



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, ALASKA
P.O. BOX 898
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99506-0898

OCT 11 1991

RECEIVED

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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ANCHORAGE DISTRICT OFFICE

Regulatory Branch
Permit Processing Section
4-910492

Ms. Judith E. Bittner
State Historic Preservation Officer
Pouch 10-7001
Anchorage, Alaska 99510-7001

Dear Ms. Bittner:

This is in response to your letter of September 6, 1991, concerning an application for a Department of the Army (DA) permit by Mr. Warren Magnuson for continuation of placer mining activities near Ophir, Alaska. The application has been given the file number 4-910492, Ganes Creek 1. Your letter expressed concerns for 1) the Takotna-Ophir Trail, 2) Ganes Creek Mining Camp and Dredge, and 3) the potential for archeological resources at the confluence of the Innoko River with Ganes Creek.

I will respond to your concerns in order, based on observations and information obtained from a field trip which took place on October 1, 1991. During the course of the Corps of Engineers' field trip, Terry Carpenter, project manager, and I flew over the area and toured the project area with the applicant, who has mined the area since 1953.

The Takotna-Ophir Trail is currently maintained by the State of Alaska between Sterling Landing and Ophir. There have been no attempts by any of the miners along the intervening drainages to alter the route of the trail. There are numerous side trails feeding into the Takotna-Ophir Trail pioneered by miners of the area. Many of these also date from the early mining days of the Ophir region. The applicant has no plans to alter the trail and there will be no effect to the trail, or to the system of trails, caused indirectly by his placer mining efforts.

Mr. Magnuson drove us over a side trail and a portion of the Takotna-Ophir Trail to reach Ganes Creek Mining Camp and Dredge, which is located 15 road miles from his mining camp. Both historic properties are located on the property of his neighbor, Mr. Carroll. The dredge collapsed two years ago. It has lost its integrity and is most likely not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Regardless of its eligibility status, the dredge would not be affected by the project. Mr. Magnuson stated that the dredge was brought in from Greenstone Creek on the Seward Peninsula in 1956.

The old Ganes Creek Mining Camp is approximately one quarter mile upstream on Ganes Creek from the dredge. Contrary to descriptions of this historic property in the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey and in the Bureau of Land Management's draft Iditarod Trail report, there are fewer buildings than recorded. The property, as visited on October 1, 1991, consisted of a square foundation, a tent platform, a privy, a cabin and a more recent addition attached to the rear of it. The cabin, which Mr. Magnuson identified as the mess hall, is in excellent condition, having been utilized on and off by the Federal Aviation Administration during the 1980's. There are new panes of glass on the windows, which are barred against bears with saw blades. The floor is intact and new chinking is evident in all four walls. The stove appears non-functional. This cabin will soon fall into disrepair because there is a hole in the roof. Mr. Magnuson stated that he thought the roof would cave in this winter due to snow load. The later addition tacked on to the cabin is in ruins. This is due to shoddy construction materials—fiber board instead of logs. The roof has completely caved in. As a whole, the Ganes Creek Mining Camp has potential for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It should be mapped and the roof of the front cabin repaired with Mr. Carroll's consent. Both the dredge and the mining camp are well beyond the boundaries of Mr. Magnuson's project.

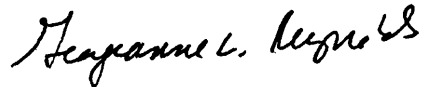
To the south of the confluence of the Innoko River and Ganes Creek, there is a series of bluffs or hills which could potentially contain archeological resources. Mr. Magnuson stated that his diversion of Ganes Creek would not affect the confluence area at all. The confluence itself is fairly low and boggy. I would consider it to be of low potential for archeological resources, although there appear to be historic remains at every side drainage with the Innoko. The bluffs appear to be between 50 and 100 feet high. They face southwest and would have provided easy access to the Innoko by inhabitants throughout the Holocene. I would rate them high in potential for archeological resources. Again, they are far beyond the area to be affected by Mr. Magnuson's project.

While visiting Mr. Magnuson, he showed us other historic properties in the area. We passed Yankee Creek Roadhouse, for example, which is still standing, mainly, according to Mr. Magnuson, because the roof is intact. He also showed us an Alaska Road Commission cabin which is in remarkably good shape. Both of these properties are on the Takotna-Ophir Trail. Mr. Magnuson has a wealth of knowledge of the area going back first hand almost 40 years and, through his early contacts with prospectors, going back considerably farther in time. He would contribute greatly to any future studies of the historic mining era of the area.

In sum, your concerns for historic properties, or potential historic properties, which could be affected by the proposed project are not warranted because all areas under concern fall outside of the area of potential effects. Based on Mr. Magnuson's statements and his tour, it can be said that there are probably many more historic resources in the area than previously recognized. Any future study of the Takotna-Ophir Trail area should include talking to the local miners and prospectors who know the area best.

If you have any questions concerning the historic properties involved, or the potential effect of the proposed action on them, please contact me at 753-2712. Xeroxed copies of photographs of the resources are attached. A copy of this letter and of the photographs are being sent to the Bureau of Land Management.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Georgeanne L. Reynolds". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Georgeanne L. Reynolds
Archeologist, Regulatory Branch



Photos 1 & 2 : Ganes Creek Dredge



Photos 3 & 4: Ganes Creek Mining Camp Mess Hall

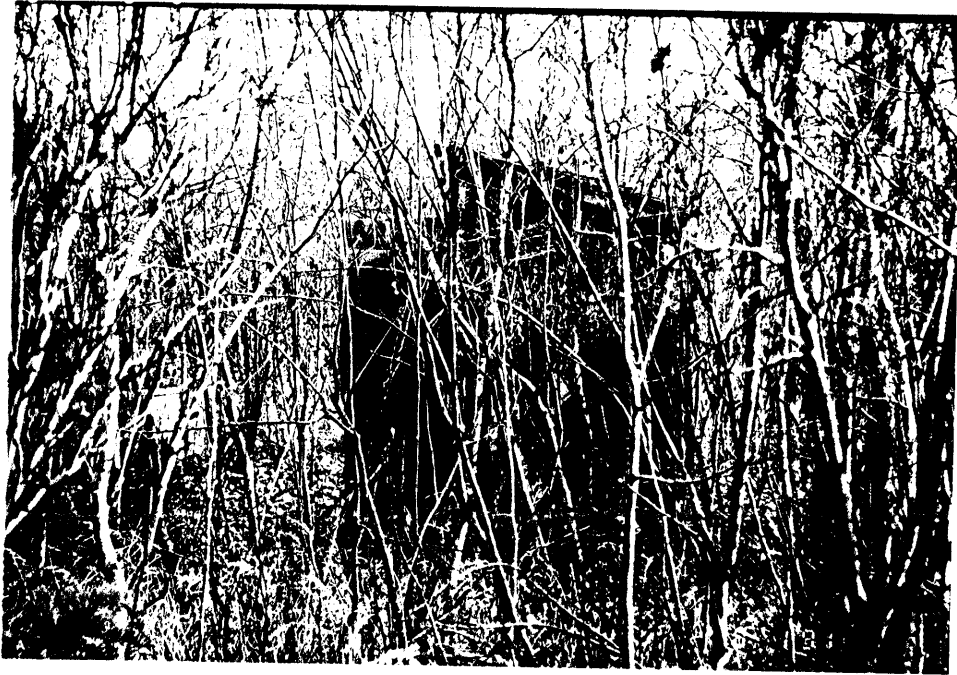


Photo 5: Ganes Creek Mining Camp Privy

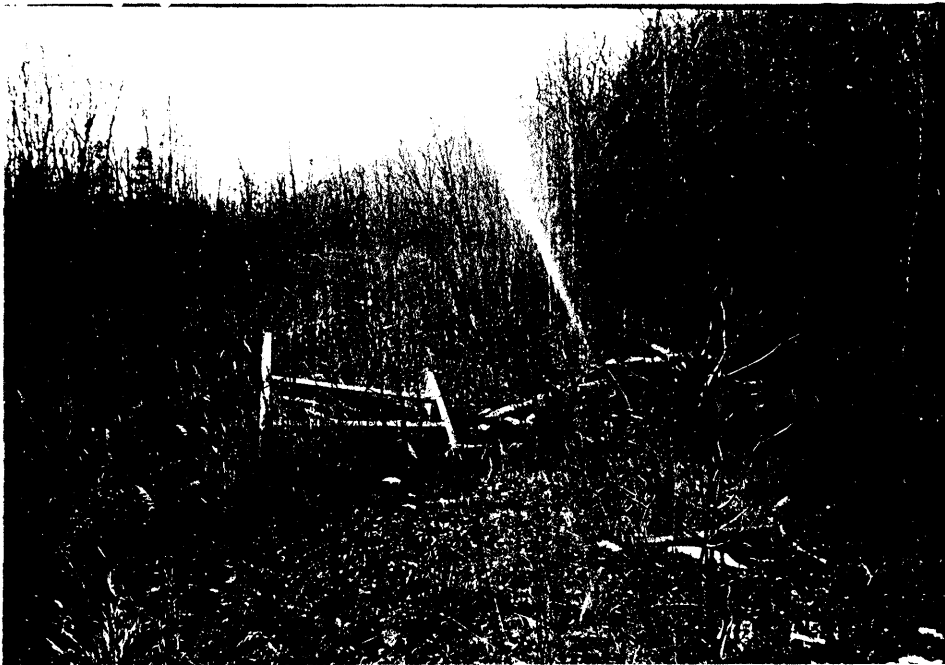


Photo 6: Ganes Creek Mining Camp Tent Platform



Photo 8: Mess Hall Addition

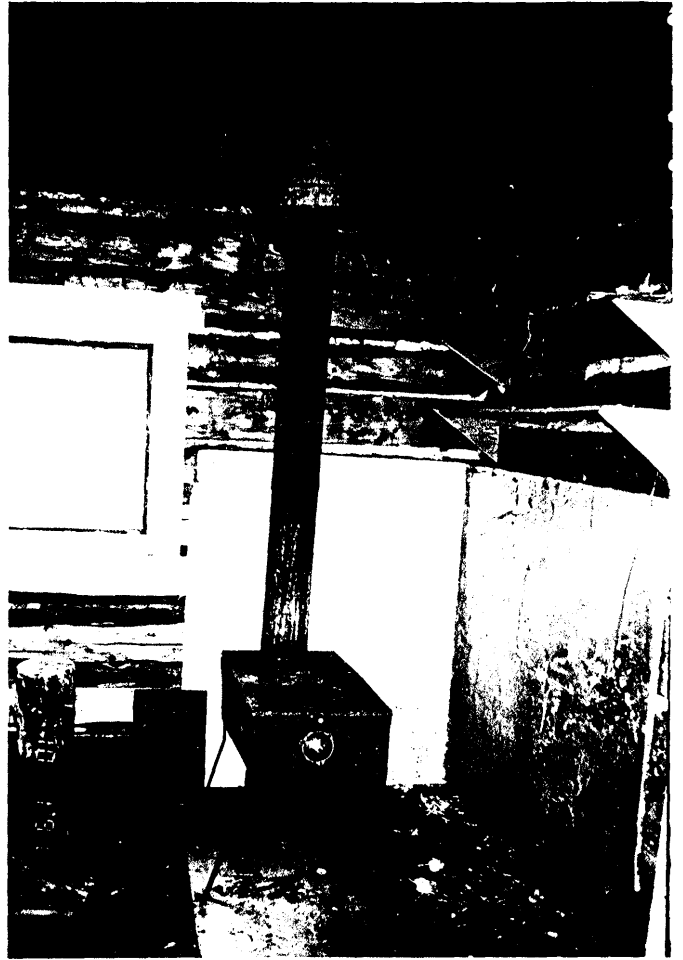


Photo 7: Mess Hall Interior

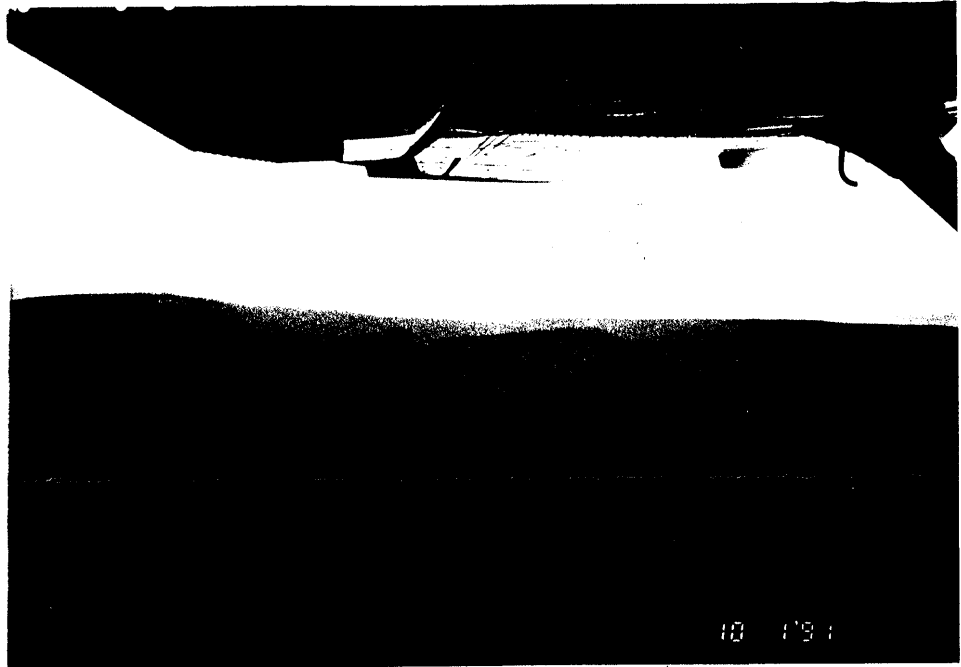


Photo 9: Low Bluffs Near the Confluence of
Ganes Creek & the Innoko River

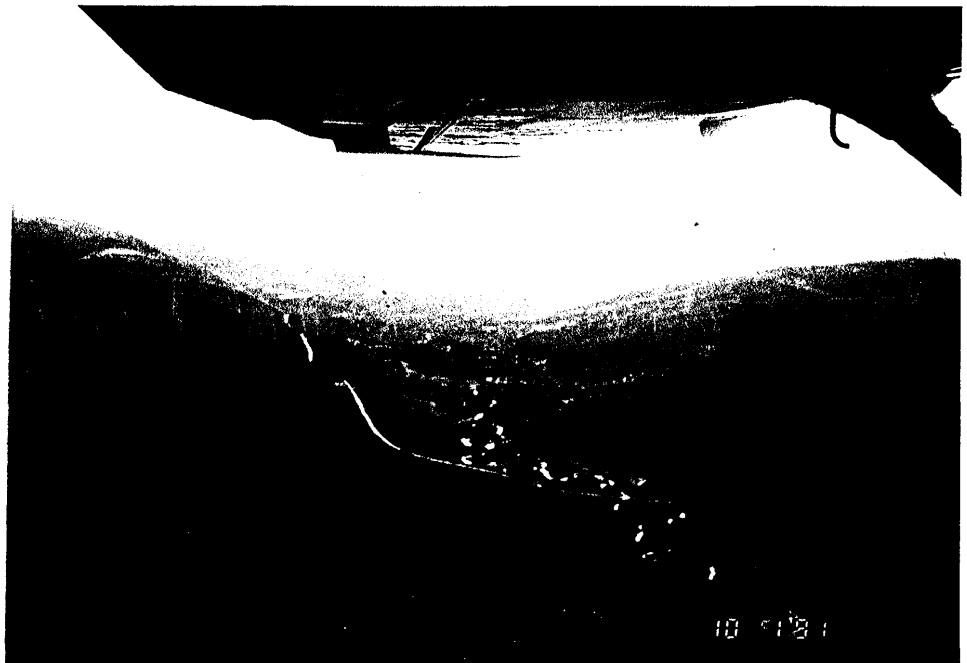


Photo 10: The Takotna-Ophir Trail
Crossing Ganes Creek.