

MEMORANDUM
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

State of Alaska
DIV. OF MINING/ WATER MGMT.

TO: Gary Prokosch, Chief
Water Resources Section

DATE: October 2, 1995

TELEPHONE NO: 762-2570

THRU: Kellie Marie Litzen, NRM I
Water Resources Section

SUBJECT: TWP 94-09
Tuluksak Dredging, LTD.
Field Inspection

FROM: Buz Kuby, NRO II
Water Resources Section

I departed Anchorage about 6:30 AM, Wednesday, September 27, 1995, via Markair Express for Bethel to inspect the Tuluksak Dredging, LTD. water use near Nyac. After landing in Bethel, I walked to Arctic Circle Air, and we took off for Nyac. At the request of Al Samet of the Southcentral Regional Office, Division of Land, we circled the Bethel Seawall several times just to see if there was any unusual activity. I took some pictures for Al, and I'll let him know that even though this was my first visit to Bethel, I didn't see anything along the seawall that appeared unusual.

We continued the flight along the Tuluksak River, which looked clean and clear, to Nyac and up the California Creek drainage. After turning around at the end of the old tailing piles at the headwaters of California Creek, we came back down and followed the Bear Creek drainage upriver until we located the current mining activity about one half to one mile north of Bonanza Creek. On the way back downriver towards the airstrip I could clearly observe the separation of the settling ponds located throughout the old tailings along the north and west side of this drainage and the flow of Bear Creek along the south and east side.

Charlie Amberg was waiting for us at the airstrip, and after introductions and unloading some gear from the plane, Charlie drove me up the road to show me their current dredging operation. Along the way, Charlie educated me on the process of placer mining, and showed me some areas of recent reclamation near Spruce Creek and Bonanza Creek. Charlie mentioned that he believes that the USGS maps are incorrect in that they show Spruce Creek where it should actually be shown as Timber Creek, as is locally known. He believes the correct location of Spruce Creek is about one and one half miles further up the Bear Creek drainage but southwest of Bonanza Creek, and exiting into Bear Creek near where Myrtle Creek flows into Bear Creek. That particular creek is not identified on our USGS map.

At Bonanza Creek, Charlie showed me how this creek has been re-connected to Bear Creek. Settling pond water flows through culverts under Bonanza Creek, and Bonanza Creek flows directly into Bear Creek without any mixing with the settling pond water. Charlie wanted to be sure Wayne Dolezal at Fish and Game was aware Bonanza Creek was now flowing directly into Bear Creek, so I took some pictures and I will send them and a memo to Wayne.

We stopped and visited the "Dreda" dredge which ceased operation in 1984, the same year they completed the on-site construction of dredge #4, which is the dredge, or dry land washplant, that they currently operate. "Dreda" dredge was dredge #3, powered by electricity sent up the power lines to the unit. The newer dredge #4 is also powered by electricity, but from a generator located on the dredge itself.

At the mine site, the dredge was temporarily shut down to drain the recycle pond and push the sediment further down the settling pond system to prevent the pump from just pumping it back to the washplant. The water flowing into the recycle system was from surface flow or drainage which was separate from Bear Creek. Charlie explained that when the washplant is in operation, the 3500 gpm pump will pump about 12-1500 gpm through the 8 inch hose, approximately one quarter mile to the washplant. Running the pump at the full 3500 gpm capacity forces too much water to the washplant, so the 12-1500 gpm rate matches the speed of the washplant. Later in the day when I flew out, I circled this area again and could see that the pond had been closed, it was filling in with the water from the surface flow, and the operation was going to be started up again.

After Charlie and I had lunch at the White House, and I met his wife Teita, he showed me the old powerhouse, the ditches that were dug to supply the water to the wooden flume of the powerhouse, and how they had to control the amount of water going into the flume. It was interesting and pretty amazing when you start thinking about the work that was involved just getting the materials to build the powerplant to the site as well as building it. He also showed me the location of the generator that currently supplies the power to the houses and shops at Nyac.

I left Nyac about 4:00 PM and arrived back in Bethel in time for Markair Express to inform me that my flight back to Anchorage had been cancelled, apparently for mechanical reasons. I stayed at the Pacifica Guest House that night and returned to Anchorage the next morning, Thursday, September 28, approximately 10:45 AM.