

Bruce Baker's written public testimony submitted by e-mail prior to the City & Borough of Juneau public meeting on January 11, 2020

Subject: Overtourism¹ – A Need to Set Limits

Juneau tourism is expected to grow 2-4 percent annually, with the potential for periods of much higher growth.

Offsetting its economic benefits have been traffic congestion, air pollution, overcrowding at the Mendenhall Glacier Visitors Center, helicopter noise, local trails crowded by guided tourist parties, charter sport fishing that competes with residents for a limited fisheries resource, and intense pursuit of whales by large boats with powerful engines.

And what are we doing to address tourism?

First, the borough strives to provide more dock space for bigger cruise ships downtown, and more harbor facilities at Auke Bay to accommodate smaller commercial tourism vessels.

Second, although 700,000 people already visit the glacier visitor center each year, the Forest Service plans to expand facilities to accommodate still more congestion there.

Third, Eaglecrest Ski Area is considering's intensive summer recreation development which, while potentially helping the revenue stream that supports winter recreation, threatens to turn the slopes into a theme park with too many people on too small a mountain.

This is a good time for Juneau to discuss limits to tourism. So far, no one has wanted to disturb the goose that lays the golden eggs. Yet, our failure to do so diminishes rather than enhances the non-monetary quality of life for those who live here.

Suggestions

I suggest that Juneau 1) convene a citizens' task force to address how much tourism is too much, and 2) retain the contractual service of an unbiased

consulting firm to help identify at what point the benefits of tourism become outweighed by the negative impacts on the quality of life for Juneau residents. This task force should reflect various community interests but should not be skewed toward representation of outside interests such as the cruise ship industry.

Thank you.

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¹ Overtourism is defined by defined by [The Center for Responsible Travel](#) (CREST), a policy research organization in Washington, D.C., as

“tourism that has moved beyond the limits of acceptable change in a destination due to quantity of visitors, resulting in degradation of the environment and infrastructure, diminished travel experience, wear and tear on built heritage, and/or negative impacts on residents.”