

240 West Fifth Avenue Anchorage, AK 99501

907-644-3512 907-644-3513 907-644-3816 fax

Alaska National Parks News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE October 17, 2005

Public Information Office Contacts: Jane Ahern, Public Information Officer Chuck Young, Chief Ranger, GLBA 907-697-2230

Increased Visitor Opportunities in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve in 2006 and 2007

Superintendent Tomie Lee announced that more visitors would be able to experience Glacier Bay thanks to the utilization of larger ships in 2006 and an increase of 14 cruise ship entries in 2007. This will potentially increase the numbers of passengers on ships by 23% over the course of the next two years. "We look forward to having more guests enjoy the incredible beauty of Glacier Bay," stated Lee. "This decision is based on the best available science and on the outstanding work of the Glacier Bay Science Advisory Board." Visitors to the park on cruise ships numbered 341,356 in 2005, an increase of about 1 percent from 2004.

In October 2005, the Glacier Bay Science Advisory Board provided Superintendent Lee with a review of completed studies, on-going research and monitoring regarding the effects of vessel traffic on the environment and visitor experience. The board worked over the past year to conduct literature reviews, consult with peer scientists on selected topics, and contributed their professional knowledge to analyze research findings.

"I feel confident continuing to work with the board this coming year so that we can have a sound focused framework for future research and monitoring," stated Superintendent Lee. "Our guidance in cases where there may be uncertainty of the impacts of certain activities on park resources is to work to reduce that uncertainty by using a science-based approach to decision making," she added.

In the coming year, the park will further define the decision criteria and implement studies to establish the specific indicators and benchmark levels by which these criteria will be evaluated. The board will review historic datasets; collect new baseline data; evaluate other air, water, and sound level standards; and investigate use of paired comparisons with unaffected control sites. Park staff will use this data to begin an adaptive management program. Adaptive management treats management decisions as experiments to be implemented, monitored, evaluated, and adjusted for continuous improvement.

A lengthy legal history surrounds the potential revision of cruise ship numbers in Glacier Bay. The National Park Service was sued in 1997 by the National Parks Conservation Association, which asserted that allowing an increased number of ships based on a 1996 environmental

assessment and finding of no significant impact was improper. The federal courts agreed and a new environmental impact statement was conducted.

A final EIS was completed in October 2003, followed by a Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD called for park managers to seek the assistance of a Science Advisory Board and a research framework to assess whether sufficient information exists to provide an informed decision as to whether an increase in seasonal day use would impact physical, biological and socio-cultural resource values of the park.

To comply with the Federal Advisory Committee Act, invitations to serve on the board were sent only to recognized tribal, state or federal government entities. However, the board could also solicit expert opinions or advice from others to aid in the board's recommendations. The board is comprised of state and federal employees from the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Navy, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, N.O.A.A. Fisheries, and the U.S.D.A. Forest Service.

"The effort the Science Advisory Board put forth in their work is outstanding and essential to better understanding the resource management concerns associated with increased cruise ship traffic," stated Superintendent Lee. The additional allocations of cruise ships in 2007 will be selected through an existing concessions contract process.

The Record of Decision from 2003 is available on the web at: http://www.nps.gov/glba/InDepth/learn/preserve/issues/vessels/VQOR/rod.html The Science Advisory Report will be made available to the public on the park's website at www.glba.nps.gov/glba in a few days.