

July 15, 2023

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Via email: Andrew Gregory at Andrew.W.Gregory@usace.army.mil

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Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification Section
PO Box 111800
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Submitted electronically to: <https://water.alaskadec.commentinput.com?id=cPBj97Hdt>

Submitted via email to: DEC-4-1CERT@alaska.gov

Reference: POA-2021-00278 and POA 2023-00206 and DEC "Notice of Application for State Water Quality Certification PN Reference Numbers POA-2021-00278 v1.0 and POA-2023-00278

Dear Mr. Gregory and Department of Environmental Conservation,

This letter serves as my initial feedback for the two Public Notices of Application for Permit, reference numbers **POA-2021-00278** and **POA 2023-00206** and for the related Department of Environmental Conservation public notices for State Water Quality Certification of the two projects, **PN Reference Numbers POA-2021-00278 v1.0 and POA 2023-00206 v1.0**. I am writing these comments to apply to both projects as they are interconnected.

To begin I am unclear on the order of permitting versus work already taking place. It is difficult to give a public comment when there is already digging and other activity on the two lots. **POA 2023-00206** refers to Glacier View LLC lot #07516342000 and **POA-2021-00278** refers to Glacier View LLC lot #07516343000.

It seems appropriate at this time to request the Army Corp, EPA, DEC to issue an immediate cease and desist order for the applicant for both projects due to the non-permitted work that is taking place within the wetlands. Any additional damage to wetlands should not be allowed to continue until the complete project is fully and properly permitted.

I do understand that Girdwood is in need of more housing, but would also note that our wetlands are just as important for our community in relation not only tourism/recreation but also in their value for wildlife, flood control, the health of glacier creek and water quality.

POA 2023-00206 refers to Glacier View LLC lot #07516342000-

This lot is 228,024 sq feet approx. 5.23 acres. There is a hotel, road, associated parking lot, hardware store, road and associated parking lot. The application states that the “work within to include discharge of fill into 1.57 acre of palustrine wetlands for the hotel” What is unclear is there is no wetland delimitation provided included in this application. How many acres of wetland are on this lot and what is the effect of 1.57 acres being developed for the surrounding wetlands? The intended development includes a 150 hotel and does not account for landscaping. It only account for the actual building pads, connecting roads, and sidewalk. It also does not account for digging for utilities or any digging that has taken place prior to the permitting.

POA-2021-00278 refers to Glacier View LLC lot #07516343000

This lot is 351,047 sq feet approx. 8.05 acres

The 3 Tier Alaska drawing dated 5/3/23 does not include digging that has taken place last year or this year. It is unclear what we are looking at as it is not up to date. It may also not include digging on the above mentioned lot **POA 2023-00206** permit area. Also not included in this POA is reference to wetlands disturbed through digging for utilities (water, gas, electricity)

POA-2021-00278 and **POA 2023-00206** Glacier View LLC has proposed no compensatory mitigation due to a past land swap. A past wetland mitigation should not negate the protection and banking of wetlands in this current project. There is no mention of this past wetland bank mitigation and/or why the acreage was not an equal trade. This again does not allow enough information to comment on the request of no mitigation. Mitigation is not assessed on the acreage alone, but the value of the wetland is also to be considered as well the % of wetlands in each parcel versus the % that will be dug. These wetlands are close to Glacier Creek a valuable waterway for the surrounding communities.

Please provide details of the applicant's proposed compensatory mitigation - the July 26, 2005 land swap including the specific wetlands acreage associated with each of the parcels swapped and the type/value of the wetlands.

Items that I would like to see included in this packet to consider.

Permits issued for these two lots prior to these requests for the work in waters (Army Corps and DEC).

A better understanding of the mitigation that took place in the past related to value and the value of the current wetlands.

An editing of the application to clarify inconsistencies in the narrative.

An updated overhead photo that includes work that has taken place prior to this permit including assessment of wetlands already disturbed.

Consideration to the impact of the roads leading into these developments and whether the entrance on the Alyeska HWY is adequate in order to mitigate less wetland digging.

Clarify what the “future upland development entails in regards to the wetlands.

I am not opposed to development in Girdwood on uplands and do acknowledge that we are in need of housing. At this stage I am unable to make a comment in support of this project based on the lack of information regarding the wetland mitigation, the specifics on the overall impact on the wetlands of both combined plans and a more transparent understanding on what is happening already prior to this permitting.

I request that the public comment period be extended for 30 days from the date from receipt of the requested information and corrected public notices for both projects.

I further request that a public hearing – combined for both permits (or a revised, single public notice for the entire project) - be held in Girdwood so that Girdwood residents and federal, state and local government agencies have the complete picture to consider and comment on. Our wetlands are a resource that has high value in our valley especially the ones adjacent to Glacier Creek. It would be in all the agencies and Girdwood’s best interested to be thoughtful in the comments and permitting weighing the need for housing in equal balance with the need to keep our wetlands healthy for the overall health of the waterways, recreation and how both goals, housing and mitigation can exist at the same time.

With responsible wetland mitigation this project could benefit our need for housing and deter any irrevocable damage to our waterways.

Thank you for considering my comments and requests.

Sincerely,

Shannon O’Brien

cc: Girdwood Board of Supervisors