



# Glacier Bay National Park

## *Public Scoping for a Marine Management Plan Environmental Assessment including Updates to Vessel Quotas and Operating Requirements*

The National Park Service (NPS) is pleased to announce the start of a Marine Management planning process that will guide future management decisions in Glacier Bay National Park (park) marine waters. As part of this effort, the NPS will update vessel quotas (excluding charter vessels, tour vessels, cruise ships, and passenger ferry to Bartlett Cove) and operating requirements to protect resources and ensure equitable public access according to the purposes for which the park was established.

Release of this newsletter initiates the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and begins a 30-day public scoping period in which the NPS is requesting your feedback on preliminary alternatives that will be refined and further developed into the draft Marine Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (the plan) for public review this fall 2022.

The plan will articulate a shared vision, objectives, and management strategies that strive to conserve an exceptional marine environment and Tlingit Homeland while providing diverse and superlative visitor experiences. The plan will also evaluate the environmental impacts of the alternatives and inform the NPS decision.

This newsletter shares initial ideas and alternatives for the plan. This public scoping period is the first of two opportunities to participate in the process (*see details, pages 9-10*). We request your feedback on the following ideas and alternatives by September 9, 2022.

- A draft vision statement (*see above, right*) and broad strategies (*see alternatives, pages 5-7*) for managing park waters over the next 10 to 20 years, and
- Quotas (limits) and operating requirements for specific watercraft classes within Glacier Bay (*see alternatives, pages 5-7*).



### **NPS Preliminary Planning Vision, April 2022**

*Marine park waters—from seafloor up to high tide line—are a protected sanctuary, a living laboratory, and an awe-inspiring setting that invites and inspires people to explore and discover the dynamic and living natural and cultural heritage of Glacier Bay National Park.*

As part of the public scoping process, the NPS is hosting three in-person meetings in gateway communities near the park. You are invited to attend these meetings to learn more about the project scope, issues, and alternatives and to ask questions:

### **Public Scoping Meetings**

#### **August 18 • Thursday**

Gustavus, Salmon River Park, 1802 Gustavus Road  
4:30 – 6 pm

#### **August 19 • Friday**

Juneau, Marine Park Pavilion, 144 Marine Way  
11:30 am – 1 pm

#### **August 20 • Saturday**

Hoonah, Hoonah City Hall Parking Lot, 300 Front Street  
11:30 am – 1 pm



***Glacier Bay marine waters support one of the most accessible national park experiences in Alaska for visitors of all ages and abilities. Surrounded by designated wilderness and traditional cultural landscapes, visitors experience tidewater glaciers (left), a spectacular setting visibly shaped by glacial and dynamic natural forces (middle), and a variety of marine and terrestrial wildlife (right).***



# Marine Management Plan

## Public Scoping Reference Map

Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior



Data source: NPS,  
State of Alaska



### Legend

**Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve**

~3.3 Million Acres

**Marine Management Planning Area**

~537,000 Acres

**Proposed Management Zones**

Zone Boundary (see pages 4-5)

**Glacier Bay**

**Icy Strait/Cross Sound**

**Outer Coast**



*Park marine waters are a globally important sanctuary for myriad species.*





*This plan will not revisit cruise ship, tour vessel, or charter vessel quotas and operations that are all managed through competitive partnerships with the NPS at some of the highest environmental standards in the industry. Glacier Bay is a global destination with park economic contributions that total (in 2019) \$402 million in economic output, \$121 million in labor income, and add \$213 million in total contributions to the national gross domestic product, with visitor spending predominantly made by non-local visitors (98.7%). Most visitors never go ashore, visiting aboard cruise ships (above), where economies of scale and evolving technology contribute to reduced impacts per visitor.*



*Glacier Bay waters sustain deeper human relationships with the living ocean, including as Homeland for the rich and evolving Tlingit maritime culture (above, left). Since the first steam cruisers arrived in the 1880s, millions of visitors have experienced these waters from the deck of a boat (above, right). Visitor surveys find that many develop a strong connection to park resources and conservation values even without setting foot on shore.*

## Background: Vessel Management in Glacier Bay

The park has been a marine tourism destination since steamships arrived in the late 1800s. Marine waters make up nearly one-fifth of the park (940 square miles), and no point of land is more than 30 miles from the coast. Most of the park's visitation (646,500 visitors in 2019) occurs in the park's productive marine waters and the adjoining biologically rich shorelines.

Marine vessel quotas and operating requirements have been in place in Glacier Bay since 1979. Today, vessels are managed according to:

- Special federal regulations for Glacier Bay under a rationale and framework articulated in the 2003 Record of Decision (ROD) for the Vessel Quotas and Operating Requirements Environmental Impact Statement (VQOR EIS), including five types of motorized watercraft managed by quota: cruise ships, tour vessels, charter vessels, private vessels, and passenger ferry to Bartlett Cove.
- NPS regulations that protect park wildlife and other resources while providing a range of recreational opportunities to park visitors, including seasonal non-motorized waters, set in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) (<https://www.nps.gov/glba/learn/management/lawsandpolicies.htm>) and the Park Compendium.
- Contracts for commercial vessels in the form of exclusive and highly competitive partnerships with the tourism industry. These provide for some of the strongest environmental standards in the world and deliver high quality visitor experiences that meet park purposes.

The NPS is in the preliminary stages of articulating a vision, objectives, and strategies for the management of ~537,000 acres of park waters, from the sea floor up, under NPS jurisdiction (*see map, page 2*). These waters encompass some of the most biologically rich and intact marine ecosystems on the planet, where park visitors consistently have the opportunity for powerful experiences in a scenic wilderness setting that connects them to the park's dynamic natural and living cultural landscapes.

## Planning for Park Waters

The plan will include marine management zones and broader programmatic actions for the park's marine waters as well as site-specific updates to vessel management within Glacier Bay.

Continuing demand for motorized and non-motorized vessel access to Glacier Bay presents challenges in balancing the protection of park resources and values and providing a range of rewarding recreational opportunities for visitors that are consistent with the park's purpose and values.

Further adding to these challenges are changes in visitor use patterns, evolving vessel technologies, and the dynamic environmental conditions in the park.

Management of vessels in Glacier Bay has been working well under the existing system of quotas and operating conditions. Nevertheless, studies have been conducted since the 2003 VQOR EIS to better understand visitor use patterns, experiences, and potential vessel disturbances to marine wildlife—including noise levels both above and below water. These studies have provided insights on



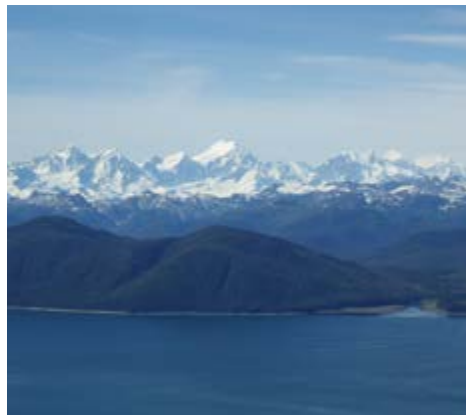
*For many private boaters, Glacier Bay is a bucket list destination that requires advance planning. According to vessel permit data, these trips typically span five days and are often the capstone experience of an Alaska Inside Passage voyage. Other private boaters live in the region and typically take more frequent day trips and a few overnight trips per season.*

ways to improve vessel management to protect the marine environment and enhance visitor opportunities.

## The NEPA Process

NEPA is an essential tool for ensuring informed decisions that conserve park resources and values. Public “scoping” is the first step in the process, where the public is asked to consider preliminary proposals and identify opportunities and concerns to help inform decisions and focus analysis.

This newsletter presents preliminary marine management proposals for your consideration and feedback, including **programmatic actions** (actions that are geographically broad in scope such as zoning or projects not fully developed at this time) and **site-specific actions** (changes to public access, or actions with a well-defined physical location, intensity, and scale).



*The NPS is proposing three marine management zones within the “Non-wilderness Waters Zone” set in a 1984 General Management Plan for the park. These zones are represented in the photos above and the map (see page 2): Glacier Bay (left), Icy Strait/Cross Sound (middle), and the Outer Coast (right). The proposed programmatic actions (e.g., floating cabins, communications upgrades, and inventory and monitoring) may occur in all of the zones; however, the site specific proposals (e.g., quota and operating requirements) would occur only in the Glacier Bay Zone.*

As an integral part of the scoping process, we ask for your input to help inform the plan. For more information on the NPS NEPA process, please visit [www.nps.gov/subjects/nepa/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/nepa/index.htm)

## Draft Purpose and Need for Taking Action

The purpose for taking action is to establish marine management zones within the park to guide future management decisions, to update the vessel quotas for new vessel types and private vessels, and to revise operating requirements across all vessel types.

Action is needed to provide a long-term marine management plan that addresses 1) changing visitor use patterns, 2) potential new vessel technology, 3) rapidly changing environmental conditions in the context of research results that established and improved our understanding of the relationships between resources and vessel activities after the 2003 VQOR EIS was completed, and 4) restoring opportunities to visit the park according to founding park purposes. The action is needed to ensure that management of all vessel types provides balanced and equitable visitor access to the park in a manner that helps achieve the park’s desired conditions.

## Scope of the Plan

The plan will cover all non-wilderness marine waters in the park and provide management direction specific to three zones: Glacier Bay, Icy Strait/Cross Sound, and the Outer Coast (see map page 2 and photos below).

Cruise ship, tour vessel, charter vessel, and passenger ferry to Bartlett Cove quotas will continue to be managed according to the 2003 ROD because the existing vessel management system for these vessel types provides balanced visitor access that is aligned with park purposes and therefore does not require adjustments at this time.

The plan will address neither management changes to wilderness waters (those are addressed by the Backcountry and Wilderness Management Plan) nor actions within Bartlett Cove waters (those are addressed by the Frontcountry Management Plan).



## EA Preliminary Alternatives

Preliminary alternatives are presented here for public consideration and feedback:

### No Action Alternative - Alternative A

The NPS would continue to manage park waters without a comprehensive Marine Management Plan and continue to manage private vessels consistent with the 2003 Vessel Quotas and Operating Requirements Environmental Impact Statement Record of Decision (36 CFR Subpart N – Special Regulations – Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, § 13.1150 - § 13.1188, online at [www.nps.gov/glba/learn/management/regs.htm](http://www.nps.gov/glba/learn/management/regs.htm)).

### Common to Alternatives B (Proposed Action) and C

#### *Programmatic Actions and Site-Specific Changes to Vessel Quota and Operating Requirements*

The NPS would implement a marine management framework that would include three management zones for park waters: **Glacier Bay**, **Icy Strait / Cross Sound**, and the **Outer Coast** (*see divisions on map, page 2*).

Potential **programmatic actions** would include but would not be limited to:

- Floating administrative use cabins (non-public use),
- Communications upgrades, and
- Inventory and monitoring activities, such as equipment installations to support science-based resource management decisions

Potential **site-specific changes** to the Glacier Bay Vessel Quota and Operating Requirements would be:

- Clarify any regulatory ambiguity about private vessels larger than 79 feet.
- Update the private and charter boat motorized vessel permit season to start May 1 and end September 30.
- Set a “peak season” when private vessel quotas apply to enable more equitable distribution of permits. Define the peak season as the weeks when Glacier Bay is typically 90% full based on private vessel permit data. Re-evaluate every 5 years or sooner based on park conditions.
- Decrease the maximum length of overnight private vessel permits from seven to five days (four nights) per permit, based on current use patterns. Upon special request, the NPS may consider extended stay permits.
- Establish vessel definitions and quotas for three new categories: Administrative Use Vessels, Non-Motorized Vessels, and Low Impact Vessels (*see definitions and quotas in the table, page 6*).



*Private vessels larger than 79 feet (above, middle), sometimes called megayachts, fit the size definitions of tour vessels (above, right) and cruise ships in park regulations and have comparable or greater impacts. The park is experiencing a rise in the number of megayachts and seeks to clarify any regulatory ambiguity about the megayachts' use in Glacier Bay.*

Vessel Category	Proposed Vessel Definition	Proposed Vessel Quota Within Glacier Bay
Administrative Use Vessels	An administrative use vessel is a vessel that is engaged in official business for the state, tribal, or federal government in support of park operations, programs, and public visitation, or NPS authorized uses such as public access for traditional activities, and guaranteed access to inholdings or for commercial fishing (where allowed under Public Law 105-277 Sec. 123). Administrative use vessels for cultural purposes would include vessels needed for Hoonah Indian Association access under tribal reserved rights to <i>Chookanhéeni</i> (acquired Berg Bay property), <i>Xunaa Shuká Hít</i> (the tribal house), and other tribe-sponsored trips into Glacier Bay. Other types of administrative use may be authorized at the park Superintendent's discretion.	Annual Quota: 600 vessels per year
Non-Motorized Vessels	A non-motorized vessel is a vessel without an engine of any kind, being solely propelled by sails or human power such as paddles, pedals, or oars. Vessels in this category include, but are not limited to kayaks, paddleboards, rowboats, and sailboats without an engine. Any vessel with an engine, even if it is not being used, is a motorized vessel. Non-motorized vessels are allowed to operate in non-motorized waters, as well as in waters that are open to all vessel classes.	Annual Quota for overnight use only: 1,891 people and 5,674 non-motorized vessel days
Low Impact Vessel	A low impact vessel is a motorized vessel that by design or technology produces less pollution (air or water), less noise, smaller wakes, and has lower maximum speeds, thereby having fewer negative impacts on wildlife, park resources, and other visitors. Low impact vessels are characterized by 1) having certain types of propulsion (electric, 4-stroke, diesel), 2) limited horsepower ( $\leq 60$ horsepower), and 3) limited hull speed ( $\leq 10$ knots). All three categories would need to be met to qualify as a low impact vessel.	Subject to advance notice, overnight private vessel permit priority system



*Non-motorized overnight users typically follow well-traveled routes to camp on biologically rich shorelines. These areas are essential to many terrestrial animals' foraging and nesting, and are also hot spots for visitor wildlife viewing. Quotas are proposed that balance the trade-offs of decreased opportunity with retaining enhanced experiences, aligned with social science and backcountry/wilderness values. The proposed quota is more than double 2019 use levels keeping use from growing to a point at which resources along these shorelines would be adversely affected.*



*Administrative motorized vessel use in Glacier Bay averages between 2 and 3 boats daily in the summer and 453 vessels annually (2015 to 2019 data). These vessels are operated by the NPS and other entities to support a range of activities including public visitation, emergency response, resource protection and research that fulfills park scientific mandates (left), guaranteed access rights, and cultural access to Homeland by tribal members (right). The proposed annual quota of 600 is envisioned as a performance target with annual reporting to the public.*





## Alternative B: Proposed Action

The proposed action includes draft actions Common to Alternatives B and C and the following vessel management **site-specific actions** within the Glacier Bay zone:

- Increase the number of private vessel permits within the park at any given time from 25 to up to 30. Divide the allocation of permits into 25 overnight and 5 day use permits:
  - Overnight vessel permits would be released 60 days prior to the trip start, with a portion reserved for shorter notice trips. Offer any unused overnight permits 48 hours in advance as short notice permits, giving priority to low-impact vessels (see page 6).
  - Day use permits would be released 48 hours in advance (first come, first served)
- Unused cruise ship and tour vessel permits may be reallocated by the park Superintendent for the entry of private vessels larger than 79 feet, managed to the same level of impacts as the permitted vessel class. These vessels may not access Glacier Bay using a private vessel permit (based on 2003 VQOR EIS size definitions).
- To create a small vessel experience in the East Arm, implement an East Arm closure to all private vessels larger than 79 feet and commercial vessels larger than a charter vessel (based on CFR definitions).
- Implement changes to the non-motorized waters of Muir and Wachusett Inlets. Muir Inlet would be open May 1 – September 15 as non-motorized waters and Wachusett Inlet would be open to motorized vessels year-round.

## Alternative C

Alternative C would include actions Common to Alternatives B and C as well as the following vessel management **site-specific actions** within the Glacier Bay zone:

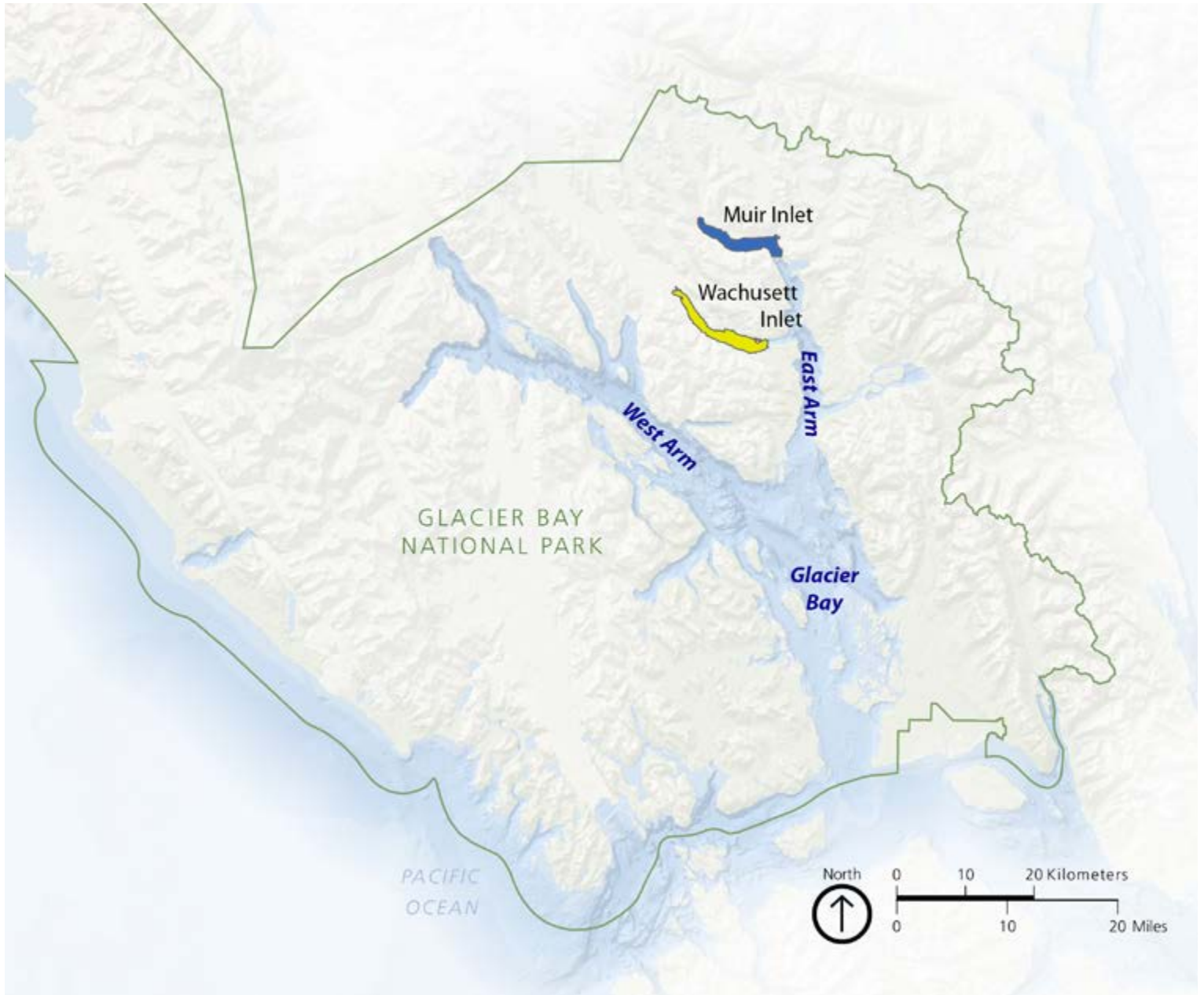
- Maintain the current number of private vessel permits (25), but change the allocation to split the permits into overnight and day use permits (up to 20 overnight and 5 day use):
  - Overnight vessel permits would be released in two rounds:
    - 1) February 1 for a vessel's first time to the park that calendar year, by random draw (lottery)
    - 2) 60 days from trip start date giving priority to low-impact vessels (*see page 6*)
  - Day use vessel permits would also be released in two rounds:
    - 1) One permit 60 days from trip start date (first come, first served)
    - 2) Four permits 48 hours prior to trip start date by random draw (lottery)
- Retain the alternating Muir Inlet and Wachusett Inlet closures and extend the Muir Inlet closure to May 1st to align with the early season, private and charter vessel permit season dates.



*Alternatives B and C both update Glacier Bay's private vessel permit system to provide more equitable access opportunities to high quality experiences of the glacial environment consistent with park purposes. Differences between them focus on visitation levels (B enables more access and C is more restrictive), planning horizons (diverse approaches to when and how permits are released), large vessel access (B enables megayacht access under unused cruise ship and tour vessel permits, and also closes the East Arm to megayachts, tour vessels, and cruise ships), and non-motorized access options specific to Muir Inlet and Wachusett Inlet.*



Decades of social science confirm that Glacier Bay visitors traveling by boat seek a diversity of experiences. While some seek the intimate experience of paddling a 17 foot long kayak along the surface of the water (left), others enjoy the elevated views and comfortable vantage afforded from a 1,000 foot long multistory cruise ship (right). Alternative B proposes closing the East Arm to all private vessels longer than 79 feet and larger classes of commercial vessels (cruise ships and tour vessels) to create a small vessel experience away from routes generally frequented by large vessels in Glacier Bay and the West Arm.



All three of the alternatives are consistent with the park's 1984 General Management Plan objective to "balance forms of access and use to obtain a feeling of the ruggedness and wildness of this dynamic landscape and the solitude that early inhabitants found" (page 16). Alternative B further enhances the perception of being able to travel deeper into the park by creating a small vessel experience in the East Arm, and by decreasing the scale and intensity of use with non-motorized waters in Muir Inlet, May 1–September 15.



## Environmental Issues for Further Analysis

Federal actions such as those proposed here require NEPA to inform agency decisions and protect “the natural and physical environment and the relationship of people with that environment.” Based on the preliminary NPS proposals presented previously, an EA is anticipated as the most appropriate analysis tool. The preliminary topics identified by the NPS that may require further analysis within an EA include:

- Marine wildlife
- Visitor use and experience
- Visitor access and recreation
- Viewscapes
- Airborne acoustic environment and underwater sound environment
- Ethnographic and Homeland values

## Plan and EA: Process and Timeline

Please offer your input during public scoping on these NPS preliminary proposals as the first of two public involvement opportunities in the process:

**1 Summer 2022: Public Scoping (*We are here*)**  
Public comments must be submitted by September 9, 2022.

**2 Fall 2022: The NPS develops a Draft Marine Management Plan with Environmental Assessment.**

**3 Fall 2022: The draft plan is released to the public for a 30-day review and comment period, including public meetings.**

**4 Fall 2022: The NPS reviews and incorporates public comments in the plan.**

**5 Winter 2022: The NPS issues Final Marine Management Plan and Finding of No Significant Impact. If significant impacts are found, NPS will issue a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.**

### *Join the Conversation!*

See details on how to participate on the next page.



*Glacier Bay is an important summer feeding ground for many humpback whales that migrate to Hawaii or Mexico in winter. Park scientists monitor population trends and inform cruise ship captains about whale distribution to reduce ship strike risks. They also set speed limit zones (whale waters) based on collision data showing reduced risk of ship strike mortality under 13 knots.*



*Glacier Bay has a proven record of proactive marine vessel use management (since 1979) that protects resources and enhances experiences. This international model for optimized environmental and experiential conditions specific to the park continues to be refined with science-based decision-making.*



*The underwater acoustic environment is important for whales, harbor seals, and many other marine species that rely on their hearing for navigation, feeding, mating, and maintaining social bonds.*



*Historic village sites dot Glacier Bay National Park and demonstrate the interplay between people, their lives, and the marine environment.*



# Glacier Bay National Park

*Public Scoping for a Marine Management Plan  
Environmental Assessment including Updates to  
Vessel Quotas and Operating Requirements*

## Public Scoping Meetings

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Gustavus, Salmon River Park, 1802 Gustavus Road  
4:30 – 6 pm

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Juneau, Marine Park Pavilion, 144 Marine Way  
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### August 20 • Saturday

Hoonah, Hoonah City Hall Parking Lot, 300 Front Street  
11:30 am – 1 pm

## How to comment

Between **August 9** and **September 9, 2022**  
there are a variety of ways you can comment:

- Submit electronically on the PEPC website:  
<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/GBwaters>
- Mail and email:  
Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve  
attn: Marine Management Scoping  
P.O. Box 140, Gustavus, AK 99826  
[GLBA\\_public\\_comments@nps.gov](mailto:GLBA_public_comments@nps.gov)

For more information please contact Sara Doyle,  
Outdoor Recreation Planner at Glacier Bay National  
Park and Preserve by phone at (907) 697-2675, or  
by emailing [GLBA\\_public\\_comments@nps.gov](mailto:GLBA_public_comments@nps.gov).

*You Are Invited to Participate*



Glacier Bay by satellite, from NASA's Earth Observatory.

*The National Park Service cares  
for special places saved by the  
American people so that all may  
experience our heritage.*

Learn  
more  
online



[parkplanning.nps.gov](https://parkplanning.nps.gov)  
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[www.nps.gov/glba/getinvolved/planning.htm](https://www.nps.gov/glba/getinvolved/planning.htm)

