold harmless and indemnify the State to the extent the State is determined to be liable for its own acts or omissions, except that:

To the maximum extent allowed by law, the Grantee shall hold the State harmless from and indemnify the State for liability, claims, or causes of action arising from an alleged defect in design or construction of facilities existing on the premises at the date of this grant, regardless of negligence or other fault, if such liability, claim or cause of action arises out of an incident that occurs more than two years after the Grantee assumes maintenance responsibilities for the facilities.

The Grantee's duty to defend shall apply regardless of whether it is also alleged that the State's acts or omissions contributed to the injury (including injury to personal property, real property or persons, including fatal injury).

Neither liability, claims or causes of action arising from injuries which occurred prior to the date of this transfer nor liabilities imposed by, or claims or causes of action arising from or asserted under AS 46.03.822 shall be governed by this paragraph.

Dated this <sup>15<sup>th</sup></sup> day of *June*, 2007.

BY:

*Malcolm A. Menzies*  
 Malcolm A. Menzies, P.E.,  
 Southeast Regional Director



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

STATE OF ALASKA )  
 ) ss.  
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT)

BE IT REMEMBERED THAT on this 15<sup>th</sup> of June, 2007 before me, the undersigned, a notary public of the State of Alaska, personally appeared MALCOLM A. MENZIES, Southeast Regional Director of Transportation and Public Facilities, known to me to be the identical person who executed the foregoing instrument and he acknowledged to me that he executed the same for and on the behalf of the State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, with full authority so to do, and for the uses and purposes therein expressed. IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal the day and year above written.

Elizabeth M. Ewen  
Notary Public  
My Commission Expires: May 6, 2010

THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU

By: Rod Swope  
Rod Swope, City Manager

Attest:  
Elizabeth M. Ewen Deputy Clerk  
City and Borough Clerk



Filed for Record at the Request of  
and Return To:  
State of Alaska, DOT&PF  
PO Box 112506  
Juneau, AK 99811-2506  
State Business - No Charge



# STATE OF ALASKA

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

**SARAH PALIN, GOVERNOR**  
6860 Glacier Highway  
P.O. Box 112506  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-2506  
PHONE: (907)465-4540  
FAX: (907)465-6216  
TTY/TDD: (907)465-4647  
1-800-575-4540

JUL 09 2007

CBJ Manager's Office

June 20, 2007

Re: Federal Aid Project No. STP-000S(52)  
Montana Creek Rd. & Skaters Cabin Rd.  
Juneau, Alaska

The Juneau Recorders Office  
400 Willoughby Av., 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Enclosed find an original "Commissioner's Quit Claim Deed and Assignment". Please record the original in the Juneau Recording District and return a conformed copy to us at your earliest convenience. Also, please forward a confirmed copy to the Grantee, the City and Borough of Juneau, 155 South Seward Street, Juneau, Alaska 99801.

Please give me a call with any questions.

Thank you for your assistance with this recording.

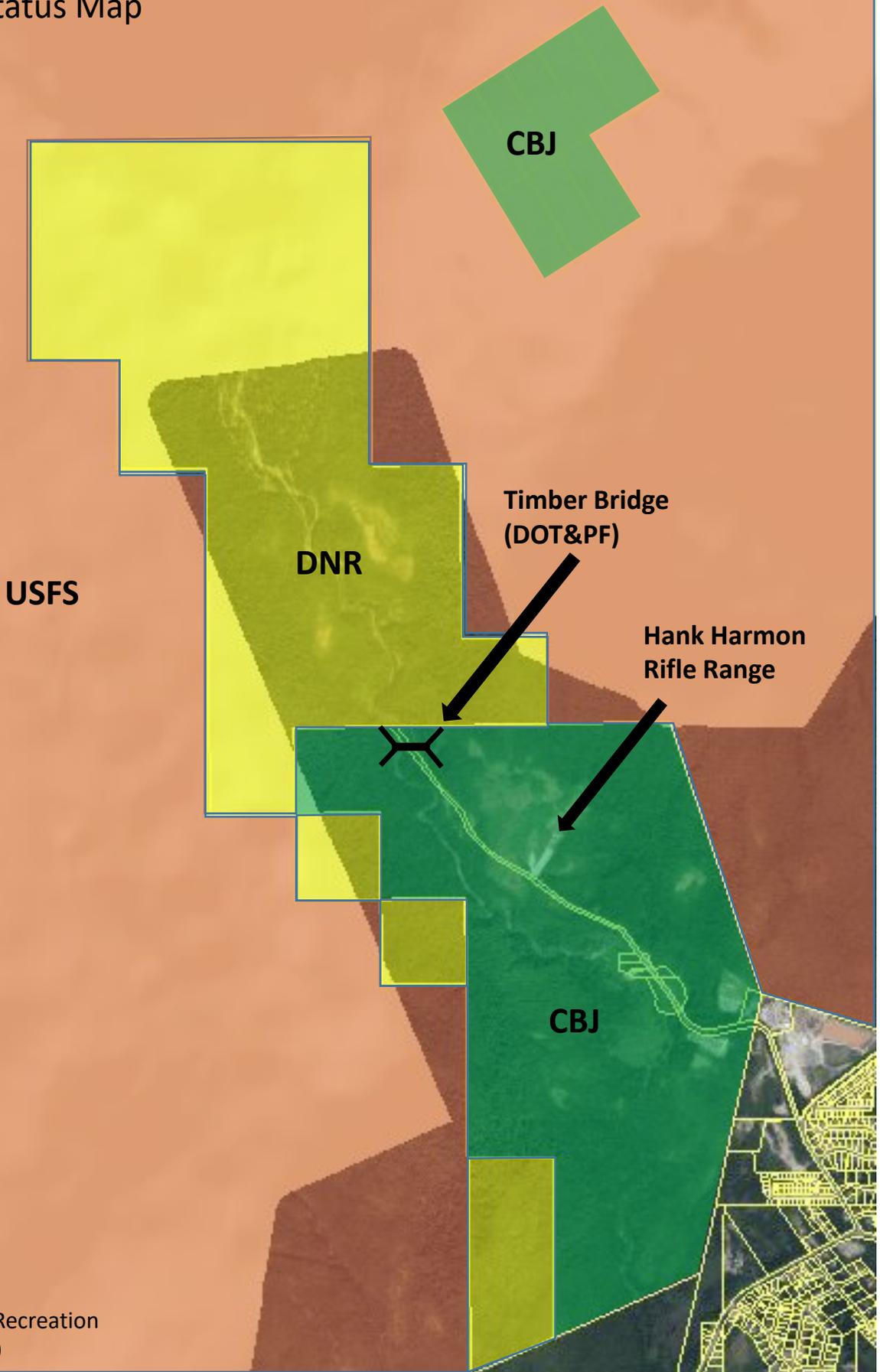
Sincerely,

Diane Powell  
Property Manager

/Encl. QCD 3 Pages

*Theresa -  
Let's try again.  
Diane*

# Montana Creek Land Status Map



**From:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Use of Montan Creek road in winter  
**Date:** Friday, July 24, 2020 1:16:14 PM

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-----Original Message-----

From: Anitra <afwaldo@gci.net>  
Sent: Friday, July 24, 2020 8:25 AM  
To: Parks Rec <Parks.Rec@juneau.org>  
Subject: Use of Montan Creek road in winter

EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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To the Juneau Assembly

I urge you to protect the Montana Creek road use for cross country skiing and to ban the use by any motorized vehicles (snowmobiles etc) other than the ski grooming sleds from November 1 to May 1 of each winter. This area is a special destination which enables folks, especially from the valley, to work on their health. Some folks are not able to travel to Eaglecrest. The high numbers of ski users at both the campground and Montana Creek show that both locations are necessary to handle the users at peak times. A large number of skiers are able to make use of the Creek, while it only takes one motorized ski machine to ruin the trail bed and to ruin the peace and quiet that is an important part of the mental health component of skiing. This is a sport which is relatively cheap to participate in and which has a high ratio of users per trail. It is accessible to all ages and incomes. Please support protecting this vital location for Juneau's elders, families, and future generations.

Sincerely,  
Anitra Waldo,  
Juneau Ak

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [scottbetsy@gci.net](mailto:scottbetsy@gci.net)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#); [Parks Rec](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek winter use  
**Date:** Friday, July 24, 2020 10:15:36 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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I am writing in support of closing Montana Creek to all unauthorized motorized use and I strongly support permanently closing the gate to the road starting at the rifle range.

Montana Creek is an important winter recreation area for hundreds of cross country skiers. The Juneau Nordic Ski Club is responsible for the development and improvement of this area for nordic skiing, starting years ago when members looked to expand areas for cross country skiers that were easily accessible by a large portion of the population. Since those early days, the club has provided consistent clearing and grooming of the trail throughout the winter by removing fallen trees, clearing landslides and working to improve bridge crossings. They have a dedicated volunteer workforce that grooms every day of the week during the winter.

Many skiers use this trail for a lunch time ski or an after work ski, safe in the knowledge that someone has spent hours getting it ready for them to enjoy. Groups of young skiers take their first steps on skis on this trail and develop into lifelong skiers. Older kids train in the evenings and on weekends on the trail, working to improve their skills and become fast ski racers. People come out in all kinds of weather to use the Montana Creek trail, because they know it is a hidden microclimate gem that seems to trap the cold and snow better than any other ski trail in the Juneau area, including the Mendenhall campground and Eaglecrest. I don't know how many times I've gone out to ski at the campground only to find it melted out or too icy for good skiing, only to turn to Montana Creek just a few minutes away and discover perfectly set skate and classic tracks.

One errant ATV or snowmachine can destroy hours of volunteer grooming in a matter of minutes and make the trail unusable for the dozens of skiers who want to ski on that particular day. The volunteer groomers must spend hours trying to repair the damage inflicted on the trail, keeping their fingers crossed that the rogue motorhead doesn't return any time soon.

Montana Creek is there to be enjoyed by a wide variety of non-motorized users - skiers, snowshoers, walkers, dog owners, families, school groups, ski team racers, etc. Allowing motorized users on Montana Creek will destroy this area that so many already use and enjoy. Please permanently close the gate from November to May and save this important winter recreation area for the large number of citizens who enjoy it!

Sincerely,

Betsy Fischer

Juneau citizen and nordic skier since 1972  
JNSC member  
Juneau Nordic Ski Team volunteer coach  
former downtown business owner (40 years)

Note: My husband Scott already wrote a message from this email address, so please consider this message from me as unique and separate. Thank you!

**From:** [bev.ingram](mailto:bev.ingram)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](mailto:Lauren.Verrelli); [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Re; Montana Creek road  
**Date:** Friday, July 24, 2020 8:44:41 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Dear Parks and Recreation Committee (PRAC),

I understand that the PRAC is considering a proposal to have the Montana Creek road beyond the rifle range gate permanently closed to motorized users. Cross country skiing the road in the wintertime is my favorite Juneau activity. This place is so special to me and I think it is important to have this area closed to snow machines and ATVs during the winter ski / grooming season. I am a member of the Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC) and my husband has volunteered to groom the trails in the past. JNSC has spent many volunteer hours in cultivating and grooming the trail for the use of all during the ski season. Motorized users are incompatible with skiers, snow shoers, and hikers on the narrow roadway.

I urge you to to protect the usability of the area by limiting motorized vehicles.

Thank you for your consideration,

Beverly Ingram

**From:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Upper Montana Creek Road  
**Date:** Friday, July 24, 2020 1:16:05 PM

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**From:** Bruce Baker <bhbaker@gci.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, July 24, 2020 2:12 AM  
**To:** Parks Rec <Parks.Rec@juneau.org>  
**Subject:** Upper Montana Creek Road

**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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I definitely want to see this part of the road reserved for Nordic skiing and do not want to see it ruined by snow machines or 4-wheelers in winter.

Bruce Baker  
10738 Horizon Drive  
Juneau

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

**From:** [Craig Farrington](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** Comments for PRAC meeting on possible motorized use of Montana Cr. Road  
**Date:** Friday, July 24, 2020 12:02:16 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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The Montana Cr. Road section above the rifle range should be designated non-motorized use during the winter season November 1 – May 1.

I have been skiing (attempting to ski) on Montana Cr. Road when there had been overnight motorized use. I did not take photos, but very deep ruts in the snow had been created by the ATV wheels digging for traction going up the grade. It wrecked the skiing and probably made it too hard for any hikers/dog walkers as well. Grooming is what makes it possible for skiing, hiking, and dog walking on the road during the winter season. Motorized use is incompatible with all the human-powered winter recreation going on there, both for wrecking the groomed surface and for the danger to people on the narrow roadway with numerous blind curves.

The Lake Cr trail is appropriate for motorized users to gain access to the Spaulding Meadows and beyond.

Montana Cr. Road above the rifle range is appropriate for the human-powered users during the winter season November 1 – May 1.

Thank you for taking my comments,  
Craig Farrington  
9471 Norris Pl.  
Juneau

**From:** [Fletcher Sewall](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#); [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek road winter use for skiing  
**Date:** Friday, July 24, 2020 7:28:31 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Hello,

I would like to express my support for allowing access for only non-motorized use of Montana Creek Road beyond the rifle range gate in winter months, 1 November through 1 May.

The Juneau Nordic Ski Club has put a great deal of effort over many years into grooming that road for skiers in winter and motorized vehicles would destroy their grooming work. That road is one of the few places accessible to many Juneau residents through winter for cross-country skiing. Motorized users have other options available for winter use such as Spaulding Meadows and areas on Douglas Island. Motorized vehicles may also access the Montana Creek road during non-winter months.

Thank you for considering keeping the Montana Creek road available for non-motorized use in winter. It is very important for local skiers.

Fletcher Sewall

**From:** [George Schaaf](#)  
**To:** [Frankie Pillifant](#)  
**Cc:** [Rorie Watt](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Montana Creek gate request  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 15, 2020 2:47:15 PM

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Hi Frankie,

Thanks for reaching out, and it's good to hear from the JNSC on this topic.

The proposal to close Montana Creek Rd. to motorized vehicles is on the agenda for the next PRAC meeting, which will be on Tuesday, August 4<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm. We'll be sure to include your email in the packet for the meeting, and you're always welcome to participate by telephone or Zoom. Details will be posted the week before the meeting on the CBJ website.

Best,  
George

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**From:** Frankie Pillifant <[frankiepillifant@gmail.com](mailto:frankiepillifant@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 14, 2020 11:26 AM  
**To:** Rorie Watt <[Rorie.Watt@juneau.org](mailto:Rorie.Watt@juneau.org)>  
**Cc:** JNSC Board <[jnsc@googlegroups.com](mailto:jnsc@googlegroups.com)>  
**Subject:** Montana Creek gate request

**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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July 14, 2020

Rorie Watt, City Manager  
City and Borough of Juneau  
155 S. Franklin St.  
Juneau, AK. 99801

Dear Mr. Watt,

On behalf of our members, the JNSC is requesting that CBJ limit motorized use on Montana Creek trail to only allow JNSC grooming equipment during winter (November to May) ski season. This will maintain the groomed trails and keep them safe for the multitude of skiers, walkers, snowshoers and dog walkers and stop the damage from non-groomer motorized use.

For approximately 15 years JNSC has groomed a ski trail on Montana Creek Road for recreational enjoyment. With its reliable snow conditions, Montana Creek ski trail is one of CBJ's best recreation successes, at no cost to the City. And it has become the most popular ski trail in recent years, with JNSC grooming it almost daily.

Several times each season, snow machines and ATVs that are not part of our grooming fleet, drive through the main pedestrian gate and over the groomed three kilometer trail. This

motorized use destroys the groomed tracks and spoils the skier experience. It poses safety concerns for skiers, walkers, and dogs, and there are already a number of trails in Juneau dedicated to motorized use.

JNSC grooms ski trails around the City and Borough through the efforts of volunteer groomers and through membership dollars that purchase equipment, fuel, and maintenance. If JNSC were to project a cost for Montana Creek grooming, based on our USFS Use Agreement for Mendenhall Campground, it would likely cost CBJ more than \$250,000 per year.

The Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC) is a 501c3 non-profit organization with the mission to put more people on skis, more often, by promoting, teaching, and grooming snow trails for cross-country ski enthusiasts. Currently we have 659 members.

We look forward to hearing from you soon about this request and about completing the Use Agreement effort started with Parks and Recreation last year.

Sincerely,

Frankie Pillifant, President, JNSC  
on behalf of the Board and the 659 Members.

**From:** [Mr. Isaac Benson](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana creek  
**Date:** Friday, July 24, 2020 10:21:16 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Hello! I am a Juneau resident who lives on Douglas. I am contacting you today about keeping Montana creek closed to motorized traffic in the winter. This is the gem of Juneau nordic skiing. Its an important resource for kids and adults alike. The JNSC does an outstanding job of grooming and maintaining these trails. Many times last year a snowmobile completely destroyed the grooming. The trail is not safe or compatible with both skiers and motorized vehicles. Motorized vehicles have untold number of acres to do there thing. Montana creek means so much to the nordic ski community and silent sport enthusiasts. I urge you to keep it free from motorists and to put up barriers that ensure this. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Isaac Benson  
1730 2nd St, Douglas

**From:** [mary.capobianco](mailto:mary.capobianco)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Keep Montana Creek Road closed to motorized traffic  
**Date:** Friday, July 24, 2020 10:17:27 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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To Parks and Rec,

I would like continued use of a groomed winter trail up Montana Cr. road without any motorized use of the trail. Juneau Nordic Ski Club has invested hundreds of hours grooming the trail, fixing the bridge and generally, making this quiet and pristine area easily accessible to cross-country skiers (and other non-motorized users). Just as important, it's used by skiers both young and old who want to ski safely without being buzzed by a motorized vehicle.

I believe there are other trails and areas that could and are used by motorized traffic. Let's keep this one as it is - safe, groomed, brushed, and silent.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mary Capobianco  
2727 John Street  
Juneau, AK 99801  
907-957-8105

**From:** [Mary Willson](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#); [Parks Rec](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek  
**Date:** Friday, July 24, 2020 8:12:55 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Keep Montana Creek for skiers, snowshoers, and hikers! Snowmachines and ATVs tear up the surface and make it bad for skiers etc. The roadway has the most reliable snow of any low elevation site. This roadway is the only easily accessible place for skiers and 'shoers; because it is an easy route, it is a good place for youngsters and oldsters and learners of all ages. Keep motorized vehicles OUT (except of course for groomers or rescuers).

**From:** [Jeff Brown](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Road  
**Date:** Friday, July 24, 2020 9:56:49 AM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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Please close the Montana Creek road to motorized vehicles (snow machines, ATV's, etc) from Nov 1 to May 1. The Montana Creek groomed winter trail is maintained by JNSC volunteers. It is an important cross country ski area enjoyed by hundreds of Juneau residents. Motorized vehicles (snowmobiles, ATV's) will damage the groomed trail, destroying the volunteer work of local residents and preventing cross country skiers from enjoying the use of the trail.

Thanks,  
Maureen Conerton  
214 Dixon  
Juneau, AK

**From:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Keep the gate locked  
**Date:** Friday, July 24, 2020 1:16:22 PM

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-----Original Message-----

From: Sandy Williams <[srwilliams@gci.net](mailto:srwilliams@gci.net)>  
Sent: Friday, July 24, 2020 9:23 AM  
To: Parks Rec <[Parks.Rec@juneau.org](mailto:Parks.Rec@juneau.org)>  
Subject: Keep the gate locked

EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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Please keep the gate locked for this winter season, and all winters for the groups that do cross country skiing, snowshoeing and hikers. Snow machines have their place in other parts of the community. They are noisy, smell of fumes and I have noticed on the Dan Moller they are courteous when others are on the trail and that will not work on the Montana section since it is at a lower elevation when the snow arrives and therefore will have a worse impact on the groomed surface. Thanks for the consideration. Sandy

**From:** [scottbetsy@gci.net](mailto:scottbetsy@gci.net)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Winter Use  
**Date:** Friday, July 24, 2020 11:45:04 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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My name is Scott Fischer, I am a member of the Juneau Nordic Ski Club, a volunteer nordic ski trail groomer, and a Jr. Nordic Ski Team coach. I am writing to encourage you to close the Montana Creek Road beyond the rifle range gate to motorized vehicles when there is enough snow for groomers to set trails on skiable snow Nov. 1 to May 1.

For fifteen years JNSC volunteers have helped rebuild the bridge across Montana Creek, brush, and clear debris from windfall trees and landslides in preparation for grooming. With adequate snowfall we have spent thousands of hours grooming and maintaining ski trails that are used by hundreds of skiers, snowshoers, hikers, and dog walkers throughout the winter.

A single ATV can leave deep ruts in the trail that are dangerous for skiers and take hours to repair by groomers. Fast moving snowmobiles are a danger to users on skis or on foot as the road has many blind curves and narrow sections bordered in a number of places by steep drop offs to the fast moving creek. Many skiers, including the Jr. Nordic Ski Team use the groomed trails after dark when visibility is often very limited making it harder for users on foot or skis to avoid fast moving vehicles.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours,  
Scott Fischer

**From:** [newallweather](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek trail in Winter  
**Date:** Friday, July 24, 2020 10:52:50 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Please close the access to all motorized users of Montana Creek trail during the winter season. This is an important mutli use area that should be dominated by a single motorized use group.

Scott McCutcheon  
Juneau, AK  
789-8408

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Virus-free. [www.avast.com](http://www.avast.com)

**From:** [Steven Greer](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**Cc:** [Lauren Verrelli](#); [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Motorized Use in winter  
**Date:** Friday, July 24, 2020 2:14:28 PM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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Dear Parks and Rec. Staff and Board Members,

I am writing to express my opinion on the upcoming discussion of allowing motorized vehicles to use the Montana Creek road in winter. I am opposed to opening this wonderful resource to motorized use in winter as it will damage the snow surface which has been worked on so diligently by volunteers to keep it available for nordic skiing. There are few places with good snow coverage consistently in Juneau that are not steep and easily accessible like this that can be groomed on a regular basis. Unfortunately use of snow machines and ATVs ruins the groomed surface and is not a compatible use for this area. Many skiers can be found enjoying this area often when nothing else is available in marginal winter conditions and if it is taken away by a few passes of a motorized vehicle many nordic skiers will lose out.

It is important for people in Juneau to get outside and get some exercise and natural light in the winter and this is the best most consistent opportunity for this in Juneau.

Thanks for your consideration of my thoughts.

Sincerely,

Steven O. Greer, MD

**From:** [Amy!](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [Juneau Nordic Ski Club](#)  
**Subject:** Comment: Motorized use beyond the rifle range gate  
**Date:** Saturday, July 25, 2020 11:45:35 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Good morning Juneau Parks and Recreation Committee,

I would like to comment on the proposal to have the road beyond the rifle range gate closed to motorized users during the winter ski grooming season. I am in favor of closing this area to recreational motorized use during the winter grooming season for two reasons: (1) recreational motorized users ruin the grooming efforts for skiers, and (2) this small, short, narrow road with blind curves used by skiers and snowshoers is not compatible with recreational motorized use.

The local Nordic ski club grooms this area every winter for skiers. In the past, I've arrived to ski and found the entire groomed area destroyed in minutes by motorized users (a group of men on dirtbikes in one instance). Perhaps they are unaware of the amount of work involved in grooming the area for skiing; perhaps they are unaware that they have now rendered the groomed area unusable for skiers; perhaps they are aware of both of these and don't care. Regardless of their reasoning, the hard work of our volunteer groomers is ruined, rendering the area unskiable for beginning-level skiers.

Recreational motorized users currently have thousands of acres of terrain available on Douglas Island and Spaulding Meadows for winter riding. I respectfully ask you to please consider closing the current area that JNSC grooms to winter motorized users (**including, but not limited to, ATV, dirtbike, and snowmachine users**) during the winter ski grooming season (November 1 to May 1).

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Amy Carroll  
2544 Douglas Island  
Juneau AK 99801

**From:** [Barney Norwick](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek  
**Date:** Saturday, July 25, 2020 11:32:40 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Please keep the road closed on Montana Cr from November 1st to May 1st. This small area is prime access for skiers, snowshoers and hikers in the winter months. The narrow road width is not large enough to provide safe access to motor vehicles and pedestrians. While the campground also provides skiing, Montana Cr. is the only place with consistent snow conditions.

The Juneau Nordic Ski Club has done a terrific job of maintaining these trails for the benefit of everyone for years. I have used them from the beginning and hope to do it for many more years.

Barney Norwick

**From:** [Brian McTague](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Public Comment: PRAC Meeting on Montana Creek Trail, 8/4/2020  
**Date:** Saturday, July 25, 2020 10:20:08 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Dear Parks and Recreation Committee:

Please consider my written public comments on the proposal to have the road at Montana Creek beyond the rifle range gate permanently closed to motorized users.

I am in full support of the proposal.

We are a Juneau family of four who regularly ski on the road from November through March. We ski there about three days per week. We value the physical challenge, natural beauty, and the camaraderie with other Nordic skiers and snowshoers. The natural quiet of the trail (once you go past the rifle range), where only the sounds of swooshing skis and the trickle of the creek can be heard, is a restorative gift.

We also value the safe environment that currently exists. When we ski at night with our headlamps, we are confident that no snow machines will zip around a blind corner or that we will catch our skis in a machine-caused rut.

So many skiers and snowshoers enjoy the trail, it would be absolutely awful to take away the unique recreational opportunity.

Please keep the road closed to motorized users.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brian McTague  
Juneau, AK

**From:** [Deborah Craig](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Road Closure  
**Date:** Saturday, July 25, 2020 10:18:19 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Dear Parks and Recreation Committee,

I support the proposal to have the Montana Creek Road beyond the rifle range gate permanently closed to motorized users.

Local users have volunteered for 15 years to ensure cross country skiers have a cleared, groomed, public trail that is easily accessible to skiers, snowshoe users, hikers and countless youth groups. This narrow two mile corridor should be specifically designated non-motorized during the winter ski / grooming season (Nov 1 - May 1). One motorized user can easily destroy all of the hard work and public good will with just one incursion on this fragile environment.

Please permanently close the gate to motorized use. Thank you for your efforts.  
Deborah Craig

July 25, 2020

Chris Mertl, Chair  
Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee  
Juneau Parks and Recreation Department  
City and Borough of Juneau  
155 S. Seward Street  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Mr. Mertl,

We are writing to you and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee today with regard to the proposal on your August 4 meeting agenda to have the Montana Creek Road beyond the rifle range gate permanently closed to recreational motorized use. As lifelong skiers and residents of Juneau for the past thirty-five years, we urge you to close this section of the road to any motorized recreational use during the winter months. We believe this decision is consistent with the existing plans, policies and budgets already adopted by the City and Borough of Juneau.

#### Parks and Recreation Master Plan

This plan focuses on a number of pertinent guiding principles

- Promote community engagement, health and wellness – this section of the road is heavily used by Juneau Nordic Ski Club members and other Juneau residents for cross country skiing, which promotes community engagement, health and wellness.
- Maintaining Assets Effectively – Juneau park lands need to be maintained and protected from damage. The Juneau Nordic Ski Club has provided many volunteer hours and materials, maintaining the bridge over Montana Creek, brushing the trail, removing fallen trees and repairing landslide damage to the trail. Illegal off-road vehicle use has damaged wetlands in this area. Closing this section of the road to motorized use will help protect it from further damage.
- Supporting community partnerships – the Juneau Nordic Ski Club is an important community partnership that has improved the quality of life in winter for many Juneau Nordic Ski Club members, the Youth Nordic Ski Program, CBJ residents and visitors and deserves your continued support. The Montana Creek ski trail is also used by the 4-H ski program, school groups, youth ski programs and the Juneau Parks and Recreation Hike Program. Closing this section of the road to motorized use will provide for the continued success of these programs and the safety of all participants.
- Foster environmental stewardship – the Juneau Nordic Ski Club and their volunteers serve as environmental stewards for this area and are a valuable asset to the community.

According to Map 1-3 in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan this area along Montana Creek is identified as a “Natural Area Park”, which is defined as an area of natural quality providing, open space, water access, and passive and dispersed recreation activities. Motorized use of this area would conflict with the goal of passive and dispersed recreational activities. While the plan notes that there is a need for areas open to ORV use, it does not identify this area as appropriate for ORV use.

### City and Borough of Juneau Comprehensive Plan Policy 9.2

The CBJ Comprehensive Plan states that policy 9.2 is “To develop and maintain an interconnected non-motorized trail system that is complementary with, and may be contiguous with, un-fragmented fish and wildlife corridors along anadromous fish streams within the roaded system that provides fish and wildlife and human access to the sea from the uplands.” Closing this section of the Montana Creek Road to motorized use is in keeping with this policy.

The plan further notes in Subarea 3 (West Mendenhall Valley) guidelines and considerations item (5) “Protect CBJ-owned lands located within 500 feet of each side of the ordinary high water line of Montana Creek from its junction with the Mendenhall River to its headwaters, in accordance with the scientific analysis of the special functions of Montana Creek’s values conducted by the Juneau Chapter of Trout Unlimited and published in November of 2006. This 2006 document specifically calls for the enforcement of laws and ordinances protecting fish habitat and watershed resources and specifically notes that “illegal off-road vehicle use in the upper watershed has damaged wetlands adjacent to Montana Creek as well as portions of the McGinnis Creek headwaters.” They further noted that off road vehicles (ORVs) were allowed on the road right-of-way in upper Montana Creek, but “enforcement is difficult and often does not occur.” Closure of this section of the Montana Creek Road to motorized use would help protect these CBJ lands as outlined in the CBJ Comprehensive Plan.

### Juneau Non-Motorized Transportation Plan (2009)

This plan in discussing the value of parks and open space notes that “activities such as walking, running cycling and cross country skiing are all relatively inexpensive, unstructured activities, providing easy access to recreation for much of the community...trails also stimulate the economy by attracting visitors interested in nature-based activities.” Juneau’s groomed Nordic trails complement the downhill ski trails at Eaglecrest Ski Area and serve to attract visitors to Juneau. Closing this section of Montana Creek Road to motorized use would show that Juneau supports the value of parks and open space through its actions. Closure of this section of the road to recreational motorized use and allowing continued ski trail use would be in keeping with the following CBJ policies regarding non-motorized transportation.

- Improve public health by increasing physical activity level and improving air quality
- Improve quality of life by fostering interactions that take place while on foot or bicycle
- City and Borough Policy 8.2 – it is the policy of the CBJ to facilitate transportation alternatives to private vehicles as a means of reducing traffic congestion, air pollution and consumption of fossil fuels, and to provide safe and healthy means of transportation for all people

### CBJ Assembly Public Works Committee

In March 2020, the CBJ Assembly Public Works Committee forwarded a request to the CBJ Assembly Finance Committee for a \$30,000 grant to the Juneau Nordic Ski Club as a match for project funding for a project to create a biathlon range at this location and add parking for an additional 20-30 cars. In addition, the six-year CIP Plan forwarded to the CBJ Assembly Finance Committee also included

- Manager’s Office - funding for a replacement of the Montana Creek bridge past the rifle range
- Parks and Recreation - funding for Montana Creek cross country running and skiing trail expansion

These commitments speak to the support from the CBJ Assembly, the CBJ Manager’s Office and the Parks and Recreation Department for non-motorized trail use in this area.

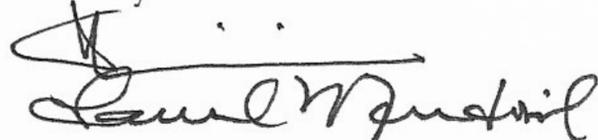
The guiding principle in this decision-making process should be to follow the CBJ policies outlined above that advocate for maintaining and protecting the natural environment. As the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, you are tasked with coming up with recommended stipulations related to operations and maintenance for this area, consistent with the management plan. In this instance, recreational motorized use of this area is inconsistent with previously adopted plans governing this area. In addition, recreational motorized use would create significant conflicts with other users in the area, specifically large numbers of Nordic skiers. This is especially true on many narrow sections of the Montana Creek trail where hazardous drop-offs exist, as well as blind corners that could lead to collisions.

Clearly, no decision regarding this area will satisfy all the needs and desires of the many people who will be communicating with you on this issue. However, we believe that closing this area to motorized use best balances and responds to current and future recreation users, while ensuring that the natural resources of this special area will be there to meet the needs of future generations. When I was the Business Manager for Eaglecrest Ski Area, we experienced similar conflicts with ORVs, specifically snowmobiles wanting access to snow during the winter months. Skier/ORV collisions are a recognized problem within the ski industry and should be avoided at all costs. Recreational ORV use at the ski area is prohibited by CBJ Ordinance 67.01.090(e), but that ordinance was flagrantly disregarded by snowmobilers numerous times. Having the gate closed at the gun range will be needed at a minimum, but please also consider barriers that would dissuade motorized users from accessing this area through the adjacent gun range.

Please also note that the U.S. Forest Service went through a similar decision-making process in deciding the balance between motorized and non-motorized use in the Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area EIS back in 1996. In that 1996 document they noted 21 previous years of conflict between motorized and non-motorized users within the area. The Forest Service closed the Dredge Lakes area to motorized use in that 1996 decision due to those conflicts and ongoing environmental damage. They considered an alternative that would have set aside a small area for ORV use, but decided against it, as they were not willing to allocate additional law enforcement budget to address the inherent problems with allowing motorized use in the area.. They did allow ORV use in winter months on the west side of Mendenhall Lake (when sufficiently frozen), so opportunities for motorized ORV use are available in the area.

Thank you for your service to the community in addressing the need for recreation and parks.

Sincerely



Gary and Laurel Mendivil  
9356 Center Court  
Juneau, AK 99801  
(907) 209-0247

**From:** [mmasuda@gci.net](mailto:mmasuda@gci.net)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** comment on closure of the Montana Creek Road  
**Date:** Saturday, July 25, 2020 8:13:02 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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RE: proposal to have the road beyond the rifle range gate permanently closed to motorized users

Dear Members of the Parks and Recreation Committee:

As one of the 600+ members of the Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC), I support closure of the road beyond the rifle range to motorized users from Nov. 1 to May 1, the time during which volunteers of the JNSC groom the road for skiing. Closure of the road to snow machiners and ATVs is critical for maintaining this area as a nordic ski area, an area that has been regularly groomed and maintained by the all-volunteer JNSC for the last 15 years.

One pass by a snow machiner or an atv user ruins the trail for all skiers--young and old--who use this area. In addition, it's dangerous to have motorized vehicles and skiers on the same trail. I, for one, have enjoyed this area for skiing much longer than 15 years and feel we skiers have historically put a lot of effort in developing this area for the enjoyment of skiers of all levels. Also, this area is one of the few areas at sea level that reliably receives snow in the winter.

Please support closure of the road beyond the rifle range to motorized users (other than JNSC grooming equipment) from Nov. 1 to May 1. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Michele Masuda

**From:** [Michelle Sydeman](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**Cc:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** Please permanently close Montana Creek Trail to motorized use during the winter for cross county skiing  
**Date:** Saturday, July 25, 2020 1:42:53 PM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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I am a senior citizen and long-term Juneau resident. I love cross county skiing and being in nature during our long gloomy winters as a way to stay in shape and stay upbeat. It is very important both to my mental and physical health. I am not an uber athlete, so flatter trails are what I use. Montana Creek is the best of these.

The trail is maintained by a team of dedicated volunteers, supported by hundreds of local residents who enthusiastically chip in to pay for equipment, gasoline, etc.... The Nordic Ski Club represents the best of Juneau: volunteerism, teamwork, and commitment to community. I am proud to be a member and lucky to have groomed trails in Juneau on which to ski.

Last year on a couple of occasions someone rode a snow machine down the trail to access hunting areas. He was a nice enough guy, but he ruined the trail for those who followed him. It no doubt took a lot of effort to restore the tracks after he gouged them almost to the end.

As there many other locations in which to snow machine, I support permanently closing Montana Creek to motorized access from Nov to April. As an active asthmatic, this trail affords me a special opportunity during the winter to get the exercise I need without climbing mountains or risking it on the glacier lake when it is not safe.

Thanks for taking this action.

Michelle Sydeman  
633 N Franklin St  
Juneau  
907-321-1944

**From:** [Roman Motyka](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [JNSC](#)  
**Subject:** Close Montana Creek to motorized traffic Nov 1 - May 1  
**Date:** Saturday, July 25, 2020 5:15:25 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Dear PRAC,

This is Roman Motyka, a Juneau resident since 1984. My comments are with regard to keeping the Montana Creek road past the rifle range closed to motorized traffic during the winter XC ski months. November 1 - May 1.

I am one of many volunteer groomers with the Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC) and I groom Montana Creek every Tuesday morning throughout the snow season, and have done so for the past several years. JNSC is an all-volunteer organization with 649 members. We provide the opportunities for quality outdoor skiing activities for all residents and visitors free of charge, as well as sponsoring many youth programs and other community activities. Getting out in Nature has been especially important this past winter, given the ongoing pandemic and the need for folks to get some outdoor exercise.

Being a groomer at Montana Creek, I've seen firsthand the damage ATVs and motorbikes can inflict on our groomed trails and the time it takes to repair the trails. These events occur several times during ski season. I believe that by far the majority of snowmobilers and ATVers are responsible citizens and enjoy access they readily have to acres of terrain in the Juneau area. It seems that a few individuals, perhaps on a lark, do the damage to the Montana Creek groomed trails.

The Montana Creek ski trail is unique in that it usually has snow the earliest and skiing lasts the longest of any of the low elevation XC ski trails in Juneau, sometimes outlasting Eaglecrest! This is due to the microclimate of the valley, which is typically 5 deg cooler than the airport. The trail is also shaded from the direct sun. The trail parallels Montana Creek, which during the winter months provides one of the most scenic ski trails in Juneau.

The trail is widely used by XC skiers, snowshoers, and hikers of all ages because of its relatively gentle grade. We are always cautious when grooming the trails, setting up warning signs, going slow, and stopping when encountering ski traffic. I fear that any other motorized activity on the ski road is a hazard to other users because of the narrow trail and the blind corners. Montana Creek provides a lovely place for folks to get out in nature and enjoy "quiet sports". I and other groomers have been thanked countless by individuals that use the ski trails.

So please preserve the opportunity for the Juneau Community, young and old alike, to continue enjoying Montana Creek during the winter months by banning motorized traffic between Nov. 1 and May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Roman J Motyka

Roman Motyka

[rjmotyka@alaska.edu](mailto:rjmotyka@alaska.edu)

907-723-0761 cell; 907-796-6307 office

"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion."

**From:** [thomas meyer](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Public comment re: closing Montana Creek road to motorized use  
**Date:** Saturday, July 25, 2020 12:37:06 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Begin forwarded message:

**From:** thomas meyer <[tommeyer@gci.net](mailto:tommeyer@gci.net)>  
**Subject:** Public comment re: closing Montana Creek road to motorized use  
**Date:** July 25, 2020 at 12:11:19 PM AKDT  
**To:** [parks.rec@juneau.org](mailto:parks.rec@juneau.org)  
**Cc:** [lauren.verelli@juneau.org](mailto:lauren.verelli@juneau.org), JNSC Board <[info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)>

Hi - My family has been skiing on the Montana Creek Nordic ski trail for several years. I have two daughters who like to XC ski. My spouse and I XC ski, as well. On a volunteer basis, I have helped maintain the Juneau Nordic Ski Club's use of the Montana Creek ski trail and helped install the new bridge that's located just beyond the gun range and "winter gate".

I understand that CBJ is either looking at a proposal to open the Montana Creek trail to motorized use in the winter or to ensure it remains a permanent non-motorized trail in winter. My view is that the trail should remain closed in winter to motorized use and used for nordic skiing, walking, or other pedestrian use in winter consistent with past policy. The nordic ski club has grown in membership recently and there has been a significant increase in the trail's use by members and non-members alike. The trail should remain available to skiers. Snowmachines and other motorized vehicles will damage the nordic groomed trails. As CBJ is aware, except for the first quarter mile or so starting at the gun range gate, the trail is a narrow right-of-way; it will not accommodate both motorized and nordic use during the winter. The nordic trails are set-up with both classic and skate tracks, requiring a significantly wide berth.

In summary, I am writing on behalf of family of four, all of whom enjoy Juneau's nordic trails. In particular, we recognize that Montana Creek is unique because it is maintainable far longer than the other Juneau nordic trails (mainly the Mendenhall Campground and Eagle Beach State Park.) We urge CBJ to choose to keep Montana Creek trail available for non-motorized winter use EXCLUSIVELY, specifically for nordic skiing. Finally, the nordic ski club has been a good steward of the trail.

Tom Meyer, Ulli Meyer, Eva Meyer, Ida Meyer  
3051 Nowell Avenue  
Juneau 99801

**From:** [Beth Weigel](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [Juneau Nordic Ski Club](#)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Trail Use  
**Date:** Sunday, July 26, 2020 11:19:54 AM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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Hello PRAC,

Thank you for taking the time to consider carefully the kind of use that is appropriate on Montanan Creek trail. This is one of the trails I use the most in Juneau primarily for cross country skiing. This past winter I logged over 50 days skiing on this trail. Montana Creek is definitely a busy ski trail during the months that the Juneau Nordic Ski Club grooms the trail. It is also unique in that if well managed, we can get far more Nordic skiing days on that trail than anywhere else in Juneau. I believe the JNSC does an amazing job taking care of this trail spending hundreds of volunteer hours and thousands of community raised dollars to its upkeep, grooming, and overall improvement.

It is my understanding that additional motorized uses are being considered and I do not believe that would be a good idea. Mixing skiers, walkers, snowshoers, and dogs with a fast moving motorized snow machine will certainly lead to some sort of accident and will degrade and likely destroy the groomed trail leaving skiers without access. I believe this would also be the case in summer should it be open to ATV use since it is also a popular bike trail and walking trail. When I am skiing there, I am very conscious of the many blind curves and steep drop offs to the creek. The last thing I want to do is end up in the creek or colliding with others. The trail is also used for training of our youth ski program. Given some of the past winters, Montana Creek has been the only place to maintain snow coverage where Nordic skiing can happen. The base at Eaglecrest and the Forest Service campground at Mendenhall often lose snow to rain where Montana Creek is able to hold onto snow, especially when properly managed as the JNSC has been doing. It is also my understanding that snow machine enthusiasts have access trails in other parts of our community that allow them to get up higher where they can find deeper snow and have thousands of acres to ride. I am not in favor of ATV use in any muskeg or place where the use would leave large ruts. Frankly, due to our very wet weather I don't think recreational ATV use is a good fit for Juneau at all and they should only be used here for utility purposes.

Please designate Montana Creek Trail as a non-motorized use trail and allow only the snow machine that is used for grooming, which moves at a very slow rate and is highly safety conscious of skiers and walkers, an exception.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Beth Weigel

**From:** [Chas Dense & Cristi Herren](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Favor NON\_MOTORIZED Winter Use on Montana Creek Road  
**Date:** Sunday, July 26, 2020 1:15:17 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Greetings,

I am writing to let you know that I **strongly favor** permanently designating Montana Creek Road beyond the rifle range for **NON-MOTORIZED USE** from October 15 to May 15. Montana Creek frequently is the winter's first and last local area to provide skiing opportunities because of the near total shade and cold weather close to the glacier. I prefer these extended dates to allow for the not-infrequent "unusual" years when the area gets significant early or late snows. My wife and I skied there through the first week of May this year.

This past winter a rogue snowmobiler seemingly deliberately drove all over recently set tracks, causing more than a day's work of shoveling and plowing for the volunteer Nordic Ski Club. As such, allowing motorized use would effectively eliminate skiing at this valuable ski resource.

Montana Creek is our favorite and most often used ski trail because of its aesthetic appeal due to its relative remote feeling, nearness to the sounds of the creek, and all around sense of a natural setting. Further, it is highly suitable for our skiing abilities and offers the community easy access and a wonderful place to get healthy exercise.

For these reasons, and many more that others are pointing out, please **permanently retain the winter closure of Montana Creek Road** to motorized vehicles so as to protect this valuable resource from adverse impacts.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Chas Dense  
427 West 11th St.  
Juneau, AK 99801

[cdense@icloud.com](mailto:cdense@icloud.com)  
907.796.9022

**From:** [Chas Dense & Cristi Herren](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Support Non-Motorized Use designation on Montana Creek Road  
**Date:** Sunday, July 26, 2020 1:43:45 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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July 26, 2020

Dear Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee Members:

**I strongly support the measure to permanently close the Montana Creek Road beyond the rifle range gate** from November 1 to as long as there is adequate snow to groom and ski on. This past winter we skied there until May 7<sup>th</sup>.

I support the closure for the following reasons:

--As you all know, Juneau's fickle winter weather is a tricky place for cross-country and skate skiing at sea level. Since Montana Creek road has started to be groomed it has provided **consistently high quality snow conditions** that cannot be found elsewhere in Juneau. It's so consistent that **we can count on it day in and day out** and that has allowed us to include cross-country skiing as a part of a regular healthy exercise routine which is especially important in the winter months. Please do not think that having other groomed trails at the Mendenhall Campground, Dredge Lakes or even up at Eaglecrest in any way alleviates or makes this resource less necessary. They are all subject to the whims of our climate and cannot be counted on.

--**Centrally located** to a large part of the population, it is a **convenient** location for a short or long ski and it meets the need of a wide segment of the skiing population. It is **easy** enough for beginners and **challenging** enough for more experienced skiers.

--**Harmonious and cooperative use** by three important and populous user groups -walkers, snow-shoers, and skiers, takes place there every day without conflict. These groups encompass all demographics **from young to old**, athletes to casual recreators, downtown to out-the-roaders.

--Many volunteers spend countless hours grooming these trails at **no cost to the CBJ** to provide an amenity that **contributes to the quality of life** of its current citizens and is an important amenity that appeals to others who are considering making Juneau their home.

**--One motorized user totally destroys the experience for all other user groups.** This spring someone did drive their snowmobile or ATV on the road past the gate and it totally ruined the ski trails for us for a couple of days. It would have been much longer if not for the diligent and skillful volunteers who worked hard to return the trails to a skiable condition. I'm sure that the Juneau Nordic Ski Club can provide photos of the damage. Pictures were posted on their website but I was not able to retrieve them. Motorized users have a lot of other places where they can roam great distances to their heart's delight. This short section should be off-limits to them.

Please keep all of these points in mind as you make your decision. You will be doing the citizens of Juneau a great service if you choose to close the Montana Creek Road to motorized use.

Thank you for your consideration,

Cristi Herren

427 W 11<sup>th</sup> Street

Juneau, AK 99801

Herren\_dense@msn.

**From:** [Mary Ellen Arvold Dave Haas](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#); [Mary Ellen Arvold](#)  
**Cc:** [Juneau Nordic Ski Club](#)  
**Subject:** Winter uses of Montana Creek Road.  
**Date:** Sunday, July 26, 2020 7:51:55 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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PRAC

My name is Dave Haas, and I have groomed Juneau cross country ski trails for about the last five years. I have groomed nordic ski trails at Eaglecrest (CBJ), Eagle Beach State Park, Mendenhall Campground (USFS) and Montana Creek. Working with these governmental agencies is within the same mission as Trail Mix, whose board I have been a member of since 2010. I appreciate the cooperation between these agencies and our board on use of our local trails.

In that context I am disappointed in the lack of consideration by the DNR and CBJ in allowing snowmobile and ATV use of Montana Creek Rd. during the winter months. Montana Ck. is the most heavily used nordic ski environment here because it holds more snow and maintains it longer than any other locations in Juneau. Thus it gets groomed daily. As such I have groomed there once or twice weekly for years to prep the snow as well as we can with our equipment.

It has been thoroughly discouraging some mornings to find that a snowmobile or ATV has gotten onto this trail with or without a locked gate at the entrance. With one pass down our groomed trail they destroy the machined pattern created by our Ginzu grooming machine and a groomer. The pattern includes both a parallel grooved track for classic skiers and a corduroyed path for skate skiers done side by side. The grooming process takes a minimum of an hour and can run to 3-4 hrs. depending upon overnight snowfall and previous day's use. We take pride in compacting and designing the ski trail so that as many skiers as possible can enjoy the trail. This can be hundreds of skiers each day, and daily grooming keeps the track in as good a condition as possible. Yet one ATV or snowmachine pass will destroy the ski track for many skiers.

I understand that the State wants to provide access for miners working claims on federal or state lands and that CBJ owns the trailhead and access to Montana Creek road. If the state and/or the USFS are providing such access then I ask that they at least limit it to the non-snow months and close it to anyone except nordic skiers and dog walkers from Nov. 1 - May 1. I ask that CBJ keep the gate locked just past the entrance to the rifle range during this time for that reason. I also suggest that CBJ and maybe the State agency advertise and enforce a substantial monetary penalty for anyone violating this road closure.

It seems ultimately fair to at least allow hundreds, maybe thousands of local skiers 6 months of quality snow skiing if a handful of miners and ATVer's have access to their claims for the same amount of time - just not in winter when they are very unlikely to be working the claims anyway.. Please maintain our quality skiing experience.

Dave Haas

**From:** [Eileen Wagner](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek for skiers, please  
**Date:** Sunday, July 26, 2020 9:53:14 AM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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Please keep motorized vehicles off the Montana Creek trail from Nov. 1 to May 1. I and many others ski there frequently during winter months. Montana Creek is a magical micro-climate that holds whatever snow it gets and often has wonderful conditions for skiing no matter the weather elsewhere.

Many volunteers groom the trail daily because they understand what it means to have dependable snow in Juneau.

Snow machines and 3 wheelers have many places to recreate; please leave Montana Creek for cross country skiers.

Thank you.

Eileen Wagner  
517 Kennedy St.  
Juneau

**From:** [CindaFred.StanekHiltner](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#); [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Fred Hiltner re: Supporting seasonal closure to motorized vehicles on Montana Creek Road  
**Date:** Sunday, July 26, 2020 2:14:17 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Juneau Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee  
Juneau Parks and Recreation  
Juneau, AK. 99801  
7/26/20

Dear Members of the PRAC Committee,

I am writing to request that Juneau Parks and Recreation puts into place a seasonal winter closure to motorized vehicles on the Montana Creek Road past the Hank Harmon Rifle Range.

The Juneau Nordic Ski Club, a volunteer membership organization, has been grooming this road for many years as a service to members and other skiers for many years. Many skiers use the trail daily, and have an amazing opportunity for winter exercise, family outings, and a lifting of spirits.

JNSC is a not-for-profit organization with currently almost seven hundred members. Many members volunteer their time for grooming trails, purchasing and maintaining snow machines and track setting equipment, putting on Nordic skiing races and other events, and the many other activities that support Juneau's cross country skiers. The Juneau Nordic Ski Team, composed of middle and high school students, frequently trains and races on this unique trail.

The Montana Creek road is a special area because it is cooled by cold air from the Mendenhall Glacier, which extends the ski season beyond other near-sea level areas. It's central location is quickly accessible from the large population in the valley, and, of course, there is no charge to skiers, making it affordable to many.

In spite of numerous other places to ride, the Montana Creek Road grooming is often ruined for skiing and hiking by snow machine and ATV riders driving down the groomed road. This creates deep grooves and mounds that make skiing difficult and sometimes impossible.

Motorized travel on this road in the winter also creates a hazard to those skiing, snowshoeing, and walking on this high-use trail. These are some of the reasons that motorized vehicles are banned in the Eaglecrest Ski Area. Imagine skiing down the Hooter run and hitting big ruts and getting thrown off your skis.

This is a case of a few ruining something for the many. Re-grooming the trail takes several extra hours, extra volunteer time, and extra expenses of additional fuel and wear and tear on equipment.

Closing this area to motorized vehicles during the winter months of grooming will create a consistent, high-quality, and safe opportunity for Juneau's residents. The groomed road

section is less than two miles long, and this two miles is precious to Juneau skiers, snowshoers, and hikers.

I thank you for your attention and encourage you to support this amazing Juneau recreation opportunity in this way. Thank you for your consideration!

Best regards,

Fred Hiltner  
957.8306

**From:** [jennifer.strumfeld](mailto:jennifer.strumfeld)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Keep Montana Creek Safe and Quiet  
**Date:** Sunday, July 26, 2020 10:28:10 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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July 26, 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

We are Juneau Nordic Ski Club members and parents of a Juneau Nordic Ski Team skier. We are writing this letter to urge you to keep the Montana Creek trail closed to motorized vehicles between November 1st and May1st.

Montana Creek is a narrow trail that is a heavily skied and snowshoed and is carefully maintained by devoted volunteer groomers in the wintertime. The trail, which meanders along the creek, is wide enough for two skiers to stride side-by-side. This doesn't leave room for much else. There is no shoulder, there are no pull-outs, but there are plenty of blind corners. The trail is used day and night by folks who are looking for a safe, quiet, low-impact recreational experience. The thought of our child and other team members skiing along the trail and having to dive to the side to make room for powerful motorized vehicles terrifies us. Allowing snow machines, quads, and electric fat tire bikes to use the area would also leave huge ruts and gouges in the track which would be very difficult for groomers to repair.

We urge you to keep this trail free of motorized vehicles.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Strumfeld and Steve Morley  
8929 N. Douglas Hwy.  
Juneau, AK 99801  
(907) 500-4488

July 24, 2020

To: CBJ Parks and Recreation Committee

From: Joel Nudelman

RE: Montana Creek access for Nordic/Cross country skiing

Juneau is fortunate to have the climate and terrain for snow sports but for the past ten years or so, our winters have become less dependable. I recall many winter days when it was raining throughout the borough, yet the Juneau Nordic Ski Club grooming cadre was taking advantage of the snow hole on the gated portion of Montana Creek road. They were providing an excellent ski surface for the community. This area is the most snow-dependable location in Juneau for Nordic skiing. JNSC is a self-sustaining group of skiers and volunteers of all ages and ski levels who are out enjoying the beautiful scenery and excellent company of fellow skiers. This trail is important to Juneau's youth through the 4H program and the Junior Nordic Ski Team. Kids from our community have competed in statewide Nordic ski competitions and some have gone onto NCAA cross country running and track programs, an excellent crossover sport. This venue has been important for me and others in the community for staying physically active and fit.

On multiple occasions the past two years, I've been troubled to read the JNSC trail report informing members that ATV's had shredded a beautifully groomed trail. I realize there is another user group who would like this same access, however they have many miles of backcountry opportunities on Spaulding meadows and on Douglas Island for snow machining. Some believe that the motorized and non-motorized uses are compatible, but at this location, they are not! The trail is too narrow for both skiers and snow machines, and hard breathing skiers will have a difficult time skiing behind the exhaust of snow machines. Blind corners make for a high likelihood of accidents between skiers and snow machines. Additionally it will be difficult to keep the snow machines out of the set ski tracks. I urge the CBJ to keep the gate locked during the ski season to eliminate access to ATV's, which cause damage to the groomed trails.

Thank you,

Sincerely,



Joel Nudelman  
3035 Nowell Ave.  
Juneau, AK 99801  
907-321-3317

**From:** [John Neary](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**Cc:** [Lauren Verrelli](#); [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek trail use  
**Date:** Sunday, July 26, 2020 12:32:50 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Hello,

I urge the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to recommend closure of the Montana Creek trail to motorized use. As a frequent skier of that trail and a groomer for the Juneau Nordic ski club I'm very familiar with the community-wide value of this trail as a non-motorized ski or snowshoe trail. On an average Saturday I see dozens of people on the trail and almost all of them are smiling as they ski up the route. And that's just within a one-hour time period! Our ski club has provided volunteer grooming on this trail for 15 years resulting in thousands of skier days on the only reliably snow covered area at sea level.

Motorized snow sleds and ATVs are incompatible with skiers on this narrow roadway with numerous blind curves. The deep ruts left behind by an ATV cause lasting impact that normally ruin the trail for the remainder of the day at least, and into the next day if there's no new snow. They have thousands of acres of terrain they can use in other places and they haven't reliably used the Montana Creek trail in a long time until this winter when the gate was left open. Please close it again.

Our volunteers helped to coordinate and provide labor to repair the bridge across Montana Cr. in addition to annually keeping the road clear of brush, fallen trees, and landslides. This a community service that should be honored with compatible regulations. As a retired federal employee who understands the complexity of land management when there are mixed jurisdictions, rights of access for mining claims or private lands, and other challenges, I realize there are multiple agencies with responsibility. But it is the PRAC that can and should be a strong voice for community health and recreation outdoors. Please recommend closure of the trail to motorized uses during winter.

cheers

John Neary  
[john.neary99@gmail.com](mailto:john.neary99@gmail.com)

**From:** [Joyanne Bloom](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** Save Montana Creek for Senior Skiers  
**Date:** Sunday, July 26, 2020 12:23:51 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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It's pretty amazing to see how many seniors use the Montana Creek ski ski trail. I'm not talking about those long legged, fast pushing high school seniors who shout "On your left" and wiz on by. I'm talking about geezers like me past the 65 mark who relish getting out on a trail in winter to exercise and meet up with friends. Once we get past the rifle range, it's quiet, safe, well-groomed and just what the doctor ordered. Please keep our long winter therapy especially for us and save CBJ money on geriatric care! (I bet a poll would show close to 50% of the current skiers are considered seniors by CBJ standards!)

--

Joyanne Bloom  
883 Basin Road  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

(907) 723-3604

**From:** [Karen Paulick](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Rd. -skiing area  
**Date:** Sunday, July 26, 2020 9:39:33 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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I would like to strongly encourage the Parks and Recreation Action Committee to keep Montana Creek Road (past the rifle range), free of motorized vehicles from November 1-May 1.

I am a cross country skier and have had encounters with snowmobiles while skiing in the past. . . and it is scary. The Montana Creek Trail is narrow in some places and contains blind curves. An encounter with a motorized vehicle could be disastrous.

Additionally, motorized vehicles tear up the terrain, and once the trail is disrupted it is quite hazardous for skiers who may slip off the trail (there is a drop off to the creek) or suffer injuries due to deep ruts, churned up rocks/debris and uneven surfaces.

The Montana Creek Ski Trail is a lovely area that has been one of the few places local skiers can go without worry about ski mobiles and ATVs. The Juneau Nordic Ski Club has spent thousands of dollars ( and hours) grooming this area for the past 15 years, and they help to maintain the trail and bridge so that skiers can safely enjoy this area in the winter.

Please keep Montana Creek Road (past the rifle range) gated and free from motorized vehicles.

Karen Paulick

9550 Moraine Way, Juneau AK

209-7796

**From:** [Steve Kocsis](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**Cc:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek closure  
**Date:** Sunday, July 26, 2020 11:33:49 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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I am in favor of keeping Montana Creek road closed to motorized travel in the winter..As a pensioner the Nordic skiing at Montana creek maintains a healthy life. The impact of ATV's and snow machines would not maintain my outdoor recreation.

Steve Kocsis

**From:** [Susan Bell](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#); [Parks Rec](#)  
**Cc:** [Juneau Nordic Ski Club](#)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Road  
**Date:** Sunday, July 26, 2020 2:39:34 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Lauren and other CBJ Parks & Recreation staff members:

Please designate the Montana Creek Road beyond the rifle range for non-motorized during the winter months. This section of road and trail has provided safe and accessible winter recreation for Juneau residents of all ages thanks to the volunteer efforts of the Juneau Nordic Ski Club. The combination of diligent grooming and slightly colder climate allows for cross-country skiing on this trail when other winter recreation options are not viable or safe.

It seems especially important now that we maintain outdoor recreation options for our residents' physical and mental health.

Sincerely,  
Susan Bell

July 24, 2020

Dear Parks and Recreation Committee,

My name is Barbara Mason and I am a regular skate skier on the Montana Creek road by the gun range and have been for many years. Skate skiing is absolutely my favorite form of skiing (for that matter, it is my favorite form of exercise), particularly since my knees have gotten arthritic enough that I can no longer downhill ski.

Since I retired I started keeping a spreadsheet of the number of times I skate ski and the number of miles, which is a great deal of fun and has challenged me to ski more often. Towards the end of the season I am skiing everyday at Montana Creek. There is an additional fun challenge at the end of year as the snow retreats. Many of us skiers will hike down the road to where the snow and grooming begins and as you ski up the road there will be places that are quite narrow.

Nordic skiers use the groomed trails for classic and skate skiing. Grooming for classic skiers requires setting a track for the skis with enough room for the skiers to use their poles. Skate skiers need a much wider corduroy track about 8 feet wide in order to skate. When I have talked to people about skate skiing most do not know what skate skiing is or the type or width of track needed. My husband is one of the groomers with the Nordic Ski Club and they spend hours each day grooming the track so both classic and skate skiers can enjoy skiing. One ATV driving on a groomed track can ruin it. It takes the groomers hours of shoveling and re-grooming the track to make it skiable for the many people that ski the trails.

The Nordic Ski Club also work on the Montana Creek trail in the summer to clear and improve slide areas that have happened. Every year I see the work that they have done to improve the trail to make it easier for the skiers. Their work makes it possible for kids and adults to learn how to ski, have races, and other events. Every time I go skiing I see a number of people all enjoying the use of the groomed trail.

Montana Creek is unique in that it will have snow when Mendenhall campground no longer has enough snow to groom. There have been some years when the only skiing available will be Montana Creek. Whenever I go skiing I will see many other skiers on the road, even at the end of the skiing season. For me personally not being able to ski Montana Creek would be a great loss and cannot be replaced.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Barbara Mason  
bmason710@gmail.com

**From:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Montana Creek Ski!  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 9:03:28 AM

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**From:** Daniel F Kirkwood <dfkirkwood@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 27, 2020 8:47 AM  
**To:** Parks Rec <Parks.Rec@juneau.org>  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Ski!

**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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I am very excited to hear that Montana Creek can continue to be a world-class nordic ski trail during the winter months. Opening this to motorized users would be incompatible and devastating to all of the skiers who already use this area. Thousands of people are benefiting from the Juneau Nordic Ski club grooming there, but allowing motorized users would immediately displace skiing along Montana Creek.

Montana Creek is often the only place to ski in Juneau - snowy even when it is raining at Eaglecrest. As I look forward to fall, I am excited to ski with friends on this trail after work. Juneau's outdoor recreation activities will be even more treasured with limited opportunities to socialize inside.

Motorized recreation should have its own place, but it shouldn't be on one of our premiere ski trails.

Thank you,  
Dan

--

Daniel F. Kirkwood  
[dfkirkwood@gmail.com](mailto:dfkirkwood@gmail.com)

**From:** [Daniel F Kirkwood](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#); [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek is our best ski spot!  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 8:59:25 AM

64 of 250

**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

<https://www.juneauempire.com/letters/opinion-support-ski-clubs-efforts/>

Thanks to CBJ for providing this great opportunity. Please continue to keep is unmotorized: motorized recreation would destroy the grooming efforts and immediately displace existing users.

## **Opinion: Support ski club's efforts**

Montana Creek is one of my favorite places in Juneau.

- Thursday, December 26, 2019 7:00am
- [Letters to the Editor](#)

Though I was dismayed to see the [recent headline that wet weather would continue](#), I enjoyed seeing Michael Penn's photo of a cross country skier at Montana Creek. Despite the wet weather, Montana Creek has been an outstanding place to ski this week thanks to its unique geography that holds snow and the unflagging efforts of the Juneau Nordic Ski Club.

As a skier in Juneau, I have been refreshing my weather apps, dissecting the NOAA forecast discussion and watching the temperatures fluctuate around freezing, right up to the top of Eaglecrest. Meanwhile, Montana Creek sits in a low canyon formed by the Gastineau Fault. The Canyon of Montana Creek, also a popular destination for local trout anglers, creates a pinch point that holds cold air spilling from the Juneau Icefield. It is really the only reliable and accessible place for cross country skiing when the temperatures climb. Montana Creek has been skiable every day of this warm, wet December.

Of course, this wouldn't be possible without the collaborative efforts of the City and Borough of Juneau, Parks and Recreation, PRAC and the Juneau Nordic Ski Club. The Nordic Ski club's volunteer groomers keep the snow in its best shape for skate and classic skiing. The Nordic Club welcomes snowshoeing and hiking too, though they request hikers keep to the side of the groomed track. Last year the club donated thousands of volunteer hours to provide 125 days of grooming at Montana Creek. The club also grooms, free of charge, the Campground, Mendenhall Lake, Eaglecrest and Pioneer Road. The club has grown three-fold in the past decade as more Juneauites discover Nordic skiing. If you enjoy Nordic skiing in Juneau, I hope you'll join me and become a member ([www.jnski.org](http://www.jnski.org)) to support their continuing efforts.

Another thanks is due to the City and Borough of Juneau for providing this outstanding recreation opportunity. Montana Creek is one of my favorite places in Juneau. For skiing, fishing, sighting in my hunting rifle or even an easy dog walk. Juneauites, don't despair yet, we can still enjoy skiing and a white Christmas out at Montana Creek!

**Jeffrey Wilson,**

**Juneau--**

Daniel F. Kirkwood  
[dfkirkwood@gmail.com](mailto:dfkirkwood@gmail.com)

July 27, 2020

CBJ Parks and Recreation Committee

Dear Committee Members:

I support keeping the Montana Creek road past the rifle range closed to ATV's and unauthorized snowmobiles during the winter.

The Juneau Nordic Ski Club has invested countless volunteer hours and thousands of dollars to create and maintain excellent cross country ski trails at Montana Creek. The trails serve as a major source of recreation for all Juneau cross country skiers as the area often has the best snow conditions in all of Juneau.

All it takes is an intrusion by one ATV to destroy the ski tracks used by hundreds of skiers. Each intrusion can cause many hours of extra work by volunteer groomers to repair the damage to the ski trails.

ATV and unauthorized snowmobile use of the Montana Creek Road past the rifle range should not be allowed during the ski season.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Doug Sanvik  
[dsanvik@gci.net](mailto:dsanvik@gci.net)  
PO Box 21774  
Juneau, AK 99802  
907-586-1421

**From:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Montana Creek Trail  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 3:22:01 PM

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**From:** Hank Lentfer <hlentfer@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 27, 2020 2:26 PM  
**To:** Parks Rec <Parks.Rec@juneau.org>  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Trail

**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Hello,

I moved from Gustavus to Juneau three years ago so my daughter could attend a larger high school. The Juneau trail system, and Montana Creek in particular, has been essential to my family's positive and healthy experience of Juneau living.

My daughter joined the Nordic Ski Team as a freshman. That wholesome outdoor activity has been central to her well-being. The friendships and healthy habits formed while playing (and skiing) on the groomed trails will be with her for the rest of her life. My daughter's enjoyment of nordic skiing motivated my wife and I to take up the sport. We're addicted to skiing and healthier for it. We are on skis at least six days a week in winter. Montana Creek is our go-to trail. It's easy to get to, wonderfully groomed and makes for the perfect lunch-hour workout.

Everytime I ski, I pass other skiers, all with smiles on their faces. I cannot say enough about how Juneau's Nordic community and trails have shaped my family's experience of Juneau living.

My daughter graduates next year. After she leaves home, my wife and I are seriously considering staying in Juneau through the winter months as we cannot imagine being away from Juneau's groomed ski trails.

Others can speak more eloquently about Montana Creek's unique micro-climate. All I know is that it's the first trail that opens and the last to close and that not being able to ski there would be a huge loss for the community.

I urge you to preserve the opportunity for Juneau people to ski at Montana Creek. The benefits to the town's overall mental health are immeasurable.

Thank you,

Hank Lentfer  
Juneau and Gustavus

**From:** [Hannah Wilson](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#); [Parks Rec](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek motorized access  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 1:44:59 PM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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Dear Parks and Rec Committee,

I'm writing to strongly urge you to put in place a pedestrian gate November 1-May 1 for access to Montana Creek past the rifle range. Each winter hundreds of Juneauites enjoy the groomed trail put in place by the Juneau Nordic Ski Club at no cost to CBJ. When a single ATV or snow machine user has driven on the groomed path it has ruined it for all other uses. The positive community impact of a non-motorized, groomed trail massively out-weighs the benefits to a few motorized users. Montana Creek provides the only reliable sea-level nordic skiing in Juneau, while there are thousands of available acres for motorized users easily accessible from the Juneau road system.

Resources like a groomed Montana Creek trail are the reason I returned home to Juneau after graduate school. Please continue to support resources in our community that make it a world-class place to live and recreate. Please close Montana Creek to motorized access during ski season.

Sincerely,

Hannah Wilson

**From:** [Jeannie and Tim](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Juneau Nordic Ski Club](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** Close Montana Creek to motorized vehicles during the winter/ski season  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 3:23:17 PM

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## EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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Dear Parks and Recreation Committee (PRAC) Committee members

**Our family would like to express strong support for the proposal to limit motorized vehicle access to the Montana Creek road beyond the rifle range gate during the winter** (except for JNSC grooming equipment). We urge the Juneau Parks and Recreation Committee to consider this proposal and move it forward to ensure that hundreds of people can continue to access the trail safely and reliably on skis, snowshoes or on foot.

We use the trail at Montana Creek 3-4 times per week during the ski season. Due to the unique micro-climate of the area, it is sometimes the only place it is possible to Nordic ski in the Juneau area. Sometimes there is no snow downtown or even at Eaglecrest lower loop while the micro-climate at Montana Creeks still allows outstanding Nordic skiing. The Juneau Nordic Ski Club volunteer groomers make it possible for Nordic skiers of all abilities to enjoy the Montana Creek ski trail.

Unfortunately, one snow machine or ATV can ruin the skiing for a whole day for hundreds of skiers. We have gone to Montana Creek to spend a few hours skiing and found that one ATV/snow machine had driven up the trail destroying the trail for all other users. In just a few minutes the day is ruined for many people. The dangerous ruts and the hazard of motorized vehicles makes skiing difficult if not impossible and requires the volunteer groomers to spend hours re-grooming and repairing the trail. This trail needs to be a non-motorized trail during the winter.

We have served as volunteer coaches with the youth Nordic programs. The Montana Creek ski trail is a key spot for youth skiers to meet for practice to learn and improve their ski skills. We often have 20-30 youth who meet at Montana Creek at 4:30 pm on weekdays and on Saturday or Sunday. If they arrive and find the trail has been destroyed by a motorized vehicle it makes it difficult for training to occur.

The Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC) spends hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars grooming (156 days and over 835 hours last season) the road beyond the gate for non-motorized users. This work is supported by the membership and donations of hundreds of community members. JNSC has provided volunteer grooming on Montana Creek road for the past 15 years. JNSC volunteers helped to coordinate and provide labor to repair the bridge across Montana Creek in addition to annually keeping the road clear of brush, fallen trees, and landslides.

We strongly feel that motorized users are incompatible with skiers, snowshoers, and hikers on the narrow roadway with numerous blind curves. Motorized users have thousands of acres of terrain available on Douglas Island and Spaulding Meadows for winter riding. The narrow 2 mile road section that JNSC grooms has been closed to winter motorized users and should be specifically designated non-motorized during the winter ski/grooming season - November 1 - May 1. There is already a gate in place and it should be used as in the past to keep motorized vehicles out of the area.

Thank you for considering the proposal to keep Montana Creek trail available to all non-motorized users during the winter.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at 907-723-9826.

Thank you,

Jeannie Monk, Tim Blust and Aaron Blust

**From:** [Jo Boehme](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#); [Parks Rec](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Road/gate  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 5:39:39 PM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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Hi Lauren,

Thanks for your time this afternoon answering my questions and directing me to some CBJ Parks and Recreation department website resources I couldn't find directly.

You clarified that:

- Montana Creek Road is owned and maintained by CBJ past the rifle range including the gate and past the bridge; then it goes on to state land to the end of the road, and then the trail progresses on to USFS land;
- the only documentation of local trails allowing snow machine use is the Dan Moller trail (requires a minimum of 12" of snow); the "back way" to Spaulding Meadows from UAS housing area is an "informal" snow machine trail;
- as presently written, CBJ Parks and Recreation commercial use regulation allows for a commercial operator to apply for a permit to run tours on any CBJ trail including on Montana Creek Road/trail. In winter this could include snowshoe, ski or snow machine tours on Montana Creek Road past the gate. The Commercial Use Regulation is presently being updated and you suggest interested parties contact that project as well as the Parks and Rec Advisory Committee to share their input about potential Montana Creek Road/trail winter commercial use;
- at next week's Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) meeting, the department will introduce the topic of closing the gate 12 months a year. You're accepting preliminary public input now and there will be a formal public comment period of about a month duration before the PRAC defines its advisory position to the department. That public comment period will be widely advertised.

I hope I got all that right, I took lots of notes during our call.

My input for the 8/4/20 PRAC meeting:

1. I support closing the gate on Montana Creek Road just past the rifle range to all motorized traffic 12 months a year except for emergency vehicles and the cross country ski trail maintenance vehicles operated by the Juneau Nordic Ski Club.
2. I support the elimination of winter (November 1 - April 30) commercial use on Montana Creek Road/trail, both motorized and non-motorized commercial activities.

Thanks for your help today and the opportunity to give input.

Sincerely,  
Jo Boehme

[joboehme175@gmail.com](mailto:joboehme175@gmail.com)

Dear Parks and Recreation Committee,

July 25, 2020

The section of Montana Creek Road past the rifle range should be closed to all motorized vehicles during Nordic ski season (November 1 and May 1). Montana Creek Road is by far the best and most reliable Nordic ski venue in Juneau. Unlike the other groomed trail in Juneau, the Mendenhall Campground, the micro climate in the Montana Creek valley, allows for groomed Nordic skiing for up to nearly 6 months for some ski seasons and typically for 5 months. Eaglecrest ski area typically has a much shorter Nordic ski season and is not nearly as close to the majority of Nordic skiers as Montana Creek Road.

Nordic skiing has become very popular among all age groups in Juneau. The Nordic Ski Club alone has over 600 members. Montana Creek Road, which is often the only groomed Nordic trail that has enough snow to ski, is used by large numbers of skiers all season long. It is a tremendous asset for Juneau's winter outdoor recreation including the youth Nordic ski team.

As a volunteer groomer for the Nordic Ski Club, I spend approximately 75 hours grooming both the Mendenhall Campground and Montana Creek Road during a typical ski season. The trails are groomed for both classic and skate skiing. A classic track consists of a set of parallel grooves placed into the snow with a flat groomed area on both sides, a width of about 5 ft. which includes enough room for skier's poles. Skate skiing requires a smooth flat surface; the grooming machine churns up the snow and then compresses it and smooths it, leaving a level surface with a slight "corduroy" finish. About an 8-foot wide groomed swath makes a good skate ski track. Most classic skiers prefer skiing on a groomed track versus on ungroomed snow—skate skiing can only be done on a groomed trail. I have seen what happens when a motorized vehicle drives on one of these groomed trails--It's terribly heart breaking to see, knowing that several hours of grooming was destroyed and that it will take many hours and days to repair the damage.

In addition to damage to the groomed ski trails, skiing at the same time and place as active motorized vehicles would be extremely dangerous. Montana Creek Road winds uphill along Montana Creek. Skiing back to the trail head is downhill and skiers can attain fast speeds; meeting motorized vehicles on the trail could be deadly. Montana Creek Road is barely wide enough to groom for both classic and skate skiing. Skiing and motorized vehicles on the trail would be an accident waiting to happen—God forbid.

I would urge you to prohibit use of motorized vehicle on Montana Creek Road beyond the rifle range from Nov. 1 – May 1.

Thank you for reading by comments and considering my suggestion.

Sincerely,

John Thedinga

Jfthedinga52@gmail.com

**From:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Restrict Use of Montana Creek Road in Winter for Skiing Only  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 2:15:35 PM

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**From:** Julie Shelton <sheltonjulie@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 27, 2020 2:14 PM  
**To:** Parks Rec <Parks.Rec@juneau.org>  
**Subject:** Restrict Use of Montana Creek Road in Winter for Skiing Only

**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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To the Juneau Assembly:

Please protect the Montana Creek Road use for Cross Country Skiing and ban the use by snowmobiles and other motorized vehicles during the winter, except for ski grooming sleds.

This area allows people in Juneau access to cross country skiing that cannot afford the expense of Eaglecrest. The Mendenhall Campground becomes very crowded and discourages many of us elders from skiing at all.

As we look forward to possibly another winter of quarantine, please keep our outdoor activities as accessible to those of us that are feeling isolated and need more fresh air and exercise!

Thank you,

Julie Shelton  
PO Box 32004  
Juneau AK 99803

**From:** [Karen Wilson](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Road Access  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 3:00:57 PM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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To All Concerned:

Thank you for helping to make Juneau a shining star for outdoor recreation.

The Montana Creek road, with its winter Nordic ski grooming, is the one sea level ski trail I count on to hold snow and keep me on skis well into spring.

It isn't safe or feasible to share this groomed trail with motorized vehicles during snow season. Even in the summertime, damage is visible from off road vehicles.

I strongly urge you to close the road beyond the rifle range to motorized users other than approved ski trail grooming in the wintertime. My preference is to keep this area motor free year round.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen Wilson  
Juneau

**From:** [Kate Slotnick](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**Cc:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek trail  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 6:01:22 AM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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I strongly support the closure of Montana Creek trail to motorized vehicles during the winter months. This trail is heavily used by cross-country skiers 7 days a week from sun up to sundown. Montana Creek trail seems to have its own weather system that keeps skiable snow when other local trails have been rained out. The tracks of one atv or snow machine destroy the trail for use by hundreds of skiers. Please close this trail to motorized vehicles.

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Laura Hosey](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek road proposal  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 3:52:38 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Dear Parks & Rec Committee,

I am writing to you about the proposed change in motorized use of the Montana Creek road. I am a lifelong Juneau resident and an avid cross-country skier. I have a large family that also enjoys snow machines and ATVs. I strongly urge you to permanently close the Montana Creek Road (beyond the rifle range) to motorized users during snow/ski season from November 1 to May 1.

There are many other places in Juneau where people can safely use snow machines and ATVs without being in conflict with people walking and on skis. I am a member of the Juneau Nordic Ski Club, which spends countless hours grooming a safe accessible ski trail for many many people in Juneau. Snow machines and ATVs would destroy the grooming instantly and leave it unusable and unsafe for skiers. The trail is very windy and is not, in my opinion, suitable for shared use.

Walkers/hikers frequent the trail and recreate harmoniously with skiers. Many youth, including organized ski teams, use the trail to train. Cross-country skiing and backcountry walking are safe, low-cost activities that can be enjoyed by anyone in town - whereas mixing the area with motorized use would endanger people and limit the use.

Please consider my remarks. Thank you very much for your time and service.

Best regards,

Laura Hosey  
817 Basin Road  
Juneau, AK 99801

**From:** [Linda Torgerson](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**Cc:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** No motorized vehicles at Montana Creek during ski season  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 9:52:18 PM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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I am a 71 year old woman who has been cross country skiing in Juneau for 40 years. Many winters I haven't had the tires required to drive to Eaglecrest, so Montana Creek is my destination, and I often ski four or five times a week, now that I am partially retired from teaching school. I've been skiing along Montana Creek when motorized vehicles drive along the carefully groomed trails and it is very disheartening and destructive. I hope you will do all you can to prevent that from happening. It is the place where Juneau skiers can go where there is reliably snow at sea level and a creek to ski along. Please keep it pristine, quiet and off limits to vehicles.

Thank you,  
Linda J. Torgerson  
1644 Glacier Ave.  
Juneau, AK 99801

To: Members Parks and Recreation Committee

From: Wayne Carnes  
8170 N. Douglas Hwy  
Juneau, AK

I'm writing as a heavy winter user of Montana Cr. road. I'm a Nordic skier and I'm requesting that Montana Cr. road past the gate at the rifle range, continue to be closed to winter motorized users.

The seasonal winter closure allows the volunteer JNSC to groom the narrow 2 mile road for all members of the public to use for Nordic skiing, snow shoeing, and walking. Due to climatic conditions this is the only reliable area at sea level to hold snow and allow grooming to occur. Because of this, the groomed trail is heavily used by the citizens of Juneau.

Unfortunately, just a single motorized user can (and does) destroy the trail in just a few minutes. This creates hazardous ruts that are dangerous to skiers and takes the volunteer groomers hours to remove. This past season this occurred several times. The primary reason is the pedestrian "kissing gate" was removed creating an opening that snowmachines, ATVs, and motorcycles could easily drive through.

The solution is simple - continue the existing winter policy of closing the gate at the rifle range and not allowing motorized users except the JNSC grooming equipment. Additionally and importantly, permanently install the kissing gate so only pedestrians have winter access. One other item is the winter closure dates need to be specified - Nov 1 to May 1 - and posted on the gate.

Thank you for your time.

**From:** [flyfish@ak.net](mailto:flyfish@ak.net)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Winter use of Montana Creek road/trail  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 10:20:13 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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As a member of Juneau Nordic Ski club I ask that Montana Creek road and trail be permanently closed to motorized traffic during the winter months.

Over the past years the JNS club has enhanced and maintained this unique winter ski trail. Like many JNS club members I have volunteered on maintaining the trail, moving debris from mudslide areas and most importantly enjoying the well groomed trail.

Montana Creek is a unique winter watershed as it stays cold and the snow conditions are usually the best in town. It would be a loss to the growing Juneau nordic ski community to not have single use access of Montana Creek. Skiiers and snowmobilers are not compatible. It is dangerous for both parties, noisy, smelly and the groomed trails would be ruined by snowmobile tracks.

Please keep motorized vehicles out of Montana Creek area.

Thank you,  
Michelle Kaelke

**From:** [Neil Slotnick](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#); [patks.rec@juneau.org](mailto:patks.rec@juneau.org); [info@hnski.org](mailto:info@hnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Trail  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 6:04:11 AM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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Hello.

As you know, having a groomed ski trail on Montana Creek all winter has made a huge impact for hundreds of Juneau residents. Not just skiers and not just Juneau Nordic Ski Club members. Walkers, snow showers, and skiers all benefit. Truly the grooming of the trail is one of the best recreational success stories in Juneau given how many people it serves. And the number is growing.

Please do not let one or two individuals ruin this for so many. Please close this trail in winter to motorized traffic other than the groomer.

I use this trail five times a week in winter. I always see many others. The three kilometers for us is huge. For a motorized vehicle it's nothing. Common sense tells us that we should protect this trail for the many.

Thank you,

Neil Slotnick

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Patricia Young](#)  
**To:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org); [Lauren Verrelli](#); [Parks Rec](#)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Road  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 7:09:18 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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The Montana Creek Road is among the very few places readily accessible for quiet outdoor skiing, hiking, and snowshoeing for both older and younger outdoor enthusiasts during the winter months. Folks with motorized vehicles have nearly unlimited access to huge tracts of land. They do not belong on the Montana Creek road in competition with folks on foot, snowshoe, and skis. In addition to endangering the non-motorized users, snow machines on that road would destroy the quiet, destroy the hard work of the groomers, and obliterate the peace.

Please continue to designate Montana Creek Road for NON-motorized use during the winter months.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Patricia Young

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Artist in Residence

**From:** [Robert Millard](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#); [Parks Rec](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Apposed to motorized vehicles during winter on the traditional ski Trail located on Montana Creek Road  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 10:08:38 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Good morning, As a lifelong member of Juneau and skier I feel that mixing motorized vehicles and trail skiers is not viable. Countless hours go into grooming and maintaining classic and skate tracks on Montana Creek Road. The Montana Creek trail has a micro climate that allows skiing longer than other trails at sea level mostly due to lack of sun and cooler temperatures. It's the trail we can always count on in years of minimal snow. Not all, but some ATV riders are not environmentally friendly. I have seen remnants of pallet parties with litter and burnt garbage on the bridge turnaround in the past. Maybe an organized rider group can do better, I certainly hope so but at this time count me as a negative vote to mixed trail use in the winter. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Robert Millard

**From:** [Butch Laughlin](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Proposed closure of Montana Creek Rd above rifle range to motorized users Nov. 1 - May 1  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 4:05:51 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Dear PRAC,

We are Juneau cross country skiers who are writing to express our strong support for the proposal to close the Montana Creek Road above the rifle range to motorized users from Nov. 1 through May 1. Because of its unique topography which pools cold temperatures this area maintains its snow coverage exceptionally well. Because of this it reliably offers skiers and snowshoers a precious and unusual opportunity to easily access good skiing and trekking terrain close to sea level, even when the snow at nearby Mendenhall Lake and campground has turned into mush. However, this occurs along a narrow, winding roadbed which is completely unsuitable to simultaneously accommodating motorized traffic in the form of snowmobiles, ATVs, cars or trucks. Allowing winter access to this area for motorized traffic would not only create safety hazards, it would inevitably destroy the ski tracks for cross country users. Even the passage of just one single motorized vehicle along here would undo countless hours of work done every winter by the Nordic Ski Club and many volunteers to maintain this well used a beloved cross country ski track. Snow mobiles and ATV's have an extensive amount of space nearby in Spaulding Meadows to enjoy their chosen form of recreation. But for the sake of Juneau's large community of cross country ski enthusiasts we urge you to please support the closure of this part of Montana Creek Road to motorized traffic from Nov 1 to May 1.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Dunlap  
Butch Laughlin

**From:** [Merry Ellefson / Wayne Carnes](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Closing Montana Creek to motorized use  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 28, 2020 10:25:33 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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PRAC Committee,

I support the efforts to keep Montana Creek closed to motorized vehicles Nov 1- May 1.

I'm in college now, but I skied for the Juneau Nordic Ski Team, and a lot of our team training was in this area because of the higher snow amounts during many of our recent winters. I also trained here as an Arctic Winter Games snowshoer. It's an essential area for the youth teams to train and race.

It's just not safe or smart to mix skiers/snowshoers/walkers with motorized users, esp on narrow stretches of windy road.

Sincerely,

Arne Ellefson-Carnes  
8170 N. Douglas Hwy

**From:** [zeke.yankee@gmail.com](mailto:zeke.yankee@gmail.com)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org); [zeke.yankee@gmail.com](mailto:zeke.yankee@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** Montana creek playground  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 28, 2020 4:16:30 PM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

My name is Cheryl'Zeke' Yankee, a 48 year resident of Juneau. I am writing on behalf of myself, and hundreds/thousands of Folks who have been able to enjoy Montana creek for outdoor fun. Allowing motorized vehicles on this stretch of serenity would put an end to what winter wonderland enjoyment we've been able to enjoy for many years thanks to the efforts and volunteer hours from the Nordic Ski Club. When they started grooming this trail for cross country skiing, it allowed the cross country skiers many extra weeks and in some years MONTHS of enjoyment outdoors. There are SO many people that are able to take advantage of this opportunity and without it, the Nordic ski team would probably not be able to train much of the time. There have been many winters where Montana Creek has been the only game in town. While I would love to say, 'let's share!' I know that is impossible considering the tight space. There is already access to Spaulding meadows that has been put in by, and designated for, the snow machine club. Opening Montana creek to motorized vehicles should continue to be prohibited no matter which season we're in. My family has owned and still owns snow machines, a 4 wheeler, and a 6 wheeler, so I'm not opposed to combustion engines, only up at Montana Creek!

The endless hours that volunteers put in grooming and working on not only Montana creek, but the Mendenhall Campgrounds as well is very much noticed and appreciated by the many people using them. I would say to anyone thinking motorized vehicles would get as much use, 'go out to Mendenhall lake/campgrounds area as WELL as Montana Creek on a sunny day, and you won't find a place to park anywhere'. Opening this area up to motorized vehicles would be a great loss felt by a majority in our community. It is probably one of the most inexpensive forms of recreation we have, thanks to the volunteers who make it happen for the entire community. I would hope you will take into consideration all of the families able to enjoy outdoor fun because of this.

zeke Yankee

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [CindaFred.Stanek@hiltner.com](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [George.Schaaf](#); [Lauren.Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Seasonal Closure To Motorized Vehicles  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 28, 2020 10:48:22 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Dear Members of the PRAC Committee,

I am writing to request that CBJ/Parks and Recreation closes the two-mile Montana Creek trail (directly past the Hank Harmon Rifle Range) to motorized vehicles from November 1 to May 1 annually. In addition, I request that CBJ install a "kissing gate" to insure motorized vehicle users adhere to the seasonal closure.

Through incredible volunteer efforts and a very large and enthusiastic nordic ski community, Montana Creek has become one of the most popular places to nordic ski in Juneau. Last year alone, Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC) volunteers spent 835+ hours over 156 days grooming Montana Creek, beyond the gate, for both classic and skate skiers. JNSC volunteers have groomed Montana Creek for the past 15 years, providing an outstanding place for both recreational and competitive skiers. JNSC currently has over 600 members, many who use the groomed trail at Montana Creek during the winter. We also know many more people ski the trail who are not a part of our membership. In addition, youth ski groups and teams spend many days each winter training on the Montana Creek trail, including the Juneau Nordic Ski Team racers. JNSC member volunteers have also spent many days repairing the bridge across Montana Creek and keeping the road/trail clear of fallen trees, landslides, and brush.

As we have unfortunately and repeatedly learned, a single motorized vehicle on the groomed trail instantly destroys the grooming for skiers, resulting in volunteer groomers needing to spend hours repairing the trail. The bottom line: Motorized vehicles are incompatible with the skiing that happens everyday during snow months on the Montana Creek trail.

Given all of the above, I request that the two-mile Montana Creek trail, directly past the rifle range, be closed to motorized vehicles from November 1 to May 1 each year and that a "kissing gate" be installed so motorized vehicle users comply with the seasonal closure.

Thank you for your time,  
Cinda Stanek  
PO Box 21994  
9601 North Douglas Highway  
Juneau, AK 99802

**From:** [Cristina Della Rosa](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#); [Parks Rec](#); [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Please Keep Snowmobiles off Montana Creek trail  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 28, 2020 10:47:52 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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I am writing to support keeping the Montana Creek Trail accessible only to NON motorized use.

This trail is heavily used by cross country skiers of all ages and ability including racers.. It is mostly flat which makes it great for beginners. Skiers come from all over Juneau, not just the valley, and often combine skiing this trail with skiing the Mendenhall Glacier Campground.

The Montana Creek road is 2 miles which makes it too short for a long ride by snowmobiles but a perfect length for a ski of about an hour..

Due to rising average winter temperatures, Mendenhall Lake is often not safe for winter cross country skiing which makes keeping this trail just for skiers. particularly important.

I am a member of Juneau Nordic Ski Club who volunteers groomed this trail for 186 days last winter at no cost to the city. . The trail is not wide enough to accommodate both snowmobiles and skiers. People who enjoy hiking or snowmobiling can enjoy the trail without destroying the groomed tracks. Snowmobiles destroy the groomed tracks.

One reason for the Montana Creek Trail's popularity is that it stays skiable for a long time due to not getting too much sun. Dog owners can bring their dogs who run next to (not in) the ski tracks. If a dog goes into a ski track, the next skier will repair the damage, but a skier can't undo damage to groomed tracks by snowmobiles.. It is impractical to expect volunteers to constantly have to regroom every time a snow machine uses the trail.

I have skied this trail for 20 years and always find it scenic. Sincerely  
Cristina Della Rosa

**From:** [Douglas Sturm](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#); [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org); [Parks Rec](#)  
**Subject:** Juneau Nordic Ski Club and Montana Creek  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 28, 2020 5:00:25 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Greetings,

I would like to voice my support to keep Montana Creek Road closed to snow mobiles and ATV's during the winter months for the cross country ski season.

I have been a volunteer groomer for the Juneau Nordic Ski Club for about 7 years. I started at the campground then asked if I could switch to Montana Creek Road after about two years grooming the campground. My reasoning for wanting to switch is that the snow stays on Montana Creek road much longer allowing me to groom for longer into the spring. I love grooming and skiing on the trails that are maintained by the Juneau Nordic Ski Club. I am on the schedule to groom once a week and many times will fill in for groomers that may have to miss a day. I also have assisted in grooming the lake when safe to do so and sometimes the campground. Sometimes we will groom in addition to our regulars times to accommodate a ski race or a class. It is a fun volunteer job. Everyone I encounter is very happy and thankful of the efforts by all of the volunteers.

I have also assisted in clearing brush, fallen trees and little mudslides.

I have had to repair the trail after a snowmachine has went around the gate and tore up the existing snow for skiing, it takes much effort and will eventually ruin the base and not be skiable.

Montana Creek being available for skiers is an asset to the community of Juneau. If Montana Creek Road is open to snow mobiles and ATV's during the winter months it will eliminate that asset.

Thank you for listening,

Doug Sturm  
907-723-2656

a

**From:** [juliebednarski@yahoo.com](mailto:juliebednarski@yahoo.com)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](mailto:Lauren.Verrelli)  
**Subject:** Fw: Montana Creek winter use  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 28, 2020 1:16:18 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

----- Forwarded Message -----

**From:** "juliebednarski@yahoo.com" <juliebednarski@yahoo.com>

**To:** "parks.rec@juneau.org" <parks.rec@juneau.org>

**Sent:** Tue, Jul 28, 2020 at 1:14 PM

**Subject:** Montana Creek winter use

Please limit the winter months for ski grooming. I spend countless hours skiing with small children there. It's a special place because of the micro climate. It's often the only skiable trail for skate skiing. The cold riverine keeps the snow. I often ski from November to end of April. Even in years where there is little snow and eaglecrest can't open I am able to ski Montana Creek. It's it's a very small amount of road and if a few motorized vehicles are able to access it then it will be at the expense of hundreds of skiers.

Please keep it skiable,

Thanks Julie Bednarski

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

**From:** [lgregovich@alaska.net](mailto:lgregovich@alaska.net)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Cr. Road Proposal  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 28, 2020 7:53:58 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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July 28, 2020

I am writing in regards to the CBJ Parks & Recreation consideration of a proposal to permanently close Montana Cr. beyond the rifle range to motorized users.

I am an avid nordic skier who averages 30 - 40 days skate skiing per year. Skate skiing requires a relatively wide, smooth and packed snow surface. It is an excellent and healthy way to enjoy the outdoors during the winter months in Juneau.

I am also a Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC) member and support them with funding above and beyond the basic membership level to ensure that equipment is obtained, operated and maintained to the benefit of Juneau's nordic skiing community at no cost to the CBJ. The groomed roadbed is also used by hikers, snowshoers, and dog walkers.

The Montana Creek Road is ideally located to receive and hold its snowpack exceptionally well. This past year, I put in over a dozen days on this track alone - with my last day being May 1.

I urge the CBJ to continue allowing a winter gate to control access and limit motorized equipment to that used by the JNSC to perform trail grooming.

It seems like every year, vandals on ATVs work their way around the gate and wreak havoc on the groomed trail that JNSC works so hard and diligently to maintain. This is why limited access needs to be controlled.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments

Lars Gregovich  
17740 Point Lena Loop Rd.

**From:** [Mary Hakala](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Motorized vehicle use during winter months  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 28, 2020 8:22:30 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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To Members of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee,.

We are writing to urge the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee to ban motorized vehicle usage on Montana Creek Road (beyond the Rifle Range), with the exception of nordic grooming equipment, during winter months.

Each winter, for the last 15 years, hundreds of cross country skiers have had the chance to ski in one of Juneau's unique micro-climates. There is more reliable snow on the Montana Creek Road than anywhere else nordic skiers can access on the road system. Eagle Crest may be washed out, along with Mendenhall Campground trails, Eagle Beach, and others. Yet, Montana Creek typically outlasts them all.

Motorized users, other than trail groomers, are not compatible with nordic trails. It would take but one ATV or snow machine to destroy the trails that volunteers so carefully groom and tend.

ATV and snow machine users have other options.

There is a team of dedicated volunteers who have donated hundreds - perhaps thousands - of hours to groom Juneau's nordic trails. Let's celebrate and thank them for their contribution to Juneau, especially in these challenging times, when nordic skiing will be an ever more important, healthy physically distanced activity for Juneau residents.

Thank you for your consideration.

Mary Hakala & Peter Ord

**From:** [Merry Ellefson / Wayne Carnes](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** Please prohibit motorized use on Montana Creek Rd  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 28, 2020 7:23:57 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Dear PRAC Board,

I'm writing to support the efforts to close Montana Creek to motorized vehicles Nov 1- May 1.

I'm writing on behalf of myself- I'm an avid skier and snowshoer- and the many many middle and high school student-athletes I coach in nordic skiing and snowshoeing each winter/spring.

I was one of the volunteers who restarted the Juneau Nordic Ski Team over a decade ago, and Montana Creek, with its own micro climate, gives us the opportunity to train safely in the Valley as we work to build connected competitors and promote healthy outdoor activities.

I've been an Arctic Winter Games snowshoe coach since 2004 and since that time we've developed the only ongoing snowshoeing club for teens in the state! and secure the majority of the snowshoe slots each year.

For both sports, we train from 4pm-6pm here (and EC and campground) during the week from Nov-April, and with head lamps until spring arrives.

All this to say one non-motorized vehicle can damage the trail, making it unsafe for everyone. Further, non-motorized vehicles are not compatible with human-powered sports. It is an unsafe mix.

It's in the best interest for the health of our youth and larger community to keep this relatively short and special section of Juneau non-motorized.

Thanks for your time and please hesitate to call me with any questions.

Merry C Ellefson  
8170 North Douglas  
907 500 8112

**From:** [Naomi Staley](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Winter Use  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 28, 2020 12:40:29 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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To whom it may concern,

I would like to voice my support for keeping the Montana Creek road past the rifle range free from motorized vehicle use in the winter. As a cross country skier, I ski in that area on a weekly basis in the winter. It is one of the few trails in Juneau groomed for cross country ski use due to its groomability and location. It is skiable for longer than any of the other trails since it is in the woods and colder there than other parts of town. In the milder winters the past few years it was the only skiable place for cross country use at times.

Having snowmachine and other motorized vehicle tracks along it would make it unskiable. Juneau Nordic Ski Club volunteers have groomed that area for the past 15 years. It is used by community members and the youth cross country ski team as a place to improve technique, learn to ski, or just go out for a ski alone or with friends.

Please take all of this into consideration when deciding if the Montana Creek road past the rifle range should be closed to motorized use or not.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Naomi

**From:** [Rachel Barth](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 28, 2020 9:30:18 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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I am writing this in regards to this subject of allowing ATV/motorized vehicles on our beloved treasure Montana Creek during the winter months. Montana Creek is a treasure for so many people in this community who flock here to xc/classic ski. People of all ages. I have personally seen the numbers rise every year, with more people finding outdoor winter recreation such a vital part of our lives. It brings health and happiness to those that know how to utilize this important place in Juneau. I spend a majority of my winter skiing this trail that has been meticulously groomed by our awesome volunteers who have donated thousands of hours to make it so.

PLEASE DO NOT allow motorized vehicles on this trail. There are plenty of other places for them. This would be one of the biggest mistakes that could happen to us!

Respectfully,  
Rachel Barth

**From:** [sharon.denton](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** using Montana Creek for ATV's  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 28, 2020 7:04:55 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Dear Lauren,

I'm one of the many Juneau skiers who use Montana Creek for winter skiing. My husband and I live on Montana Creek Rd. and specifically purchased our property in 1976 so we could run our dogs and ski. At the time there weren't any subdivisions except one house catty corner from our house, one shack a mile down the road, and Moraine Way across the street with some houses.

We enjoyed wonderful access to the campground, Montana Creek, and the Dredge Lake area for years. The cross country skiers didn't always like our dog teams, but we existed together. There was a Juneau Dog Musers Association for about ten years, and we're all still friends. Now instead of mushing, we cross country and downhill ski.

No longer can we mush or ski from our house as in the 70's and 80's, but we use Montana Creek all winter as a place to ski. It lasts the longest into the spring as a delightful place to ski. The Nordic Club works tirelessly and without pay to keep the trail open.

There is no way ATV's are compatible with that trail. It is hardly big enough for classic and skate skiing. Even the dog mushing was better than the ATV machines. They rip up the course making skiing impossible. Because it's used more than most trails for skiing, it should not be used with the machines. They need to find another place that skiers don't use. I know they already use the Spaulding Trail and meadows, Dan Moeller, and Mt. Troy.

Please don't take our favorite ski trail.

Sincerely,  
Sharon Denton  
5100 Montana Creek Rd.

Shawn Eisele

606 6<sup>th</sup> St.  
Juneau, AK 99801  
(907) 723-9066  
shawneisele@gmail.com

July 27, 2020

City and Borough of Juneau  
Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee  
parks.rec@juneau.org

Dear Committee Members,

CBJ Parks and Rec has done an amazing job partnering with the Juneau Nordic Ski Club to make Montana Creek a seasonally-groomed cross country ski trail enjoyed by hundreds if not thousands of Juneau residents. *I can't think of a CBJ P&R partnership that has harnessed so many volunteer hours or generated so many recreational user hours as the partnership for ski trail grooming by the Juneau Nordic Ski Club.* Please maintain that progress by keeping the existing vehicle gates at Montana Creek closed for the duration of ski season.

Montana Creek is a well-used and beloved recreation opportunity. Hundreds if not thousands of Juneauites enjoy skiing that trail, and they do so regularly throughout the ski season. I often ski that trail daily and every single time see other skiers...even in the dead of night on a cold winter evening...even in a windy, rainy spring storm, Juneauites are always enjoying that trail. Further, dozens of volunteer hours go into grooming that trail each week. It takes many hours to groom, and often is groomed multiple times a day.

However, a single vehicle on the groomed ski path ruins the ski trail, sometimes irreparably. Vehicle tires create a rut for each wheel, sized about the inverse of a curb. It becomes impossible to ski the track. (Imagine trying to roller skate on a sidewalk that has two sets of curbs weaving along them.) I've seen it take many demoralizing days of hard work to groom away the tracks of a single vehicle. I've also seen tire tracks beyond repair in low snow conditions, effectively ending the ski season for hundreds of skiers. And let's be honest, it's pretty lame to drive a vehicle across a fairly flat and groomed ski trail. Not many folks truly want to do it, and it's not the kind of use Parks and Rec is into promoting.

While PRAC rightly might not value one recreational activity higher than others, it does need to balance users and the recreational opportunities created overall. Here, the use and enjoyment of hundreds of Juneauites skiing every day far outweighs the rare, though destructive, vehicle use.

I applaud Parks and Rec's work to make this trail a great recreational opportunity for our community, and it's a no-brainer to close the trail to the rare vehicle traffic that ruins that.

Sincerely,



Shawn Eisele

**From:** [Tina Pasteris](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Trail  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 28, 2020 2:52:53 PM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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Please keep Montana Creek road/trail closed to motorized traffic year round. The cold micro-climate of the area makes it a jewel of a place for non-motorized winter recreation. It's used by many people for skiing, snowshoeing, biking, and walking. These activities are not compatible with motorized traffic.

I have seen the effects of ATV's on the trail and the meadows above. These machines wreak devastating damage to the fragile muskeg and forest ecosystems. They have no business being up in Spaulding Meadows, another popular year round hiking destination.

Thank you for your consideration.

Tina Pasteris



July 29, 2020

Dear CBJ PRAC,

Trout Unlimited (TU) is a national non-profit organization with 300,000 members in 400 chapters. TU's mission is to conserve, protect and restore North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. The Tongass Chapter of TU has about 150 members including several businesses. Most of these members live in Juneau. For over 25 years, we have worked to protect, enhance, and restore trout, char, and salmon habitat in the City and Borough of Juneau and in other parts of Southeast Alaska.

Juneau is very lucky to have Montana Creek in our back yard. It's the best urban wild trout and salmon fishery in our town. We have partnered with CBJ in the past to get 500 ft buffers to development around parts of Montana Creek as part of the Comprehensive Plan. We also partnered with the USFWS to provide funding for habitat restoration - the removal of junk cars and a decrepit house. Attached is a report on Montana Creek that we completed in 2006 with help from CBJ and others.

The watershed up stream of the Rifle Range is a very special area and is home to wild coho salmon, dolly varden, cutthroat and steelhead trout. As one of the of the stewards of Montana Creek, we are very concerned about the impacts of off-road ATV use in the upper watershed. ATVs are getting access to this area through CBJ property. A survey of the area early this summer indicated that ATV's are causing substantial impacts to some of the small tributaries that are used as rearing areas for juvenile salmon and trout. ATVs are illegally going off-road and are crisscrossing these tributaries (Figures 1 and 2). The CBJ and the state of Alaska have ordinances and laws that are supposed to prevent this. For example, there is a sign that says "Do not drive motor vehicles and ATVs into the creek and adjacent side streams (AS 16.05.871, AS 16.10.010)" and another sign that says "No motorized vehicles off road (CBJ 67.01)", and "no trail building without a permit." We also recognize that enforcing these regulations is very difficult. Starting on page 29 of the 2014 Montana Creek Stewardship Plan is a good description of issues regarding ATV use in the watershed (also attached).

We are sympathetic with the desire for ATV users to have a place to ride. However, Montana Creek is not the right place for ATVs because of the habitat damage to the tributaries coupled with Montana Creek being our best urban fishery. ATVs are gaining access to this area through CBJ property. We would like to find a solution to this problem in cooperation with CBJ and other partners and agencies. TU can potentially provide funding if any road/trail structures and improvements are used to curtail ATV access to the upper watershed.

Sincerely,

Jon Heifetz  
President, Tongass Chapter TU  
[jonheifetz@yahoo.com](mailto:jonheifetz@yahoo.com)  
907-321-4447



**Figure 1 Example of illegal off-road use of ATVs in the Montana Creek watershed observed June 8, 2020.**



**Figure 2 Example of off-road ATV crossing a tributary to Montana Creek, June 8 2020.**



# MONTANA CREEK WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP PLAN

Our mission is to  
promote watershed  
integrity in the City  
and Borough of  
Juneau through  
education, research  
and communication  
while encouraging  
sustainable use and  
development.

# MONTANA CREEK WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP PLAN

## Drafted by:

Amy Sumner, Juneau Watershed Partnership

## Cover photo:

View of Montana Creek from footbridge. Photo by Mark Kaelke, Juneau Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

## Acknowledgements:

This Plan was produced with financial support from the U.S. Forest Service.

The Juneau Watershed Partnership (JWP) would like to extend its appreciation to those individuals who participated in the Montana Creek Task Force meetings, and to those individuals who participated in our public survey.

JWP would also like to extend a special “thank you” to those who took extra time to review and provide edits on the Draft Plan, and provide additional project support:

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Jackie Timothy, Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game

Johnny Zutz, Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game

Doug Sanvik, Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources

Teri Camery, City and Borough of Juneau

Mark Kaelke, Juneau Chapter of Trout Unlimited

Chris Zimmer, Juneau Chapter of Trout Unlimited

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## APPENDICES

Appendix A. Montana Creek Task Force Meeting Agendas, Minutes, and Sign-in Sheets

Appendix B. Montana Creek User Survey

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## Introduction

The Juneau Watershed Partnership (JWP) with support from the U.S. Forest Service facilitated the creation of this collaborative and stakeholder-based stewardship plan for the Montana Creek watershed. The overall goal of this Stewardship Plan is to conserve, protect, and enhance the water quality, fisheries and wildlife habitat, and recreational values found in the Montana Creek watershed.

The Montana Creek watershed is located in the Mendenhall Valley area of Juneau, Alaska. The Montana Creek watershed is notable for being a mostly pristine watershed, in spite of its proximity to an urban center. This is the defining characteristic that makes the Montana Creek watershed an important recreational area, as well as important fish and wildlife habitat.

Stewardship, or careful and responsible management, is necessary to protect these qualities. As part of this Stewardship Plan, the JWP convened Montana Creek Task Force meetings to identify potential threats to the Montana Creek watershed and potential management solutions to address those threats. The JWP also conducted a public survey to gain insight to the public's perspective on the Montana Creek watershed including its health, values and threats.

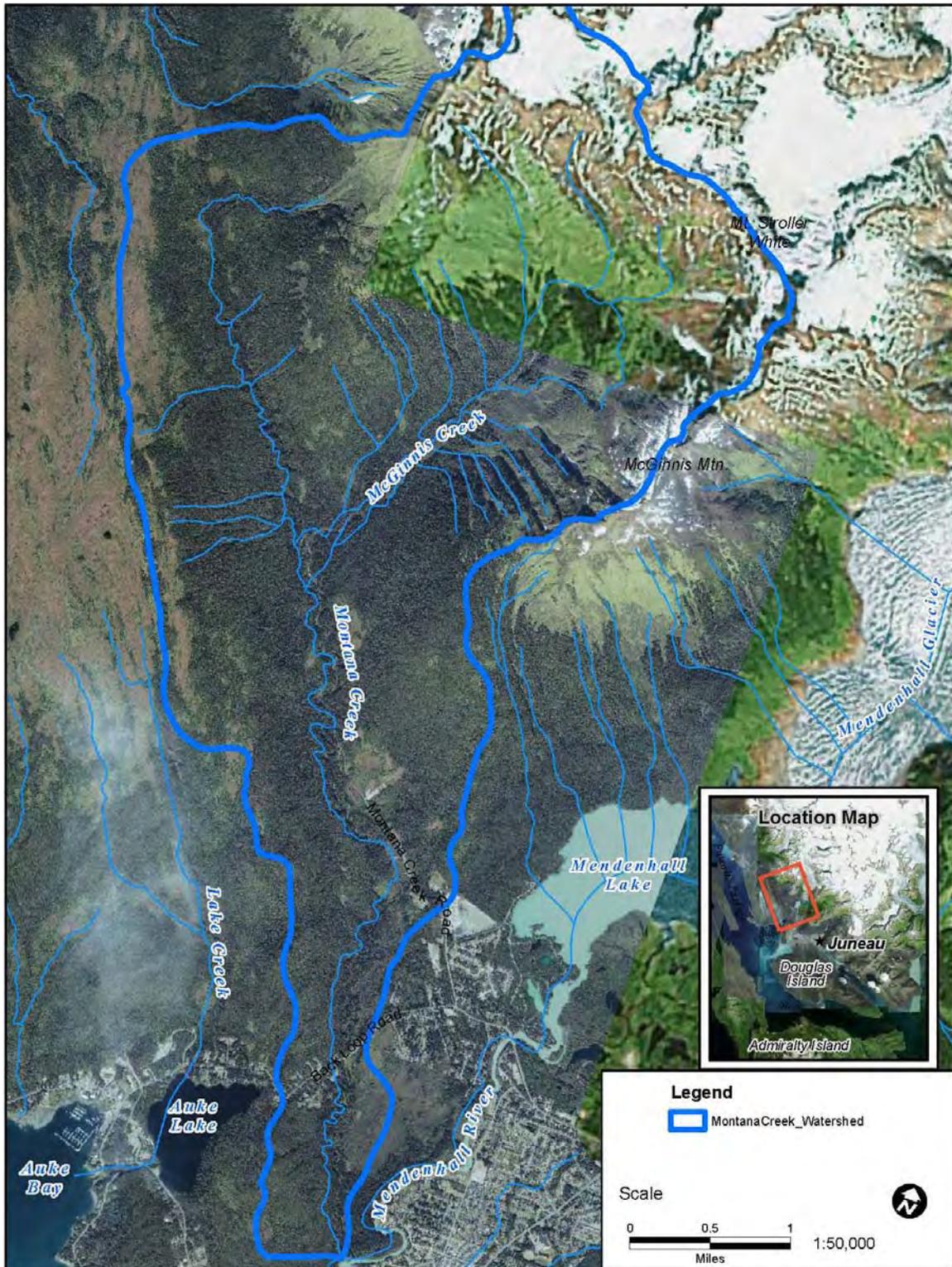


**Figure 1.** Montana Creek just below the confluence with McGinnis Creek. Photo courtesy of Erik Norberg, JWP Board Member

## Setting

Juneau is located on the Southeast panhandle of Alaska, approximately 900 air miles northwest of Seattle, Washington and 577 air miles southeast of Anchorage, Alaska. Juneau is the state capital, but is only the third largest city in the state with a population of approximately 33,000. The Montana Creek watershed is located in geographic area of Juneau known as the Mendenhall Valley. The Montana Creek watershed is approximately 9,722.2 acres that primarily consists of undeveloped alpine, forest, and wetland habitats as well as pockets of urban areas (Figure 2). The main tributary to Montana Creek, McGinnis Creek, originates from the meltwater of McGinnis and Stroller White Mountains, which border the Juneau Ice field. Montana Creek's headwaters come from a smaller, unnamed mountain to the west. The Montana Creek system discharges into the Mendenhall River, approximately one mile upstream from where Glacier Highway crosses the river.

As both Montana and McGinnis Creeks flow out of the mountains, much of the watershed is undeveloped Sitka spruce-Western hemlock forest characteristic of Southeast Alaska temperate



Service Layer Credits: Alaska Mapped Program; UAF-GINA; USFS Tongass National Forest; ADF&G Sport Fish Division; USGS National Hydrography Dataset; Southeast Alaska GIS Library; University of Alaska Southeast

**Figure 2.** Montana Creek watershed boundaries. The boundary shown is based on the 12-digit HUC boundary developed by the U.S. Geological Survey.

rainforest. Wetlands such as sedge meadows and muskeg also occur throughout the mid and lower sections of the watershed (Figures 3 and 6). The intact forest and wetland habitats in the Montana Creek watershed provide habitat for a variety of wildlife such as black and brown bear, Sitka black-tailed deer, wolves, porcupine, beaver, weasels, mink, otter, and a variety of raptors, waterfowl and song birds. The extent of suitable bear summer habitat and deer winter habitat in the Montana Creek Watershed are shown in Figures 7 and 8, respectively.



**Figure 3.** View of wetlands and Mt. McGinnis from Montana Creek Road. Photo courtesy of Amy Sumner, JWP.

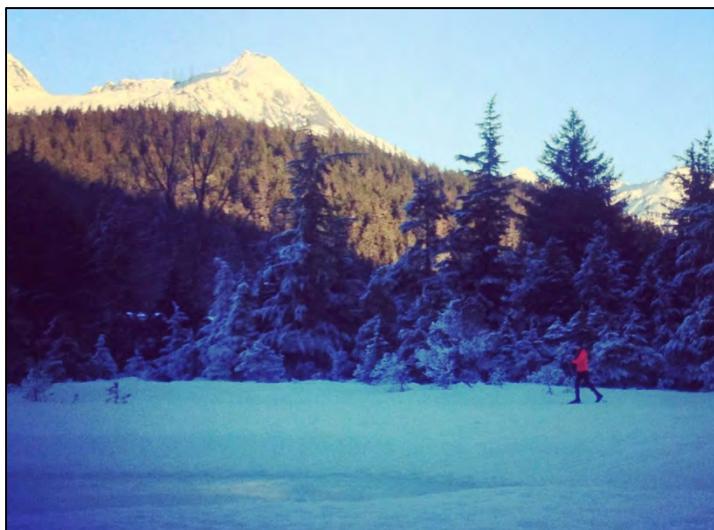
The Montana Creek watershed supports both anadromous and resident fish including chum salmon, coho salmon, chinook salmon, pink salmon, cutthroat trout, steelhead trout, and Dolly Varden. The extent of anadromous habitat, as mapped in the Anadromous Waters Catalog, is shown in Figure 9. Excellent spawning and rearing habitat for both anadromous and resident fish is present throughout the watershed (Bethers et al, 2012). Spawning and rearing habitat is shown in Figure 10.

The urban pockets occur along Back Loop (Mendenhall Loop) Road and Montana Creek Road in the mid to lower portion of the watershed. Urban development largely consists of residential areas, though light commercial development and recreation facilities also exist. Notable infrastructure and developments include the Montana Creek Trail, the Community Garden, the Hank Harmon Rifle Range, an archery range, an RV park, gravel mining, and construction equipment and material storage areas.

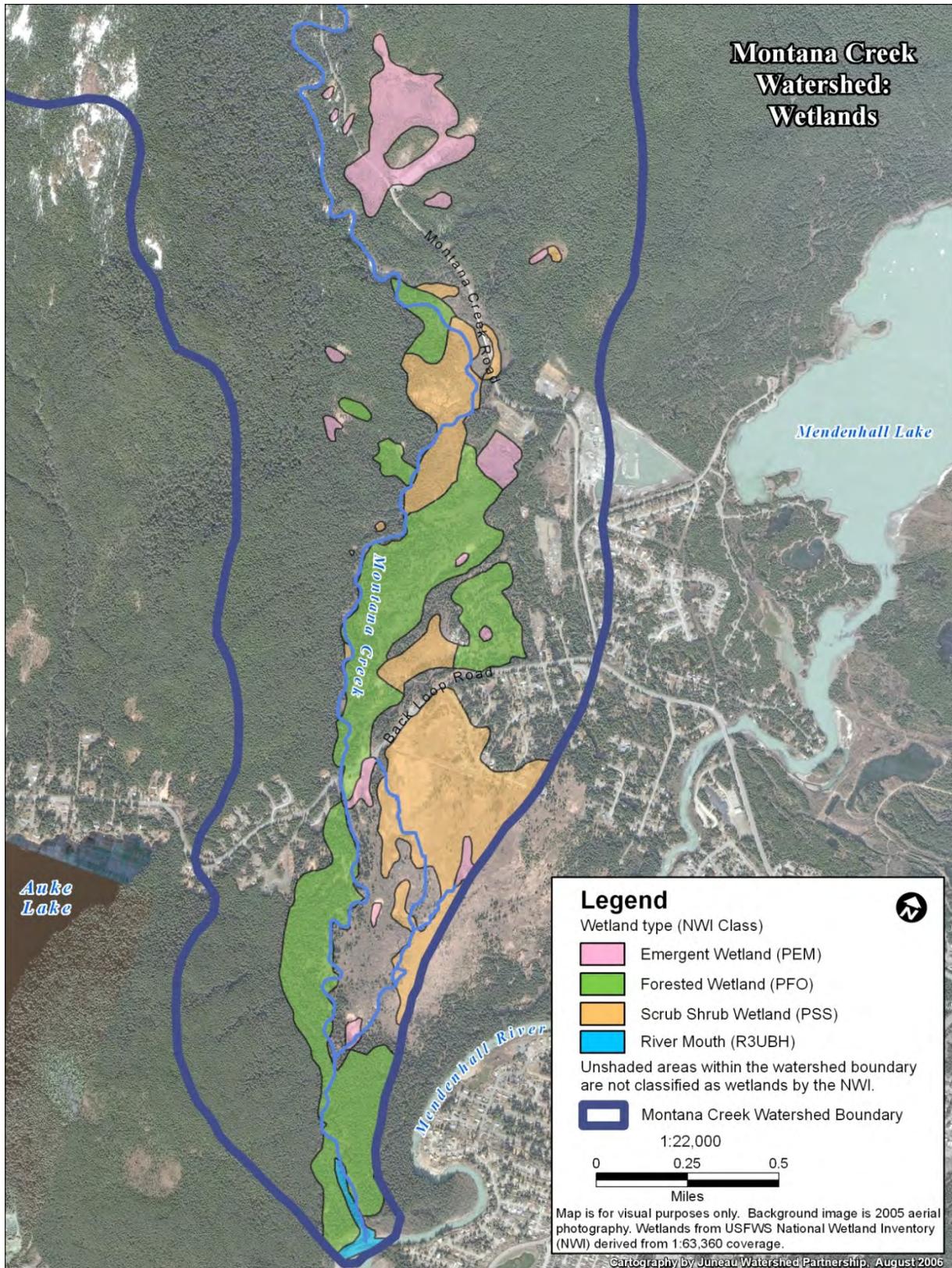


**Figure 4.** Hank Harmon Rifle Range. Photo courtesy of Amy Sumner, JWP.

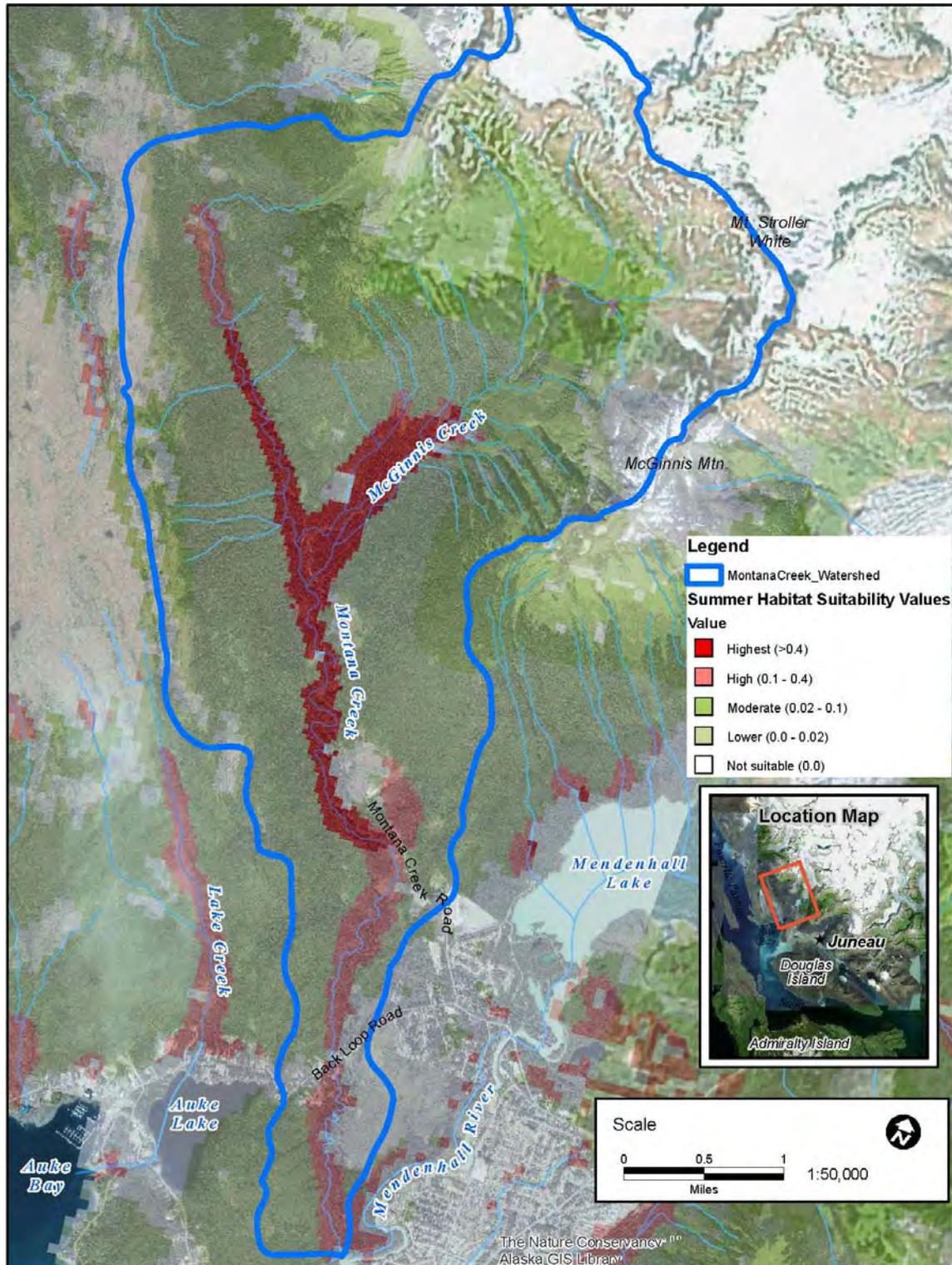
The Montana Creek watershed is known for its numerous recreational opportunities such as fishing, hunting, hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, recreational gold panning and mining. Due to its proximity to the population center of Mendenhall Valley and its plentiful wild stock of salmon and trout, Montana Creek is especially popular for freshwater sport fishing. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game Area Sport Fishing Reports for Juneau identify Montana Creek as a good fishing spot for coho salmon, Dolly Varden and cutthroat trout, and the best time for freshwater sport fishing is July through September.



**Figure 5.** Cross-country skiing in the upper Montana Creek watershed. Photo courtesy of Nina Horne, former JWP Executive Director.

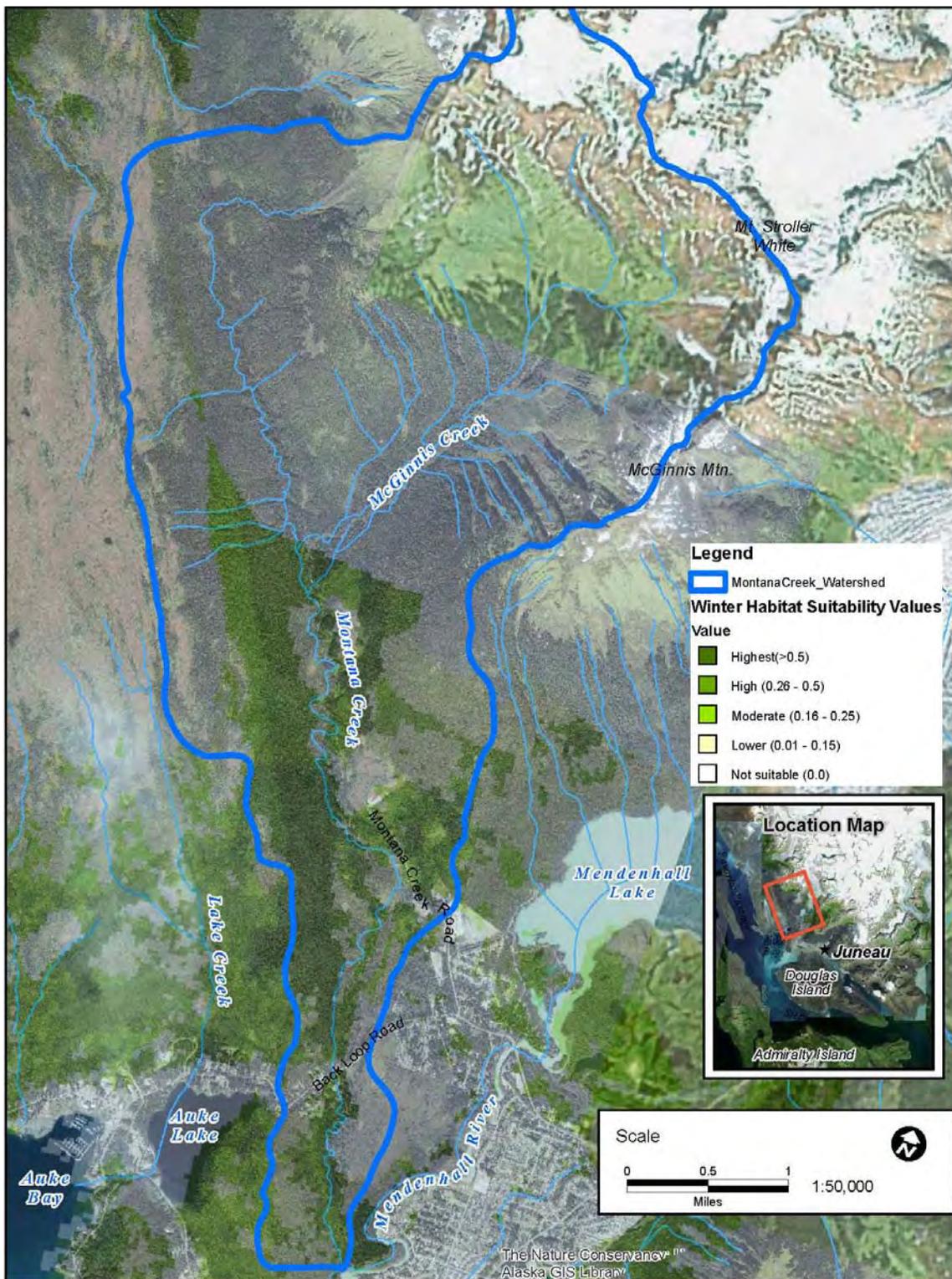


**Figure 6.** Wetlands in the lower Montana Creek watershed. Figure originally appeared in the *Lands Assessment and Recreation Corridor Conservation Proposal* (Trout Unlimited, 2006).



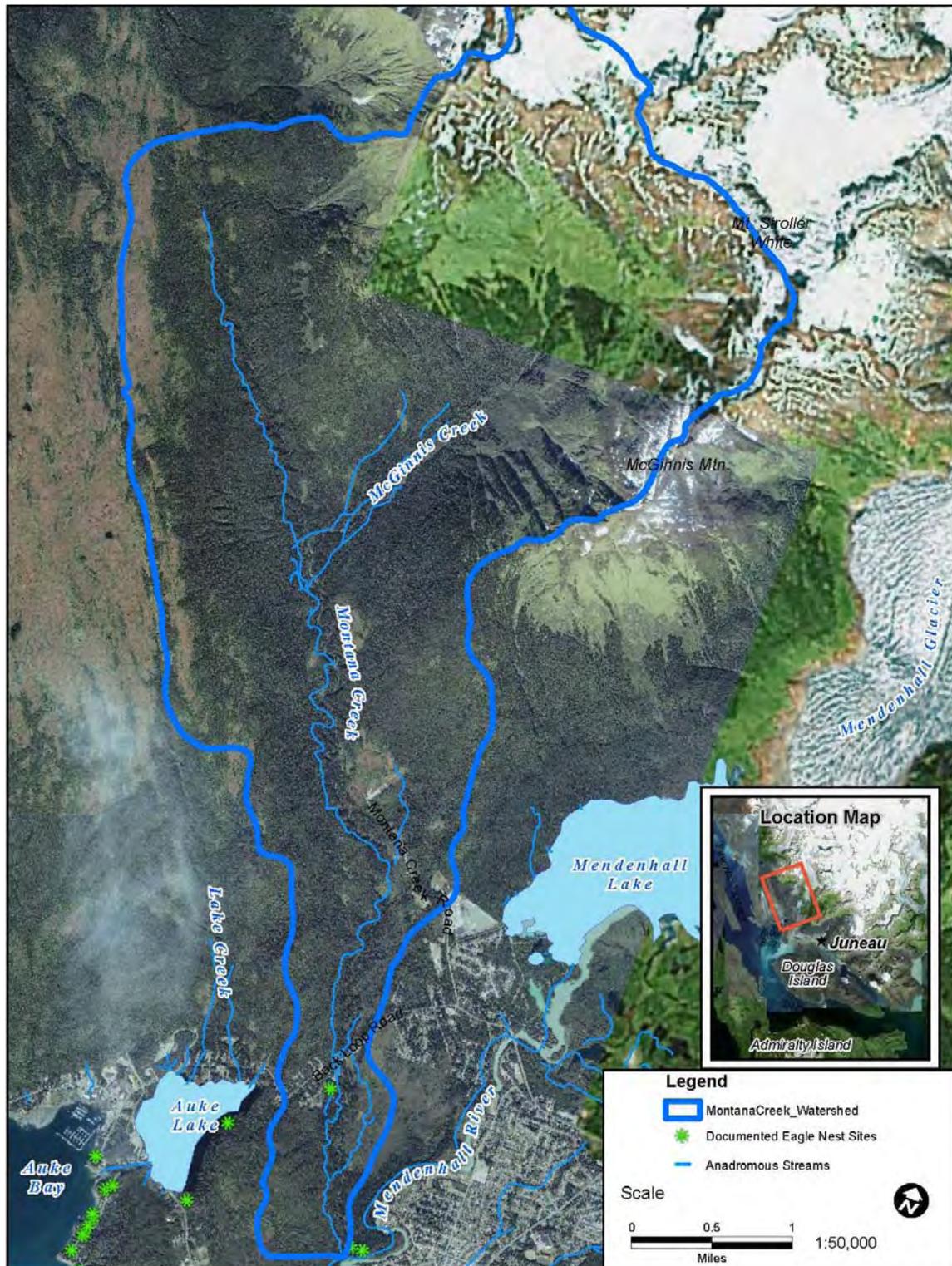
Service Layer Credits: Alaska Mapped Program; UAF-GINA; The Nature Conservancy; USFS Tongass National Forest; ADF&G Sport Fish Division; USGS National Hydrography Dataset; Southeast Alaska GIS Library; University of Alaska

**Figure 7.** Suitable bear summer habitat in the Montana Creek watershed. The best suited bear habitat is in the mid-section of the watershed along the stream corridor.



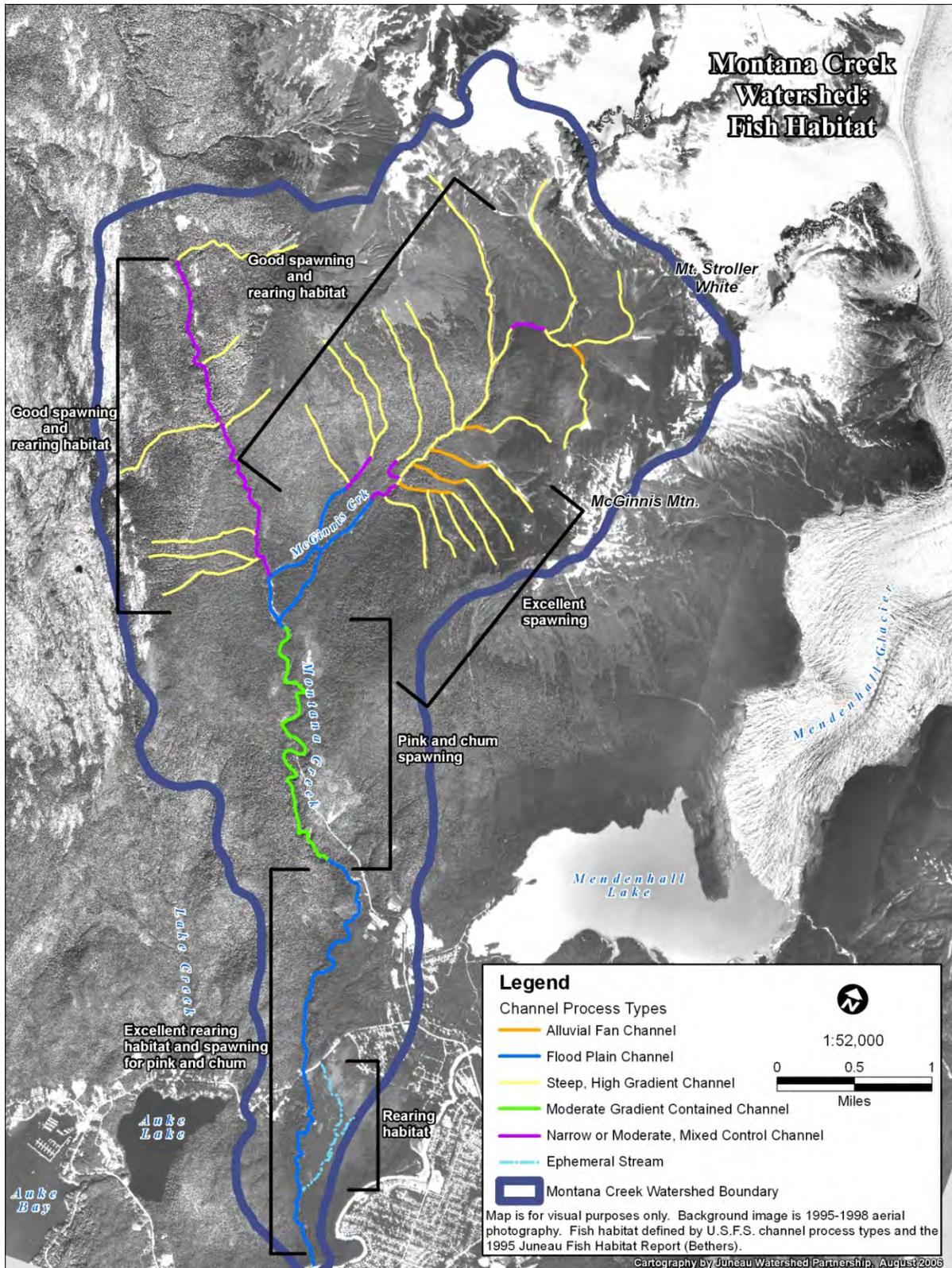
Service Layer Credits: Alaska Mapped Program; UAF-GINA; The Nature Conservancy; USFS Tongass National Forest; ADF&G Sport Fish Division; USGS National Hydrography Dataset; Southeast Alaska GIS Library; University of Alaska

**Figure 8.** Suitable winter habitat for deer in the Montana Creek watershed. The best suited deer winter habitat is located primarily below the confluence with McGinnis Creek.



Service Layer Credits: U. S. Geological Survey; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game; Southeast Alaska GIS Library; University of Alaska Southeast

**Figure 9.** The extent of anadromous fish habitat in Montana and McGinnis Creeks, as mapped by the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game in the Anadromous Waters Catalog. Known bald eagles nests are also shown.



**Figure 10.** Spawning and rearing habitat on Montana and McGinnis Creeks, as identified in the 1995 Juneau Fish Habitat Report. Figure originally appeared in the *Lands Assessment and Recreation Corridor Conservation Proposal* (Trout Unlimited, 2006).

## Land Ownership and Management

Land managers in the Montana Creek watershed include U.S. Forest Service, the State of Alaska, the City and Borough of Juneau, and a number of private landowners (Figure 12). Much of the upper Montana Creek watershed is within the Tongass National Forest and is managed by the U.S. Forest Service. National forest lands, including the Tongass National Forest, are managed for multiple uses as set forth in the Forest Plan. Generally, national forests are managed for resource development (e.g. timber harvest) and recreation, though areas may be designated for protection (e.g. wilderness areas) or for research purposes (e.g. experimental forests). According to the Tongass Forest Plan (2008), the Montana Creek watershed within the national forest boundaries is managed for semi-remote recreation and mineral exploration.

The State of Alaska owns land on the lower part of McGinnis Creek and in the middle section of Montana Creek. State lands are managed by the Department of Natural Resources and management is guided by the policies set forth in the applicable Area Plan. State land on Montana and McGinnis Creeks are within Land Unit 3f in the Juneau State Land Plan, and are to be managed for their high recreation, habitat and harvest values, as well as a potential water source. The state selected these lands from the U.S. Forest Service primarily for its recreational values, and because the City and Borough of Juneau was unable to select these lands as originally intended (DNR, 1993). The lower watershed is largely owned by the City and Borough of Juneau and private land owners. Within the CBJ boundaries, regardless of ownership, land use and development is guided by the policies set forth in the CBJ Comprehensive Plan and regulated by the CBJ's Land Use Code. The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) maintains Back Loop Road and the CBJ maintains the residential roads.



**Figure 11.** The Montana Creek Bridge located on Back Loop Road. Photo courtesy of Amy Sumner, JWP.



## Montana Creek Task Force

The purpose of establishing the Montana Creek Task Force was to provide a platform for agencies and stakeholder groups to express their concerns regarding the management of the Montana Creek Watershed.

Participants in the Task Force meetings included representatives from the following agencies and stakeholder groups:

U.S. Forest Service	City and Borough of Juneau
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Trout Unlimited
Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game	Alaska Fly Fishing
Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources	Raincountry Fly Fishers
Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation	Trail Mix
Southeast Alaska Soil and Water Conservation District	Juneau Gun Club

Unfortunately, the Montana Creek Task Force did not include representatives from several stakeholder groups such as ATV enthusiasts and recreational suction dredge miners. However, some perspectives of individuals within these stakeholder groups were captured in the public survey.

Task Force meetings were held on March 21, 2013 and May 27, 2014. Participant sign-in sheets and meeting agendas and notes are included in Appendix A. The concerns and recommendations of the Montana Creek Task Force will be discussed throughout this plan.

## Public Survey

A public survey was conducted as part of this planning process. The purpose of the survey was to establish the public's perception of the Montana Creek watershed's health, values, and threats to the watershed. A blank copy of the survey is provided in Appendix B. The survey was created using the free survey development tool on SurveyMonkey, an online survey development and analysis resource. The Juneau Watershed Partnership solicited participants using FaceBook, a social networking site. The survey was released on September 23, 2014 and remained open until October 15, 2014. Responses to the survey were anonymous. Data collected from the survey is provided in Appendix C, and will be discussed throughout this plan.

After survey responses were received, it was noticed that the public survey had several limitations. First, free surveys created on SurveyMonkey will only provide the first 100 participants' responses. Therefore, this limits the responses shown in the data (the Montana Creek Stewardship Plan Survey had 102 participants). However, given the data, it is unlikely the elimination of the last two responses greatly

altered the results. While JWP would have liked to obtain a greater number of participants, timing and funding limited options for conducting a public survey.

Secondly, the selections for the Question 4, “I use the Montana Creek Watershed for,” were limiting. For example, a participant noted in their comments, “that fishing and hunting should not have been grouped together.” On consideration, the two should have been separated, since it is most likely that the many of the participants selecting this option use the creek for fishing only. In addition, it did not allow any suction dredge miners to identify themselves. One participant, in their comments to another question, did identify themselves as a suction dredge miner, but it is unknown whether there were others that participated in the survey.

Another limitation is that each participant did not respond to all questions in the survey. Since all questions were optional, participants could skip any of the questions. In retrospect, all of the questions should have been made mandatory, with maybe the exception of Question 3 regarding gender (which could be a sensitive/personal question). Participants were less likely to skip the questions with multiple choice answers (Questions 5, 6, and 8) than those requiring a typed response (Questions 7 and 9) (Table 1). This inconsistency in participant responses makes it difficult to draw comparisons between the data resulting from the two types of questions. For this reason, when discussing the survey data, the relevant question being referenced will be identified to provide context.

Question	# participants responded	# participants that skipped question
1 – Where in Juneau do you live?	99	1
2 – What is your age?	100	0
3 – What is your gender?	97	3
4 – I use the Montana Creek Watershed for (check all that apply):	100	0
5 – Evaluate the following statements:	95	5
6 – Evaluate whether the following are benefits/values of the Montana Creek Watershed:	93	7
7 – What do you perceive to be the greatest benefit/value to the Montana Creek Watershed?	71	29
8 – Evaluate whether the following are threats to Montana Creek’s health:	92	8
9 – What do you perceive to be the biggest threat to Montana Creek?	62	38
10 – Anything you’d like to share about Montana Creek?	41	59

**Table 1.** Number of participants that answered and skipped each question in the public survey. The survey had a total of 102 participants, but the free SurveyMonkey application will only provide the responses of the first 100 participants.

Even with these limitations, the survey seemed to reach a good mix of people, relatively representative of the demographics of the community with some exceptions (Table 2). The survey did not reach the portion of the population that is under 18 years of age, but reached a larger proportion of those between 25 and 44 years old. This is to be expected given how the survey was distributed and the nature of the survey itself.

<b>Demographic characteristic</b>	<b>% Montana Creek Survey Participants</b>	<b>% Juneau Residents</b>
<b><i>Gender</i></b>		
Male	58	51
Female	42	49
<b><i>Age</i></b>		
Under 18	0	26
18 – 24	3	6
25 – 34	28	14
35 – 44	32	14
45 – 54	20	17
55 – 64	14	14
65 – 74	3	6
75 +	0	3
<b><i>Geographic Location</i></b>		
Mendenhall Valley	30	
Downtown Juneau	27	
Out-the-Road	12	
Thane	0	
Douglas	26	
Lemon Creek/Switzer	4	

**Table 2.** Comparison of demographic characteristics between the Montana Creek public survey and Juneau residents.

## Watershed Values

For the purpose of this Stewardship Plan, watershed values are defined as the characteristics or qualities of the watershed perceived as good or beneficial to the community. Government agencies with land holdings in the Montana Creek area manage their land for a variety of uses such as recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, resource extraction, and development of community facilities and infrastructure, which are all generally considered as beneficial to the public. However, it is important to understand the community's perspective of the watershed's values and how the community uses the watershed. The public survey conducted as part of this planning process was used to establish public opinion regarding the Montana Creek watershed's health and values.

According to responses received for Question 6 of the public survey, participants ranked fish and wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and fishing/hunting/gathering as the top three benefits of the Montana Creek watershed. Undeveloped land and ecotourism were also perceived, although less so, as benefits. Participants seemed to disagree with land to be used for development and resources development (timber/minerals) as benefits of the watershed. When asked to identify the greatest benefit/value of the Montana Creek watershed (Question 7), the majority of participant responses were split between the watershed's healthy, pristine character and the abundance of recreational opportunities.



**Figure 13.** Mark Kaelke releases a Dolly Varden downstream of the confluence with McGinnis Creek. Photo taken by Darren Dorris, and provided courtesy of Mark Kaelke, Juneau Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

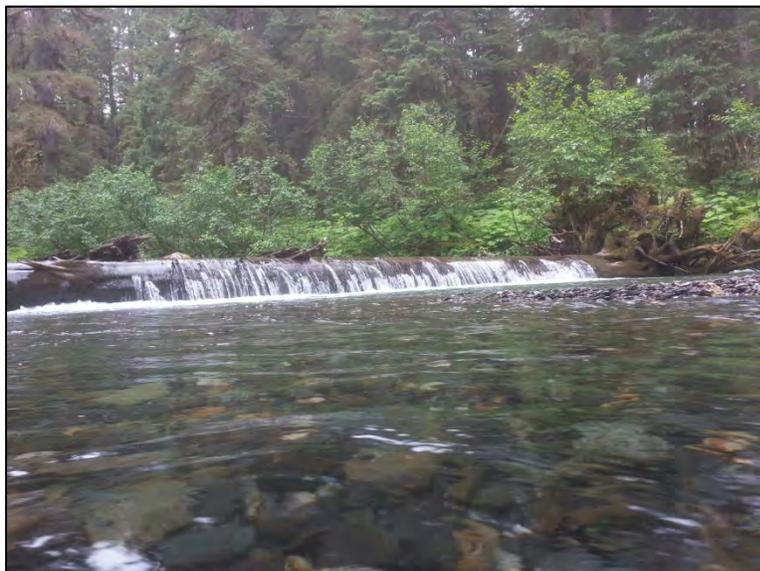
Most survey participants (68.4 percent of those that responded to Question 5) either agreed or strongly agreed with the assertion that the Montana Creek watershed is healthy. Responses to Question 7 identifying characteristics such as “green space,” “fresh water,” “nature,” “beauty,” and “habitat” as being the greatest value of the Montana Creek watershed is reflective of valuing the watershed's healthy, pristine character. This is obviously a defining characteristic of the Montana Creek watershed greatly valued by the public.

Responses to Question 7 focusing on recreation as being the greatest value varied in specificity: some responses listed specific recreational activities such as fishing, skiing, hiking, biking; some responses specified non-motorized recreation, others motorized recreation; and some participants simply stated “recreation” in general. It was also indicated in a few responses that the area provides “non-tourism impacted recreation” (term taken from participant response), which may provide some indication as to why eco-tourism was valued less as a benefit.

The majority of survey responses to Question 5 indicate the Montana Creek watershed is important to participants personally, as well as important to the community as a whole (96.8 and 95.7 percent, respectively). This shows that, whatever their differences on other issues regarding the watershed, the majority of participants at least agree that the Montana Creek Watershed is an important community asset.

In this sense, the Montana Creek survey is highly consistent with some of the findings from the Community Values survey conducted for the City and Borough of Juneau (2007). Responses to the CBJ Community Values survey indicated that Juneau residents value the following:

- Protecting natural beauty and scenery
- Maintaining public access to nature and outdoor recreation
- Preserving and protecting streams and wildlife habitat



**Figure 14.** View of Montana Creek approximately one-half mile from the upper Montana Creek trailhead on Montana Creek Road. Photo courtesy of Dave Hanna, former JWP Board member.

## Threat Analysis

Threats to a watershed are those activities or actions that are perceived as negatively impacting the watershed's values, uses, and health. The goal of a threat analysis is to identify potential threats and develop recommendations to improve the management of, and/or otherwise reduce impacts from, these activities or actions.

The primary threats identified during the planning process were:

- urban development;
- motorized use;
- suction dredge mining; and
- invasive species;

Each of these is discussed separately, in more detail.

However, it is worth mentioning that the responses to the public survey Question 9 identified some concerns that, though not discussed in more detail, are worth noting, as they correspond with several recurring themes throughout this plan.

**Irresponsible use** – approximately 6 percent of responses to Question 9 identified irresponsible use, over use, and cumulative impacts as being the greatest threat to Montana Creek. Overuse is grouped with irresponsible use, as overusing a resource is generally seen as irresponsible. Irresponsible use and overuse are overarching ideas that can get unwieldy if not discussed in relation to specific resources or activities. Irresponsible use in this plan is discussed in relation to motorized use and suction dredge mining. Overuse is not explicitly discussed in this plan, since the Montana Creek Task Force and public survey participants did not overwhelmingly identify a specific problem with overuse. Two survey comments did specify concerns with over-fishing. One comment identified over-fishing as a concern due to proximity to the residential population; the other noted that serious harvesting impacts occur in the first three weeks of September. While not discussed or analyzed in this plan, over-fishing in the Montana Creek watershed may be worth investigating in the future, given the popularity of the area for fishing.

**Over protection/catering to one group's needs over another's** – approximately 5 percent of responses to Question 9 stated that over protection and catering to one group's needs over another are the greatest threat to Montana Creek. When watersheds are managed for multiple uses, there is a potential for user conflicts. User conflicts can result when one user group perceives that the activities of another user group are detrimental to their own activities. As one survey participant stated, the greatest threat to Montana Creek "depends on the user group." Because of their nature, user conflicts will often become apparent during a watershed threat analysis, and Montana Creek was no exception. These ideas are grouped into one theme because, as a use becomes restricted or prohibited due to its perceived threat to one or more other user groups, this can be seen as overprotection by the affected user groups.

## Urban Development

Juneau is wedged between ocean and mountains, with limited developable land. The Montana Creek watershed is located adjacent to the highly urbanized, populated center of the Mendenhall Valley. Urbanization of the Mendenhall Valley has already led to the impairment of other local watersheds: Duck Creek, Jordan Creek, and Pederson Hill Creek. Though most of the Montana Creek watershed is currently undeveloped, its proximity to the Mendenhall Valley and the increasing need for housing puts Montana Creek at risk for urban development due to the availability of land. Land use planning and zoning changes over the years have reflected the increasing development pressure, as the portions of the watershed designated for residential use have been trending toward higher density residential development. This has spurred concern that urbanization could negatively affect Montana Creek, possibly to the extent that the creek may become impaired.

## Current Conditions and Management

Land managers in the Montana Creek watershed include U.S. Forest Service, the State of Alaska, the City and Borough of Juneau, and a number of private landowners (Figure 12). Most urban development occurs within the boundaries of the City and Borough of Juneau, and is not likely to occur on federal or state land due to how this land is managed.

Land use within the CBJ boundaries is governed by the policies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, which is then implemented by the CBJ Land Use Code and zoning ordinances. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to describe the long-term planning intent for the community through Land Use Designations (LUDs). The CBJ Land Use Code, through zoning and other land use ordinances, provide the regulatory means for the City to ensure the community is developed as intended in the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, the Land Use Code should reflect the policies in the Comprehensive Plan and zoning districts should be complementary to the LUDs outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Land use designations (LUDs) outlined in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan for the Montana Creek watershed include Natural Area Park (NP), Recreational Service Park (RS), Resource Development (RD), Urban Low Density Residential (ULDR), and Mid-Density Residential (MDR) development. There is also a Stream Corridor (SC) LUD (Figure 15).

The Resource Development LUD is used to identify and conserve natural resources until specific land uses are identified for the unit. Land under the Resource Development LUD is meant to be re-designated and re-zoned appropriately, once the specific land use for the area is identified. The RD land unit currently correlates with Rural Reserve (RR) zoning district. This zoning district holds public lands in reserve for the conservation and development of natural resources and for future community growth.

The Urban Low Density Residential (ULDR) LUD allows for densities of one to six units per acre. The ULDR land units in Montana Creek Watershed currently correlate with D-1, D-3, and D-5 residential zoning districts. The use of the D-3 residential zoning district is limited within the urban service boundary, and typically is only used where either lower density is deemed appropriate or where the zoning will be changed to a higher density when sewer/water utility is provided (as in the case of a transition zone).



The Medium Density Residential (MDR) LUD allows for densities ranging from 5 to 20 units per acre. The MDR land unit currently corresponds with a D1(T)D5 residential zoning district. The “T” indicates that this is a transition zone, where the density is currently one unit per acre but will be allowed to increase to 5 units per acre once services (water, sewer) are provided.

The Stream Corridor LUD provides a protective buffer from the impacts of urban development. Development within the Corridor is carefully controlled or, if necessary, prohibited to protect stream functions and values. The baseline corridor is established at 200 feet on each side of the Ordinary High Water (OHW) line, but the Montana Creek corridor has been increased to 500 feet on each side of the OHW line due to information presented in the *Montana Creek Lands Assessment and Recreation Corridor Conservation Proposal* published by the Juneau Chapter of Trout Unlimited (November 2006). Currently, this 500-foot corridor is only applicable on CBJ property adjacent to Montana Creek.

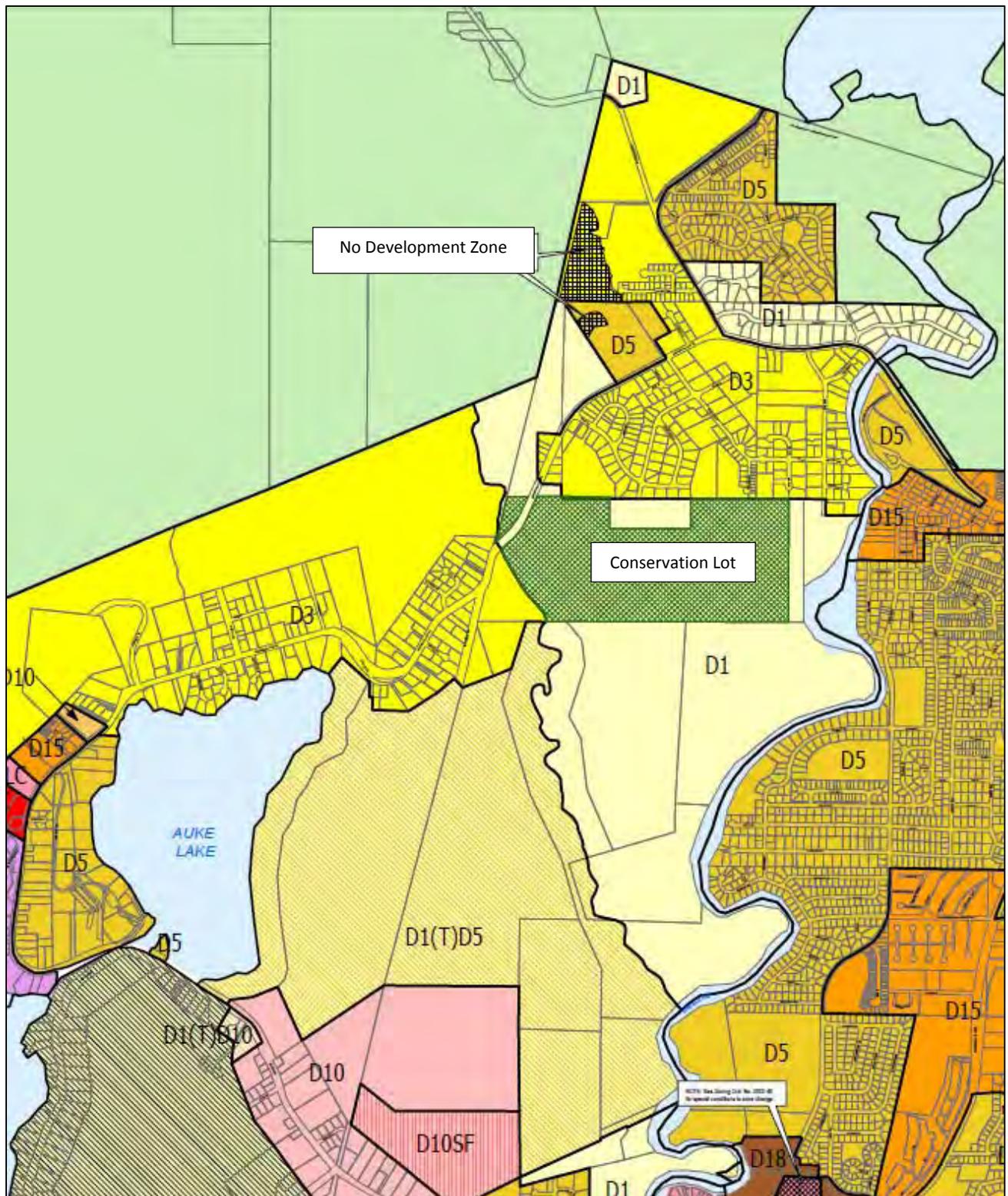
It should be noted that current zoning maps do not have a corresponding zoning district for the Stream Corridor designated in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan. The D-1, D-3, and D1(T)D5 residential zoning districts currently go right up to the creek (Figure 17). However, Implementing Action 9.1-IA2 in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan recognizes the need to “establish one or more discrete zoning districts in the CBJ Title 49 Land Use Code for CBJ-owned lands dedicated to parks and recreation and natural area uses...[to] correspond to the CA (Conservation Area), SC (Stream Corridor), and NP (Natural Park) land use designations.”



**Figure 16.** SEALTrust conservation properties in the Montana Creek watershed. Montana Creek Wetlands is a 128-acre property containing high value wetlands purchased from Juneau Youth Services. Copied from SEALTrust, 2014.

Current habitat protection ordinances in the CBJ Land Use Code include a 50-foot setback for development on private property adjacent to anadromous streams (CBJ Land Use Code 49.70.950) and a 25-foot no disturbance zone on private property for anadromous streams (CBJ Land Use Code 49.70.310). However, there is a procedure to request a variance from these setbacks.

One positive development towards protection of Montana Creek within the urbanized area of the watershed is that a 128-acre conservation area was established in February 2014 (Figures 16 and 17). The Southeast Alaska Land Trust



**Figure 17.** CBJ zoning map current as of October 2014. Image copied from CBJ, 2014  
 ([http://www.juneau.org/cddftp/maps/documents/mend\\_valley\\_lemon\\_10\\_29\\_14.pdf](http://www.juneau.org/cddftp/maps/documents/mend_valley_lemon_10_29_14.pdf))

(SEAL Trust) purchased this property from Juneau Youth Services (JYS), and the property contains approximately 111 acres of high functioning wetlands and a quarter mile of Montana Creek. This is a large portion of the JYS property shown on Figure 6. SEAL Trust hopes to donate this property to CBJ while maintaining a conservation easement to ensure its protection. SEAL Trust holds a smaller conservation easement (Moraine Edge) on CBJ property adjacent to the 128-acre property; this smaller easement was acquired in 2005 (SEALTrust, 2014; Figure 16).

Other properties in the watershed have been protected as well. Over the years, the CBJ has acquired several private properties adjacent to CBJ land that have been incorporated into Natural Area Park lands. The first was in 1990, when Lots 2 and 3 of the McGinnis View subdivision were retained and Ordinance 90-01 was adopted. In 2006, CBJ obtained a vacant parcel Tract B, USS 2337 and then acquired the adjacent parcel Tract A, USS 2337 in Partnership with Trout Unlimited in 2011. Resolution 2573 designated the property as Natural Area Park (Marlow, 2011). In addition to these properties, in December 2005, “No Development Zones” were established via ordinance to protect high quality wetlands in the Montana Creek watershed (CBJ Ord. 2005-31). These No Development Zones were established in association with a zoning change in the West Mendenhall Valley from D-1 to a D-3 (Figures 17 and 18).

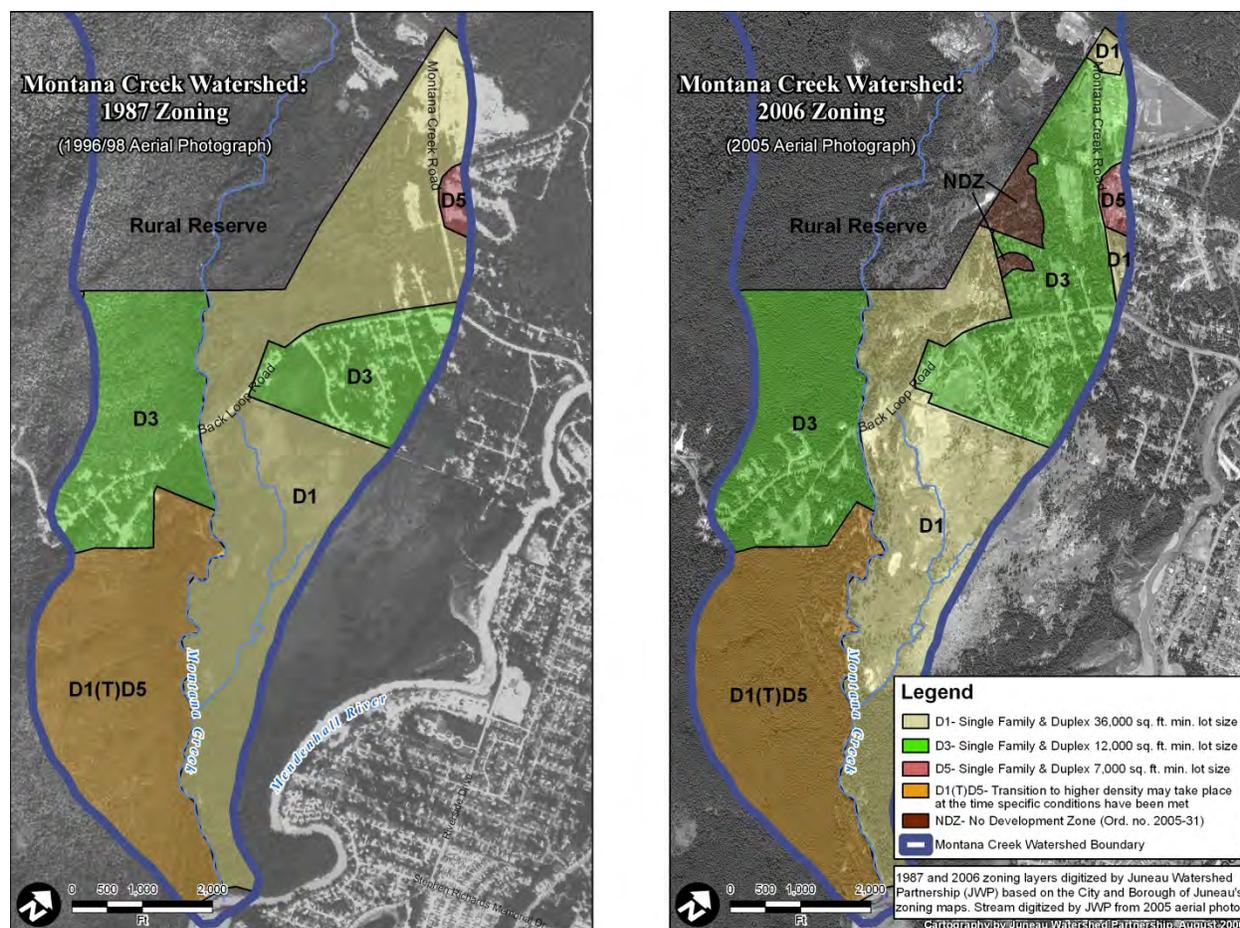
### Concerns with Urban Development

Approximately 77 percent of participants either agreed, or strongly agreed, urban development is a threat to the Montana Creek watershed (see results for Question 8). However, only about 29 percent of the individuals indicated that urban development or development in general was the greatest threat (see responses to Question 9). The primary concerns regarding urban development identified by the Task Force are:

- Trends toward increased residential housing density
- Development within the stream-side setbacks and within the stream corridor
- Development of high quality wetlands
- Stormwater management, especially for subdivisions and roadways
- Development of Montana Creek as a community drinking water source

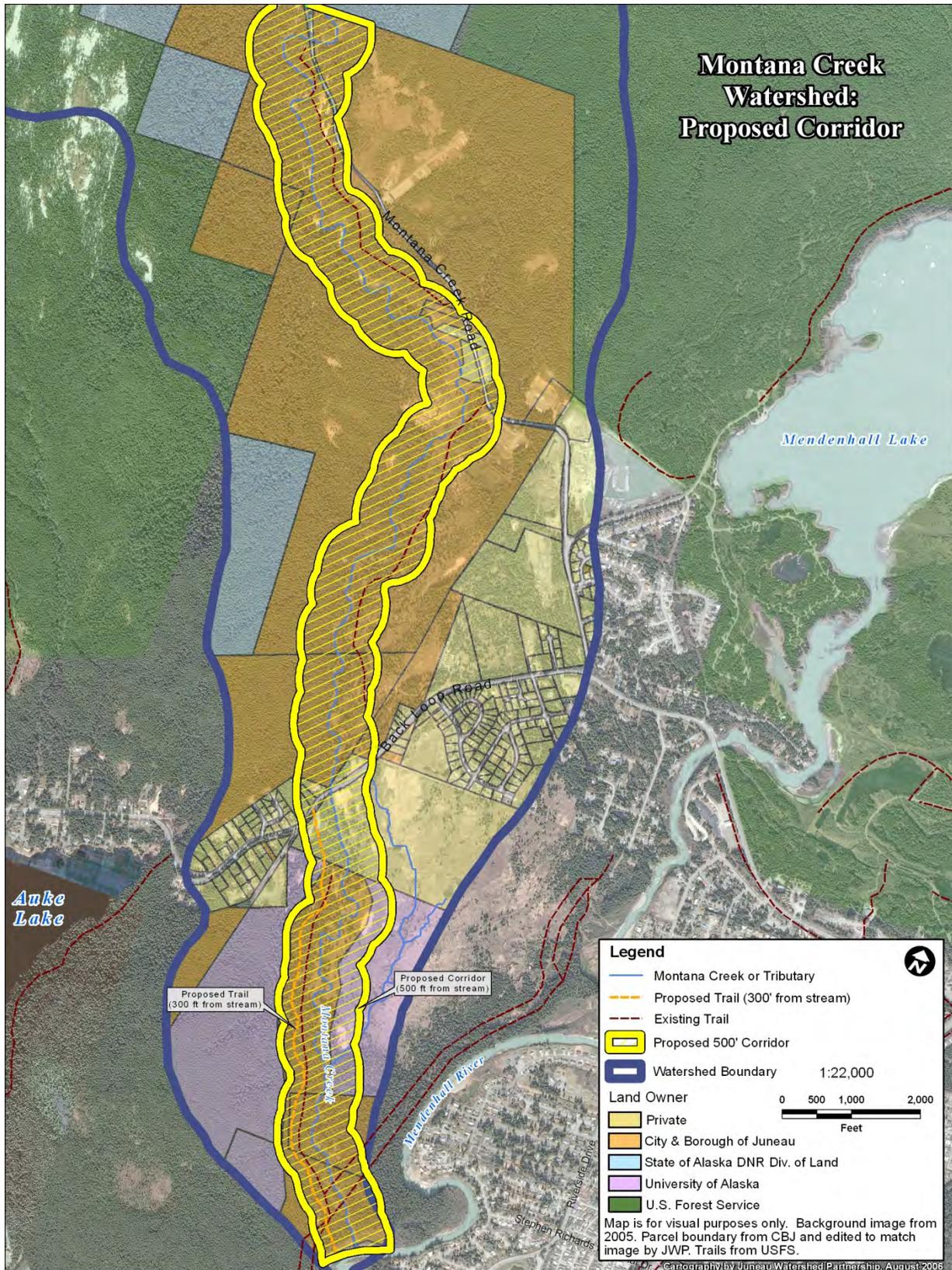
Some of these concerns were also reflected in the public survey responses.

**Increased Residential Housing Density:** The Juneau Chapter of Trout Unlimited (TU) published the *Lands Assessment and Recreation Corridor Conservation Proposal* in November 2006, primarily to address concerns regarding urban development in the Montana Creek watershed. This document presented evidence that development in the lower Montana Creek watershed has trended towards increased residential housing density between 1965 and 2006 (Figure 18). This trend could potentially continue in the lower southwest section of the watershed. Though the zoning district in this area has not changed since the publication of the TU document [it is still D1(T)D5] as shown in Figure 17 and 18], the land use designation (LUD) changed from Rural Dispersed Residential transitioning to Urban Low Density Residential [RDR(T)ULDR] in 2000 to Medium Density Residential (MDR) in 2013 (Figure 15); therefore, this area can theoretically be re-zoned and developed to support up to 20 units per acre.



**Figure 18.** A comparison of zoning districts from 1987 and 2006 showing a trend in increasing residential density in lower Montana Creek. Figure originally appeared in the *Lands Assessment and Recreation Corridor Conservation Proposal* (Trout Unlimited, 2006).

**Development within the Streamside Setbacks and within the Stream Corridor:** There are several structures and facilities within the streamside setback including an unpaved road, retaining walls, and houses that straddle the stream (Trout Unlimited, 2006). One such house was removed in 2011 through a cooperative effort by the Juneau Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the CBJ, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Habitat Restoration Program. The 500-foot stream corridor buffer proposed by Trout Unlimited was implemented in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, but only applies to CBJ property. Though the CBJ's property covers much of this corridor (Figure 19), other properties [Juneau Youth Services (JYS) and University of Alaska (UA)] were identified by the Task Force as potentially having high effects on the watershed, and recommended that they should have comparable buffers. As shown in Figure 19, portions of the JYS and UA properties are within the 500-foot corridor. As previously mentioned JYS deeded 128-acres of their property to SEAL Trust, allowing establishment of a conservation easement protecting Montana Creek and associated wetlands, including much of those within the 500-foot corridor. One of the public survey participants identified "insufficient protective setbacks" as the biggest threat to the Montana Creek Watershed.



**Figure 19.** The 500-foot corridor proposed in the *Lands Assessment and Recreation Corridor Conservation Proposal* (Trout Unlimited, 2006). Figure as originally appeared in the *Lands Assessment*.

**Stormwater:** Stormwater discharges from urban areas and roadways are a major source of impairment of four Juneau watersheds: Duck, Jordan, Lemon and Vanderbilt Creeks. Special consideration of stormwater management should be given to developments that discharge stormwater into Montana Creek.

Properties and areas of concern with regards to stormwater discharges include:

- Stormwater run-off from new and expanded subdivisions
- Quarry on Coogan Property - concerns regarding stormwater run-off and potential discharges into Montana Creek
- Stormwater run-off from Back Loop Road ditches
- DOT&PF roadside ditch maintenance (timing and techniques)

**Montana Creek as a Community Drinking Water Source:** The Task Force recalled that a well-field connected to Montana Creek, located near the community garden, was identified for a community drinking water supply 30 or so years ago. The Task Force did not know whether the CBJ still considered this a viable drinking water source and, if so, what protections were in place to protect this potential drinking water source.

The upper Montana Creek watershed is included in a Watershed (WS) overlay land use designation in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, which is used to designate and protect watershed lands that provide, or could provide in the future, water supply for domestic consumption. The Montana Creek (WS) designated area encompasses nearly 11 square miles and the southern boundary is just below the confluence with McGinnis Creek (CBJ, 2013). Most of the land in the WS-designated area is managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the State of Alaska. State land in the Montana Creek watershed includes a similar land use designation for Montana Creek as a potential drinking water source.

Though the upper Montana Creek watershed has a WS land use designation, the suitability of the upper Montana Creek watershed above the community garden as a groundwater source is only speculative, as no work has been done to confirm whether the groundwater supply is of adequate quality and quantity. Areas that have been studied as groundwater sources in the Mendenhall Valley were found to have water quality problems such as high in iron, manganese, and salinity. Studies have also found that Montana Creek, along with several other watersheds, would be inadequate as a surface water supply due to low flows during the winter when much of their drainage basins are frozen. Since 1960, no other surface water or groundwater sources have been identified as a better source for drinking water than Last Chance Basin and Salmon Creek (Dorn, 2012).

However, due to the WS overlay designation, under CBJ Code 49.70.320, development within the upper Montana Creek watershed is to be designed and/or use Best Management Practices (BMPs) to avoid negative impacts to water quality or ground water recharge capabilities of the site. Developers can be requested to provide evidence of compliance from a certified professional engineer. This is the only protection the watershed has a potential drinking water source.

## Opportunities for Improvement

The recently updated Comprehensive Plan includes policies that could afford better protection for Montana Creek and other Juneau watersheds, but some of these policies have not yet been reflected in the Land Use Code or zoning maps, which have the force of law. This process could take several years. Development of new or modifying current ordinances, and rezoning could be held up by lack of funding and staffing. Adopting these changes requires lengthy administrative proceedings that could be further delayed by political debates. Until the Land Use Code and zoning maps are updated, the CBJ has limited means to implement and enforce the policies in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan.

Several of the recommendations made by the Task Force could be addressed if the Land Use Code and zoning maps were updated to reflect the policies, procedures and actions set forth in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan. These include:

**Place conditions on variances to streamside setbacks:** The Task Force recommends that applications for variances to the streamside setback on Montana Creek should meet standard conditions designed to protect Montana Creek and that variances granted by the Planning Commission should require mitigation. This recommendation is supported by the following Implementing Actions set forth in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan:

7.3 – IA1 Fund an effort to develop for adoption into the Land Use Code a riparian habitat protection ordinance that tailors riparian standards to the particular stream-type, functional value and location and which would be consistent with, and complementary to, related Title 49 regulations protecting wetlands, flood zones and coastal areas.

7.3 - IA8 Amend the Land Use Code to include additional criteria in the grounds for variance standards that require an evaluation of impacts to habitat and water quality for variance requests from streamside and lakeshore setbacks, and to provide for mitigation when variances to stream or lakeshore setbacks are granted.

**Improve stormwater management:** Improve stormwater management by requiring BMPs and improving DOT&PF's ditch cleaning practices. This recommendation is supported by the following Development Guideline set forth in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan:

7.7 – DG1 Ensure that stream corridors, surface waters, and associated riparian buffer areas receive greater attention in the local permitting process through adherence to the most recent version of the CBJ *Manual of Stormwater Best management Practices* and adoption of additional requirements or criteria that protect these areas and waters if needed.

**Acquire and protect properties in the Montana Creek stream corridor, particularly those with high value wetlands and those in the floodplain:** Only a few private land holdings exist in the 500-foot corridor proposed by the Juneau Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Where possible, such lands should be acquired by CBJ or other entities, such as SEAL Trust, willing to conserve and protect these areas. This recommendation is supported by the following Guidelines/Considerations for Subarea 3 Auke Bay, Mendenhall Peninsula and West Mendenhall Valley set forth in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan:

- Continue to acquire Greenbelt properties along the Montana Creek

One such property, Tract B, USS 2271 was considered for acquisition in late 2011. This is one of two private land holdings remaining within CBJ's Natural Area Park lands (Marlow, 2011).

**Participate in the Juneau Wetland Management Plan update:** The CBJ is in the process of updating the Juneau Wetland Management Plan. As part of this process, the CBJ is working with property owners to assess functions/values of wetlands on their property in an effort to provide them with free, reliable information about wetlands on their property so that they can make informed development decisions. The CBJ had hoped that West Glacier Development and Coogan, which have property in Montana Creek, would participate, but later determined that there are no wetlands on these properties. In any case, the update of the Juneau Wetland Management Plan would provide some opportunity to protect high value/high functioning wetlands in the Montana Creek Watershed. The updated plan would have to undergo a public review and comment period in accordance with CBJ procedures, and this would provide regulatory agencies and stakeholder groups a chance to have input on how wetlands are being managed in Juneau.

## Motorized Use

Juneau has a number of all-terrain vehicle (ATV), or off-highway vehicle (OHV), enthusiasts, and there are two local ATV/OHV user groups, Rough Riders and the Juneau Douglas Motocross Association. However, there are a limited number of places for ATV/OHV users to legally enjoy recreational riding. Several attempts to develop city-managed ATV/OHV riding areas have been made over the last decade, but these have not been successful. This has been, in part, due to controversy surrounding the proposed locations as well as lack of funding.

The 1.25 mile section of the Montana Creek Trail that is a former gravel road is one of the few legal riding trails in Juneau. However, there has been a proliferation of user-created trails that spread out from this segment of the trail, generating concern over destruction of vegetation, erosion, and illegal stream crossings that could affect fish and wildlife habitat. Unfortunately, the destruction from motorized use is likely being caused by a few irresponsible riders repeatedly using the area, but could have consequences for the ATV community as a whole. The reality is the Montana Creek Trail could be closed to motorized use, as other areas have been in the past.

## Current Conditions and Management

The segment of the Montana Creek Trail open to motorized use is accessed at the end of Montana Creek Road, and extends only approximately 1.25 miles to just below the confluence of Montana and McGinnis Creeks. Where the former road transitions to a foot-path, the trail is no longer open to motorized use (U.S. Forest Service, n.d.). The motorized-use section of the Montana Creek is located on state land. There has been a proliferation of user-created trails that spread out from this segment of the trail, traversing state, national forest, and CBJ lands. User-created trails also spread out from the nearby archery and rifle ranges (Figure 20). Tongass National Forest Lands in the Montana Creek area are closed to motorized use, except for a small section of the Montana Creek Trail near Windfall Lake, which is open seasonally from December 15<sup>th</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup> provided that there is 12 inches of snow or the ground is frozen (U.S. Forest Service 2015). There are no City lands where ATVs/OHVs are allowed.

On state lands, ATV/OHVs are considered a generally allowed use, and are allowed to go off established road easements on state land provided that riders adhere to conditions set out in State regulations (11 AAC 96.025). These conditions state that the off-road use of ATV/OHVs cannot contribute to water quality degradation, alteration of drainage systems, or significant rutting or ground disturbance. If activities are not conducted in a responsible manner to minimize or prevent disturbance to land and water resources, then they can no longer be considered a generally allowed use under state regulations, and the activity is no longer allowed without being permitted by the DNR (DNR Division of Mining Land and Water, 2011).

In areas where ATVs are allowed, individuals planning to drive their ATV across anadromous streams are required to obtain a Habitat Permit from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). A Habitat Permit will include stipulations meant to prevent or reduce impacts resulting from the stream crossing. ADF&G can issue a General Permits for commonly used stream crossings. Crossing anadromous streams without a permit is illegal. In 2010, approximately 20 stream crossings were identified on Montana and McGinnis Creeks (Figure 20).

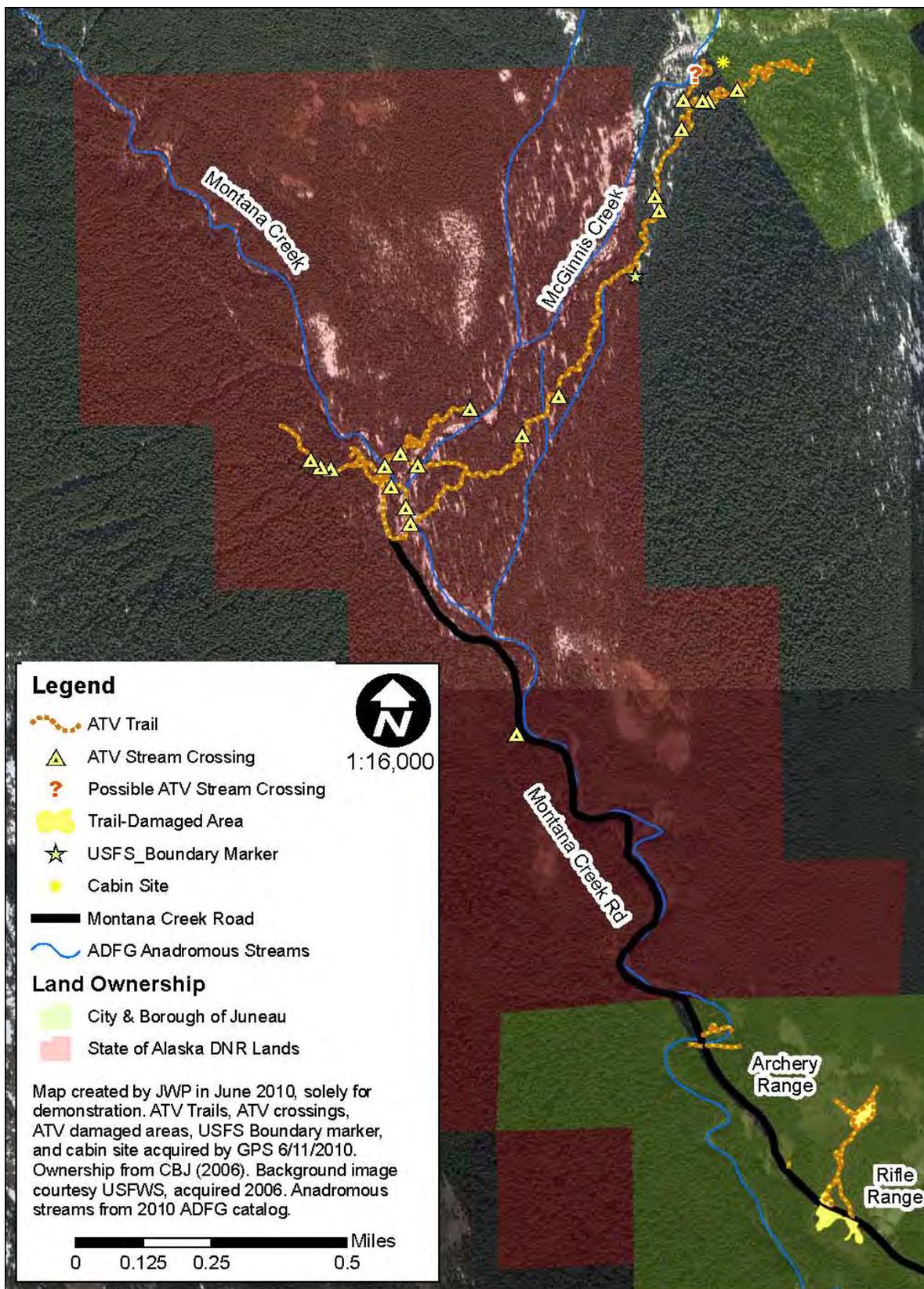


Figure 20. ATV trails, damaged areas and stream crossings in the Montana Creek watershed, as mapped in 2010.

In 2010, the DNR conducted site visits in the Montana Creek watershed in response to a permit application submitted to the ADF&G Habitat Division from the Rough Riders for an ATV stream crossing on Montana Creek to access existing secondary trails on state land. At that time, DNR felt that the heavily used secondary trails were causing too much damage to the land to be considered a general use and informed the Rough Riders that this type of activity is not allowed. Since the riders did not have permission of the land owner, the ADF&G denied their permit (Marquis, 2010a). Since then, ATV use off the established trail has not been allowed. However, illegal use of user-created secondary trails by ATV riders continues throughout the watershed. This may reflect the limited legal riding options for ATV riders in town. Riders may be drawn to the Montana Creek watershed since the area provided a legal riding option, and then increased use of the secondary trails leads to the visible damage over time. Without many other legal riding options, riding activities and their impacts cannot be dispersed.

The CBJ has attempted to identify a site where an ATV/OHV park can be developed to satisfy the needs of Juneau’s ATV enthusiasts. However, it’s been a continual struggle to find an appropriate site for ATV/OHV use. Nearly 35 sites over the last decade have been considered and rejected for potential ATV/OHV use (NOHVCC, 2013). In the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) committed to “seek location and construction for an ATV/snowmobile course with a programmed riding course as well as trails.” In 2013, several site options were evaluated: the Goldbelt Quarry at Echo Cove, a site at 35-mile of Glacier Highway, the Fish Creek Quarry, and the Lemon Creek Gravel Pit. Each site comes with its own opportunities and constraints, and history. Some of these sites have been considered multiple times and have been a part of the continued controversy in the development of an ATV/OHV area. The 35-mile site appeared to be promising, but is costly to develop and also has environmental considerations such as wetlands and anadromous streams. At this time, the CBJ appears to be no closer to identifying a suitable site.



**Figure 21.** Vehicular and pedestrian gate on Montana Creek Road just beyond the Hank Harmon Rifle Range. Photo courtesy of Amy Sumner, JWP.

The CBJ installed a vehicular gate and adjacent pedestrian gate just past the rifle range entrance on Montana Creek Road (Figure 21). The vehicular gate is closed from 9:00 P.M. to 7:00 A.M., so that it is open during the same hours as the rifle range. There is also video surveillance. Though the purpose of this vehicular gate is to deter illegal dumping that has historically occurred along the end of Montana Creek Road beyond the rifle range, this may have some impact on ATV use and riders’ behaviors.

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### Concerns with Motorized Use

Approximately 78 percent of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that ATV use is a threat to the watershed, and ATV use ranked the highest among the other identified threats (see results for Question 8). Approximately 21 percent of responses to Question 9 indicated that ATV/motorized use posed the greatest threat to Montana Creek.

However, conflict between motorized and non-motorized uses is one of the most contentious issues in managing recreational areas, and the Montana Creek Watershed is no exception to this trend. Concerns regarding motorized use in the Montana Creek watershed voiced during the Montana Creek Task Force meetings and in the public survey are reflective of the user conflicts surrounding motorized use, and can be generalized into two perspectives:

- Motorized use is destroying fish and wildlife habitat, and impacting non-motorized uses
- Montana Creek may be closed as a recreational riding area

Another concern, primarily identified by the Task Force, is that there is a lack of enforcement to ensure that motorized use is being properly managed and that riders are adhering to the regulations that are in place to protect Montana Creek.



**Figure 22.** ATV damage in the vicinity of the archery range. Photo courtesy of Chris Zimmer, Juneau Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

**Motorized use is destroying fish and wildlife habitat, and impacting non-motorized uses:** It is well-documented that motorized use can be destructive when it comes to fish and wildlife habitat. Impacts on soil, vegetation are widely discussed in literature regarding ATV impacts. These include soil compaction, erosion, alteration of drainage patterns, destruction of vegetation, and introduction of invasive plant species. In addition, impacts to soil and vegetation also lead to increased sediment loading to streams and can affect fish and wildlife habitat (Stokowski and LaPointe 2000).

Ground disturbance from ATVs is highly visible and, therefore, is difficult to ignore (Figures 22 and 23). One of the public survey participants wrote, “I have seen incredible stream degradation from ATVs!” While the damage may be an eye-sore, and is certainly not indicative of responsible riding behaviors, there are no studies on Montana Creek that provide quantitative impacts of ATVs/OHVs on the watershed beyond the miles of illegal trails and number of illegal crossings. There is no local data that connects ATV/OHV use with impaired fish habitat or

degraded water quality. In fact, published data suggests that water quality is quite high on Montana Creek and that the watershed meets state Water Quality Standards. Therefore it is difficult to say exactly what negative impacts ATV/OHV use is having on fish and wildlife habitat in the watershed at this time, if any. This is not seen as a problem for those who wish, as one survey participant wrote, “...to protect this valuable watershed while it is still intact and healthy - - NOT wait until it is impaired and costly to restore.”

Another well-studied area in the literature is the impacts ATVs have on non-motorized users. Degradation of trails, noise intrusion, and the visible impacts to fish and wildlife habitat affect the recreational experience of non-motorized users. This can either lead to the displacement of non-motorized users, or conflicts between the two user groups. Public survey responses indicated that 78.3 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that ATV use is a threat to Montana Creek’s health, and approximately 25 percent of the responses indicated that motorized use is the biggest threat. One public survey participant commented, “[I] like it better non-motorized” and another commented, “[Montana Creek] should be kept free of motorized vehicle use.” However, it should be noted that the majority of survey participants are not motorized users.



**Figure 23.** ATV damage in the upper McGinnis Creek watershed. Photo courtesy of Chris Zimmer, Juneau Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

**Montana Creek may be closed as a riding area:** ATV enthusiasts are seemingly in the minority of recreational users in the watershed as reflected in the public survey. Only 9 percent of participants indicated that they enjoy motorized recreation in the Montana Creek watershed (see responses for Question 4). For ATV enthusiasts that may enjoy riding on the Montana Creek Trail, the primary concern is losing use of the area. ATV/OHV enthusiasts already have to deal with limited legal riding options. A number of formerly legal riding areas have been closed to ATV use. In addition, a number of proposed ATV/OHV park sites have been rejected by the CBJ and the community over the years. According to a report written by the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council (2013), some riders are selling or parking their vehicles due to the lack of legal riding opportunities, while others travel outside of Juneau to enjoy riding opportunities elsewhere. Motorized users obviously want, like everyone else, a place to enjoy a favorite pastime.

The DNR representative on the Montana Creek Task Force expressed that the agency’s primary concern is access to and the degradation of State lands, which is often associated with ATV use. In 2010, DNR indicated that off-road ATV/OHV use on state lands in the Montana Creek watershed was not

permissible under the generally allowable use guidelines. However, use of these secondary trails still occurs and illegal riding is difficult to enforce in the Montana Creek watershed (enforcement addressed below). The DNR could potentially further restrict or prohibit ATV/OHV use in the area by establishing special conditions or special land use designations in the state land plan or other appropriate management plan if the agency feels that ATVs/OHVs are causing detrimental impacts to state lands. This could include potentially closing the 1.25 miles of the Montana Creek Trail currently open to ATV use.

**Lack of enforcement:** While motorized use is allowed, the chief deficiency in managing motorized use in the Montana Creek watershed will be the continued lack of enforcement. Due to a lack of enforcement, irresponsible riders are not being deterred from negligent behaviors. Regulatory signage does not seem to deter riders from illegally crossing Montana Creek and the regulatory signs are continually damaged (see Figure 24).

According to members of the Montana Creek Task Force, the Juneau Police Department (JPD) has difficulty with enforcement because they cannot get into the upper watershed, where the majority of illegal riding activities occur. In addition, there is no means for JPD to identify riders or their vehicles. It has been proposed to use cameras, but the Montana Creek Task Force indicated that posting cameras would not help JPD with enforcement because it is difficult to connect a rider to a particular ATV/OHV, due to the lack of tags/plates because ATVs/OHVs are not required by the State to be registered.



**Figure 24.** Damaged regulatory sign on Montana Creek. Photo from JWP's archives.

### Opportunities for Improvement

Recommendations to improve managing ATV/OHV use in the Montana Creek watershed are as follows:

**Public Education:** The Montana Creek Task Force believes that public education is the best opportunity for improving the impacts from motorized use. The Task Force recommends an education/outreach campaign encouraging ATV enthusiasts to comply with motorized use regulations in the Montana Creek watershed and encourage riders to be responsible stewards. Some states have “Trail Ambassador” programs where volunteers are trained to greet fellow outdoor enthusiasts, provide useful information about the trail and responsible ATV/OHV use, and assist in minor aid and emergencies. A similar program could be implemented in Juneau if there is stakeholder buy-in and funding could be secured. This could provide a means for ATV enthusiasts to self-regulate and maintain their riding privileges in the Montana Creek Watershed.

**Encourage the development of an appropriate ATV/OHV site:** While, historically, the majority of the public has spoken against proposed ATV/OHV sites, the Montana Creek Task Force would like to encourage the CBJ Planning Commission to continue working towards identifying and developing an appropriate ATV use site. The Task Force believes this would not only benefit the ATV user community, but access to an alternate site would allow conditions to improve in Montana Creek, since riders could be encouraged to go to the alternate site.

**Implementing ATV user fees, permitting and/or registration:** A feasibility study should be conducted to determine if there is a way to assess user fees through municipal permitting, registration, or other means. There are examples of municipal-based permitting programs that can be used as a model. This could have several beneficial outcomes. First, the fees could be set aside to fund the development of an appropriate ATV/OHV site, as well as provide funding for continued maintenance and operations once the site is developed. Assessed fines could also be used to restore damaged areas. Secondly, it could also provide a means of identifying individuals that do not comply with motorized use regulations in Montana Creek.

**Assess and restore ATV-damaged areas:** In 2010, JWP with support from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service mapped ATV trails, stream crossings and damaged areas along Montana and McGinnis Creeks (Figure 19). However, conditions may have changed since then. We do not have a handle on the current extent of ATV-damaged areas, and what impacts the damaged areas are having on the watershed. While the visibility of ATV damage gives the perception that the impacts are significant, that is not necessarily the case. The Montana Creek Task Force recommends continued assessment of ATV damage in the watershed and identification of potential restoration sites.

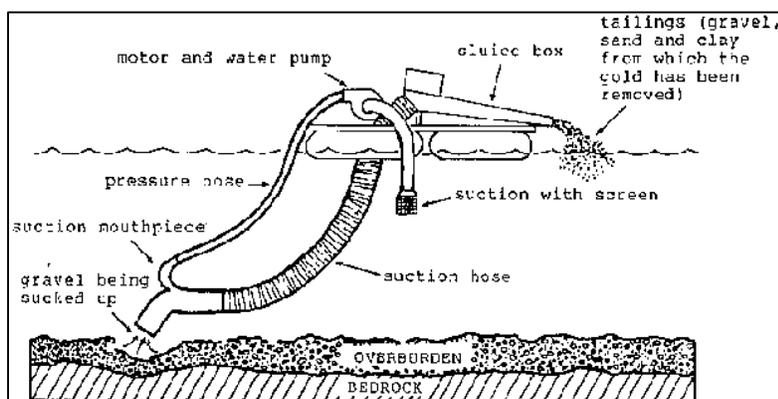


**Figure 25.** ATV crossing of a Montana Creek tributary. Photo courtesy of Erik Norberg, JWP Board Member.

**Recreational Trails Program:** The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) administered by the DNR Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation could be a potential funding source for trail related environmental protection, safety and educational projects described here. The applications for the RTP grants are available starting August 15 and must be submitted by November 15 (DNR Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, 2014). JWP hopes that it can partner with CBJ, other non-profits and/or ATV user groups to fund the variety of projects and activities recommended here to improve ATV management in the Montana Creek Watershed.

## Suction Dredge Mining

Suction dredge mining is a popular form of mining for gold in Alaskan streams. Suction dredges work like a vacuum; an intake hose is used to suck up sediments from the streambed into a sluice box that filters the gold from the sediments and discharges the sediments back into the stream (Figure 26). Suction dredges of various sizes and power can be used, from smaller recreational models to large, heavy dredges that can process large amounts of material in a single day. Suction dredge mining is more popular in the Northern and Central Regions of Alaska. Southeast Region saw its first suction dredge mining permit request approximately five (5) years ago. Concerns regarding this activity in Montana Creek have likely increased with public awareness that these activities are occurring in a locally-favored fish stream. Small scale, or recreational, mining is defined as the use of a 6" diameter intake hose (or smaller) powered by a motor that is 18 HP or less. It is this level of mining that has been permitted in Montana Creek in recent years.



**Figure 26.** Diagram depicting how a suction dredge operates. Image from the Humanity Development Library Collection, New Zealand Digital Library, University of Waikato.

## Current Conditions and Management

There are different regulatory requirements for suction dredge mining activities depending on the size of the suction dredge being used, whether the activities are occurring on state or federal lands, and whether the activities are being conducted in anadromous streams.

Montana Creek and its tributaries are anadromous streams, and the watershed includes both state and federal lands. Small scale mining occurring in Montana Creek and its tributaries will require, at minimum:

- Fish Habitat Permit from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)
- Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (APDES) permit from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in the form of a General Permit.
- A CBJ permit

Suction dredge mining activities occurring in the Montana Creek watershed may also require a DNR permit, if occurring on State land.

A Fish Habitat permit from the ADF&G is required for all anadromous and resident fish streams, regardless of land ownership. A separate Fish Habitat permit is also required for crossing anadromous streams, such as Montana Creek, with a motorized vehicle. ADF&G Habitat Division permits to conduct small scale mining expire one year to evaluate if any changes to timing windows are needed. Timing windows aim at protecting sensitive life stages within stream gravels based on species cataloged for a specific stream. ADF&G Habitat Division Biologists discuss conditions and answer questions permittees have prior to instream activities.

In most cases, the ADF&G Biologists will work with the permittee to set up an on-site visit to observe active mining operations, Biologists then write up a trip report summarizing their visual observations in the form of a Memo to the Regional ADF&G Habitat Supervisor for Southeast. These trip reports are provided to regulatory personnel at other agencies such as U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) as well as the permittee.

All suction dredge mining activities must also be covered under an APDES General Permit, which permits the pollutant discharges resulting from the suction dredge mining activities. There are two APDES General Permits for suction dredge mining: one for small-sized suction dredge placer miners and one for medium-sized suction dredge placer mines. These are dependent on the size of the suction dredge being used. The APDES permits requires that the suction dredge operator implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) to ensure that their pollutant discharges are being reduced or minimized to meet State Water Quality Standards.

On state lands, suction dredge mining activities are regulated by the DNR Division of Mining Land and Water. Recreational Suction dredge mining is considered a generally allowed use of state lands. All generally allowed uses, such as suction dredge mining, are subject to the conditions listed in 11 AAC 96.025, which are meant to minimize the impact of these activities on state land. If an individual does not adhere to these conditions, they can be penalized under State law. In addition to being held to these conditions, suction dredge mining activities occurring on State land that does not meet the definition of a recreational activity requires a permit from the DNR Division of Mining Land and Water.

Suction dredge mining on state land is classified as a recreational activity when the suction dredge has an intake line of six inches or less, is powered by a motor of 18 horsepower or less, pumps no more than 30,000 gallons of water per day, and which is used without mechanized support equipment. In addition, use of structures in association with suction dredge mining is not permitted on state land, even if they are on skids or other form of non-permanent foundation. Temporary tent camps may be used, but not for more than 14 days at one site.

The City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) regulates recreational mining under CBJ Code 49.65.00, Exploration and Mining. The Exploration and Mining code section was written primarily to regulate large-scale exploration, but recreational mining is regulated under the same ordinance. Within the CBJ boundaries, recreational mining requiring a mining exploration permit from the City includes anything that has an engine, e.g. suction dredge, sluice box, etc. Since gold panning does not require an engine, it

does not require a CBJ permit. The CBJ mining exploration permit has a \$200 fee, no matter if it is a large commercial operation or a small recreational one. Since the Exploration and Mining code section was written to apply to large-scale exploration, adjustments in the internal review process have been made to accommodate recreational mining activities. CBJ review is quite limited and considers whether bonding is necessary to cover the potential cost of equipment left behind. CBJ requires permission from the underlying landowner, if the applicant is not the landowner. The current policy is to issue permits for five years. CBJ coordinates with ADF&G and other relevant agencies to be sure that all agencies and the applicant have been informed of the development and requirements (Camery, personal communication).

According to the ADF&G Habitat Division, permitted suction dredge mining occurring in the Montana Creek watershed are small-scale recreational mining operations conducted by individuals (generally retirees) and there were only five permitted operations at the time this plan was written. One of the public survey participants stated, “I like to prospect for gold. I'm concerned about sport fishermen preventing me from doing that. It is there for everyone!”



**Figure 27.** Recreation suction dredge mining occurring June 2014 below confluence of McGinnis and Montana Creeks. Photo taken by Greg Albrecht and provided courtesy of Johnny Zutz, ADF&G.

### Concerns with Suction Dredge Mining

Concerns regarding recreational suction dredge mining primarily centered on the impacts this activity has on stream and riparian habitat, and resulted in the following two questions:

- Do suction dredge mining activities truly have minimal impacts?
- What are the comprehensive/cumulative impacts from recreational suction dredge mining activities?

In addition, the CBJ permitting process for recreational suction dredge mining presents an administrative concern.

**Do suction dredge mining activities truly have minimal impact?** The Montana Creek Task Force was concerned permitting authorities are operating under the assumption that recreational suction dredge mining is a minimal impact activity, and that this assumption is not supported by monitoring or other evidence. Participants in the public survey also seemed concerned about allowing recreational suction dredge mining. In the public survey, approximately 70.7 percent of the participants agreed or strongly

agreed that recreation suction dredge mining is a threat to the watershed (see results for Question 8). Responses to Question 9 indicate that approximately 18 percent of participants believe this activity is the biggest threat. One participant wrote: "Gold dredging is harmful to spawning salmon yet it seems to be allowed despite the warnings." Indeed, several of the public's comments indicated there are individuals who do not trust that the regulatory agencies, particularly the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), are regulating activities in a manner to protect the Montana Creek fishery.

Suction dredge mining, even small-scale recreational operations, has the potential to affect a stream. Recreational suction dredge mining has been shown to have the following impacts: alteration of aquatic and riparian habitat, increased fine sediment deposition, increased turbidity, mobilization of heavy metals and other pollutants. While serious impacts to habitat and water quality have been documented, the literature is mixed with regards to the nature and severity of the impacts resulting from suction dredge mining activities. The actual degree of impacts depend on a variety of factors including the size and power of suction dredge(s) being used; whether individual operators conduct mining activities responsibly and in compliance with their permits; stream flow conditions; presence of sensitive species and/or life stages; presence of sensitive habitat; and the number and distribution of suction dredge mining activities occurring within a single watershed. In addition, other activities associated with suction dredge mining activities such as ATV use and camping, can also have impacts on the stream and surrounding riparian areas. There are studies indicating the effects of recreational suction dredging (where a smaller nozzle and engine are used) appear to be local and minor, particularly when properly managed and regulated. This "proper management" includes the suction dredge operators abiding by their permits, the ability of the regulatory agencies to enforce their permitting requirements, and the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) (Horizon Water and Environment 2009; Oregon Chapter American Fisheries Society, 2013; Harvey and Lisle, 1998).

The ADF&G Habitat Division Southeast Area office gave a history of suction dredge mining permitting activities in Southeast Alaska to address the concern that they are treating recreational suction dredge mining as a minimal impact activity. Southeast Region saw its first suction dredge mining permit request approximately five years ago. In response to this request, the ADF&G Habitat Division Southeast Area office sought input from colleagues in other Habitat Division Area offices and in other agencies such as DNR, and did research to understand what this activity entails and its potential impacts before issuing the first permit. Suction dredge mining is popular in the Northern and Central Regions of Alaska, and agencies in those Regions had more experience with permitting this activity. The ADF&G Habitat Division Southeast Area office learned that this activity is widely considered a generally allowable use by national entities, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, as well as by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

Furthermore, in response to the first request on McGinnis Creek, the ADF&G Habitat Division Southeast Area office Habitat Biologists set up a weir, and conduct stream surveys and fish trapping to determine whether steelhead were present in the McGinnis Creek because their presence would have prevented the issuance of a permit. However, Habitat Biologists were unable to document the presence of steelhead in McGinnis Creek, which surprised the ADF&G Habitat Division Southeast Area office since Montana Creek is listed on the anadromous waters catalog for steelhead and it was commonly thought

steelhead were present in McGinnis as well. A Memorandum documenting the Habitat Biologist's findings was presented to the Regional ADF&G Habitat Supervisor for Southeast (Hitselberger, J. 2010). This finding sparked concern among fishermen, who felt that the agency should take a more precautionary stance and treat McGinnis Creek as though steelhead were present (Marquis, 2010b).

Based on the information gathered, the ADF&G Habitat Division Southeast Area office has been issuing permits for suction dredge mining in accordance with ADF&G Statutes and Regulations. ADF&G imposes timing windows that restrict suction dredging activity to those times when there are no eggs or alevins in the stream gravels. Suction dredging may occur in a window if activity is occurring on dry gravel bars or the perimeter of the stream where eggs/alevins can be avoided. Since permitting of recreational suction dredge mining is still relatively new in Southeast, the ADF&G Habitat Division Southeast Area office has expended resources (staff time) conducting on-site visits in an effort to ensure any permitted recreational suction dredge mining activities are not negatively impacting fish habitat. Habitat Biologists document their field visits in staff reports which are sent to other regulatory agencies (as previously described).

ADF&G Habitat Division believes all evidence from their on-site visits suggests the few permitted small-scale recreational suction dredge mining operations currently in operation in the Montana Creek watershed have relatively minor impacts and the agency does not believe the current circumstances are compromising the watershed's fish habitat. Existing operations are not moving large amounts of materials; operating a suction dredge is highly labor intensive and operators are mostly retirees. Operators have been cooperative with Habitat Biologists during field visits. . Continued monitoring will allow ADF&G to expand its knowledge regarding this activity and possibly address the issue of cumulative impacts.

**What are the comprehensive/cumulative impacts from recreational suction dredge mining activities?**

As previously stated, the number and distribution of suction dredge mining activities occurring within a single watershed can influence the degree to which the watershed is impacted. However, there is very little research regarding the cumulative effects of recreational of suction dredge mining operations. This lack of information is a concern to the Montana Creek Task Force. According to ADF&G Habitat Division, most watersheds being adversely affected by suction dredge mining have a large number of permitted operations. ADF&G Habitat Division Southeast Area office believes understanding the cumulative impacts of suction dredge mining operations could greatly inform their permitting process and help protect Montana Creek and other watersheds. Though there are currently only a few individuals applying for permits for suction dredge mining in Montana Creek, this activity tends to fluctuate with the price of gold, and there could be more applications if gold prices were to increase. If there were ever an increase in applicants, ADF&G does not have enough information to know how many permits could be issued before the cumulative effects of the suction dredge mining activities would adversely affect the creek.

**CBJ permitting process for recreational suction dredge mining:** Another concern with recreational suction dredge mining is that the City and Borough of Juneau's permitting process is the most deficient aspect of managing suction dredge mining activities. In cross-referencing data with the ADF&G, the CBJ

has become aware that only 30 to 40 percent of individuals are obtaining the required CBJ permits. However, the CBJ does not have the staff to pursue those individuals who did not obtain permits. Information regarding the permitting requirement is either not getting to the suction dredge mining operators, or the additional \$200 permit fee is deterring these recreational miners from submitting a mining exploration permit application with the City.

### Opportunities for Improvement

There are a number of actions that could be implemented to improve the circumstances surrounding suction dredge mining. The Montana Creek Task Force recommends the following:

**Research the impacts of suction dredge mining, particularly cumulative impacts:** If possible, it might be worthwhile to work with suction dredge mining operators to conduct an impartial monitoring effort on the currently permitted operations. This could, perhaps, be done by the JWP or another party that does not represent the operator or the regulatory agencies. This data/information can be used in a public education/outreach campaign that may be helpful in alleviating concerns regarding the current impacts of suction dredge mining on Montana and McGinnis Creeks. More important, however, is that research is needed to understand the cumulative impacts of recreational suction dredge mining. Knowing how many permits could be issued in a watershed without causing adverse cumulative impacts would assist permitting agencies in making informed decisions. This information would reduce the risk of allowing too many permitted suction dredge mining operations in any single watershed. Over-permitting these activities caused other watersheds to become adversely affected by recreational suction dredge mining. However, this could be prevented in Montana Creek and other watersheds in Southeast Alaska, which currently do not have a large number of permitted suction dredge mining operations.

**Identify non-fish streams that could be productive for suction dredge mining:** Identifying non-fish streams within the Juneau area that could be productive for suction dredge mining would provide a means to redirect activities to these waterbodies. Those individuals who participate in suction dredge mining can be informed of alternate streams in which to conduct their activities or, perhaps, redirected to these alternate streams to reduce or prevent cumulative impacts on Montana Creek. The benefit of these alternate sites to the individual is that they would not require a Habitat Permit and, therefore, the activity could be less burdensome in terms of meeting regulatory requirements.

**Improve CBJ's permitting process:** CBJ's Exploration and Mining code section was written primarily to regulate large-scale exploration, but recreational mining is regulated under the same ordinance. The code could be modified to make permits less costly for recreational miners in order to encourage them to obtain the permit. In addition, in line with the previous suggestion, the Exploration and Mining code could also be amended to include pre-approved recreational mining areas that have little to no habitat impacts or conflicts with other recreational users, which could be exempt from the requirement for a mining exploration permit. Again, this might re-direct recreational miners to other watersheds and reduce the permitting enforcement and tracking burden on CBJ. In any case, it would still be beneficial for CBJ to improve their ability to track and enforce their permits.

**Public education and outreach:** Public education and outreach has to address to different groups: those that are recreational suction dredge mining operators and the general public. According to ADF&G, they educate operators at the time they obtain their Habitat Permit, but there may be other opportunities to conduct outreach with the operators. However, it is important to also educate the general public about recreational suction dredge mining to improve their understanding of this activity, how it is managed, and its actual impacts on Montana Creek. This will improve public perception by providing concerned stakeholders with facts regarding suction dredge mining activities in the Montana Creek watershed and make them more informed participants in future planning discussions about this activity.

## Invasive Plant Species

Invasive plant species are non-native species that can spread aggressively throughout a habitat once introduced and cause adverse impacts to the environment. Invasive plant species can be introduced to habitats by both natural and human-aided pathways. Once introduced, invasive plants have many characteristics and adaptations that allow them to out-compete native vegetation. Typically, invasive plants grow rapidly, mature early and can reproduce both sexually and asexually. Invasive plant species can alter habitat composition, alter soil and water nutrient availability, and increase the risk of wildfires. Aquatic habitats such as wetlands and waterways are particularly sensitive to invasive species. Relatively pristine areas, like the Montana Creek watershed, are not immune to an invasive plant infestation. Surveys of the Montana Creek watershed have identified infestations of invasive plant species occurring at sites disturbed by human activities and infrastructure, as well as areas disturbed by natural processes.

## Current Conditions and Management

Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has authority to regulate and manage noxious weeds and invasive plant species in a variety of capacities. DNR's regulations in 11 AAC 34 includes a list of prohibited and noxious weeds, which are regulated through restrictions on the sale, use and transport of seed. The DNR Division of Agriculture also developed a Strategic Plan to coordinate prevention, outreach and management strategies for invasive plant species.

The DNR has twelve Soil and Water Conservation Districts that are legal subdivisions of the DNR under AS 41.10. The districts are non-regulatory agencies that address conservation issues through education, technical assistance, and grant programs. The Southeast Soil and Water Conservation District is the regional district that includes Juneau.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) also plays a regulatory role in the management of invasive plants, though ADF&G's focus is primarily invasive aquatic plants that impact fish habitat. ADF&G's regulations prohibit transplanting aquatic plants and prohibit anglers from using footgear with absorbent, fibrous material (e.g. felt) soles to prevent the spread of invasive aquatic plants.

The CBJ 2013 Comprehensive Plan outline's the City's policy toward invasive species management: "to protect local biodiversity, including native flora and fauna, from invasive species." In the Comprehensive Plan, CBJ has committed to the following Implementing Actions with regards to invasive species:

7.12 – IA1 The CBJ government should fund or otherwise support a study of the effects of climate change on the potential for invasive species to immigrate to and thrive in the borough, to the detriment of native species. If this study identifies potential harmful effects of invasive species, the CBJ government and community should undertake aggressive measures to prevent and eliminate this infestation hazard.

7.12 – IA2 The CBJ should fund or help fund a Borough-wide study of invasive plants to produce an inventory and maps of existing locations of invasive plants on, at least, CBJ-owned lands. This study should include the following elements: (1) development of a priority list of invasive plant species to be targeted for control and eradication throughout the CBJ and a five to ten year plan for achieving that goal; (2) development of a CBJ team within an existing department or to a

contracted non-profit group to coordinate the implementation of that eradication program; (3) development of a prevention plan to identify and address sources of invasive plant species; (4) development and implementation of a public education program to promote awareness of the impacts of and methods to eradicate invasive plant species and to urge retailers not to sell invasive species or to prohibit them from selling them; (5) development of new land use controls to require private property owners to eradicate, or to prevent the introduction of invasive species on their property as part of review and approval of new building or grading permits; and (6) designation of a secure site and procedures for safe disposal of pulled or cut invasive species.



**Figure 28.** Volunteers removing Bohemian knotweed in the Montana Creek watershed. Photo from JWP archives, 2011.

Invasive plant species are also managed by a variety of non-profit and non-government organizations (NGOs) including the Alaska Association of Conservation Districts, UAF Cooperative Extension Service, Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition (SAWC), and the Juneau Watershed Partnership (JWP). The role of these organizations is primarily education and community service projects such as invasive plant removal using volunteers (Figure 28).

Non-native plant species are usually given an invasiveness ranking, which is a number between 0 and 100 denoting how much of a threat the plant poses to native ecosystems. The higher the invasiveness rank, the greater the threat the plant poses. The ranking is calculated based on the species' ecological impacts, biological attributes, distribution and response to control measures.

There has already been a rapid response effort in Montana Creek by the Southeast Alaska Soil and Water Conservation District. Since 2011, the Alaska Association of Conservation Districts (AACD) has partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to manage invasive plant species in Juneau. Efforts began with conducting invasive plant surveys in three Juneau watersheds, including Montana Creek. In 2011, approximately 31 acres of the Montana Creek watershed was surveyed. This survey identified approximately 18 invasive plant species in 562 infestations that cover a total of 6.7 acres of the watershed. Several of the identified invasive plant species had an invasiveness ranking of 60 or higher, including reed canarygrass, ornamental jewelweed, Bohemian knotweed, oxeye daisy and orange hawkweed. The most common invasive plant species in the watershed is creeping buttercup, which has an invasiveness ranking of 54 (Figure 29).



**Figure 29.** Creeping buttercup growing on a streambank in lower Montana Creek. Photo from Hudson et al, n.d.

Most infestations were found in areas disturbed by human activities and infrastructure (e.g. roads and trails) and natural processes (e.g. wind-thrown trees, bank erosion, fluvial sediment deposition). Water seems to play a role in transporting some species away from the road and trail system. ATV/OHV trails harbored few invasive species, and it is suspected that regular traffic and forest canopy shading may be preventing establishment along these areas (Hudson, et al, n.d.).

Following mapping and inventory efforts, control measures have been implemented. A single infestation of ornamental jewelweed consisting of 100 plants near the rifle range was removed in 2011, and additional plants were removed from this site in 2012 (Hudson, et al, n.d.). In 2013, the USFWS and SE SWCD conducted hand-pulling projects and herbicide control of bohemian knotweed and reed canary grass throughout Juneau. As part of this effort, reed canary grass was targeted in Montana Creek to protect fish habitat (Maupin and Hudson, 2013). According to Brian Maupin, the SE SWCD has eradicated a knotweed patch and 30 infestations of reed canary grass in the Montana Creek watershed.

### Concerns with Invasive Plant Species

While a little over half of the public survey responses indicate invasive species are a threat to the watershed (see results for Question 8), no one indicated that invasive plant species, in and of themselves, are the greatest threat (see responses to Question 9). Those that mentioned invasive plant species did so in relation to ATV use. The Montana Creek Task Force feels that current strategies are working to address existing conditions in the watershed. However, that does not mean that there are no concerns with regards to invasive plant species. The following concerns were identified during the planning process:

- Ensure the watershed stays in “prevention” mode
- The community garden appears to be a source of invasive plants
- ATVs as vectors

**Ensure the watershed stays in “prevention” mode:** Ensuring that the watershed stays in “prevention” mode is a primary concern. This involves continued Early Detection/Rapid Response efforts, particularly for the following species of concern:

Orange Hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum* L.) is a perennial herb, with red to orange flowers. Orange hawkweed has an invasiveness ranking of 79, and was identified as a concern because this plant can be destructive if it gets into undisturbed ecosystems, like the Montana Creek watershed. Hawkweed is allelopathic, which means it can release chemicals into the soil that can affect the growth and survival of nearby plants. Hawkweed also tends to establish dense monocultures and, therefore, limit biodiversity. Hawkweed is also likely to reduce soil moisture and nutrient availability. The seeds are easily dispersed by wind, animals and human activities (Klein, 2011b). Orange hawkweed is one of the five most invasive species identified in the watershed and requires rapid response. One orange hawkweed infestation was found next to a trail in the upper watershed in the 2011 survey (Hudson et al, n.d.).

Reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea* L.) is a perennial grass with an invasiveness ranking of 83. Reed canarygrass forms dense monocultures in wetlands. Ecological impacts include reduction in cover for small mammals and birds (the infestations are too dense for use); promotion of silt deposition and constriction of waterways; and alteration of soil hydrology (Klein, 2011c). Reed canarygrass infestations were primarily found in roadside ditches along Montana Creek Road from the rifle range to the end of the road. Infestations were also found within an extensive area of braided channels upstream of the community garden (Hudson et al, n.d.). Control measures have already begun in Montana Creek.

European Mountain Ash (*Sorbus aucuparia* L.) is a tree that has alternate, pinnately compound leaves and small white flowers that bloom in clusters. European mountain ash has an invasiveness ranking of 59, and was identified as a concern because it can out-compete native species for pollinators due to their numerous blossoms. It can also hybridize with similar, native species such as Sitka mountain ash (*Sorbus sitchensis*) and Cascade mountain ash (*S. scopulina*). Otherwise, the impacts of European mountain ash are largely unknown (Klein, 2011a).

Rock snot (*Didymosphenia geminata*) is a freshwater diatom that can form large, dense mats that can spread across the stream bottom. The mats are strong and resistant to degradation. The mats are not slimy, like algae, and can be yellow-brown to white in color. It can be introduced through contaminated fishing gear. The Task Force is not sure if rock snot is present in Montana Creek, but considers it worthwhile to determine whether it is present.

**The community garden appears to be a source of invasive plants:** Previous mapping efforts indicate that a lot of invasive species are present within the vicinity of the community garden. Therefore, the community garden appears to be a source of invasive plants.

**ATVs as vectors:** Although mapping efforts have not shown a large number of infestations on ATV trails, ATVs have the potential to be a vector for invasive plant species into more remote, sensitive locations and is a concern for continued prevention.

### Opportunities for Improvement

In regards to invasive species, the group made these recommendations:

- Continue rapid response efforts
- Conduct long-term monitoring
- Provide education/outreach, particularly to ATV/OHV groups

**Continue rapid response efforts:** There has already been a rapid response in Montana Creek. Continuing these efforts will maintain the “prevention mode,” because known infestations will be addressed.

**Conduct long-term monitoring:** There is a need for long term monitoring to keep Montana Creek in “prevention” mode. This will help track whether the rapid response efforts are improving conditions and allow for identifying and addressing new infestations as they occur. The latter is particularly important for highly invasive plant species, which are more difficult to address once established.

**Provide education/outreach, particularly to ATV/OHV groups:** There is a need for more education about invasive plants and ways to prevent their spreading. Although mapping efforts have not shown a large number of infestations on ATV trails, ATVs have the potential to be a major vector for invasive plant species. It is important to educate riders at this stage, in order to prevent spread of invasive species throughout the area.

## Other Recommendations

Through the Montana Creek Task Force meetings and the public survey, there are other items recommended to improving conditions on Montana Creek.

**Improvements to the Montana Creek Trail system:** The Montana Creek Trail system consists of three trail segments totaling approximately 11 miles. The Lower Montana Creek Trail connects with the 2-mile long Kaxdigoowu Heen Dei Trail and the Upper Montana Creek trail connects with the 3-mile long Windfall Lake Trail (Figure 31). The Task Force and the public identified improvements that they would like to see in the Montana Creek Trail system. These include:

- Address the litter/dumping problem at the Montana Creek Road trailhead and throughout lower portions of the creek;
- Downstream of the Juneau Youth Services (JYS) property, re-locate hiking trails 300-feet away from the creek, as proposed in the *Lands Assessment and Recreation Corridor Conservation Proposal* (Trout Unlimited, 2006);
- Improve the Montana Creek Trail's connection to Auke Lake;
- Improve the Montana Creek Trail upstream of Back Loop Rd.;
- Improve the upper section of Montana Creek Trail to Windfall Lake; and
- Improve access to McGinnis Creek basin

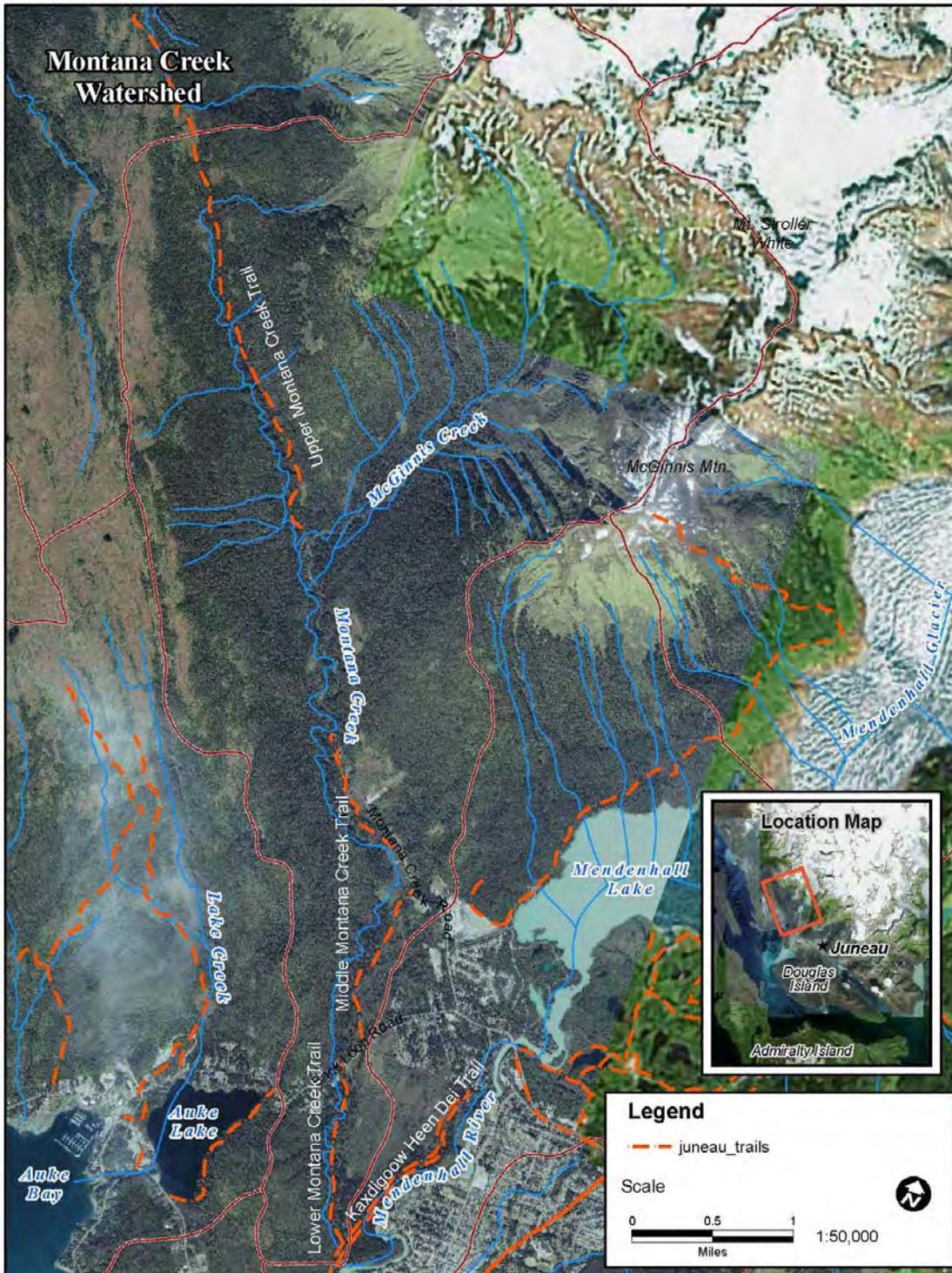
### Replacing the Montana Creek Bridge:

The Task Force would like to reopen discussions about replacing the Montana Creek Bridge located at the end of Montana Creek Road (Figure 30). The Task Force believe funding was available in the past for a temporary bridge at this location, but was not pursued because permitting became problematic. The Juneau Trout Unlimited Chapter previously committed funds for a revetment project upstream of the bridge to improve bank stabilization, but it would have required the bridge to be rebuilt. When it became clear the plans were to build the bridge to support



**Figure 30.** The Montana Creek Bridge located at the end of Montana Creek Road. Photo courtesy of Amy Sumner, JWP.

vehicle traffic, Trout Unlimited decided to retract support for the revetment project because they were concerned about the potential impacts of traffic associated with the proposed replacement bridge (Mark Kaelke, Personal Communication). The U.S. Forest Service representative on the Task Force believes the USFS may have supplies to build a replacement bridge, but would have to confirm this. The Task Force agreed that the best bridge structure for this location would be one that had a clear span across the creek (no pilings), and support pedestrians and non-highway (off road) vehicles only.



Service Layer Credits: U.S. Geological Society; Southeast Alaska GIS Library; University of Alaska Southeast

Figure 31. Montana Creek trail system.

**Improve Fish Habitat in Montana Creek:** The following actions are recommended to help improve and protect fish habitat, and fish populations:

1. JWP or other non-profit group, or as a partnership, submit a proposal to Sustainable Salmon Fund or other grantor to map undocumented habitat.
2. Identify and replace culverts preventing fish passage.
3. Identify areas where fish habitat can be created.
4. Determine whether overfishing is impacting fish populations.



**Figure 32.** Four side-by-side culverts that create a low and high water velocity fish barrier on a side channel of Montana Creek. Photo courtesy of John Hudson, USFWS.

**Implement CBJ Comprehensive Plan Policies:** The 2013 Comprehensive Plan contains numerous environmental policies, standard operating procedures, and implementing actions that could improve protection of Montana Creek and other Juneau watersheds. This includes those that were previously mentioned in this Plan as well as many others that will not be specified here. Though it is understood that implementation of these policies could take time, the Task Force would like to encourage the CBJ to work toward implementing the measures outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.



**Figure 33.** Volunteers from the annual Litter Free Spring Clean-Up posing with the garbage they collected from the Montana Creek trail. Photo from JWP's archives.

**Continue Participation in Litter Free, Inc.'s Annual Spring Clean-Up:** To address litter and debris in Juneau's watersheds, JWP will continue participating in the Annual Spring Clean-up. Recognizing the importance of Montana Creek and the expressed concerns regarding littering and dumping occurring within the watershed, particularly along the trail, JWP will ensure that some volunteers at the Clean-up are directed to focus clean-up efforts on Montana Creek.

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## **APPENDIX A. Montana Creek Task Force Documents**

# Montana Creek Watershed Stewardship Task Force - 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting March 21, 2013

## Meeting Notes

### Nina Horne - Juneau Watershed Partnership

- Introduced the Juneau Watershed Partnership and gave a brief description of the USFS sponsored project to develop a Montana Creek Watershed Stewardship Plan.

### Erik Boraas - Trail Mix

- Trail Mix has worked on bank rehabilitation, trail improvements and fisherman access (finished last summer, 2012) in the Montana Creek Watershed.
- With the 1% CBJ sales tax, will eventually get funding to rebuild Montana Creek trail connection from Back Loop Road to the Community Garden (4-5 years away).
- Supports non-invasive trail development and has had mostly positive interaction with the community in the Montana Creek Watershed when doing work in that area.

### Mark Kaelke & Brad Elfers - Trout Unlimited (both) and Alaska Fly Fishing Goods (Brad)

- Worked on the Montana Creek Lands Assessment in 2006, which resulted in a 500 ft no-development buffer enforced by City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) alongside the Montana Creek corridor.
- Trout Unlimited is mainly concerned with prevention and maintaining the current conditions (current status) and natural environment of the Montana Creek watershed.

### Doug Sanvik - Alaska Division of Mining, Land and Water, Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

- The DNR manages state lands, and their primary concern is the access and degradation of state lands.
- The issue of degradation and access is often associated with ATV use and access to state lands and the affect that they have on the landscape, on and off-trails.
- The term General Use is roughly defined by the State of Alaska and is open to interpretation.
- Trail corridor on State lands is required to maintain a 25 foot corridor (could use some clarification).

### Barbara Adams - U.S. Forest Service

- Interests as grantor include bringing all of the ideas together and collaboration in order to maintain and better Montana Creek Watershed.
- Restrict OHV use on USFS lands (they are currently not allowed to operate on Forest Service land).

## Montana Creek Watershed Stewardship Task Force - 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting March 21, 2013

### Jackie Timothy - ADF&G

- Generally concerned with fish passage, which involves permitting stream crossings and in-stream activities:
  - Activities requiring an ADF&G permit cannot harm or impede fish passage.
  - There are currently 3 recreational suction dredge mining permits issued through ADF&G and 1 person with an ATV crossing permit.
  - There are signs posted at stream crossings that ATV's are not allowed to cross the streams without a permit, but these signs are constantly requiring replacement.
- Log Retention project on bend of Montana Creek, downhill side of trail (failed project from previous years).
  - Materials have already been purchased but haven't acquired the necessary permits to cross the stream with large equipment necessary to install the retention.
  - The bridge crossing Montana Creek would also require stabilization and reinforcement in order to be fortified for construction equipment to pass over it.
  - The retention project would be a trails project, and would not necessarily benefit in-stream fish habitat and hydrology of the river system.
- Suction Dredge Mining
  - Jackie conducted an on-site visit to witness suction dredge mining first-hand being conducted in the stream.
  - Suction dredge mining is a generally minimal impact activity, not occurring in-stream, just on dry gravel beds, therefore not affecting egg beds and spawning habitat.
  - This activity is widely considered a generally allowable use by national entities, including the EPA, Army Corp of Engineers, DNR, and State of Alaska.
  - In Jackie's experience, more miners are applying for suction-dredge permits rather than mining illegally. *[CBI has a different experience, see Teri Camery's notes below]*
- Teri Camery - City and Borough of Juneau Senior Planner
  - CBI also requires a permit for suction dredge mining, and is not experiencing the same amount of legal permit applications as the ADF&G; especially when comparing applicants (applicants are required to possess both permits in order to legally suction dredge mine).
  - Teri mentioned the following work the CBI has done in regards to the watershed:
    - The CBI Comprehensive Plan has a number of goals and actions applicable to the Montana Creek watershed.
    - The normal planning code includes a basic stream setback of 50 feet.
    - Invasive species survey in Montana Creek that includes a knotweed patch.
    - ATV studies in the watershed.

## Montana Creek Watershed Stewardship Task Force - 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting March 21, 2013

- The CBJ purchased a house in the watershed that was falling into Montana Creek and removed the house.
  - The CBJ is currently working on updating the Juneau Wetlands Management Plan, which includes wetlands mapping and classification in the Montana Creek watershed.
  - Flood Management - the CBJ currently has new/updated FEMA flood maps and the City must adopt the draft flood maps by August 2013.
- **John Hudson - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**
    - Has been working on invasive weed inventories in the Montana Creek watershed, which includes invasive weed surveys, mapping and eradication planning.
    - The weed survey included areas along the community garden and alongside the stream corridor.
      - 562 field investigations on greater than 7 acres, ranked 60 or more on an invasive species scale.
      - Invasive species located in the watershed include reed canary grass, which slows down water flow and increases sedimentation in the stream, damaging spawning habitat.
    - John has also worked on mapping fish habitat in the Montana Creek watershed, damaging foot trails at the rifle range and ATV trail mapping with the Juneau Watershed Partnership around Upper Montana Creek and McGinnis Creek.
- **Brian Maupin - SE SWCD**
    - Dana White, previous Invasive Plant Manager, set a foundation of work for the newly formed SE SWCD.
    - The SE SWCD works with invasive species, including knotweed and reed canary grass and follows the protocol of rapid response and eradication.
- **Erich Schaal - City and Borough of Juneau Docks & Harbor**
    - Hopes to use this format of the Task Force and apply it to the overarching goals at the Echo Cove boat launch, which is owned and operated by the City and Borough of Juneau.
    - Problems at Echo Cove include illegal ATV use and activity, degradation to the landscape and marine habitat caused by this illegal activity.
    - At one point there was a caretaker who lived in Echo Cove, but it ended up not working out.

## Montana Creek Watershed Stewardship Task Force - 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting March 21, 2013

- **Mal Menzies - Juneau Gun Club**

- The Juneau Gun Club is on 10 acres of leased land from the City and Borough of Juneau and there are several small tributaries of Montana Creek that abut the leased property.
- There are no current plans for development on the property, but years past they had plans to re-permit and reconstruct the range.
  - The main issue was the disturbance and removal of contaminated soil containing lead shell casings, which could possibly contaminate the soil/peat by leaching into the wetlands.
  - Studies were conducted that detected minimal lead levels in the soil.
- There has been a discussion of adding a shooting sport course to the gun range, but no definitive plans have been made.

- **Chuck Caldwell - Raincountry Fly Fishers**

- Mainly concerned with ATV use and fish habitat in the Montana Creek watershed and would like to focus on preservation, before rehabilitation and restoration is necessary.

**End Note:** There was a discussion about the possibility of the CBJ Parks & Recreation department installing a gate on Montana Creek road, just past the rifle range. Erik Boraas confirmed with George Schaaf, Director of CBJ Parks & Rec, that plans are in place to install the gate near the rifle range over the summer 2013. The gate will operate the same hours that the rifle range is open.

### **Main Concerns discussed at the first Montana Creek Task Force meeting:**

1. Access and trail maintenance
2. Illegal Trails
3. Stream Health
4. ATV Usage
5. Fishing/hiking activities
6. Mining
7. Degradation of state land
8. Undocumented fish habitat
9. Flood management
10. Enforcement

# Montana Creek Watershed Stewardship Task Force - 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting March 21, 2013

## Participants

Name	Affiliation	Email
<b>1. Nina Horne</b>	Executive Director Juneau Watershed Partnership	jwp@alaska.net
<b>2. Jackie Ebert</b>	Project Coordinator Juneau Watershed Partnership	jackie.jwp@gmail.com
<b>3. Chuck Caldwell</b>	Raincountry Fly Fishers	ceis@gci.net
<b>4. John Hudson</b>	US Fish & Wildlife Service	John_hudson@fws.gov
<b>5. Erik Boraas</b>	Trail Mix	erik@juneautrails.org
<b>6. Brian Maupin</b>	Southeast Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	bgmaupin4000@gmail.com
<b>7. Brad Elfers</b>	Trout Unlimited Juneau	brad@alaskaflyfishinggoods.com
<b>8. Mark Kaelke</b>	Trout Unlimited Juneau	mkaelke@tu.org
<b>9. Doug Sanvik</b>	Alaska Div. of Mining, Land & Water, DNR	doug.sanvik@alaska.gov
<b>10. Teri Camery</b>	CBJ Planning <span style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;">email update: <a href="mailto:teri.camery@juneau.org">teri.camery@juneau.org</a></span>	Teri_camery@ci.juneau.ak.us
<b>11. Mal Menzies</b>	Juneau Gun Club	mmenzies@gci.net
<b>12. Barbara Adams</b>	Forest Service, Juneau Ranger District	bjadams@fs.fed.us
<b>13. Jackie Timothy</b>	ADF&G Habitat	Jackie.timothy@alaska.gov
<b>14. Erich Schaal</b>	CBJ Docks & Harbors	Erich_schaal@ci.juneau.ak.us <span style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;">email update: <a href="mailto:erich.schaal@juneau.org">erich.schaal@juneau.org</a></span>

## Montana Creek Task Force Meeting Agenda

Meeting date: 27 May 2014

Meeting time: 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Meeting Location: Downtown Public Library, Large Meeting Room

### Agenda Items

1. Introductions (~15 mins.)
2. Montana Creek Planning Strategy:
  - A. Threats – did we capture everything in the last meeting? (~15 mins.)

Threats identified in first meeting:

    - Urban Development
    - Motorized Use
    - Invasive Species
    - Suction Dredge Mining
    - Undocumented Fish Habitat
    - Illegal Trails
    - Stream Crossings
  - B. Threat – Current Management – Deficiencies in Management – Opportunities (~1 hr., 20 mins.)

As a group, we will discuss each of the identified threats in detail. We will go over current management strategies, deficiencies in those strategies and opportunities for improved management. We will not get through the whole list this meeting. We will organize additional meetings as needed.

3. Wrap-up



## Montana Creek Task Force Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: 27 May 2014

Meeting Time: 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Meeting Location: Downtown Public Library, Large Meeting Room

**Present:** (sign in sheet also attached)

Amy Sumner, Juneau Watershed Partnership (JWP) Board Chair

Mark Kaelke, Trout Unlimited

John Hudson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Barb Adams, U.S. Forest Service

Chuck Caldwell, Raincountry Fly Fishers

Gretchen Pikul, Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation

Dave Hanna, Community member and local contractor

Teri Camery, City and Borough of Juneau

Chrissy McNally, City and Borough of Juneau

Brian Maupin, Southeast Soil and Water Conservation District

A. Sumner, Board Chair, introduced herself to the group and had everyone introduce themselves. After introductions, Ms. Sumner apologized to the group for the lack in communication and coordination regarding the Task Force and the Montana Creek Stewardship Plan. She explained to the group that, over the last year, JWP had experienced staff turn-over and that the Plan had been extremely delayed. Ms. Sumner further explained that JWP currently does not have paid staff members and that she will now be coordinating the Planning process. Ms. Sumner, however, made it clear to the group that she is, unfortunately, just a Board member who is doing all of this work voluntarily, and she asked that the group be patient with her in this process.

Ms. Sumner told the group that her plan was to discuss the threats that were identified in the first meeting, back in March 2013. She had provided the group with a hand out that described the problem and current management structure for four of the seven identified threats: Urban Development, Motorized Use, Invasive Species and Suction Dredge Mining. Ms. Sumner posed to the group that they use this meeting to discuss the deficiencies in the current management structure and identify opportunities to improve the problem for these four threats, and organize another meeting to discuss the threats of Undocumented Fish Habitat, Illegal Trails and Stream Crossings.

### Urban Development

In the discussion regarding Urban Development, the group identified these items of concern:

1. The 500 ft. stream corridor buffer proposed by Trout Unlimited has been implemented in the new CBJ Comprehensive Plan, but only applies to CBJ property. However, other

properties (JYS and University) have potential to have high effects on the watershed and should have buffers.

2. What are the terms of the conservation easement of the JYS property?
3. Specific sites/projects that are of concern are:
  - The Montana Creek home with the bridge is currently a fish barrier
  - Quarry on Coogan Property - concerns regarding the drainage and potential discharges into Montana Creek
  - Subdivision stormwater management during expansion
  - Stormwater management off of Back Loop Road
  - DOT ditch maintenance, specifically timing and techniques
  - Stream gauge needs replacing
4. Two developments exist within setback.
5. In the Wetland Management Plan update, CBJ is working with property owners to assess functions/values of wetlands on their property. Hoping to work with West Glacier Development and Coogan, both of which have property in Montana Creek.

In regards to Urban Development, the group made these recommendations:

1. In variances to the streamside setback on Montana Creek, standard conditions should be met to apply for the variance. Also, variances should require mitigation.
2. Improve stormwater management by requiring BMPs and improving DOT&PF's ditch cleaning practices
3. Have more planning efforts prior to development

### **Motorized Use**

In the discussion regarding motorized use, the group identified these items of concern:

1. What are the effects of the gate on use?
2. Cost and community perceptions have prevented identification and development of a suitable ATV site
3. Lack of enforcement in Montana Creek
4. JPD cannot increase enforcement and they cannot get into the upper watershed.
5. Camera would not be effective because you cannot connect rider to a particular ATV due to lack of tags/plates
6. Regulatory signage regarding ATV use needs replacing but the signs always seem to be shot at or otherwise damaged. Does not seem to deter ATV users from crossing streams or riding where prohibited.
7. Likely that it is a few individuals that are causing the problem and not the ATV community as a whole.

In regards to motorized use, the group made these recommendations:

1. It is in the best interest of Montana Creek to have riders use other locations. The use of other locations should be encouraged.
2. Encourage Planning Commission to identify and develop an appropriate site.

3. Determine if there a way to assess user fees that can be used to fund development of a site
4. Assess ATV damage in the watershed and identify potential restoration sites
5. Standardize the ATV stream crossings through use of a General Permit granted by ADF&G

In addition, John Hudson agreed to send Ms. Sumner copies of the ATV maps that he has on file for Montana Creek.

### **Suction Dredge Mining**

In the discussion regarding Suction Dredge Mining, the group identified these items of concern:

1. CBJ permits have no enforcement and only 30 - 40 percent file for permit
2. Is there any follow-up or monitoring to determine if the activity is truly minimal impact? (Note: someone added that ADF&G is good about flowing up with their Permittees in the field, but not sure if they conduct any monitoring)
3. What are the comprehensive/cumulative impacts from suction dredge mining?
4. This activity fluctuates with the price of gold.

In regards to suction dredge mining, the group made these recommendations:

1. CBJ can make permits and information regarding permitting easier to obtain; no concrete suggestions were given as to how this can be accomplished.
2. Identify non-fish streams that could be productive for suction dredge mining and redirect activities to these waterbodies

### **Invasive Plant Species**

In the discussion regarding Invasive Plants, the group identified these items of concern:

1. Mountain Ash - out competes for pollinators because they have numerous blossoms
2. Orange Hawkweed – do not want this getting into undisturbed ecosystems
3. Rock snot (diatom) - not sure if it is present in Montana Creek; perhaps we should determine this?
4. ATVs are vectors – need outreach
5. There are a lot of invasive species in the vicinity of the community garden. The garden appears to be a source of invasive plants.

In regards to invasive species, the group made these recommendations:

1. There has already been a rapid response in Montana Creek - need to continue these efforts
2. Eradicated a knotweed patch and 30 infestations of reed canary grass.
3. There is a need for long term monitoring to keep Montana Creek in “prevention” mode
4. There is a need for more education about invasive plants and ways to prevent their spreading

At this point, there was still time left, and the group continued discussions on the remaining topics:

### **Undocumented Fish Habitat**

In the discussion regarding Undocumented Fish Habitat, the group did not identify any concerns other than that there is undocumented/undescribed fish habitat.

In regards to the undocumented fish habitat, the group made these recommendations:

1. JWP or other non-profit group, or as a partnership, submit proposal to Sustainable Salmon Fund to map the undocumented habitat

Other concerns and recommendations regarding fish habitat in general included:

1. Identify perched culverts and crushed culverts preventing fish passage
2. Identify areas where fish habitat can be created

There was also discussion about replacing the Montana Creek bridge located at the end of Montana Creek Road. It was thought that there was funding available for a temporary bridge here but permitting became problematic so it was not pursued. Trout Unlimited had previously committed funds for the bridge replacement but decided to retract funds because they were concerned that the purpose for the replacement was more for road function rather than a fish habitat project. The Forest Service may have supplies to build a replacement bridge, but would have to confirm this. It was agreed that the best bridge structure for this location would be one that had a clear span across the creek (no pilings). It should also be built to support pedestrians and non-highway (off road) vehicles only. Everyone agreed it might be worth re-opening the discussion about replacing the bridge.

### **Illegal Motorized Vehicle Use**

The group felt that illegal trails are primarily interrelated with motorized/ATV use-trails, not hiking trails. However, there was discussion regarding the trail system in Montana Creek, which needs improvements; in particular:

- Downstream of JYS, re-locate hiking trails away from the creek
- Improve trail upstream of Back Loop Rd.
- Improve trail connection to Auke Lake

### **Stream Crossings**

Again the group consensus was that concerns regarding stream crossings are interrelated with motorized/ATV use, and they did not have any additional concerns or recommendations regarding this topic. The group consensus was that this topic had already been discussed and addressed.

### **Other Comments**

It was pointed out that a well-field for a community drinking water supply near the community garden was identified 30 or so years ago. It was recommended that this be researched to

determine if this is still considered a viable drinking water source and, if so, make recommendations to protect it as such.

**Meeting Wrap-up**

Ms. Sumner asked if the group felt that there should be another follow-up meeting to continue discussing the topics of concern. The group consensus was that all topics were discussed and addressed, and preferred to have a draft Plan to review. Ms. Sumner committed to integrating this information and having a draft Plan to review by fall (September/October). She commented that everyone should read the handout and contact her if they felt information presented regarding their agency or the topic was erroneous, or if they had anything to add. Ms. Sumner told the group that this information is going to serve as the base for the Draft Plan.

Ms. Sumner added that she will schedule another meeting after the Draft Plan has been distributed so that the group can discuss any changes they would like to see. With that, Ms. Sumner thanked everyone for attending and the meeting was adjourned at 4:00PM.

**APPENDIX B. Montana Creek Stewardship Plan**  
**Public Survey**

## Appendix B. Montana Creek Stewardship Plan Public Survey

**Montana Creek Stewardship Plan**

## About You and Your Relationship to Montana Creek

**1. Where in Juneau do you live?**

- Mendenhall Valley
- Downtown Juneau
- Out-the-Road
- Thane
- Douglas
- Switzer/Lemon Creek

**2. What is your age?**

- Younger than 18
- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 or older

**3. What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male

**4. I use the Montana Creek Watershed for (check all that apply):**

- Fishing/Hunting
- Non-motorized recreation (hiking, biking, skiing, horseback riding)
- Motorized recreation (ATVs/OHV/s)
- I live in the Montana Creek watershed
- I work in the Montana Creek watershed
- I don't use the Montana Creek watershed

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**Montana Creek Stewardship Plan**

## Your Perception of Montana Creek

**5. Evaluate the following statements.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Montana Creek is a healthy watershed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Montana Creek is at risk of becoming impaired (not meeting water quality standards)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Montana Creek is at risk of becoming over-developed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Montana Creek is important to me as a resident of Juneau	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Montana Creek is important to the community of Juneau	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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**Montana Creek Stewardship Plan**

Watershed Values

6. Evaluate whether the following are benefits/values of the Montana Creek watershed.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Land for development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Resources such as timber and minerals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fishing/Hunting/Gathering	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fish and wildlife habitat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recreation opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eco-tourism (guiding)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Undeveloped land	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. What do you perceive to be the greatest benefit/value to the Montana Creek watershed? This can be one of the benefits described above or one you identify.

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**Montana Creek Stewardship Plan**

Threats to Montana Creek

8. Evaluate whether the following are threats to Montana Creek's health

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Invasive species	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Urban development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ATV use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recreational suction dredge mining	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. What do you perceive to be the biggest threat to Montana Creek? This can be one of the threats from the previous question or one that you identify.

Prev Next

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Check out our [sample surveys](#) and create your own now!

Montana Creek Stewardship Plan

Final Thoughts

10. Anything you like to share about Montana Creek? This can be things you love about the watershed or concerns you have about its future. Thank you for participating in our survey!

Prev

Done

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Check out our [sample surveys](#) and create your own now!

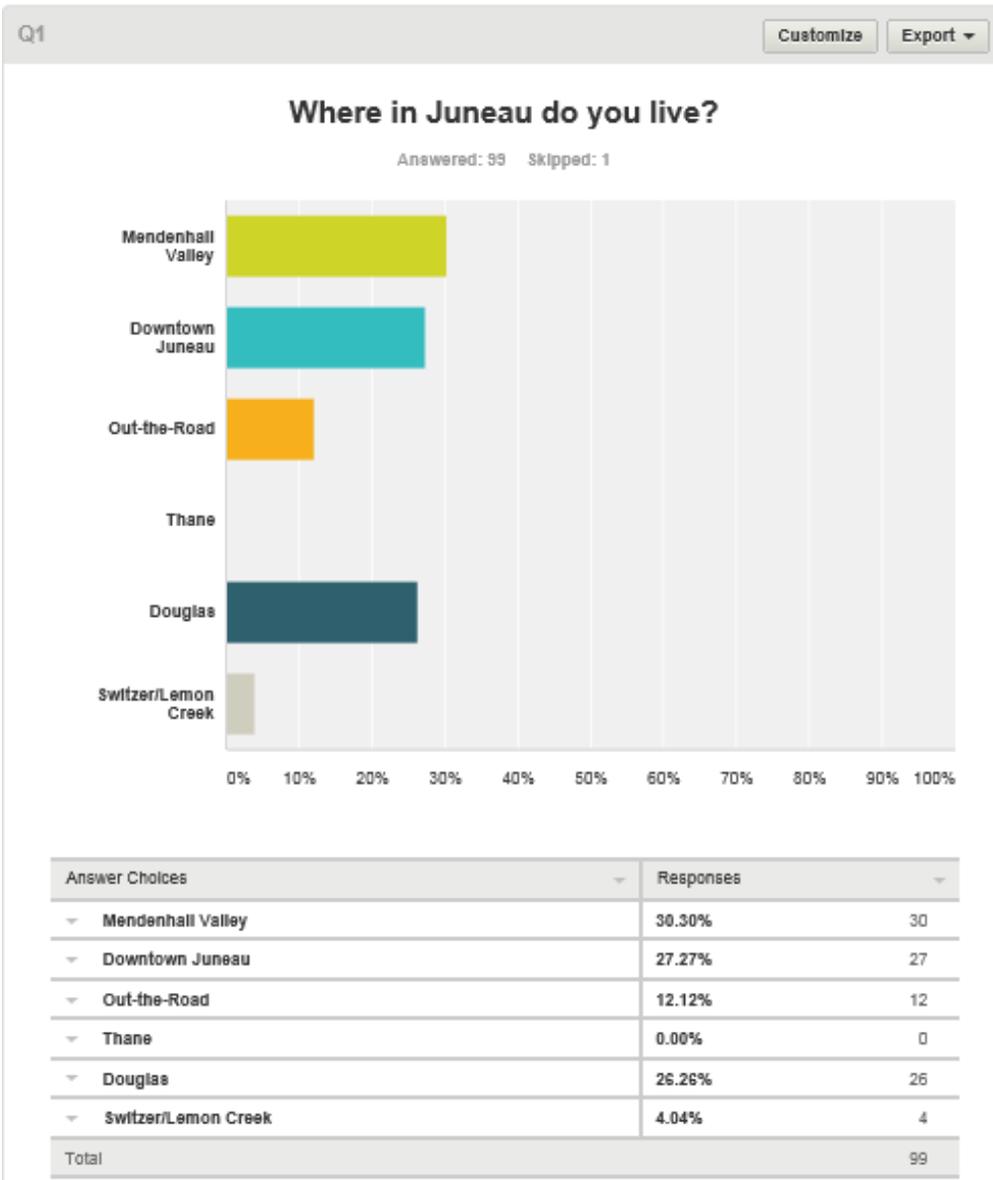
**APPENDIX C. Montana Creek Stewardship Plan**  
**Public Survey Data**

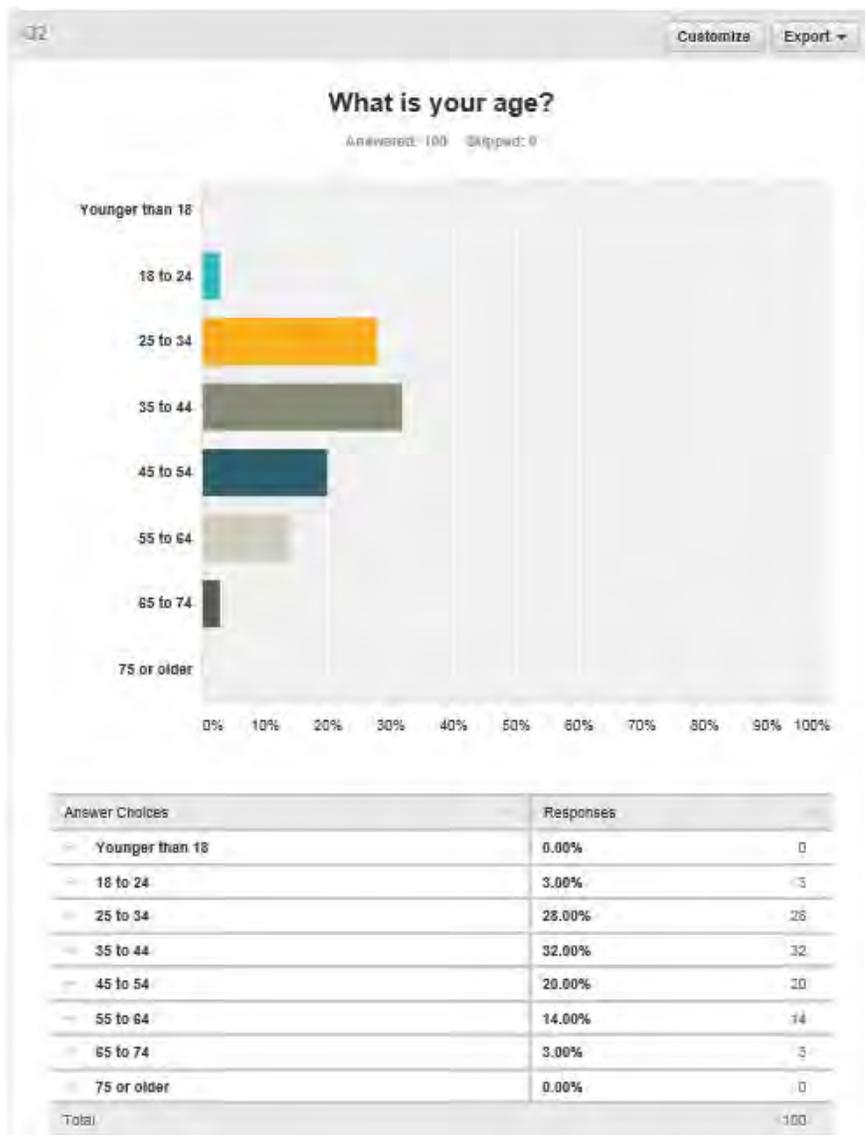
Appendix c. Montana Creek Stewardship Plan Public Survey Responses

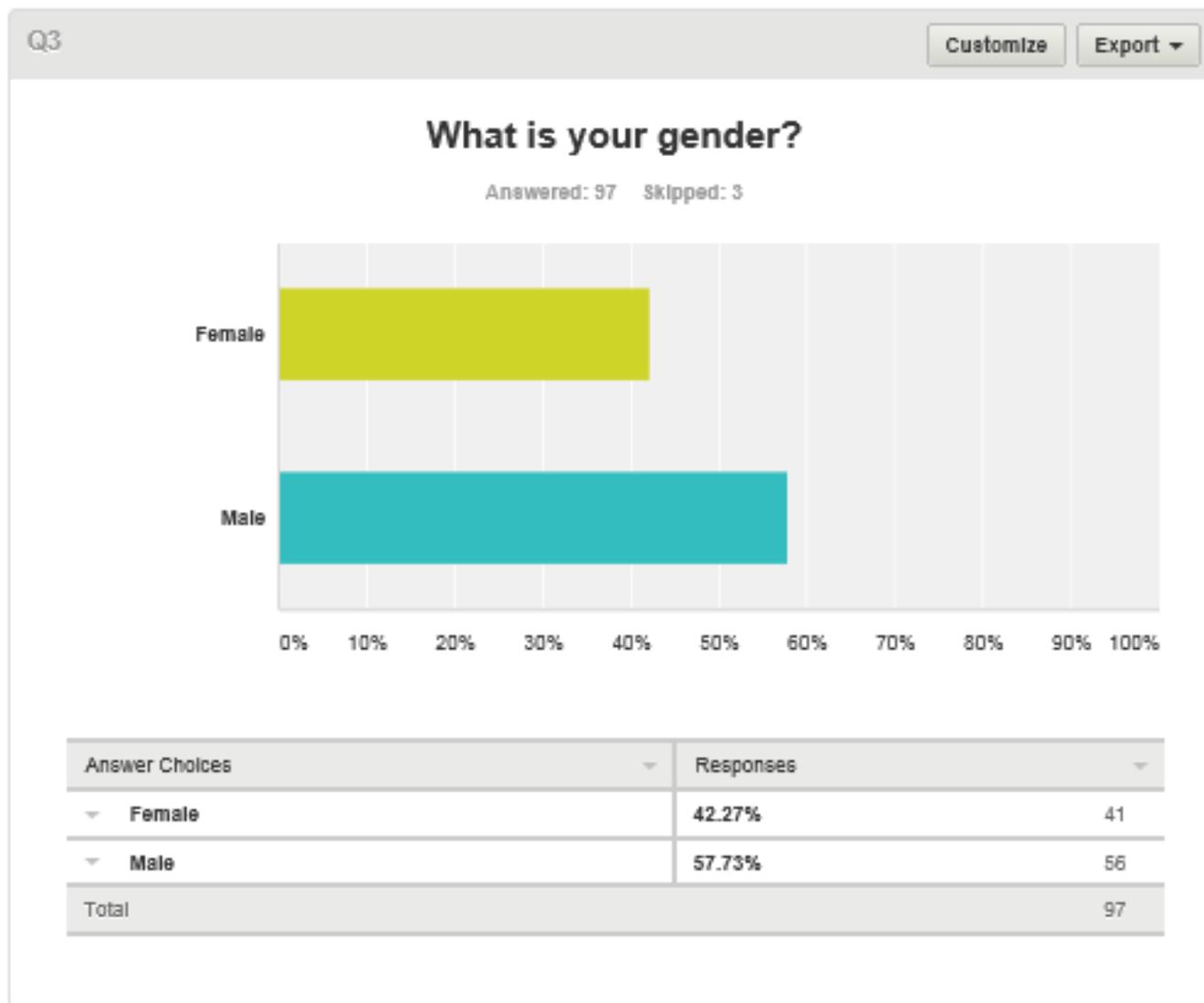
1. Response Summary. Screenshot from SurveyMonkey.

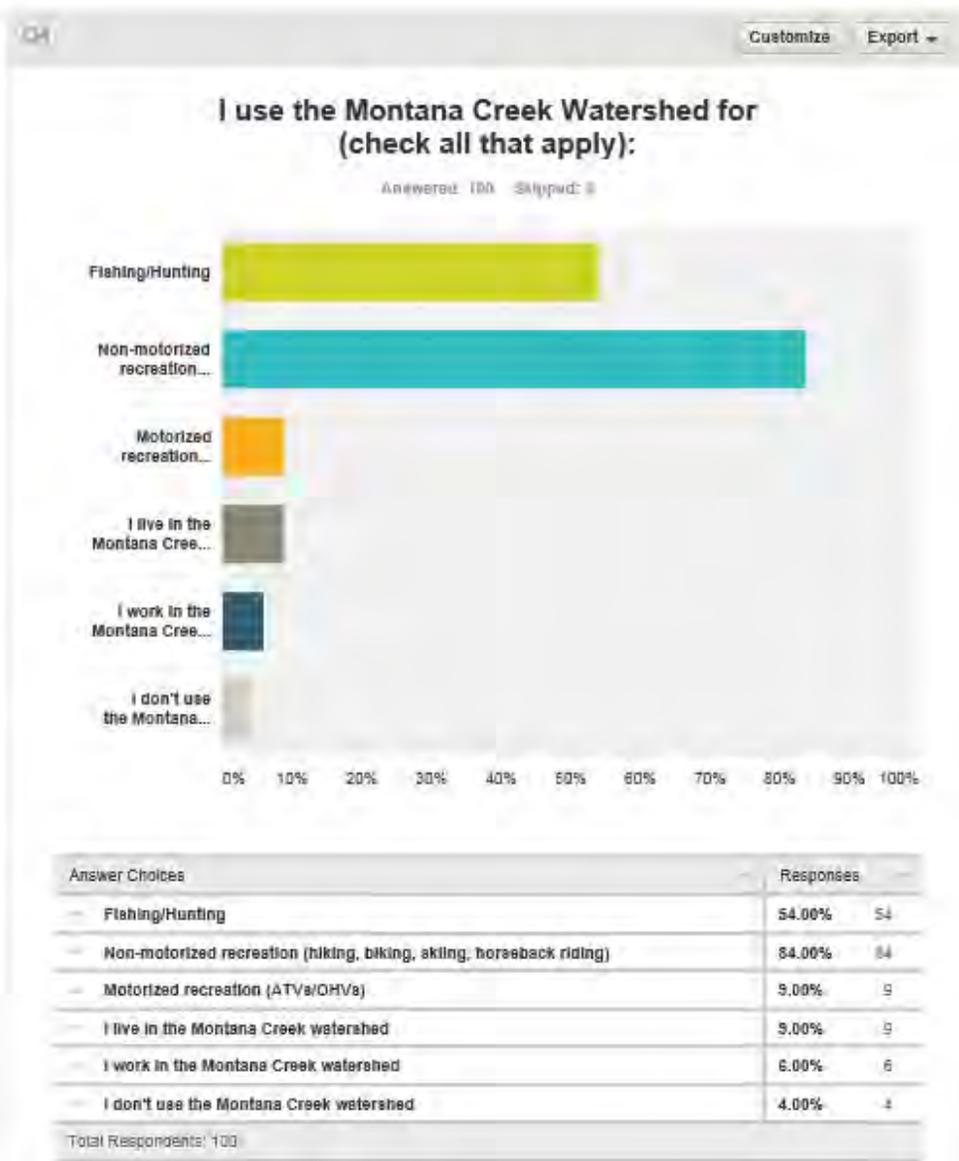


PAGE 1: About You and Your Relationship to Montana Creek





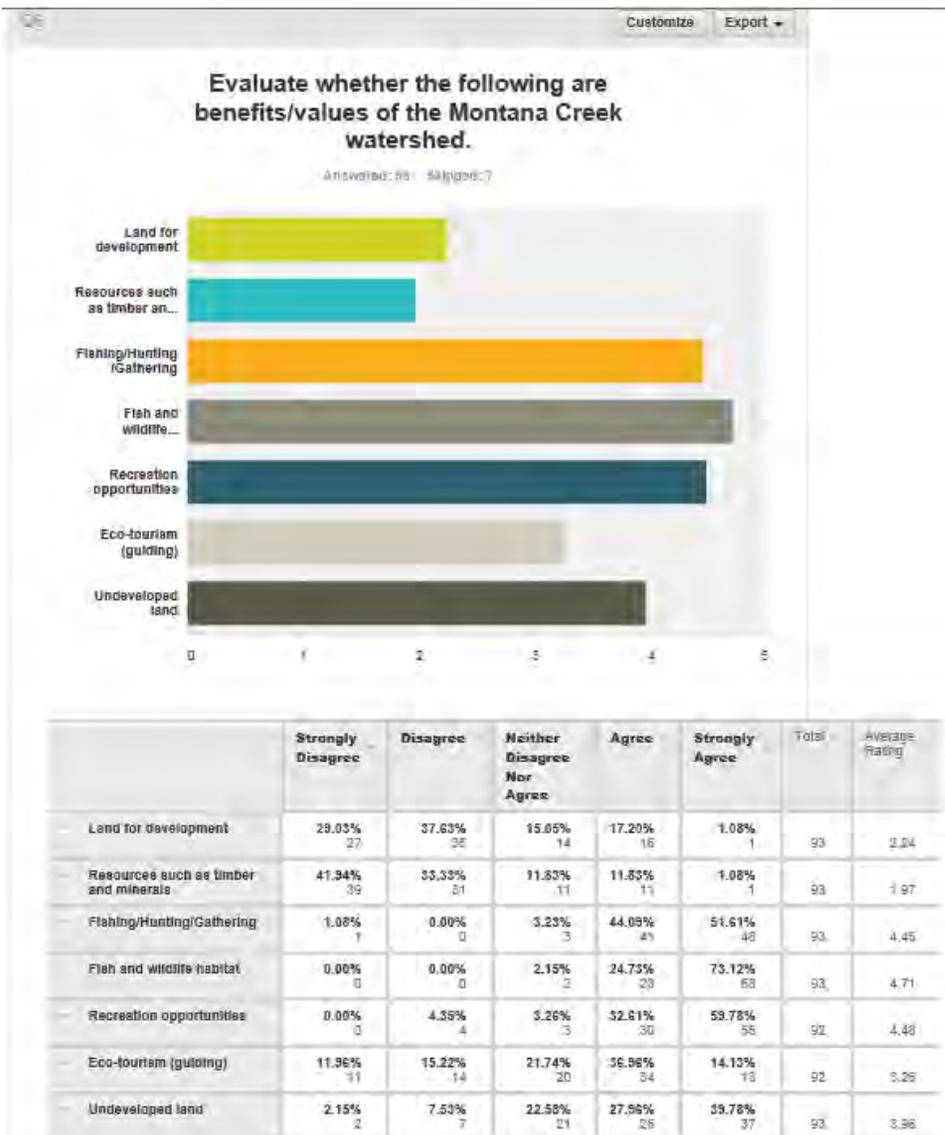




PAGE 2: Your Perception of Montana Creek



	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Average Rating
Montana Creek is a healthy watershed	0.00% 0	10.53% 10	21.05% 20	60.00% 57	8.42% 8	95	3.66
Montana Creek is at risk of becoming impaired (not meeting water quality standards)	1.06% 1	15.36% 15	40.43% 38	35.11% 33	7.45% 7	94	3.52
Montana Creek is at risk of becoming over-developed	3.16% 3	15.79% 15	31.58% 30	40.00% 38	9.47% 9	95	3.57
Montana Creek is important to me as a resident of Juneau	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	3.19% 3	29.79% 28	67.02% 63	94	4.64
Montana Creek is important to the community of Juneau	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	4.21% 4	33.68% 32	62.11% 59	95	4.88



Q7

Export ▾

**What do you perceive to be the greatest benefit/value to the Montana Creek watershed? This can be one of the benefits described above or one you identify.**

Answered: 71 Skipped: 29

1. a recreational area for locals to escape from the tourist  
10/10/2014 5:13 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
2. Natural landscape  
10/9/2014 7:48 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
3. Fish and wildlife habitat  
10/9/2014 7:33 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
4. Recreation, non-motorized, eg skiing and biking, fishing  
10/9/2014 4:08 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
5. Fishing, hiking, gathering berries  
10/2/2014 10:15 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
6. fish habitat  
10/1/2014 3:36 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
7. Fishing  
10/1/2014 8:07 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
8. Undeveloped land  
9/30/2014 6:47 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
9. Non-tourism impacted recreation  
9/30/2014 1:22 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
10. Road system opportunity for flyfishing for trout and salmon. Easy access for cross country skiing, in motorized biking, and hiking.  
9/29/2014 10:30 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
11. Recreation/wildlife habitat  
9/29/2014 9:26 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
12. Nearby, high quality fishing, walking, and skiing  
9/29/2014 8:55 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
13. Hiking, Biking trail  
9/29/2014 8:30 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
14. Undeveloped land  
9/29/2014 11:40 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
15. Healthy habitat  
9/29/2014 10:07 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

16. Fishing/beauty

9/29/2014 9:43 AM View respondent's answers

17. Great location to live in and have a fantastic Forrest playground in your back yard.

9/29/2014 9:29 AM View respondent's answers

18. Recreation

9/29/2014 8:30 AM View respondent's answers

19. fish and wildlife habitat

9/29/2014 7:53 AM View respondent's answers

20. Recreation.

9/28/2014 9:10 AM View respondent's answers

21. fish and wildlife habitat

9/28/2014 9:07 AM View respondent's answers

22. It is an excellent local flyfishing option

9/28/2014 8:52 AM View respondent's answers

23. wildlife corridor

9/27/2014 9:13 PM View respondent's answers

24. Fish and wildlife habitat

9/27/2014 6:19 PM View respondent's answers

25. Open space w good trails near town

9/27/2014 1:31 PM View respondent's answers

26. Fish and wildlife habitat

9/27/2014 12:44 PM View respondent's answers

27. Habitat it provides for all organisms, subsistence, rec.

9/27/2014 10:11 AM View respondent's answers

28. Relatively healthy fish spawning habitat

9/27/2014 9:51 AM View respondent's answers

29. Fish

9/27/2014 9:47 AM View respondent's answers

30. Nature

9/27/2014 9:25 AM View respondent's answers

31. non-motorized recreation (Mtn biking).

9/27/2014 9:07 AM View respondent's answers

32. Non-motorized recreation

9/27/2014 9:06 AM View respondent's answers

33. Being as that it is Juneau's only designated atv area, I think there should be some focus to expand the existing area of use with with either a trail to the west up the hillside or a bridge and a trail to the east over the creek to give our growing atv population more places to play.

9/27/2014 9:05 AM View respondent's answers

34. Green space

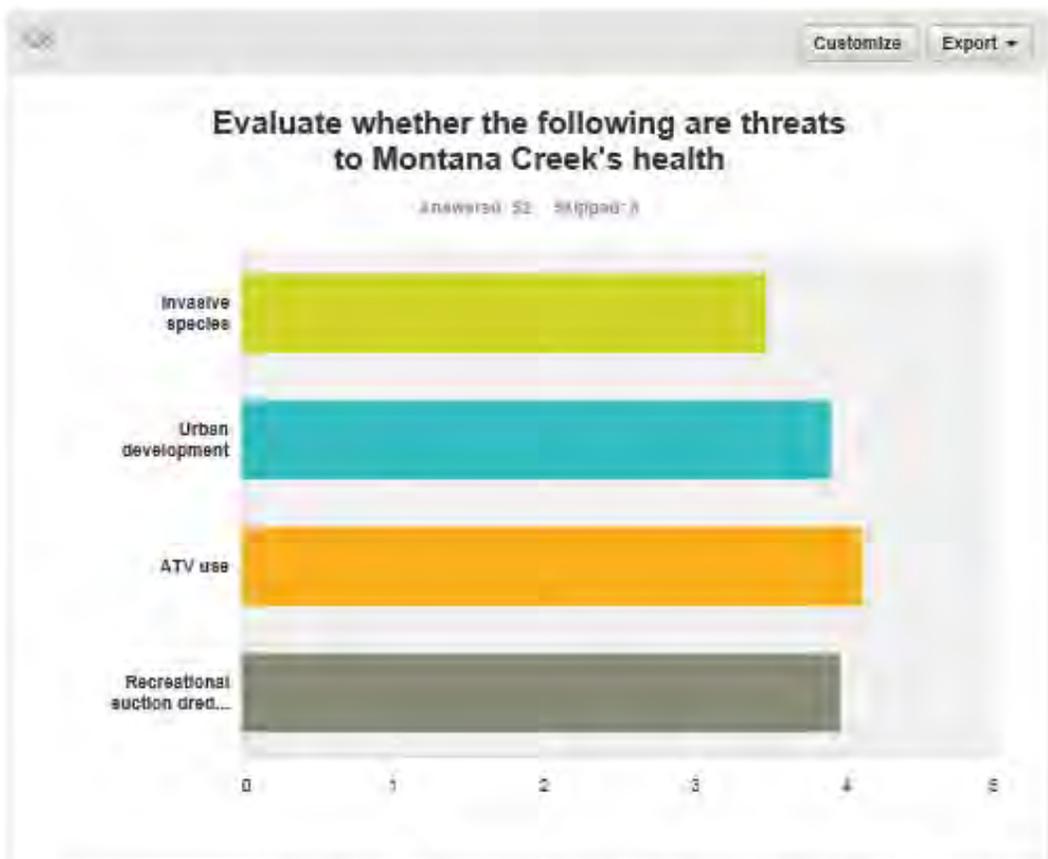
9/27/2014 8:58 AM View respondent's answers

35. fresh water source

9/27/2014 8:50 AM View respondent's answers

36. access to a wild & beautiful area  
9/27/2014 8:30 AM View respondent's answers
37. Recreation  
9/27/2014 5:50 AM View respondent's answers
38. clean water  
9/26/2014 11:08 PM View respondent's answers
39. Outdoor recreation  
9/26/2014 6:15 PM View respondent's answers
40. proper management  
9/26/2014 12:00 PM View respondent's answers
41. Fish and Wildlife habitat  
9/26/2014 10:17 AM View respondent's answers
42. Fishing  
9/26/2014 10:08 AM View respondent's answers
43. Fishing  
9/26/2014 10:05 AM View respondent's answers
44. Habitat and low-impact recreation  
9/26/2014 7:05 AM View respondent's answers
45. rec opd  
9/25/2014 8:36 PM View respondent's answers
46. development is ok in areas not everywhere bicknell is pushing the limits. I wouldnt want houses past coogans lot on Montana Creek Rd  
9/25/2014 8:46 AM View respondent's answers
47. Recreation  
9/25/2014 7:13 AM View respondent's answers
48. Fish habitat and the ecosystem of the area  
9/24/2014 11:16 PM View respondent's answers
49. recreation and natural resources  
9/24/2014 4:05 PM View respondent's answers
50. Recreation Oppourtunities  
9/24/2014 12:10 PM View respondent's answers
51. responsible development  
9/24/2014 8:34 AM View respondent's answers
52. Montana Creek is an important ecosystem to Juneau. It should be valued as such. It's really sad to see the destructive evidence of ATV use, in stream suction dredge mining in the creek.  
9/24/2014 7:20 AM View respondent's answers
53. Healthy fish & wildlife habitat  
9/24/2014 7:06 AM View respondent's answers
54. another beautiful jnu area  
9/24/2014 6:29 AM View respondent's answers
55. habitat for indigenous flora fauna.  
9/23/2014 10:48 PM View respondent's answers

56. Fish habitat, recreation, beauty  
9/23/2014 10:38 PM View respondent's answers
57. Supporting healthy salmon runs.  
9/23/2014 9:50 PM View respondent's answers
58. development and sustainable resource use can coexist  
9/23/2014 9:47 PM View respondent's answers
59. Recreation  
9/23/2014 9:45 PM View respondent's answers
60. A multi-species fishery that is accessible  
9/23/2014 9:40 PM View respondent's answers
61. Fishing  
9/23/2014 9:23 PM View respondent's answers
62. healthy, wild fishery in an urban setting  
9/23/2014 8:59 PM View respondent's answers
63. Fish and wildlife habitat  
9/23/2014 8:44 PM View respondent's answers
64. "Urban wilderness" - the ability to be so close to town, yet so far away  
9/23/2014 8:23 PM View respondent's answers
65. vsalmon habitat & productivity  
9/23/2014 8:09 PM View respondent's answers
66. Cross country skiing  
9/23/2014 8:05 PM View respondent's answers
67. salmon  
9/23/2014 7:38 PM View respondent's answers
68. recreation area  
9/23/2014 7:37 PM View respondent's answers
69. Connection of people with a wild healthy watershed - and building awareness of responsibility to protect watersheds.  
9/23/2014 7:31 PM View respondent's answers
70. Healthy and active Juneau living  
9/23/2014 7:21 PM View respondent's answers
71. Fish habitat  
9/23/2014 7:20 PM View respondent's answers



	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Average Rating
Invasive species	4.35% 4	6.52% 6	34.78% 32	45.65% 42	8.70% 8	92	3.48
Urban development	2.17% 2	4.35% 4	16.30% 15	55.43% 51	21.74% 20	92	3.90
ATV use	3.26% 3	6.52% 6	11.96% 11	32.61% 30	45.65% 42	92	4.11
Recreational suction dredge mining	2.17% 2	5.43% 5	21.74% 20	34.78% 32	35.87% 33	92	3.97

Q9

Export ▾

**What do you perceive to be the biggest threat to Montana Creek? This can be one of the threats from the previous question or one that you identify.**

Answered: 62 Skipped: 38

1. development  
10/10/2014 5:13 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
2. Over preservation  
10/9/2014 7:49 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
3. Currently ATV use, future: development  
10/9/2014 4:16 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
4. Jackie Timothy. Seems like she'll permit anything without considering the consequences to the salmon  
10/2/2014 10:16 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
5. dredge mining  
10/1/2014 3:36 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
6. Definitely ATV use! I have seen incredible stream degradation from ATVs  
10/1/2014 11:45 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
7. Urban development  
9/30/2014 6:47 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
8. Dredge mining and littering  
9/30/2014 1:23 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
9. Atv, suction dredging, over use  
9/29/2014 10:32 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
10. Urban development  
9/29/2014 8:55 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
11. Overuse, irresponsible use  
9/29/2014 8:31 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
12. Urban development  
9/29/2014 11:42 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
13. People  
9/29/2014 10:07 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
14. suction dredge mining  
9/29/2014 9:44 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
15. Tourist overload

9/29/2014 9:30 AM View respondent's answers

**16. suction dredging**

9/29/2014 8:58 AM View respondent's answers

**17. urban development**

9/29/2014 7:54 AM View respondent's answers

**18. ATV use, and ATV use contributing to the spread of invasive species**

9/28/2014 9:07 AM View respondent's answers

**19. Urban development**

9/28/2014 8:53 AM View respondent's answers

**20. development**

9/27/2014 9:14 PM View respondent's answers

**21. Recreational suction dredge mining**

9/27/2014 6:21 PM View respondent's answers

**22. People**

9/27/2014 12:45 PM View respondent's answers

**23. Odds are good that recreational miners are driving ATVs that could easily be infested w/invasive species...generally speaking I'd say there's a disconnect between desire to preserve wild character of Montana Creek and destructive activities such as mining and ATV riding. Unbridled mountain bike riding can be destructive too.**

9/27/2014 10:14 AM View respondent's answers

**24. Development-residential and resource extraction**

9/27/2014 9:51 AM View respondent's answers

**25. Development**

9/27/2014 9:26 AM View respondent's answers

**26. development**

9/27/2014 9:08 AM View respondent's answers

**27. Over protection, we don't need to make alaska like California, "look, but don't touch!"**

9/27/2014 9:07 AM View respondent's answers

**28. Motorized recreation**

9/27/2014 9:07 AM View respondent's answers

**29. Depends on user group...**

9/27/2014 8:59 AM View respondent's answers

**30. litterbugs**

9/27/2014 8:53 AM View respondent's answers

**31. Overfishing due to close proximity to large residential population.**

9/26/2014 6:18 PM View respondent's answers

**32. Jokulhlaups**

9/26/2014 12:02 PM View respondent's answers

**33. ATV**

9/26/2014 10:09 AM View respondent's answers

**34. Threats to the health of the habitat/ecosystem**

9/26/2014 9:39 AM View respondent's answers

**35. Damaging uses like suction dredging and ATVs**

9/26/2014 7:06 AM View respondent's answers

**36. garbage dumping**

9/25/2014 8:37 PM View respondent's answers

**37. catering to one group needs over others**

9/25/2014 9:18 AM View respondent's answers

**38. ATV use**

9/25/2014 7:14 AM View respondent's answers

**39. Gravel extraction and mining**

9/24/2014 11:18 PM View respondent's answers

**40. development and mis-use by the public who deplete/pollute the watershed**

9/24/2014 4:07 PM View respondent's answers

**41. Urban Development**

9/24/2014 12:12 PM View respondent's answers

**42. radical environmentalist whacks are the biggest threat**

9/24/2014 8:35 AM View respondent's answers

**43. Currently ATV & Mining**

9/24/2014 7:22 AM View respondent's answers

**44. Development that does not compensate for damage to habitat**

9/24/2014 7:07 AM View respondent's answers

**45. unplanned development**

9/24/2014 6:30 AM View respondent's answers

**46. 'development at any cost' attitude of good old boys in charge at city hall**

9/23/2014 10:50 PM View respondent's answers

**47. Insufficient protective setbacks**

9/23/2014 10:39 PM View respondent's answers

**48. Illegal motorized use in wetlands and anadromous streams.**

9/23/2014 9:51 PM View respondent's answers

**49. i dont think montana creek is threatened**

9/23/2014 9:48 PM View respondent's answers

**50. ATVs and dumping**

9/23/2014 9:46 PM View respondent's answers

**51. ATV use in the stream bed**

9/23/2014 9:41 PM View respondent's answers

**52. Urban development**

9/23/2014 9:24 PM View respondent's answers

**53. motorized use and associated impacts coupled with ADFG Habitat Division's utter incompetence**

9/23/2014 9:00 PM View respondent's answers

**54. Development**

9/23/2014 8:45 PM View respondent's answers

**55. Disregard for fish habitat and spawning/rearing areas, degradation of riparian habitat**

9/23/2014 8:24 PM View respondent's answers

**56. development pressures**

9/23/2014 8:10 PM View respondent's answers

57. I don't know of any. I only use it in the winter.

9/23/2014 8:05 PM View respondent's answers

58. Dredge mining

9/23/2014 7:41 PM View respondent's answers

59. atbs

9/23/2014 7:37 PM View respondent's answers

60. No single biggest, cumulative impacts of a thousand cuts.

9/23/2014 7:32 PM View respondent's answers

61. Recreational mining?

9/23/2014 7:22 PM View respondent's answers

62. Garbage and debris!

9/23/2014 7:20 PM View respondent's answers

Q10 Export ▾

**Anything you like to share about Montana Creek? This can be things you love about the watershed or concerns you have about its future. Thank you for participating in our survey!**

Answered: 41   Skipped: 59

1. montana creek is a great place to catch a few fish after work without the crowds

10/10/2014 5:15 PM View respondent's answers

2. Montana creek and adjacent areas are beautiful. I'm ok with development near m c with buffers for fish and ensuring water quality is maintained.

10/9/2014 7:51 PM View respondent's answers

3. Like the groomed ski trails. Like it better non-motorized. Gold dredging harmful to spawning salmon yet it seems to be allowed despite the warnings about harm from ATV use affecting salmon spawning -surely repeated gold dredging/panning is just as if not more harmful.

10/9/2014 7:35 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

4. Illegal dumping and anthropogenic debris in lower sections of the creek concern me. Motorized use and ATV users are damaging riparian areas and littering, building illegal structures, mining and hunting without respect for the law, the environment, or other users. Very disgusted by the damage they have done throughout the watershed. Thanks for giving us the opportunity to comment.

10/9/2014 4:21 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

5. We're told there are no steelhead that use the creek... Wonder what that small "rainbow" was that I caught last week. Wasn't a cutthroat!

10/2/2014 10:18 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

6. Let's keep it wild for future generations!

9/30/2014 6:48 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

7. Beautiful archery range!

9/30/2014 1:23 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

8. The canyon section is a unique feature on our road system and should be kept as pristine as possible.

9/29/2014 10:34 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

9. I love hiking and fishing in this creek and seeing bears enjoy its salmon and deer browse near it. I'm very concerned about sedimentation due to ATV use and gold dredging along the creek.

9/29/2014 9:28 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

10. Please continue to advocate for this watershed.

9/29/2014 8:56 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

11. Pretty creek, too bad trout don't live in it year round.

9/29/2014 9:44 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

12. Correct drainage to preserve the land and history of the Montana creek area

9/29/2014 9:31 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

13. It is a great wildlife corridor.

9/29/2014 7:55 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

14. The city and community organizations need to do everything possible to protect this valuable ecosystem while it is still intact and healthy--NOT to wait until it is impaired and costly to restore.

9/28/2014 9:08 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

15. It would not take much to destroy the place, so protecting habitat and prohibiting urban development along the river needs to be a priority of everyone who values Montana Creek as a fishery/recreational area.

9/28/2014 8:57 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

16. curtil illegal dumping

9/27/2014 9:14 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

17. I would like to see that it pretty much stays the same, have been here 38 years.

9/27/2014 6:22 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

18. How can we, as a community, stop the formation/spread of the garbage pit at the end of the road/beginning of trail???

9/27/2014 10:14 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

19. I love the new gate and think it has helped a lot to keep down the vandalism at the trailhead. XC ski trail grooming in winter is another great improvement. Trail work to improve upper trail to Windfall Lake would further improve things. Thanks!

9/27/2014 9:53 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

20. Think of ways to expand use to the area, without effecting the watershed. Maybe make the trails a bit further from the creek itself( to contain erosion issues), the whole basin behind McGinnis is a very useable zone, let's make more access!

9/27/2014 9:09 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

21. I like to prospect for gold. I'm concerned about sport fishermen preventing me from doing that. It is there for everyone!

9/27/2014 8:55 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

22. I use this area recreationally in all seasons. I love that we have this unique area accessible to all of us by foot, bike, ski or snow shoes!

9/27/2014 8:32 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

23. I really like spending time at Montana Creek and hope that it is being properly maintained!

9/26/2014 12:03 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

24. Montana Creek is an important watershed as fish habitat, and an important recreation area, and should be kept free of motorized vehicle use and development!

9/26/2014 9:40 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

25. the placement of the new gate near the gun range is the worst place it could be located. could have been moved to the conex boxes

9/25/2014 9:36 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

26. The trail head looks better than it did in the past. Thank you for doing the survey.

9/25/2014 7:14 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

27. It is the only stream in the urban area that hasn't been over developed. It should be preserved through large development setbacks.

9/24/2014 11:20 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

28. Montana Creek is one fantastic asset to this community that makes living in Juneau that much more special.

9/24/2014 6:11 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

29. I love to hike and fish there. I think the City should do more to fight invasive plants and protect Montana Creek.

9/24/2014 12:13 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

30. The ADFG Sport Fish is clueless to the serious harvesting impact that takes place the first three weeks in September. We need to monitor this harvest because Sport Fish will not! A mailer is not the way to determine impact. If I used that approach in my college population bio class I would have been laughed out of college. Clearly Dan and Sport Fish are more cerebral than that.

9/24/2014 6:15 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

31. Montana creek road should be blocked off well before it gets to the creek. Also, it should be managed for fish and game and habitat preservation.. There is enough gold all ready mined to take care of all practical needs gold mining is not necessary.

9/23/2014 10:56 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

32. I support a wide protective corridor along Montana Creek. All creeks don't need this, but Montana Creek does to maintain it's uses and values.

9/23/2014 10:40 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

33. The montana creek watershed is great for trail running too! Also you shouldn't group together hunting and fishing that isnt realistic.

9/23/2014 9:50 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

34. Beautiful river.

9/23/2014 8:45 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

35. I spend 20-30 days a year in Montana creek from the mouth up past the McGinnis forks...it is a special area and a changing area that needs to have close attention paid to it. With its proximity to the population center of Juneau and relative ease of access, we as people have the ability to greatly alter the landscape of this creek, most often in a negative fashion.

9/23/2014 8:29 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

36. Erik Norberg is just darn dreamy.

9/23/2014 8:06 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

37. Seems that Montana creek trail head has always had the most trash left behind than any other trail head in Juneau.

9/23/2014 7:55 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

38. I love Montana Creek and the wild runs of salmon and trout in the area and hope that they continue to years to come.

9/23/2014 7:42 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

39. I watch Montana Creek stream gauge whenever big events, I watch the clarity and wonder what happened upstream when muddy. The life and health of Montana Creek is important to me.

9/23/2014 7:33 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

40. With the way other less visited places in Juneau have been targeted, I'm worried about the heroine junkies throwing their needles along the road and parking areas.

9/23/2014 7:25 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

41. I love Montana creek!

9/23/2014 7:20 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

# MONTANA CREEK

LANDS  
ASSESSMENT  
AND  
RECREATION  
CORRIDOR  
CONSERVATION  
PROPOSAL

NOVEMBER  
2006



JUNEAU CHAPTER  
[www.tujuneau.org](http://www.tujuneau.org)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following agencies, organizations, and individuals contributed to the development of this document by providing information or support to Trout Unlimited:

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service –  
Juneau Field Office

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Juneau Watershed Partnership

City and Borough of Juneau

John Hyde Photography

U.S. Forest Service – Alaska Regional Office

Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Sport Fish Division

Juneau Douglas City Museum

Skaggs Foundation

## TROUT UNLIMITED

Trout Unlimited (TU), founded in 1959, is a private, non-profit organization with more than 155,000 members nationwide dedicated to conserving, protecting, and restoring North America's trout and salmon fisheries and their watersheds. The Juneau Chapter of TU, now 100 members strong, is in the process of re-building its membership in partnership with the statewide Alaska TU office, which re-opened in 2005 in Juneau.

The Juneau chapter of TU initiated this study in May 2006 to contribute as a grass-roots, community effort to the revision of the City and Borough of Juneau's Comprehensive



**Additional  
information about  
Trout Unlimited  
in Juneau can be  
found at  
[www.tujuneau.org](http://www.tujuneau.org)  
or by calling  
(907) 790-8876.**

Plan. The work is supported by the Trout Unlimited Embrace-A-Stream grant program.

The goal of the Juneau Chapter of TU is to ensure the sustainability of the Montana Creek Watershed as a fishery, recreation area, and educational asset to our community. The watershed supports healthy salmon runs, large mammal populations, the local commercial fishing industry, and cherished fishing and hunting opportunities for Juneau residents. The Juneau Chapter seeks to promote comprehensive and durable land use designations within the watershed to maintain the fishery and recreational values of Montana Creek.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Montana Creek watershed provides excellent fish and wildlife habitat and a variety of unique recreational and educational opportunities for Juneau. These values must be preserved and protected through informed land use planning and management decisions as urbanization of the Mendenhall Valley continues.

This document provides the City and Borough of Juneau with an overview of the value of the Montana Creek Watershed to Juneau residents and an outline of management recommendations to ensure the sustainability of fish habitat and recreational and educational opportunities.

Threats to Montana Creek include development of floodplains and wetlands, non-point source pollutants, and resource extraction activities. Watersheds such as Duck Creek have suffered from a lack of stream setbacks and prudent land use designations and zoning. To avoid repeating these mistakes, forward-looking municipal planning should recognize the existing multiple uses and values of the riparian lands in the Montana Creek Watershed.

### We specifically recommend the following:

#### 1. Establish a Stream Conservation Corridor extending 500 feet from either bank of Montana Creek.

The proposed corridor is only .78 square miles or 5.1% of the entire 15.23 square mile Montana Creek Watershed. An estimated 74% of the corridor is classified as a wetland and/or lies within the 100-year floodplain and is largely unsuitable for development. A wider corridor is needed to protect side channels and wetlands that are vital salmon, trout, and char habitat and to protect Montana Creek from contaminated runoff.

#### 2. Protect all CBJ wetlands associated with Montana Creek.

Wetlands provide benefits such as flood attenuation, groundwater recharge, nutrient storage and contributions to surface water systems, and fish and wildlife habitat.

#### 3. Build a trail along Montana Creek and link it to the existing trail network.

This trail will greatly increase access for hikers, anglers, and other user groups.

#### 4. Abandon both the potential road corridor connecting Montana Creek with the Herbert/Eagle River area via Windfall Lake and planning for a heliport.

A road or a heliport within the watershed would be detrimental to recreational values and would pose serious threats to water quality and adjacent riparian habitat.

#### 5. Educate the public on stream stewardship.

Montana Creek is an ideal location for youth education programs and represents a living laboratory for other areas of study by Juneau students as well as the University of Alaska.

#### 6. Enforce laws and ordinances protecting fish habitat and watershed resources.

Trout Unlimited proposes partnering with the Juneau Police Department and Alaska State Troopers so that off-trail ATV use and illegal dumping may be curtailed.

## INTRODUCTION

As the most important clearwater tributary to the Mendenhall River, Montana Creek offers vital salmon, trout, and char habitat as well as outstanding recreational opportunities for fishing, hiking, hunting, and wildlife viewing. The ecological and recreational value of this pristine watershed must be preserved and protected through informed land use planning and management decisions.

This document provides the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) with an overview of the value of the Montana Creek Watershed to Juneau residents

and an outline of management recommendations to ensure the sustainability of the fish habitat and recreational opportunities. As CBJ updates the 1996 Comprehensive Plan, this community based plan can inform and guide the planning and management decisions. It is intended for use by the CBJ staff, Planning Commission, Wetlands Advisory Board, City Assembly, local citizens, resource agencies, and others involved in conservation and land management decisions within the Montana Creek Watershed.

**The ecological and recreational value of this pristine watershed must be preserved and protected through informed land use planning and management decisions.**



PHOTO BY RICH CULVER

## WATERSHED DESCRIPTION

The watershed drains approximately 15.5 square miles (U.S. Geological Survey, 1998), originating in the mountains that divide the Juneau Ice Field to the east from the coastal forests and wetlands to the southwest. Montana Creek enters the Mendenhall River approximately one mile upstream of Glacier Highway, and Back Loop Road crosses Montana Creek approximately 1.5 miles upstream of its confluence with the Mendenhall River (See Map 1). For purposes of discussion, the portions of Montana Creek upstream and downstream of Back Loop Road will be referred to as “upper” and “lower” Montana Creek in this report.

McGinnis Creek drains meltwater from Mounts McGinnis and Stroller White, and is the primary tributary to Montana Creek. Both creeks begin as high gradient streams in the headwaters, transitioning to lower gradient as they flow out of the mountains. The gradient of lower Montana Creek is low at 0.35% slope at Back Loop Road, and decreases to 0.09% near its confluence with the Mendenhall River (Adamus Resource Assessment, 1987).

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) maintains a stream gage on Montana Creek (station i.d. 15052800), located just upstream of Back Loop Road. Periodic stream flow data for Montana Creek has been recorded since 1965. For the period of record, mean monthly discharge ranges from 43 to 172 cubic feet per second (cfs). A peak flow of 3,850 cfs was recorded on October 20, 1998, and the minimum discharge of 3.4 cfs was recorded on February 8, 1972 (USGS, 1965-2006). According to National

Weather Service information, 50% of the 15 feet or greater flood events on Montana Creek have occurred since 1995.



Meltwater from McGinnis Creek contributes to the pristine headwaters of Montana Creek.

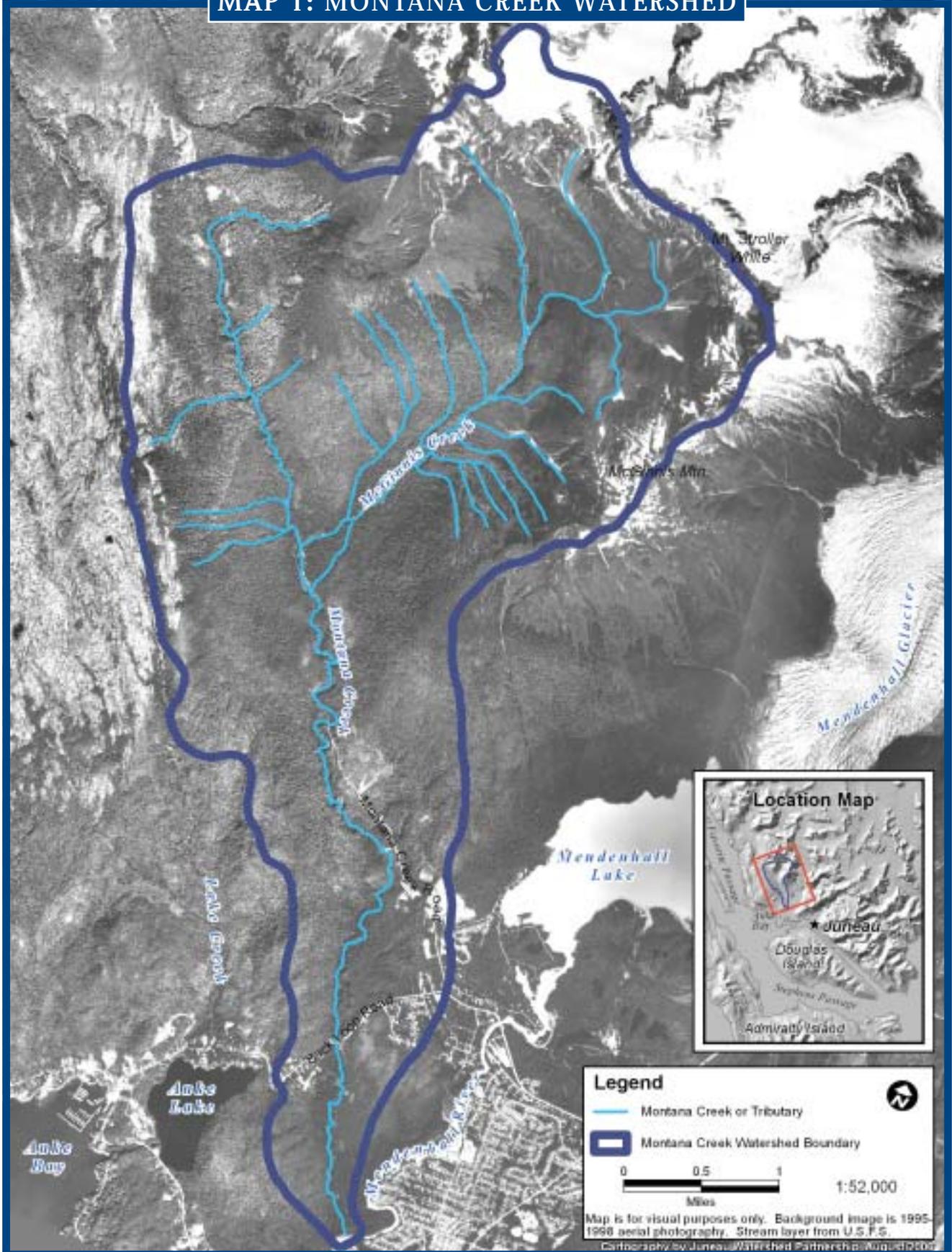
PHOTO BY M. ELFERS

Some instantaneous discharge measurements have been taken in conjunction with USGS water quality studies on upper Montana Creek (station i.d. 15052780, upstream of the McGinnis Creek confluence) and McGinnis Creek (station i.d. 15052790) in 1985-1986. Discharge measurements were taken within one hour or less of each other during the study period. McGinnis Creek contributed more than half of the

total flow measured at both locations for about 75% of the data readings collected. Additional research would be necessary to assess the hydrology of the entire watershed, but it is likely that discharge in both streams is influenced by climatic factors which may vary seasonally and between drainages.

Some of the wetlands in Montana Creek are connected to the main channel via surface hydrology, while others may contribute to the creek via groundwater. Wetlands in the Montana Creek drainage are primarily bogs and reed-sedge wetlands. The wetlands in the northern part of the watershed appear to act as discharge areas for groundwater flowing in moraines that cross the Mendenhall Valley. In other areas, wetlands help recharge local groundwater flow. Hydrologic modeling studies conducted on the 268-acre bog located downstream of Back Loop Road between the Montana Creek main channel and the Mendenhall River indicate that the wetland

### MAP 1: MONTANA CREEK WATERSHED



serves as a buffer for surface runoff, reducing peak discharge in Montana Creek by as much as 187 cfs in July (Adamus Resource Assessment, 1987). This area also comprises a significant portion of the FEMA 100 year floodplain of lower Montana Creek.

Mendenhall Valley geology consists primarily of glacial, glacio-marine, and alluvial deposits overlying a northwest-trending belt of metamorphosed volcanic and sedimentary bedrock. Surficial geology in the Montana Creek watershed ranges from exposed bedrock to soils that are several feet deep, depending on location and slope (Alcorn and Hogan, 1995; Schoephorster and Furbish, 1974). Downstream of Back Loop Road, much of the channel flows through well drained, shallow soils on steep slopes or poorly drained, deep soils containing layers of peat and sand (Schoephorster and Furbish, 1974).

Much of the canopy cover in the watershed is closed Sitka spruce-western hemlock forest (Viereck et al., 1992).



**Subdivision and Gravel Pit off Montana Creek Road.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU

There are also areas that are above treeline as well as low-lying muskegs or meadows. The forested understory includes salmonberry, blueberry, devil's club, ferns, skunk cabbage, horsetail, and other herbaceous plants. Riparian areas may be populated by alder, willow, sedges, grasses, or the dominant tree species. Open, non-forested areas primarily occur in the middle portion of the watershed, upstream and downstream of where the stream crosses Back Loop Road. These areas are dominated by sedge wetlands or muskegs, and include a

variety of grass species, rushes, and herbaceous plants.

Raptors, waterfowl, and songbirds frequent most of the watershed. Small mammals such as porcupine, beaver, red squirrel, voles, weasels, and mink are likely year-round residents. Large mammals such as black and brown bear, Sitka black-tailed deer, wolves and mountain goats live in portions of the watershed for at least part of the year. River otters have been observed in the lower stream reaches.

## FISH AND FISH HABITAT

Both Montana and McGinnis Creeks support wild stocks of anadromous and resident fish. McGinnis Creek is cataloged by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) for coho salmon (stream number 111-50-10500-2003-3060-4019), while Montana Creek is listed for coho, pink, and chum salmon, steelhead trout, and Dolly Varden char (stream number 111-50-10500-2003) (Johnson and Weiss, 2006). Bethers et al. (1995) also include chum and pink salmon, Dolly Varden char, and cutthroat trout as being present in McGinnis Creek, and state that sockeye salmon and cutthroat trout have been observed in Montana Creek.

As a sport fishery, Montana Creek is unique because it is located close to a densely populated area, yet it remains mostly undeveloped with pristine habitat and clean water.

This fishery is supported by excellent spawning and rearing habitat throughout both Montana and McGinnis Creeks. The absence of fish barriers opens up rearing and spawning habitat along most of the creek (See Map 2). Much of the spawning habitat is located in the

mid to upper stream reaches, while rearing habitat is primarily found in the lower gradient sections of the stream.

Excellent seasonal rearing habitat is also found in side channels flowing through wetland areas in the lower watershed (Bethers et al., 1995).

The coho salmon fishery is extremely productive in Montana Creek due to the rare combination of both abundant spawning and abundant rearing habitats. Coho salmon require gravel streambeds with specific gradients for spawning so that water flow aerates the eggs. Upon hatching, the coho fry rear in freshwater systems for one year before going out to saltwater. They need side channels and areas of slow moving water to provide protection from predators and high water conditions in their first year. Additionally, these slow areas often produce high populations of macroinvertebrates that coho fry rely on for food (O'Clair et al., 1992).

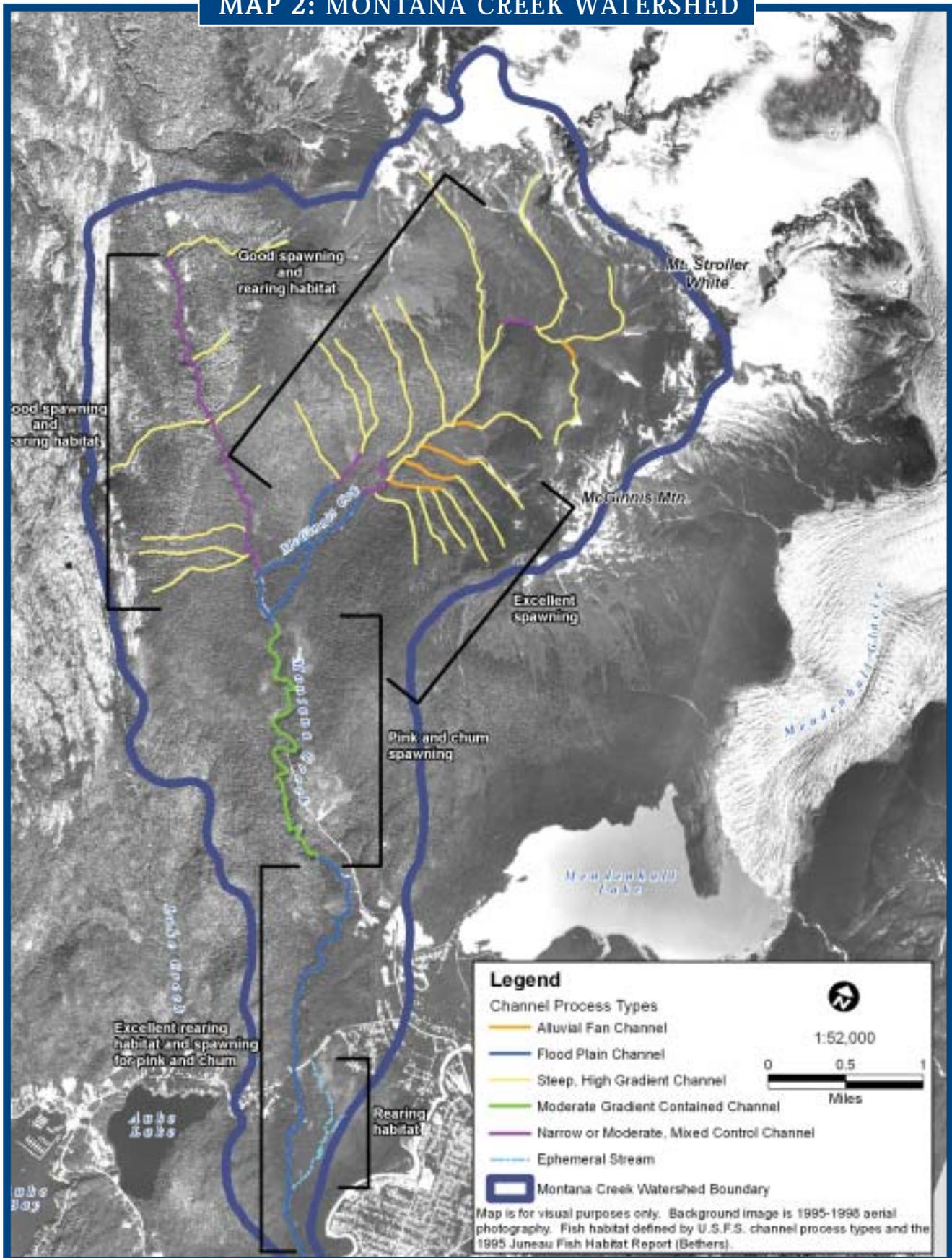
**As a sport fishery, Montana Creek is unique because it is located close to a densely populated area yet it remains mostly undeveloped with pristine habitat and clean water.**



**Bright coho salmon from Montana Creek.**

PHOTO BY RICH CULVER

**MAP 2: MONTANA CREEK WATERSHED**



Evidence of the valuable habitat for coho salmon in Montana Creek is seen in the ADF&G's salmon counts over the past twenty years. Based on foot survey counts averaging 1,300 coho annually between 1989 and 1998, biologists estimate that 7,000 coho salmon return each year to Montana Creek (Schwan, 1999). ADF&G also reports that their biological escapement goal, or the required number of salmon returns to a stream for a sustainable run, has been met or exceeded twenty two times since 1981 (Clark, 2005).

The abundant populations of chum and pink salmon create excellent foraging conditions for Dolly Varden char. The salmon lay their eggs in the gravel beds in mid-summer and the Dolly Varden follow the spawning salmon and eat the stray eggs (O'Clair et al., 1992). When the eggs hatch in the spring, the Dolly Varden supplement their diet with salmon fry that are going out to saltwater. According to a mark and recapture study conducted in 1983, the habitat in the Montana Creek system supported 19,000 Dolly Varden (Bethers et al., 1995).

Montana Creek plays a crucial role for populations of Dolly Varden and cutthroat trout along the entire Juneau road system during several life history stages.

ADF&G studies have shown that Dolly Varden and cutthroat trout that spend the winter in Auke Lake move freely into and out of Montana Creek (Jones and Seifert 1997; Jones and Harding 1998). This further emphasizes the important role Montana Creek plays to the healthy populations of Dolly Varden and cutthroat in the Juneau area.

The water quality in Montana Creek affects fish and fish habitat significantly. The little data that is available indicates good water quality with a minimum of contamination. Studies show that dissolved oxygen has consistently exceeded the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation water quality standards, and levels of pollutants such as lead, iron, suspended sediment, and diesel range organics have been low (Hood et al., 2003; Hood and Byers, 2004; USGS water quality data, 1985-1986). A small tributary stream located near the Hank Harmon Rifle Range exhibited higher iron concentrations than elsewhere in Montana Creek, and suspended sediment concentrations were generally higher at sampling sites located where the creek is accessible by road (Hood et al., 2003). The introduction of excess sediment from roads may clog interstitial spaces in salmon spawning beds.

**...the habitat in the  
Montana Creek system supported  
19,000 Dolly Varden.**

BETHERS ET AL., 1995



Dolly Varden caught in Montana Creek.

PHOTO BY JOHN HYDE

**...biologists estimate that 7,000  
coho salmon return each year to  
Montana Creek.**

SCHWAN, 1999

## RECREATIONAL USE AND OPPORTUNITIES

In 2006, the Juneau Economic Overview found “quality of life” and “abundance of outdoor recreation opportunities” as the top two reasons why people choose to live in Juneau (McDowell Group, 2006). The Montana Creek watershed is used by residents and tourists for hiking, snowshoeing, skiing, hunting, fishing, shooting, horse-back riding, archery, wildlife viewing and photography, camping, recreational gold panning, berry picking, ATV riding and snowmobiling (Adamus Resource Assessment, 1987; Bethers et al., 1995). The close proximity to highly populated areas and good access make Montana Creek a popular destination.

The primary focus of the sport fishery is on coho salmon and Dolly Varden char, however, pink salmon, chum salmon, and cutthroat trout also inhabit the stream (Bethers et al., 1995). Additionally, adult king salmon have been observed spawning in certain reaches of the creek as recently as July 2006. The Division of Sport

Fish’s Statewide Harvest Survey (Jennings, G. B., K. Sundet, A. E. Bingham, and D. Sigurdsson, 2006) shows a range of annual angler user days over the last decade from 1,570-3,993, with several hundred coho harvested each year (see Appendix A).

**In 2006, the Juneau Economic Overview found “quality of life” and “abundance of outdoor recreation opportunities” as the top two reasons why people choose to live in Juneau**

MC DOWELL GROUP, 2006

Currently there are several trails along portions of Montana Creek. In the lower reach, ADF&G and CBJ built a trail in 1989 connecting the Mendenhall River to the rifle range. This trail facilitates access to the creek, however it is not maintained. A second section of trail in the upper reaches begins along a Department of Transportation right of way and extends upstream to a U.S. Forest Service trail that connects to Windfall Lake.

Local fisherman, seasonal visitors, and the public depend on these trails for access to the excellent fishing grounds. The protection and improvement of these trails will benefit TU members as well as all residents of Juneau seeking outdoor recreation.



Existing recreational facilities, including the Community Gardens, Juneau Gun Club, Archery Range and the Hank Harmon Rifle Range (pictured here) would be maintained under the proposed stream corridor.

PHOTO BY MARK KAELEKE

## DEVELOPMENT, ZONING, AND LAND USE DESIGNATION

In the past eighty years, the increase in Juneau's population and the development of the Mendenhall Valley have critically impacted streams and watersheds. Watersheds such as Duck Creek have suffered from a lack of stream setbacks and prudent land use designations and zoning. With the population boom spanning the 1960s-1980s, infrastructure and residential development sprawled throughout the valley.



**Land use adjacent to Mendenhall Valley streams has changed over time from homestead agriculture to higher density residential and commercial development.**

FARM IN THE LOWER DUCK CREEK WATERSHED, CIRCA 1910  
(WINTER AND POND COLLECTION)

In 1987, approximately 36% of the Duck Creek Watershed was categorized as impervious surface, including streets, driveways, and rooftops (Koski and Lorenz, 1999). The stormwater runoff and pollution that resulted contributed to reduced water quality, loss of floodplain function, and the degradation of salmon and bird habitat. In 2003, Duck Creek was rated the lowest for quality of aquatic habitat of all streams studied in Southeast Alaska (Rinella, et al., 2003). As a result, significant amounts of money (at least \$1 million according to one estimate), time and effort have been invested in the restoration of the Duck Creek watershed and its stream corridor by the CBJ and state and federal agencies over the past ten years (Koski and Lorenz, 1999).

To avoid repeating the mistakes that occurred in the Duck Creek Watershed, forward-looking municipal planning should recognize the existing multiple uses and values of the riparian lands in the Montana Creek Watershed. With increasing pressure for affordable housing and other development, a comprehensive plan that recognizes habi-

tat, education and recreation assets within the watershed is crucial.

An analysis of the land use designations and zoning in the Montana Creek Watershed reveals a lack of cohesion in planning as well as a trend towards increased residential housing density. Current land ownership consists of federal, state, CBJ and private lands (See Map 3). The U.S. Forest Service owns the land in the headwa-

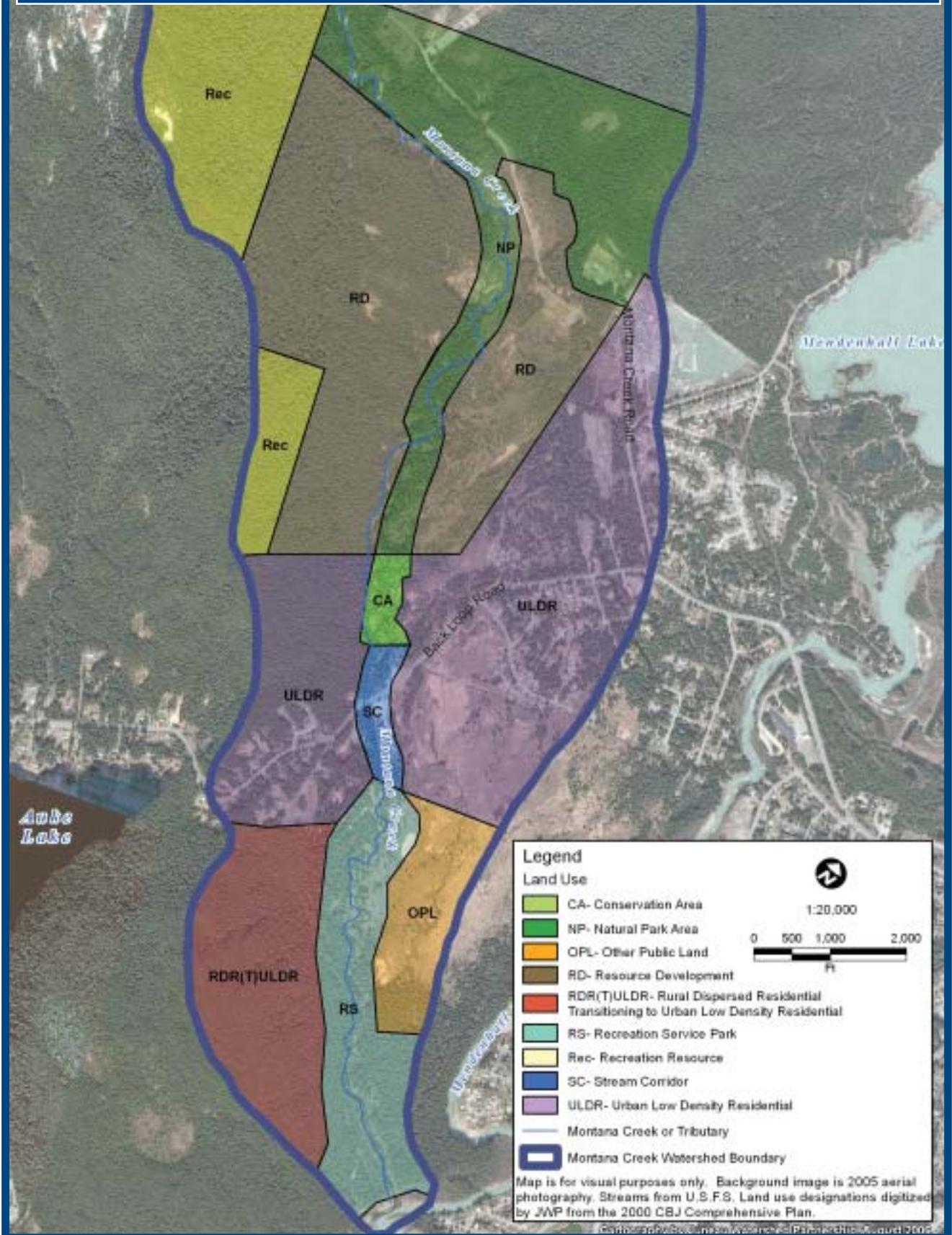
ters of the watershed, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources manages a large portion of land in the central watershed, and CBJ owns large parcels in the mid to lower reaches of the watershed. Private land ownership is mostly concentrated in the downstream reaches east of the creek.

Land Use Designations (LUDs) guide land use decisions throughout the CBJ and private lands in the watershed. There are currently four separate LUDs along the Montana Creek stream corridor (See Map 4). The 1997 Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan describes each area as follows:

- Conservation Area (CA) -An area of high environmental value with recreation as a secondary objective.
- Recreation Service Park (RS) - A more highly developed park for more programmed recreation.
- Natural Park Area (NP) -A less structured park area for outdoor pursuits.
- Stream Corridor (SC) - Open space in recognition of anadromous stream corridors



**MAP 4: MONTANA CREEK WATERSHED: 2000 CBJ LAND USE DESIGNATION**



Additionally, much of the land surrounding the current stream corridor is designated RD (Resource Development) or ULDR (Urban Low Density Residential). A unified and complimentary set of land use designations is needed for the corridor. Additionally, a wider corridor is needed to buffer the creek from potentially harmful effects of development on the surrounding land.

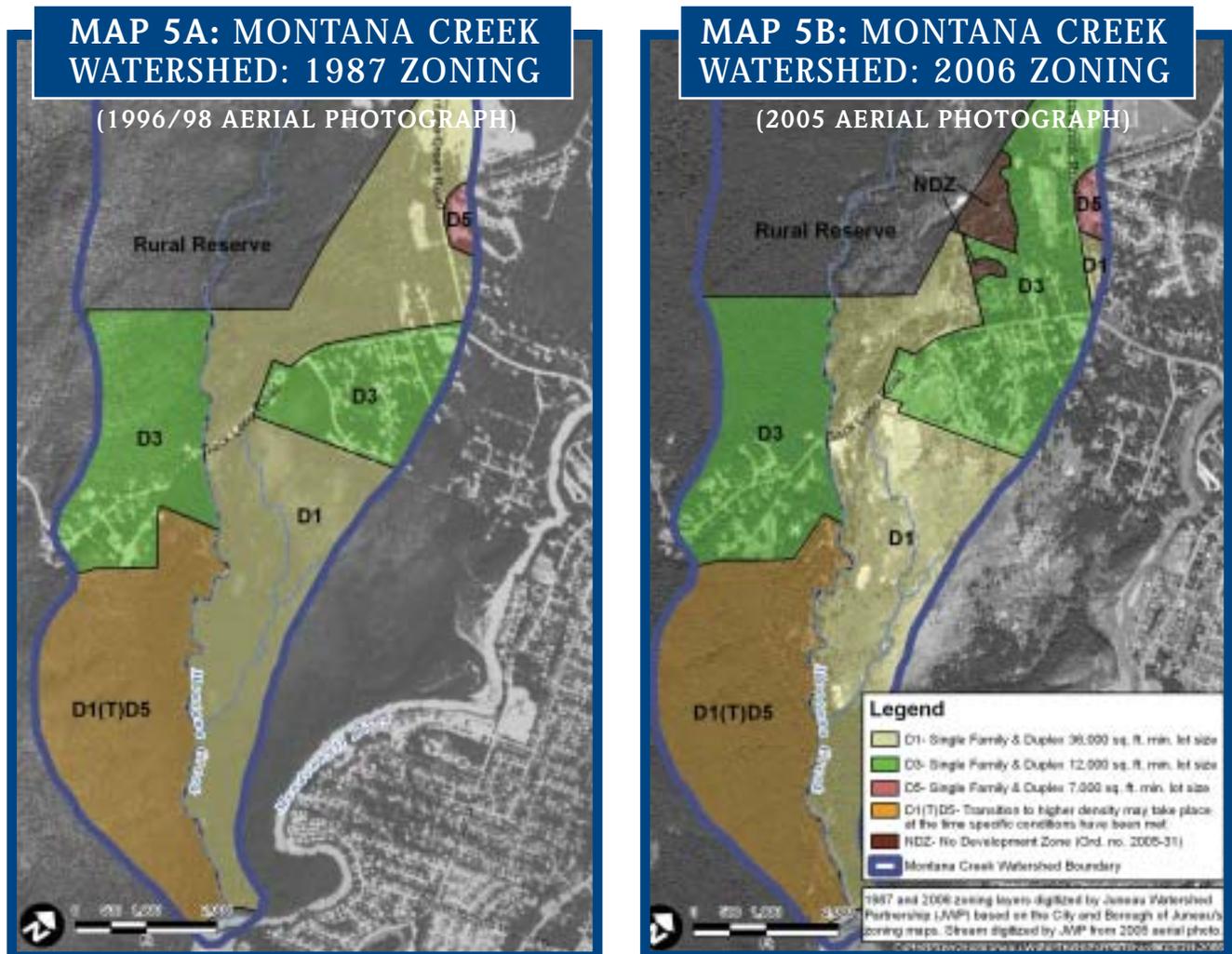
There is a pattern of higher density development moving towards the Montana Creek area. A brief survey of zoning changes since 1965 in this area reinforces the complexity of land use in the watershed (See Table 1). The original zoning along Montana Creek was Agricultural and Forest Land in 1965. In 1969, development pressures in the valley opened portions of the lower watershed for development of single-family and duplex residences with a density of one unit per acre. Between 1987 and 2006, significant changes in zoning become apparent (See Map 5). Most of the land in the upper Montana Creek Watershed is zoned for Rural Reserve. This type of zoning is defined as public lands managed

for conservation and development of natural resources, and for future community growth (CBJ, 1987). The Rural Reserve designation allows for such land uses as residential development, resource extraction activities, and development of recreational facilities (CBJ Land Use Ordinance 49.25.200, and Table 49.25.300). The remaining land is primarily residential zoning for building densities of one to five units per acre. However, it is interesting to note that the amount of available D1 designation (Single Family and Duplex one unit per acre area) has decreased since 1987 and has been converted to D3 and D5, or three to five units per acre (CBJ, 1987 and 2005). Much of this density shift has occurred through site-specific re-zoning requests.

As seen in the recent zoning changes to higher densities there is pressure to develop in the Montana Creek Watershed. Without forward-looking planning and a thorough understanding of the value of the watershed to the community, conflicts may arise between residential, resource development, and recreational uses.

**TABLE 1.**  
**CHANGES IN CBJ ZONING IN THE MONTANA CREEK WATERSHED**  
**(CBJ 1965, 1969, 1987, AND 2005).**

Year	Area	Zone	Description
1965	Entire creek corridor	AF	Agricultural and forest land
1969	Lower watershed, including west side of Mendenhall River	R40	Residential reserve, with 40,000 square foot minimum lot size.
1987	East side of lower and upper creek	D-1	Single-family and duplex residential development at one dwelling unit/acre.
	West side of lower creek	D-1(T) D-5	Transition from single-family and duplex residential development at one dwelling unit/acre to an allowable five units/acre after sewer and water are provided.
	West side of creek at Back Loop Rd. and upstream to U.S. Forest Service boundary	D-3	Single-family and duplex residential development at three dwelling units/acre.
	Creek corridor upstream of U.S. Forest Service boundary	RR	Rural reserve - public lands managed for conservation and development of natural resources, and for future community growth.
2005	East side of lower creek	D-1	Single-family and duplex residential development at one dwelling unit/acre.
	West side of lower creek	D-1(T) D-5	Transition from single-family and duplex residential development at one dwelling unit/acre to an allowable five units/acre after sewer and water are provided.
	West side of creek adjacent to Back Loop Rd.	D-3	Single-family and duplex residential development at three dwelling units/acre.



Recent zoning changes in the watershed are trending toward higher densities.

## EXISTING HABITAT PROTECTION

The Juneau Coastal Management Program (1986) currently includes a 50 foot setback for development adjacent to anadromous streams or lakes, and states that the setback area should be vegetated or revegetated to “maximize shade on the stream.” This requirement for riparian vegetation is reinforced in Section 49.70.950 of the local Land Use Ordinances. In addition, there is a no disturbance zone established within 25 feet of anadromous water bodies (CBJ Land Use Ordinance 49.70.310). Despite these regulations, structures and facilities exist within the 50 foot setback along Montana Creek. These include an unpaved road, retaining walls, and houses that straddle the stream itself in the reach downstream of the rifle range.

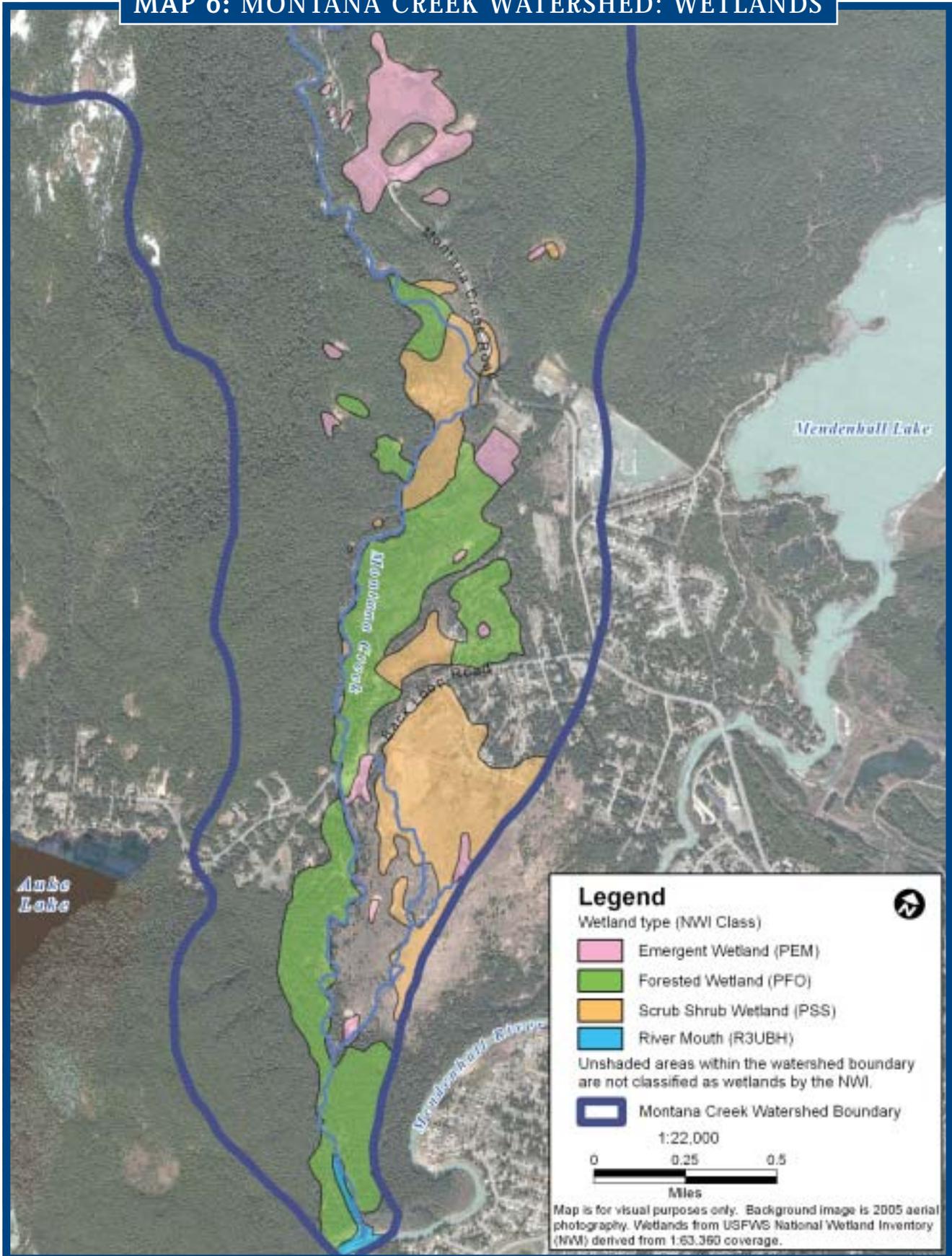
There are several large wetland areas in the Montana Creek Watershed (See Map 6). Most of the designated wetlands

in the Montana Creek area are Category A, or high-value wetlands. CBJ adopted the following administrative policies in relation to Category A wetlands to include:

- Seek acquisition of Category A wetlands.
- Retain ownership and manage Category A wetlands for environmental protection.
- “Generally” keep Category A wetlands in their natural condition. However, Category A wetlands may be developed if “there is no net loss of individual functional values” within a given wetland unit (Juneau Wetlands Management Plan, 1997).

Even with this administrative policy, development has occurred on Class A wetlands near Montana Creek.

**MAP 6: MONTANA CREEK WATERSHED: WETLANDS**



## THREATS TO MONTANA CREEK WATERSHED

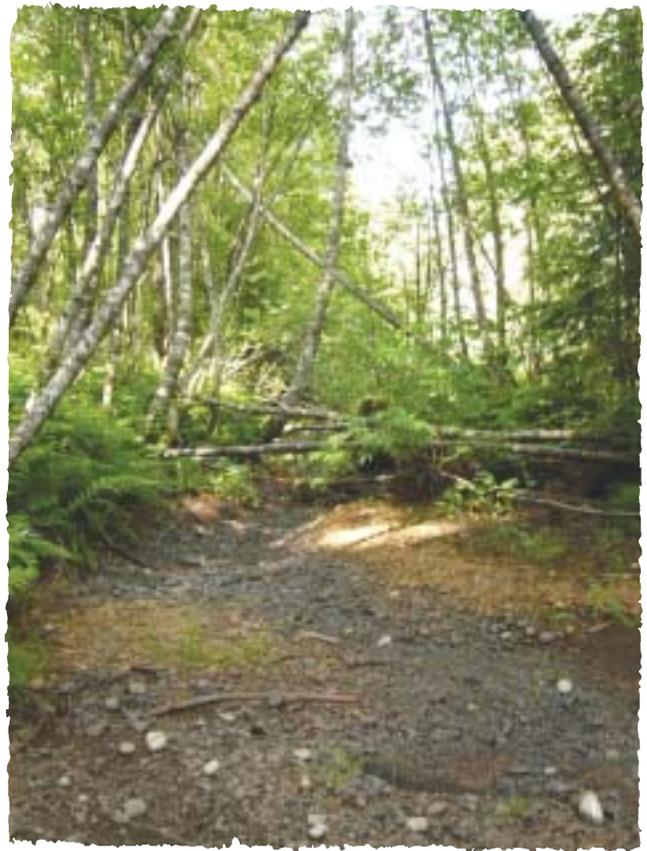
The Montana Creek watershed provides excellent fish and wildlife habitat, and a variety of recreational and educational opportunities. Maintaining and protecting this high value stream is critical as urbanization of the Mendenhall Valley continues. Physical alterations to the stream channel and associated floodplain have contributed to declining water and fish habitat quality in other Juneau streams, such as Duck, Jordan, Lemon, and Vanderbilt Creeks. Historically, each of these creeks supported locally or regionally significant salmon fisheries. But development of the watersheds has degraded habitat

and each of the streams is listed as “impaired” by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC, 2006). The potential loss of important cutthroat trout spawning and rearing areas in Peterson Creek (North Douglas), due to the development of a golf course, also reinforces the importance of protecting Montana Creek. Potential threats to Montana Creek include development of floodplains and wetlands, contribution of non-point source pollutants from recreational and land uses, and continued or renewed resource extraction activities.



Low flows in Duck Creek concentrate naturally occurring iron flocculation, thus decreasing water quality.

PHOTO BY KOSKI AND LORENZ



Seasonal dry conditions in Duck Creek due to development and loss of adjacent wetlands.

PHOTO BY M. ELFERS

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish a Stream Conservation Corridor extending 500 feet from either bank of Montana Creek.
2. Protect all CBJ wetlands associated with Montana Creek.
3. Build a trail along Montana Creek and link it to the existing trail network.
4. Abandon both the potential road corridor connecting Montana Creek with the Herbert/Eagle River area via Windfall Lake and planning for a heliport.
5. Educate the public on stream stewardship.
6. Enforce laws and ordinances protecting fish habitat and watershed resources.

### 1. Establish a Stream Conservation Corridor with a single land use designation extending 500 feet from either bank of Montana Creek as part of the Revised Comprehensive Plan (See Map 7).

Currently there are a variety of buffer sizes and four separate LUDs along Montana Creek (See Figure 4). In order to effectively protect trout and salmon habitat unified and complimentary LUD's are needed. A wider corridor is needed to protect side channels that are vital salmon, trout, and char habitat. The proposed corridor will also protect Montana Creek from contaminated runoff resulting from urban pollution and sedimentation. Furthermore, much of the area inside the proposed corridor is unsuitable for development due to flood danger, stream channel migration, steep slopes, or designation as valuable wetlands. The proposed corridor is designed to acknowledge these conditions and more effectively protect the creek. A detailed rationale of this recommendation includes:

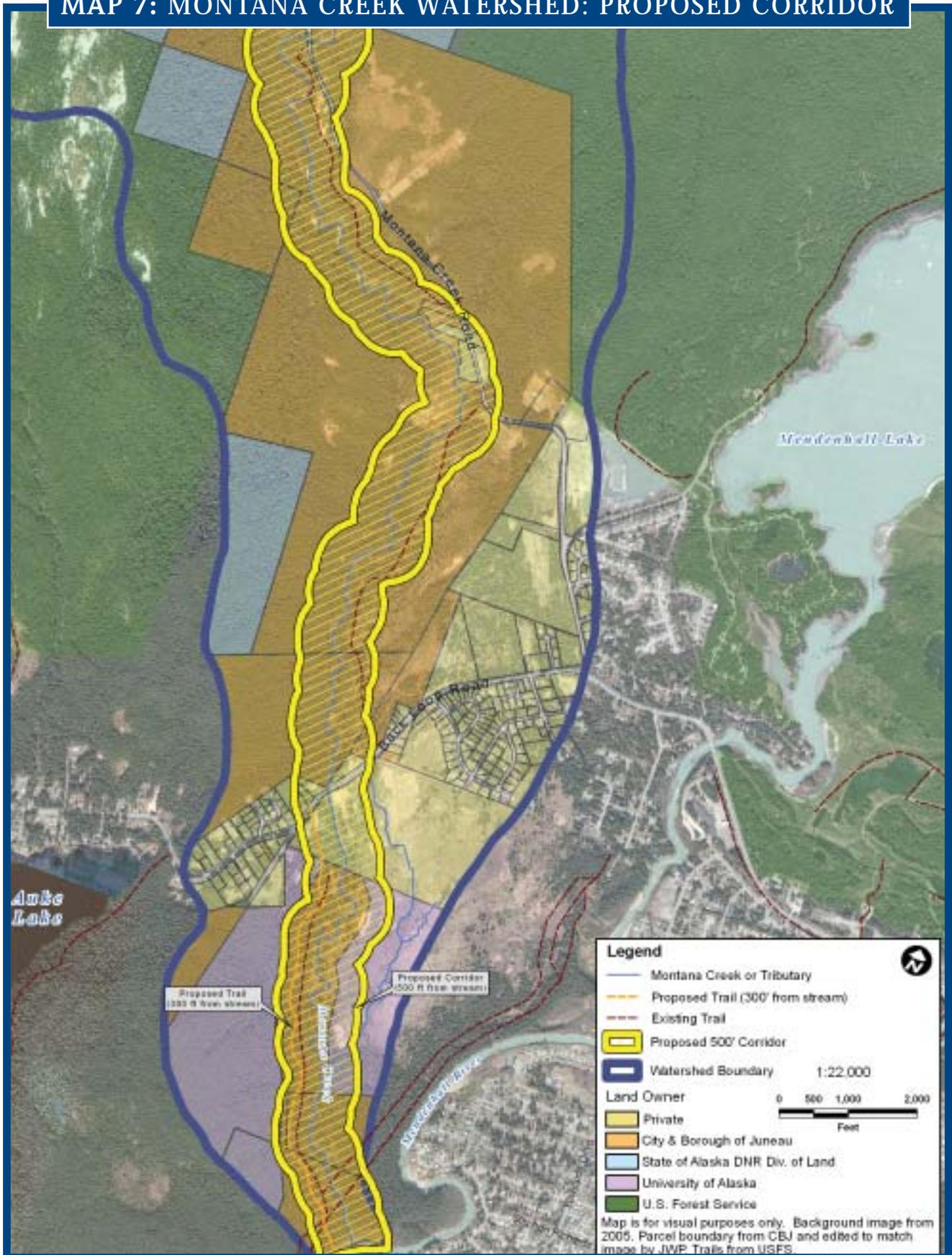
**A) A WIDER BUFFER IS NECESSARY FOR FILTRATION** As development increases around Montana Creek, a wider buffer is needed to protect the creek from pollution and urban runoff. Increased development in a watershed leads to increased impervious surfaces. Without filtration

from soils and vegetation, runoff is transported more rapidly into creeks and sediment loads are increased (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1993; Knighton 1998; Dunn and Leopold 1978). Studies have shown that excessive sediment increases the mortality of salmon eggs and sac fry within salmon redds. Sediment blocks the flow of oxygenated water over eggs and sac fry and effectively smothers them. (Bisson, 2003)

**B) WETLANDS, TRIBUTARIES, AND SIDE CHANNELS** Many side channels of Montana Creek, which often range outside the current buffers, provide excellent rearing habitat for salmon and trout. These channels may be old stream channels that now hold excess water or may drain adjoining wetlands. Protecting these critical rearing areas from development, habitat degradation, and maintaining their connectivity to Montana Creek will help ensure the health of salmon and trout populations.

**C) 100-YEAR FLOOD PLAIN** Much of the proposed corridor lies within the Federal Emergency Management Agency's 100-year floodplain. In several areas the 100 year flood plain stretches beyond the current buffers (See Map 8).

**MAP 7: MONTANA CREEK WATERSHED: PROPOSED CORRIDOR**



Furthermore, it does not take a major flood event to inundate the wetland areas surrounding Montana Creek. At the 15-foot water level, one stage below flood level, water starts to inundate the undeveloped wetlands adjacent to Back Loop Road. Water also begins flowing over the low water crossing on Montana Creek Road. Since 1966 there have been 16 occasions when Montana Creek has exceeded this level and flooded the road (USGS 1965-2006).

According to National Weather Service information, 50% of the 15 feet or greater flood events on Montana Creek have occurred since 1995.

There have been several recent incidents where damaging flood levels have occurred. In October of 1998 Juneau received over 6 inches of rain and Montana Creek exceeded its 50-year flood level. There was also a high water event in September of 1996 when the creek exceeded its 10-year flood level (USGS 1965-2006).

**D) CHANNEL MIGRATION ZONE** A 500-foot corridor is needed on Montana Creek to allow for flooding due to natural stream migration. During a high water event in 1962, on a stretch near the Community Garden, Montana Creek's main channel jumped over 500 feet to the east. It later moved back to its original course. It is not known how many times this has occurred. In 1999, both the main channel and the old flood channel were carrying water. (Carstenson, 1999). This stream channel behavior can also be seen near the houses at the low water crossing on Montana Creek Road near the rifle range. Large culverts and extensive road work were implemented to accommodate increased stream flow as Montana Creek's main channel moves to the east.

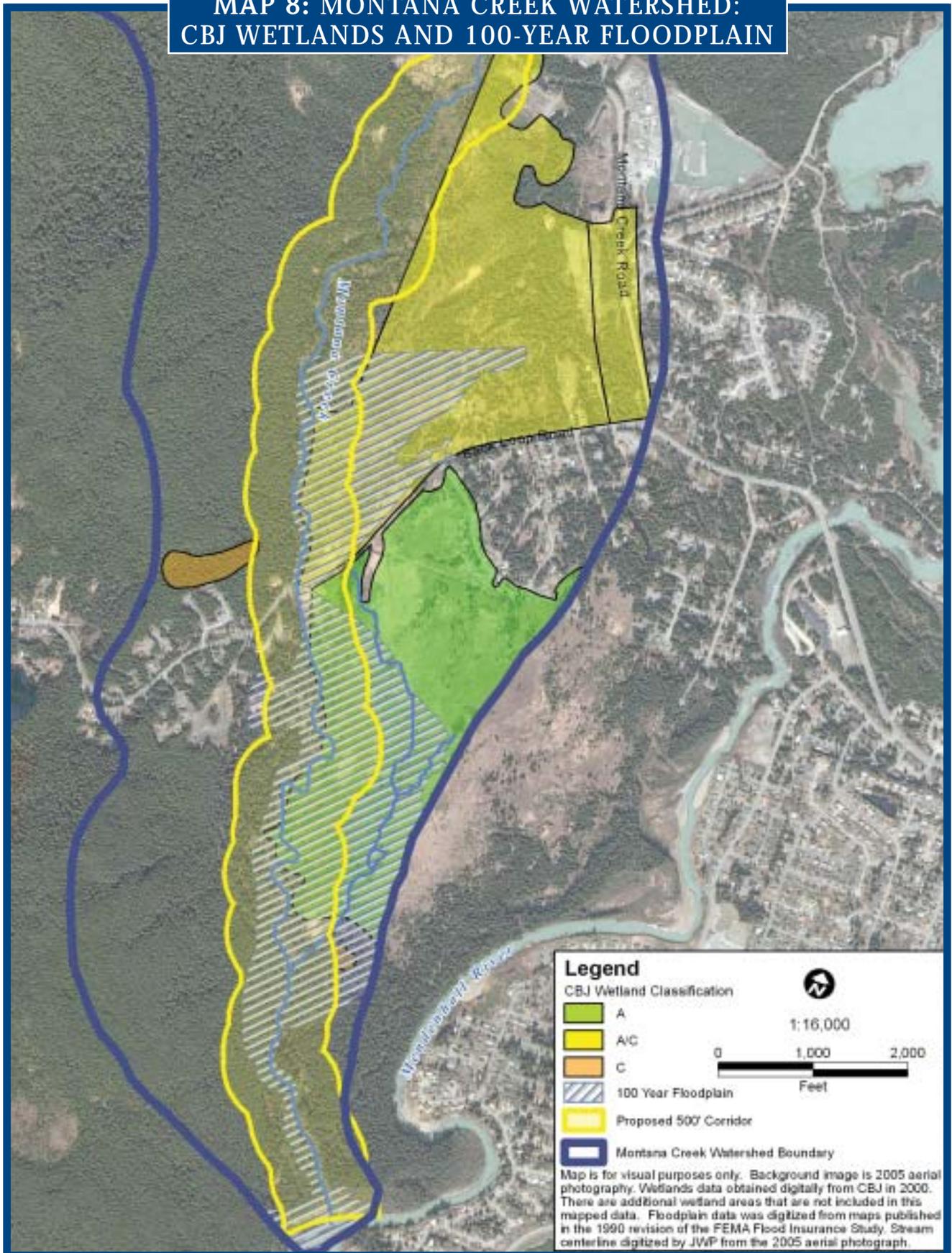
**E) STEEP SLOPES** Within the proposed corridor, an estimated 21.5% of the land is on slopes greater than 15%. Most of this land is either in the upper Canyon Stretch or on the steep hillside to the west of Montana Creek (See Map 9). These large



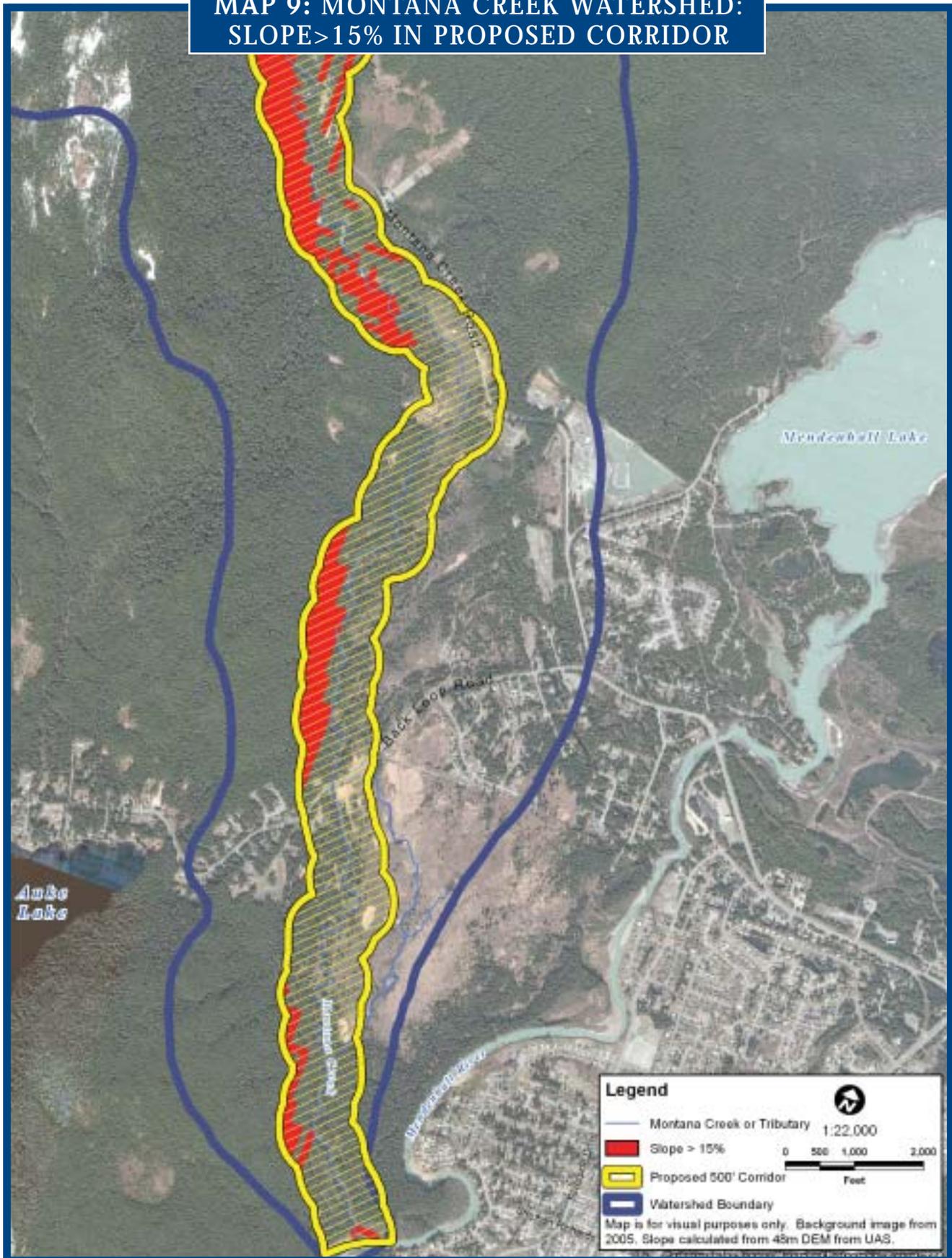
Migration of Montana Creek stream channel.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU

**MAP 8: MONTANA CREEK WATERSHED:  
CBJ WETLANDS AND 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN**



**MAP 9: MONTANA CREEK WATERSHED:  
SLOPE > 15% IN PROPOSED CORRIDOR**



areas of land cannot be developed under CBJ ordinance. Street construction on grades greater than 15% is restricted. In addition, despite the current shortage of affordable housing, the costs of developing housing on slopes 18% or greater make such land unsuitable for affordable housing on CBJ-owned property (CDD, Montana, 2006).

- F) A UNIQUE AND VALUABLE AREA** The proposed corridor is only .78 square miles or 5.1% of the entire 15.23 square mile Montana Creek Watershed. An estimated 74% of the corridor is classified as a wetland (combined CBJ & National Wetlands Inventory) and/or lies within the 100-year floodplain (See Figure 8). Such high value stream and wetland complexes are unique and increasingly rare in Juneau. Additionally, the existing recreational resources such as the Community Garden, Archery Range, Hank Harmon Rifle Range and Juneau Gun Club are valuable destinations for the public and are complementary to the goals of this proposal.

**The proposed corridor is only .78 square miles or 5.1% of the entire 15.23 square mile Montana Creek Watershed.**

- G) DEVELOPMENT IN THIS CORRIDOR IS EXPENSIVE** Development and resource extraction in the proposed corridor would be detrimental to potential homeowners, the CBJ, and Montana Creek. Allowing construction in the 100-year flood plain will cost taxpayers money in the future. Juneau taxpayers continue to pay for habitat restoration on Duck and Jordan Creek, reclamation of former gravel pits, and road and driveway maintenance on Montana Creek Road.

Trout Unlimited will work with private landowners, such as Juneau Youth Services and the University of Alaska, to find complimentary land use strategies for their property. Multiple win-win opportunities such as access easements, conservation acquisitions, and conservation easements exist to maintain the watershed character while providing incentives to adjacent landowners. Additionally, TU acknowledges that a future school site has been identified near the Community Garden, and is interested in helping guide its planning.

For a review of corridor and buffer width prescriptions please see [Appendix B](#).

## **2. Protect all CBJ wetlands associated with Montana Creek.**

CBJ should cease granting permits for development on Class A wetlands associated with Montana Creek. According to the CBJ's Land Use Code and Wetlands Management Plan Category A wetlands "may only be developed if there is no net loss of individual functional values in a wetland unit. One environmental function cannot be substituted for another."

Wetlands in the Montana Creek watershed provide benefits such as flood attenuation, groundwater recharge, nutrient storage and contributions to surface water systems, and fish and wildlife habitat (Adamus Resource Assessment, 1987). Some protection of wetlands is provided through the CBJ Wetland Management Plan (1997); however development in wetland areas still occurs. Acquiring high value wetlands with protective easements will maintain both wetland and stream functions.

## **3. Build and maintain a trail along Montana Creek and link it to the existing trail network.**

In the CBJ West Mendenhall Valley Greenbelt Plan a proposed trail parallels Montana Creek to the west. The trail connects the existing paved bike path along

the Mendenhall River to Back Loop Road. It then continues on the east side of the creek to Montana Creek Road near the Community Garden (See Figure 7).

We propose the construction and maintenance of a gravel trail for non-motorized use, similar to the recently improved Herbert River Trail. To avoid conflicts with private property owners and wildlife habitat along the stream banks, it would be sited a minimum of 300 feet from Montana Creek and a minimum of 100 feet from the outer boundary of the corridor.

Currently this stretch of Montana Creek is very difficult to access due to a lack of connectivity between existing trails and their unmaintained condition. This trail will greatly increase access for hikers, anglers, and other user groups. It will fulfill the CBJ Greenbelt Master Plan goal of connecting neighborhoods with trails and will offer an ideal connection to a trail circumnavigating Auke Lake.

#### **4. Abandon the potential road corridor connecting Montana Creek with the Herbert/Eagle River area via Windfall Lake and discontinue all planning for a remote heliport site in the Montana Creek watershed.**

Constructing either a road along this corridor or a heliport within the watershed would be detrimental to the recreational values enjoyed by current users and would pose serious threats to water quality, fish and function of adjacent riparian habitat.

Recent collaborative flight routing and noise reduction efforts have been effective in reducing helicopter impacts. We believe that these strategies are preferable to incurring the massive expenditures and impacts of a remote heliport. A major road would undermine the integrity of the watershed and is not needed.

#### **5. Educate the public on stream stewardship.**

The Chapter is very interested in partnering with CBJ Parks and Recreation to promote educational opportunities that a pristine Montana Creek riparian area offers. Trout Unlimited has several programs designed to educate and involve youth with fishing and cold water conservation that the Juneau Chapter plans to make available to local students. A healthy Montana Creek will be an ideal location for these programs and will represent a living laboratory for other areas of study by Juneau students as well as the University of Alaska.

#### **6. Enforce laws and ordinances protecting fish habitat and watershed resources.**

Illegal off-road vehicle use in the upper watershed has damaged wetlands adjacent to Montana Creek as well as portions of the McGinnis Creek headwaters. While ATVs are allowed on the road right-of-way in upper Montana Creek, off-road vehicle recreation is subject to local ordinances governing riparian disturbance as well as state regulations that protect anadromous fish habitat (AS 41.18.870). Enforcement is difficult and often does not occur. Trout Unlimited proposes partnering with the Juneau Police Department and Alaska State Troopers so that off-trail ATV use and illegal dumping may be curtailed. In addition, the Juneau Chapter of TU will explore options for obtaining and placing increased and improved regulatory and interpretative signage along the stream corridor.



**Damage from off road vehicles adjacent to Montana Creek.**

PHOTO BY MARK KAEELKE

## CONCLUSION

With the update of the Juneau Comprehensive Plan, the public and municipal decision makers have the opportunity to proactively preserve and protect the most valuable clear water stream in the Mendenhall Valley. Thoughtful and intelligent protection of resources in the Montana Creek Watershed produces *ecological* and *economical* benefits.

A 500 foot no-development / recreational corridor adjacent to Montana Creek promotes the sustainability of the high quality fish habitat and recreational opportunities. The establishment of an adequate riparian buffer will protect the stream from the detrimental impacts of unplanned development that Juneau has seen in Duck and Jordan Creek. The lack of buffers along these streams continues to cost the city money for rehabilitation.

Similarly, the restriction of development in Class A wetlands maintains the filtration of sediment and contaminants in runoff. These wetlands prevent fine sediment from degrading the vital spawning and rearing habitat that supports Montana Creek's thriving fish populations.

Many of us live here because we love the beauty and accessibility of the Alaskan outdoors. To us, Montana Creek is unique because of the abundant fishing opportunities that are so close to our homes. We need to protect this resource for our enjoyment and for the benefit of future generations.



PHOTO BY MARK KAEIKE

## APPENDIX A: MONTANA CREEK ANGLER EFFORT AND CATCH RATES

Year	ANGLER EFFORT (angler days)	COHO SALMON		PINK SALMON		CHUM SALMON		CUTTHROAT TROUT		DOLLY VARDEN	
		Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch
1992	608	97	308	27	27	15	15	27	101	74	410
1993	770	134	525	0	0	0	26	0	45	28	697
1994	735	208	344	0	256	0	241	0	197	9	1381
1995	2045	255	652	0	106	69	231	34	143	104	1076
1996	2241	353	1010	20	386	33	563	0	158	473	7362
1997	2448	218	303	0	1227	205	777	0	71	591	5479
1998	2221	274	684	0	605	0	206	67	741	349	7056
1999	2069	230	680	0	439	14	213	58	408	429	1841
2000	2763	324	497	0	154	26	530	9	151	534	2683
2001	3993	301	641	133	2121	39	1115	96	741	508	8722
2002	3015	658	1905	73	1652	0	277	37	1022	174	7676
2003	2229	361	734	0	954	11	199	47	127	302	2913
2004	1570	90	194	0	307	0	47	0	65	40	1895
2005	1782	264	686	0	235	0	191	20	91	165	1228

Source: Unpublished data from Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Sport Fish Division Research and Technical Services database.



PHOTO BY JOHN HYDE



PHOTO BY RICH CULVER

## APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL REFERENCES FOR RIPARIAN BUFFERS

*In a comprehensive review of riparian literature, Scheuler and Holland state that the typical minimum base width recommended to provide adequate stream protection is 100ft, noting that buffers may be expanded beyond the 100ft minimum to incorporate the following conditions:*

- The full extent of the 100-year floodplain.
- Steep slopes greater than 25%.
- Adjacent delineated wetlands or critical habitats.
- Higher order or quality streams.

Scheuler, T.R. and H.K. Holland, eds. *The Practice of Watershed Protection*. Center for Watershed Protection: Elliott City, Maryland. 2000.

*The City of Everett, Washington conducted a review of riparian literature and, as applied to the riparian function requirements of their community, came up with the following buffer width recommendations:*

- Sediment Retention and Filtration: 100 ft.–300 ft.
- Bank Stability: 100 ft.–125 ft.
- Small Woody Debris: 250 ft.
- Shade/Water Temperature: 35 ft.–250 ft.
- Water Quality: 13 ft.–600 ft.
- Wildlife Habitat: 30 ft.–1000ft.

Everett, *Use of Best Available Science in the City of Everett Buffer Regulations: Non Shoreline Streams*. Prepared for the City of Everett by The Watershed Company, Kirkland, Washington. 2003.

*From a review of over 140 books and articles performed to establish a legally defensible basis for determining buffer width, extent, and vegetation, the author concludes that the following general prescription provides the greatest level of protection for stream corridors, including good control of sediment and other contaminants, maintenance of quality aquatic habitat, and some minimal terrestrial habitat:*

- Base width: 100 ft. plus 2 ft. per 1% of slope.
- Extend to the edge of the floodplain.
- Include adjacent wetlands. The buffer width is extended by the width of the wetlands, which guarantees that the entire wetland and an additional buffer are protected.
- Existing impervious surfaces in the riparian zone do not count toward buffer width.
- Slopes over 25% do not count toward the buffer width.
- The buffer applies to all perennial and intermittent streams.

Wenger, S. *A review of the Scientific Literature on Riparian Buffer Width, Extent, and Vegetation*. Institute of Ecology. University of Georgia. 1999.

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PHOTO BY MARK KAEKE





PHOTO BY RICH CULVER



## HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED WITH TROUT UNLIMITED

Trout Unlimited is increasing its efforts in Alaska, with the opening of the State Office in Juneau in 2005 and the re-building of the Juneau Chapter. But, we need help from our members and other concerned citizens to ensure success in our local and regional efforts. To find out more about our work in Alaska and to get involved please see [www.tujuneau.org](http://www.tujuneau.org) or call us at 907/790-8876.



**TO:** Rorie Watt, City Manager  
**FROM:** George Schaaf, Parks & Recreation Director  
**DATE:** July 2, 2020  
**RE:** Park Infrastructure Projects

The Parks & Recreation Department respectfully requests a general obligation bond to fund the following projects be considered for the October 2020 municipal election. These projects address longstanding deferred maintenance needs in some of Juneau's most heavily used parks, and implement adopted park master plans. Importantly, these projects would provide significant work for small and medium-size contractors and consultants affected by the economic impacts of COVID-19.

Facility	Scope of Work	Est. Cost
Adair-Kennedy Memorial Park	Replace restroom/concession building Replace utilities (water/sewer) Replace lighting Construct new entry plaza Repair track	\$2,500,000
Treadwell Arena	Replace leaking roof	\$1,100,000
Capital School Park	Replace playground Replace basketball court Replace retaining wall Improve drainage Construct new open play area Install security lighting	\$1,000,000
Melvin Park	Replace inoperable field lighting	\$1,000,000
Savikko Park	Replace playground Repave parking lot and improve drainage Replace curb and gutter Construct new entry plaza	\$750,000
Cope Park	Pave parking lot Install curb, gutter, and ADA sidewalks	\$500,000

*(Continued)*

Eagle Valley Center	Pave parking lot Repair drainage to prevent building damage	\$250,000
Dimond Park	Install ADA sidewalks Install adult fitness machine circuit Construct new dog park	\$200,000
Hank Harmon Rifle Range	Repair safety berms Improve drainage Replace shooting benches	\$200,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$7,500,000</b>

## Adair-Kennedy Memorial Park



## Capital School Park



## Cope Park



## Savikko Park



## Hank Harmon Public Range



## Dimond Park



Presented by: The Manager  
Introduced: 07/20/2020  
Drafted by: Bond Counsel

## **ORDINANCE OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU, ALASKA**

### **Serial No. 2020-40**

#### **An Ordinance Authorizing the Issuance of General Obligation Bonds in the Principal Amount of Not to Exceed Fifteen Million Dollars to Finance Capital Improvements to the Facilities of the City and Borough, and Submitting a Proposition or Propositions to the Voters at the Election to Be Held Therein on October 6, 2020.**

WHEREAS, improvements and renovations to the infrastructure and facilities of the City and Borough of Juneau, Alaska (the “City and Borough”) are needed in order to meet the current and future needs of the City and Borough; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 epidemic has placed unprecedented strain on the Juneau economy; and

WHEREAS, strained municipal revenues have caused certain public infrastructure projects to be delayed for lack of current funding; and

WHEREAS, economic stress and uncertainty has caused businesses to delay infrastructure projects that would have generated local economic activity; and

WHEREAS, history has demonstrated the economic stabilization and recovery benefits that accrue from public infrastructure spending in times of economic stress; and

WHEREAS, a number of school facilities are in urgent need of roof and facility repairs that have been deferred due to lack of funding; and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Department has worked with the community to develop detailed master plans to repair and improve specific parks, playgrounds, and other infrastructure that has reached the end of its useful life, yet remain unbuilt because of a lack of funding; and

WHEREAS, the community has developed master plans and other documents setting forth a vision for development of West Douglas for commercial and residential purposes; and

WHEREAS, certain projects listed in Section 3 below (the “Projects”) have been identified and approved by the Committee of the Whole as necessary to meet the needs of the City and Borough; and

WHEREAS, in order to provide funds for paying the cost of acquiring, constructing, renovating and equipping the Projects, it is deemed necessary and advisable that the City and Borough issue and sell its unlimited tax levy general obligation bonds in the principal amount of not to exceed \$15,000,000 (the “Bonds”);

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU, ALASKA:

**Section 1. Classification.** This ordinance is a noncode ordinance.

**Section 2. Findings.** The Assembly of the City and Borough hereby finds and declares that the acquisition, construction, renovation and equipping of the Projects identified in Section 3 hereof are necessary and are in the best interest of the inhabitants of the City and Borough.

**Section 3. Purposes.** The Assembly has determined that the City and Borough is in need of the following:

- Critical repairs to schools, including roof replacements;
- Repairs and capital improvements to municipal park infrastructure and recreation facilities; and
- Construction of the extension to West Douglas Pioneer Road.

The foregoing are herein referred to as the “Projects.” The cost of all necessary architectural, engineering, design, and other consulting services, inspection and testing, administrative and relocation expenses, costs of issuance of the Bonds and other costs incurred in connection with the Projects that is approved by the electors shall be deemed capital improvement costs of the approved Projects. The approved Projects may be completed with all necessary furniture, equipment and appurtenances.

If the City and Borough shall determine that it has become impractical to accomplish any portion of the approved Projects by reason of changed conditions or needs, incompatible development or costs substantially in excess of those estimated, the City and Borough shall not be required to accomplish such portions and shall apply Bond proceeds as set forth in this section.

Interest earnings on Bond proceeds may be used and applied by City and Borough, at the direction of the City Manager or his or her designee, for the Projects or for other capital improvements or for the retirement of the Bonds or other general obligation bonds of the City and Borough.

If the approved Projects have been completed in whole or in part, or its completion duly provided for, or its completion found to be impractical, the City and Borough may apply Bond proceeds or any portion thereof as provided in Section 10.10 of the Home Rule Charter.

In the event that the proceeds of sale of the Bonds, plus any other monies of the City and Borough legally available, are insufficient to accomplish the approved Projects, the City and Borough shall use the available funds for paying the cost of those portions of the approved Projects for which the Bonds were approved deemed by the Assembly most necessary and in the best interest of the City and Borough. No Bond proceeds shall be used for any purpose other than a capital improvement.

**Section 4. Details of Bonds.** The Assembly hereby authorizes the issuance of general obligation bonds in order to fund the costs of the Projects described in Section 3 (the “Bonds”). The Bonds shall be sold in such amounts and at such time or times as deemed necessary and advisable by the Assembly and as permitted by law and shall mature over a period of up to 20 years of date of issue. The Bonds shall be issued in an aggregate principal amount of not to exceed \$15,000,000. The Bonds shall bear interest to be fixed at the time of sale or sales thereof. Both principal of and interest on the Bonds shall be payable from annual tax levies to be made upon all of the taxable property within the City and Borough, without limitation as to rate or amount and in amounts sufficient with other available funds, to pay such principal and interest as the same shall become due.

The full faith, credit, and resources of the City and Borough are hereby irrevocably pledged to the payment of both the principal and interest on such Bonds. The exact form, terms, conditions, contents, security, options of redemption, and such other matters relating to the issuance and sale of said Bonds as are deemed necessary and advisable by the Assembly shall be as hereinafter fixed by ordinance and resolution of the City and Borough.

**Section 5. Submission of Question to Voters.** The Assembly hereby submits to the qualified electors of the City and Borough the proposition or propositions of whether or not the City and Borough should issue the Bonds for the purpose of financing the costs of the approved Projects at the regular municipal election to be held on October 6, 2020.

The City and Borough clerk shall prepare the ballot proposition(s) to be submitted to the voters as provided by this ordinance and shall perform all necessary steps in accordance with law to place these propositions before the voters at the regular election.

**Section 6. Ballot Proposition.** The proposition(s) to be submitted to the qualified voters of the City and Borough as required by Section 5 above shall read substantially as follows:

#### **Explanation**

The proposition will authorize the issuance of \$15,000,000 in general obligation bond debt for paying the cost of planning, design and construction of municipal infrastructure, facilities and related capital improvements, including the construction of West Douglas Pioneer Road, school roof replacements and municipal park improvements. The total annual debt service costs, assuming an interest rate of 3.5%, will be \$857,000. This amount of debt service would require an annual property tax levy of approximately 16.75 per \$100,000 of assessed value. This example of a property tax levy is provided for illustrative purposes only.

PROPOSITION NO. \_\_\_\_  
GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS

To promote the health, well-being, education, and economic recovery of the community by repairing school facilities and roofs, improving and maintaining park infrastructure and recreation facilities, and extending the West Douglas Pioneer Road, shall the City and Borough of Juneau, Alaska, issue and sell its general obligation bonds, maturing within 20 years of their date of issue, in the aggregate principal amount of not to exceed \$15,000,000?

BONDS, YES

BONDS, NO

After voter approval of the proposition and in anticipation of the issuance of the Bonds, the City and Borough may issue short term obligations, under such date and in such amount, form, terms, maturity, and bearing such rate or rates of interest, all as may hereafter be fixed by ordinance of the City and Borough, consistent with limitations imposed by State law and by the Home Rule Charter and Code of the City and Borough.

**Section 7. Notice of Election.** The Assembly shall cause a notice of election to be published once a week for three consecutive weeks in a newspaper for general circulation in the City and Borough. The first notice shall be published not later than September 16, 2020, which is 20 days prior to the regular municipal election. The notice shall contain the information required by Section 10.5 of the Home Rule Charter of the City and Borough.

**Section 8. Effective Dates.**

(a) The authority to issue general obligation bonds proposed in Section 6 of this ordinance shall become effective on the day following the date the election results are certified for the regular municipal election held on October 6, 2020, if a majority of the qualified voters voting on the proposition set forth in Section 6 votes for the proposition.

(b) Section 6 of this ordinance authorizing the submission of the ballot proposition to the qualified voters of the City and Borough shall become effective thirty days after adoption of this ordinance.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_ day of August, 2020.

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Beth Weldon, Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Elizabeth J. McEwen, Municipal Clerk

June 28, 2020

To the Parks and Rec Advisory Committee:

We would like to see a permanent gate installed at the entrance to Montana Creek road adjacent to the Rifle Range. The road that continues from there should be for human-powered use only, and permanently closed to motorized use year-round.

This section of Montana Creek road should be designated a trail and used only as such. Currently, it supports skiing and snowshoeing from November to May, fishing and bicycling in the summer, as well as hiking, dog-walking, and running year round.

The use of this trail by motorized vehicles endangers non-motorized users. The speed differential between people and machines, on a narrow one-lane road with blind curves, is a threat to the safety of human-powered users.

Motorized use also degrades lands along this corridor. The muskeg meadow just inside the gate was destroyed this spring by off-road vehicle users. What was once a walkable meadow full of wild flowers is now a giant muck hole of standing water and mud.

The ski trail, groomed by volunteers and used daily for 156 consecutive days this winter, was ruined by motorized users on three separate occasions this winter when the existing gate was opened without authority.

The Juneau Nordic Ski Club, a member-supported non-profit, grooms the trail for skiing from first snowfall to final snow melt. The club also provides grooming on Mendenhall Lake and Campground as well as several other sites in cooperation with the City and Borough of Juneau and the US Forest Service. This free service, provided by volunteers, is valued at over \$200,000 in recreational benefit to the people of Juneau.

User groups include the middle school and high school Ski Team, the 4-H Ski program, and a wide cross-section of the community in age, ability, and other demographic groupings. Daily use is often over 100 people, from early morning until after dark.

This area stays cold all winter, with unusually heavy snowfall. It is the most reliably ski-able area in Juneau even in low snowfall years.

We are asking for this recreation corridor to be designated a human-powered non-motorized use area year-round, to protect users and the usability of the area. The installation of a permanent gate, locked year-round, would immediately and cheaply solve this problem.

Signed,

Jenifer Shapland	Nathan Bishop	Amanda Arra	Lisa Lindeman
Tracey Miller	Jan Moyer	Rory Darling	Luann McVey
Anne Sutton	John Staub	Virginia Stonkus	Cindy Audet
Katherine Heumann	Deborah Craig	Janet Valentour	Bonnie Chaney
Mary Capobianca	Eileen Wagner	Deborah Rudis	Gretchen Keiser
Elaine Schroeder	Cynthia Krehbiel	Judy Neary	Bob Wild
Nancy Jones	Thomas Krehbiel	John Neary	Linda Torgerson
Marinke Van Gelder	David Job	Martha Murray	Nancy Simpson
Diane Mayer	Beth Rivest	Mary Sweeney	Stephanie Hoag
Barb Lindh	Craig Lindh	Brenda Holdener	Ani Torgerson
Fran Roche	Mary Ellen Aarvold	Dave Haas	Theresa Tavel
Betsy Brennehan	Mary Hausler	Doug Woodby	Carrol Rafferty
Peggy & Alex Wertheimer	Sally Saddler	Dave Sturdevant	Susan Baxter

**From:** [Raymond Dwyer](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#); [Parks Rec](#)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Road Access  
**Date:** Saturday, August 1, 2020 10:01:46 AM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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I am writing to urge the CBJ to keep the Montatna Cr road access close to motorized vehicles during the winter months. During the winter, the road is a valuable recreational asset for skiers, hikers, etc. Allowing motorized vehicles will mean that the ski trails cannot be maintained. I think a fair compromise is to allow motorized vehicles in non-snow months and let the skiers have it in winter. Thanks for your time.

Ray Dwyer  
Blackerby Street  
Juneau

**From:** [Mary Ellen Arvold Dave Haas](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#); [Juneau Nordic Ski Club](#)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Road  
**Date:** Sunday, August 2, 2020 9:36:23 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Dear PRAC Members,

My name is Mary Ellen Arvold and I am an avid cross country skier and hiker.

The Montana Creek Trail is my main skate ski venue all snow season due to the fact that it retains the snow better than any of the other trails in the Juneau area. Over the past couple of years, on multiple occasions, the carefully groomed ski tracks on Montana Creek have been severely damaged by a few snowmobilers or ATV users. I request that this trail be utilized only by XC skiers and hikers during the winter months of November through April in order to maintain the well groomed status of the trails for the thousands who exercise here and enjoy the pristine nature of the area.

Appreciatively,

Mary Ellen Arvold

**From:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Montana Creek Access  
**Date:** Monday, August 3, 2020 3:20:12 PM

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**From:** Rory Darling and Jan Moyer <alaskakayakers@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, August 2, 2020 3:18 PM  
**To:** Parks Rec <Parks.Rec@juneau.org>  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Access

**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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We, and many other people, use the Montana Creek trail for outdoor activities all year round. Hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, dog walking, enjoying the peace and quiet, etc. It is incomprehensible that CBJ would allow motorized vehicles to also use this area. Motorized vehicles are incompatible with non-motorized activities. Volunteers from Juneau Nordic Ski Club set ski tracks all winter long which are used by hundreds of skiers. Motorized vehicles would destroy these set tracks.

We recommend closing and locking the Montana Creek gate ALLL YEAR LONG. We do not want to get run over by machines that are going much faster than us and in the winter, ruining the ski tracks.  
Thank you for your consideration  
Jan Moyer and Rory Darling

**Rory** 907.957.6971

**Jan** 907.957.6972

**From:** [Gary Hayden](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#); [Parks Rec](#)  
**Subject:** Exclude Motorized use on Montana Creek Trail  
**Date:** Monday, August 3, 2020 6:45:57 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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We support the closure of Montana Creek Park to motorized users from November 1<sup>st</sup> to May 1. Please install the “kissing gate” during the same time frame. Keeping the use of the trail as a XC ski trail is essential and a critical need for the community. The snow conditions are unique in this area and provide an extension of the few other trails in the Mendenhall Valley. Motorized use is not compatible with XC skiing and one motorized user can ruin the trail for all skiers.

Using this XC ski trail allows for an extended season. This last winter it also met a mental health / get out of doors alternative during a stressful time.

Gary and Judi Hayden

**From:** [Karla Hart](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**Subject:** Support Juneau Nordic Ski Club regarding motorized use of Montana Creek  
**Date:** Monday, August 3, 2020 3:02:37 PM

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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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I support the Juneau Nordic Ski Club's position on motorized use of Montana Creek Trail.

One person on a motorized vehicle can destroy the experience for hundreds of non-motorized users.

Regards,

Karla Hart

**From:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Montana Creek Road/Trail  
**Date:** Monday, August 3, 2020 3:20:48 PM

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-----Original Message-----

From: Mary Tonsmeire <tonsmay@hotmai.com>  
Sent: Tuesday, July 28, 2020 4:45 PM  
To: Parks Rec <Parks.Rec@juneau.org>  
Cc: info@jnski.org  
Subject: Montana Creek Road/Trail

EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

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To Juneau Parks & Recreation

Montana Creek road is a God send for so many in our community over past winters. The sound of the creek as you run, hike, bike and ski soothes the soul like no other spot in town. The snow pack is dependable for almost half the year. We are so fortunate to have Juneau Nordic Club volunteers set a Nordic track all winter for everyone to share. The past winters I have skied 3-5 times a week. This trail helped me so much through the death & then the murder trial of my daughter. It was my wilderness womb. In the midst of the pandemic I saw so many folks of all ages seeking healthy exercise. On two separate occasions in late spring I was skiing alone and a motorized vehicle was suddenly upon me, once he came close and the other the driver was intentionally driving over the ski track. Please consider blocking this treasure to motorized traffic from November through April

Mary Tonsmeire  
2204 Douglas Hwy  
Douglas AK 99824

**From:** [Bob Marshall](#)  
**To:** [Parks Rec](#); [Lauren Verrelli](#); [Juneau Nordic Ski Club](#); [Bob Marshall](#)  
**Subject:** Montana Cr Road Closure  
**Date:** Monday, August 3, 2020 11:13:49 AM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Dear Parks and Recreation Committee,

Please support closing Montana Creek Road to motorized use beyond the rifle range gate each winter.

As you know, the road beyond this gate has been maintained for nordic skiing for many years and provides thousands of skier days each winter. This use is not compatible with motorized use..

Thank you for your attention to this important issue,

Robert Marshall  
3251 Nowell Ave  
Juneau AK 99801

**From:** [thomascd@gci.net](mailto:thomascd@gci.net)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Cc:** [info@jnski.org](mailto:info@jnski.org)  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Trail  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 4, 2020 12:32:58 PM

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**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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Lauren,

We support the Juneau Nordic Ski Clubs request to have a pedestrian 'kissing gate' in place Nov. 1 - May 1 Montana Creek Trail and not have it opened to motorized vehicles. We have been Nordic skiing at Montana Creek since the early 1960. It is distressing to see the destruction motorized vehicles cause when operating on fragile muskegs and off-road habitat. The disturbed muskeg at the beginning of the trail reveals the damage we can anticipate if 4 wheels are allowed on the road.

Because we ski, help with grooming and trail maintenance at Montana Creek we are there five or more days per week we see how popular this trail is with local skiers.

Somedays skiers use the trail from 6:00 a.m. until late at night.

Thanks for considering this request!

Sincerely,

Don & Chris Thomas

**From:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Montana Creek  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 4, 2020 9:10:17 AM

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**From:** Jen and Pat Malecha <jenandpat@gci.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 3, 2020 6:51 PM  
**To:** Parks Rec <Parks.Rec@juneau.org>  
**Subject:** Montana Creek

**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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**Please keep Montana Creek road closed to motorized users and the pedestrian "kissing gate" in place [from Nov 1 to May 1](#).**

**Thank so much.**

**Best,  
Jenny Malecha**

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Parks Rec](#)  
**To:** [Lauren Verrelli](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Montana Creek Gate  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 4, 2020 9:10:59 AM

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**From:** Odin Brudie <odin@gci.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 4, 2020 8:46 AM  
**To:** Parks Rec <Parks.Rec@juneau.org>  
**Cc:** George Schaaf <George.Schaaf@juneau.org>  
**Subject:** Montana Creek Gate

**EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS**

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CBJ Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee,

Dear PRAC Members,

I am writing in support of the request for CBJ to manage and enforce the closure of Montana Creek Road to motorized vehicles in winter. Long before the gate was put in place at the Hank Harmon Range, the end portion of the road has been a very popular “near-wilderness” destination close to home for skiers and pedestrians. As a member of the Juneau Nordic Ski Club, my dues support the ski trail grooming at Montana Creek. Our family skis this trail nearly every day in winter. I also coach the Juneau Nordic Ski Team and we often ski Montana Creek with headlamps, in the dark after school. During the last three seasons there have been instances where snow-machines and four-wheelers have driven on the groomed trails. This wrecks our trails, and poses a serious **threat to the safety of skiers and walkers.**

Please join me in supporting the move to strengthen an existing rule for winter use on Montana Creek.

Thank you for your service to Juneau’s people, parks and recreation gems.

Odin Brudie  
512 6th St.  
Juneau, AK. 998901  
(9097)209-4344

August 4, 2020

To: CBJ Parks and Recreation Committee

From: Wayne Carnes  
Representing Juneau Nordic Ski Club

I'm here representing the Juneau Nordic Ski Club Board and the over 600 Members. We are requesting the continued winter closure of the Montana Cr. Road after the Rifle Range and the permanent installation of the pedestrian gate – also know as a “kissing gate” from Nov 1 to May 1.

Here are reasons and facts to support such a closure.

- Grooming history of Montana Cr. Road. The JNSC began grooming in the area about 15 years ago. In 2014 after the winter road closure began, we purchased additional equipment specifically for this area and began regular grooming efforts. This is now a daily occurrence during the winter ski season. Interestingly there is a much older Nordic ski use of the road. In an interview with longtime Juneauite Fred Baxter, club member Chris Thomas discovered that a Nordic trail was groomed to the end of the road as early as 1962 for use by the ski racing team and others.

- JNSC groomed the road 156 days - over 835 hours of volunteer labor - last season. This provided thousands of skier days to the public in the only reliably snow covered area at sea level.

- JNSC volunteers helped to coordinate and provide labor to repair the bridge across Montana Cr. in addition to annually keeping the road clear of brush, fallen trees, and landslides.

- Youth skiers spend many days and dark evenings training and racing on the ski trail.

- Last winter the pedestrian kissing gate was dismantled – all it takes is a couple of wrenches. This allowed unauthorized motorized vehicles to drive thru the opening and onto the closed road.

- A single motorized user can destroy the groomed trail by creating deep ruts which are not only hazardous but take many hours for volunteer groomers to remove.

- Motorized users have thousands of acres of winter terrain available on Douglas I., Spaulding Meadows and nearby at the Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area. Comparatively, the narrow Montana Cr. Road is only 2 miles long, equating to 2.4 acres.

- Motorized users are incompatible and can create dangerous situations with skiers, snow shoers, and hikers on the narrow roadway with numerous blind curves.
  
- Keeping the gate closed beyond the Rifle Range during the winter and having JNSC continue grooming is in line with Parks and Recreation Master Plan guiding principles of:
  - Promote Community Engagement, Health, and Wellness
  - Maintaining Assets Effectively
  - Supporting Community Partnerships
  - Fostering Environmental Stewardship.
  
- Thanks to this CBJ / JNSC collaboration, in the years since the gate closure this recreational area has seen a dramatic increase in public non motorized use.
  
- The parking challenges at the Rifle Range will hopefully be addressed in the near future with a proposed grant endorsed by CBJ Assembly Public Works Committee that includes increasing the parking for an additional 20-30 cars.
  
- Having another public process is unnecessary. This process was completed prior to the gate being installed in 2014 as described in George Schaaf's letter to you. Importantly, the stakeholders - including the U.S. Forest Service, Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources, Juneau Archery Club, off-road vehicle users, and the owners of mining claims in the area - agreed to the winter road closure.
  
- We are not asking for anything new. There is an agreement in place and the CBJ has the authority to close the road. We are simply asking for a continuation of the existing agreement and rules agreed to in 2014 and request that they be enforced.
  
- All that is necessary, is to have the existing gate closed during the winter months – Nov 1 to May 1 – and the pedestrian kissing gate be permanently installed.