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REPORT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SURVEY
IN THE WILLOW-WASILLA AREA, 1978

HARZA-EBASCO
Susitna Joint Venture
Document Number

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METHODOLOGY

The area covered in the survey work during 1978 was, roughly, along the Little Susitna River, around most of the lakes south of Willow Creek, east of the Parks Highway, west of the Susitna River, and north of Knik Arm. Additionally the lower part of Kroto Creek (Deshka River) was partially examined. With the exception of the village area at the outlet of Red Shirt Lake, the level of investigation was a reconnaissance using knowledge of high probability areas as the guide to localities selected for more intensive examination. As the purpose of the survey was to provide as much data as possible for a broad scale land-use study and not for a specific resource impacting action, the level of intensity was judged adequate. Biases such as relying on incomplete knowledge of aboriginal use patterns were unavoidable, so this report can in no way be construed as more than a very incomplete sampling of the area's cultural resources. Additionally, examination from a helicopter for vegetation or other surface indicators of past use further biases the results toward the historic period.

The specific approach used in locating sites was to define on a 1:63,360 scale map those areas which showed some promise in yielding cultural remains and then making an aerial examination by helicopter. Two days were spent flying in the area to refine those areas marked for more intensive examination. Specific localities were then examined on the ground, and small test probes made to locate possible subsurface materials. The purpose of the testing was to confirm existence of a site rather than to obtain a collection for analysis or to find site limits.

The criteria for defining probable site localities were: confluences of side streams with a larger stream or lake, prominences along lakes and streams, prominences holding potential as hunting lookouts, prominences with exposures of soil which could be quickly examined, and disturbed areas in the apparent normal vegetation pattern. Additionally, some time was spent trying to confirm and catalog the remains at a number of reported sites in the area. Two days were spent making limited tests at the Fish Creek Site on Knik Arm. A total of 15 working days were spent in the field.

Tanaina residents of the Nancy Lake area, Shem Pete and his son, Billy Pete, gave information about use of the area, routes of travel, and some site locations. Shem Pete had spent a part of his youth in a village at the outlet of Red Shirt Lake and is very knowledgeable about the area. Billy Pete has spent quite a lot of time hunting and trapping in the general area and has knowledge of resource use by the local Tanaina. A flight over the Nancy Lake