FINDINGS OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

ACTION: Iditarod National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management Plan

BACKGROUND: In 1977, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR) submitted to Congress a report entitled "The Iditarod Trail (Seward-Nome Route) and Other Alaskan Gold Rush Trail." From this report, and the recommendations therein, Congress included the Iditarod National Historic Trail as a component of the National Trails System in November 1978.

As an adjunct to the 1977 study report, a comprehensive environmental assessment was completed by the BOR and attached to the report. The results of that assessment were that the proposed actions and recommendations for including the Iditarod within the National Trails System did not represent a major Federal undertaking as defined by the Council of Environmental Quality's guidelines. The results of that assessment are directly applicable to the comprehensive management plan as the proposal for management follows the guidelines submitted in the study report and were accepted by Congress.

FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

The plan, by itself, has no impact on the environment and, therefore, is not considered to be a major Federal undertaking.

Individual activities recommended by this plan, prior to initiation of the activity, must be addressed through appropriate consideration of their potential environmental impact and applicability to other Federal and State legislative requirements.

DECISION:

I have reviewed the environmental assessment and the recommendations on the comprehensive plan for management of the Iditarod National Historic Trail. They are technically adequate and all resource values have been considered to the best of my knowledge. The action would not have significant environmental effects on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required.

[Signature]
District Manager

[Date]
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
IN SUPPORT OF A
NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Proposed

Designation of the Iditarod Trail route
as an element of the
proposed National Trails System

Prepared by

Bureau of Outdoor Recreation
U. S. Department of the Interior

April 1977

Regional Director
SUMMARY

1. Brief Description of Action:

The Iditarod Trail Study was conducted pursuant to the National Trails System Act, Public Law 90-543. The report recommends Federal legislation to designate the historic route of the Iditarod Trail as a component of the National Trails System, within the proposed new category of National Historic Trails and Travelways, and to commemorate the historic significance of the Iditarod Gold Rush route while providing for existing and future travel, recreation, and subsistence uses. The report also includes recommendations for administration, planning, preservation, acquisition, development, marking, and public information.

2. Summary of Environmental Impact and Adverse Environmental Effects:

Implementation of study recommendations would commemorate the Iditarod Trail’s historic significance; would attempt to protect significant historic structures, remains, and artifacts along the historic route; would preserve the trail from incompatible land uses; and would provide for public recreational use. Increased public use would result in increased damage to soils, vegetation, and a greater probability of littering, user conflicts, and damage to historic remnants and artifacts. The potential exists for increased annoyance to people who live near the trail. Increased human use will create stresses on certain species of fish and wildlife. Implementation of the proposal will affect the responsible agencies in the development of transportation, energy, and mineral resources.
Alternatives Considered:

Alternative actions considered were: (1) no action, (2) designation of fewer route segments, (3) no reservation or acquisition of rights-of-way easements or historic resources, (4) designation as a National Scenic Trail, (5) designation as a National Recreation Trail, (6) inclusion of the route in a State trails system, and (7) inclusion of the route on the National Register of Historic Places.
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APPENDIX A
I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

This statement concerns a proposal which recommends commemoration of approximately 2,037 miles of historic travel routes between Seward and Nome, Alaska, through designation by the Congress as the Iditarod National Historic Trail within the National Trails System.

The proposal was developed in accordance with the National Trails System Act (Public Law 90-543) which established a national trails system comprised of three categories of trails: national recreation trails, national scenic trails, and connecting or side trails. The Act designated two national scenic trails as initial components of the system and listed 14 additional routes to be studied to determine the feasibility and desirability of their designation as national scenic trails. "Gold Rush Trails in Alaska" was one of the routes listed for study.

In the legislative history of the National Trails System Act, reference to five Alaskan "Gold Rush Trails" was made. One of these was the "Iditarod Trail" from Knik to Iditarod. This segment along with related additional routes, collectively known as the Seward-Nome route, was studied by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. The study found that the Seward-Nome route does not qualify for designation as a national scenic trail, but that it does qualify for national recognition as a significant historic route.

Legislation has been proposed to amend the National
Trails System Act to create a new category of National Historic Trails. The "Iditarod Trail" could qualify for inclusion in the National Trails System within the proposed new category.

The Iditarod Trail proposal also recommends: overall route administration and coordination by the Department of the Interior (under the umbrella of Department of the Interior management, various route segments will be managed by the appropriate landowners or land management agencies); signing of historic routes near population centers, acquisition of rights-of-way or easements along selected segments in private ownership; retention of a right-of-way through public lands; study of several segments for possible development as recreational trails; protection and stabilization of significant historic structures and sites along the route. The proposal further recommends that water bodies, crossed by the trail after freeze-up, and existing roads and railroads be included; that off-road vehicle uses along the route not be prohibited, and that the rights-of-way through public lands could be used in the future development of surface transportation systems.

The proposal also recommends that, upon inclusion in the National Trails System, the Department of the Interior will coordinate a review to determine the actual historic route, and which segments or branch routes would be included. A detailed description of Iditarod route alignments will be filed with Congress.
The purpose of the proposed action is to:

1. Commemorate and call national attention to the historic significance of the Alaska Gold Rush and specifically the 2,037-mile Iditarod Gold Rush route.

2. Retain a right-of-way in public ownership and acquire easements through approximately 1-1/2 miles of private lands to provide for existing and future travel, recreation, and subsistence uses.

3. Protect significant historic structures, remains, and artifacts along the historic route.

4. Provide interpretative signing along those portions of the route readily accessible from urban areas and transportation corridors.

PROPOSED AREA

The proposal includes 2,037 miles of historic routes generally located between Seward and Nome, Alaska. In addition to the 1,099-mile segment which directly connected these two towns, the proposal would include 938 miles of branch routes to the gold mining boom towns of Flat and Iditarod, routes connecting
Ophir and Ruby, the Yukon River from Ruby to Kaltag, an alternate route through Ptarmigan Pass in the Alaska Range, several short branch routes on the Kenai Peninsula, and an alternate route over Indian Pass in the Chugach Mountains.

The segment (plus branch and alternate routes) between Seward and Knik is largely paralleled or overlain by existing roads or railroads, or is accessible by road from the Anchorage urban area. Beyond Knik, the route traverses a primitive environment largely uninhabited and undeveloped and accessible mainly by aircraft.

The proposal calls for national designation of the entire primary and major alternate and branch routes to commemorate their historic significance. Public roads, railroads, and water bodies which overlie or form part of the historic routes would be included in the designation.

The location and width of the corridor to be retained in public ownership through Federal, State, and possibly municipal-owned lands will be determined by the respective land managers in connection with the overall trail coordinator (U. S. Department of the Interior). Where acquisition of easements or rights-of-way through private lands is recommended, a trail width of approximately 25 feet is recommended. Historically, route alignments changed up to a mile or more from year to year to avoid local adverse trail conditions. Thus, a "floating corridor," which would not be limited to a specific ground location, may be desirable along some segments. Additionally,
such a corridor would have the advantage of avoiding localized existing
or future conflicts in land use.

ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT

Virtually the entire route is presently in public ownership. Only approx-
mately 1-1/2 miles of the route in the Knik area have been identified which
are in private ownership and which are receiving significant public use. The
proposal calls for acquisition of a right-of-way or easement through these
lands to insure continued public use along this segment of the historic
route. At present land values in the area,
acquisition of a 25-foot wide trail would cost approximately $35,000.

The only other acquisition recommended is for those isolated small tracts
which may contain structures or remnants of significant historical values
which are in danger of destruction or degradation, and for which cooperative
management agreements cannot be worked out with private landowners.

This action includes no proposals for trail construction, campgrounds, or
other major recreational facilities. Trail markers and interpretive signing
are proposed along those segments of the route near major towns or along
existing roads or recreational trails. At an average cost of $100
per sign or marker, an estimated 25 signs would cost approximately $2,500.
The proposal calls for a study to be made of the route to assess potential for future development of recreational trails, or improvements or additions to existing recreational trails along the route.

To protect significant historic structures or remnants along the route, rehabilitation construction, relocation, or other actions may be necessary.

ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

The primary purpose of the proposal is to commemorate the historical values of the Iditarod Trail, rather than development and management of an extensive recreational trail system. As such, administrative actions governing most of the physical route will be minor.

Under the proposal, the Department of the Interior is charged with overall administration and coordination of planning and actions pertaining to the designated route. In conjunction with the respective landowners or managers, detailed route alignments would be located, historical structures and remnants identified, protection plans formulated, a study made to identify segments with high potential for recreational development or improvement, and acquisition of specific route segments and perhaps historic sites undertaken. The survey of historic resources would also be conducted in consultation with the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.
The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation has initiated measures to comply with the "Procedures for the Protection of Historic and Cultural Properties" (36 C.F.R., Part 800). The programmatic approach to meeting requirements regarding protection of historic and cultural resources is explained on page 62.

Management of specific route segments would be by the involved landowner or manager: Federal lands by the respective Federal land manager, State lands by the appropriate State agency, and municipal lands by the municipality involved. Where easements have been reserved along the route through lands conveyed or to be conveyed to private Native corporations, the easement would be managed by the agency charged with management of adjacent public lands under the umbrella of management by the Department of the Interior in close cooperation with the involved Native corporation.

All land uses presently accepted and customary would be allowed to continue along the route under the normal regulations governing the adjacent lands. Motorized vehicle uses both on-road and off-road would not be prohibited. Controls may be implemented along specific segments if user conflicts arise or significant environmental damages occur. Hunting, fishing, trapping, wood cutting, and other activities presently occurring along portions of the route would continue under applicable Federal and State regulations.

In the selection of right-of-way or easement alignments through public or private lands, utmost consideration will be given to avoiding conflicts with existing or potential land uses.
Of seven Gold Rush routes studied by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation for potential inclusion in the National Trails System, only two—the Seward–Nome and the Washington–Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS) route from Mentasta Pass to Eagle, Alaska—were recommended for further in-depth study as potential candidates for inclusion.

Two of seven trails, the Chilkoot and the White Pass Trails near Skagway, Alaska, were not studied in depth or recommended for inclusion in the National Trails System because they were studied previously by the National Park Service and are currently included in a Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park.

Under terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA) approximately 90 million acres of public domain lands have been recommended by the Secretary of the Interior in legislation for addition to the National Park, National Wildlife Refuge, National Forest, and Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Three such proposals are located along the proposed historic route. The Innoko lowlands around Dishkaket are included in the Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge proposal and the Kuskokwim River valley between the Alaska Range and McGrath is included in the Yukon–Kuskokwim National Forest proposal. The lands surrounding the Upper Unalakleet River are included in the Unalakleet National Wild River proposal.
ANCSA also provided that approximately 40 million acres of land in Alaska be conveyed to Native corporations. Up to 275 miles of the route traverse lands to be conveyed to Native corporations. It is expected that a public use easement will be reserved along most of the route passing through these Native lands.

Major segments of the route are overlain or closely paralleled by roads owned and maintained by the State of Alaska. Approximately 140 miles of the route utilized the frozen surface of the Yukon River which is claimed by the State of Alaska. Several hundred additional miles of the route traverse lands already patented or selected for ownership by the State under the terms of the Alaska Statehood Act.

Over 70 miles of the route between Seward and Girdwood follow the grade of the Alaska Railroad, a federally owned and managed transportation route. The U. S. Forest Service manages two recreation trails along portions of the historic route.

A transportation planning map developed by the State Department of Highways in July 1974 shows potential long-range needs for extensions of the transportation system covering much of the historic route.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared a nomination to the State Historic Preservation Officer for the inclusion of the town site of Iditarod on the National Register of Historic Places. BLM has also prepared a nomination for the inclusion of the "Iditarod Trail" on the National Register.
Each winter since 1973, a dog sled race known as the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race has been held from Anchorage to Nome following 1,049 miles of the proposed primary and branch routes. The race has attracted statewide and national attention. It is the longest dog sled race in the world and commemorates the historic mode of winter travel in Alaska.

The "Alaska Recreation Trail Plan," a component of the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), identifies the "Iditarod Trail" as a historic trail which should be studied for potential inclusion in the Alaska Trail System and the National Scenic Trails System. The plan further recommends that special attention be given to dedicating or acquiring rights-of-way or easements for historic trails if it is determined that they are not protected by common law or prescriptive rights based on historic use.
II. DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

REGIONAL SETTING

Physical Features

The Iditarod route from Seward to Nome spans a major portion of Alaska. From the Gulf of Alaska to the Bering Sea, the route traverses two major mountain ranges; several smaller ones; extensive low-lying river valley "flats;" the frozen surfaces of rivers, lakes, and estuaries; and barren coastlines.

The trail crosses or follows Alaska's two largest rivers, the Yukon and the Kuskokwim. These two rivers along with the Susitna River, another major Alaskan river, drain much of the land along the route.

Vegetation types range from Alpine tundra through mountain passes, to muskeg bogs and open low-growing black spruce, to dense forests of white spruce, birch, and poplar trees, to the treeless, moist tundra landscape surrounding Norton Sound.

Fires, mostly caused by lightning, are endemic along major segments of the route. Large areas show recent and past evidence of fire.

Most of the route is largely undeveloped except in the Anchorage urban area. Little land has been cleared of its natural vegetation and evidence of man is confined to small widely scattered towns and villages along the route.
The National Weather Service describes the climatic zone covering much of the Seward to Nome route as "transitional." This zone is characterized by 12-30 inches of precipitation annually (average 17) and mean annual temperatures from 22 to 35°F (90°F maximum, -70°F minimum). Around McGrath and Galena, a more continental climate is encountered with colder winter temperatures, warmer summer temperatures, and less precipitation than those "transitional" regions receiving more maritime influences. In the Seward area, a maritime climatic zone exists. Here precipitation is considerably greater (80 inches), and winter temperatures not so extreme.

Over much of the route, winters are long, dark, and severe, beginning with freeze-up in October of lakes and streams and ending with break-up usually in May. Snowfall averages 50-100 inches a year with accumulations averaging 2-5 feet depending on elevation and wind conditions. Winds along Norton Sound and in the mountainous regions are common and can bring chill factors in the winter down to -100°F and colder. Extended periods of -40°F to -60°F are common in the interior. On the shortest day of the year, only about 4 hours of daylight occur on the northern end of the route, and, on the southern end, only about 6 hours.

Summers are short but warm over most of the route with temperatures often in the 70's and 80's in the interior. On the longest day, sunlight averages from 20 to 22 hours (depending, again, on location along the trail) with twilight during the remaining 2 to 4 hours. Precipitation averages 4 to 6 inches in the summer months. Although freezing temperatures
have been reported in all months except July in most areas, a frost-free season generally extends from the first of June to the end of August.

Permafrost underlays much of the route, especially north of Kuskokwim River. The region from Seward to Susitna is free of permafrost and portions of the Innoko valley and Kuskokwim valley are underlain with isolated masses. The permafrost is discontinuous throughout the Alaska Range.

Population

The Iditarod route is located in six different census divisions with a combined 1970 census population of approximately 146,000 persons. Of that number, 125,000 were enumerated in the Anchorage urban area (1975 estimate: 168,000). Other than Anchorage, major towns and villages along the route include Seward (1970 census population, 1,600), McGrath (280), Ruby (150), Galena (300), Koyukuk (120), Nulato (310), Kaltag (210), Unalakleet (430), Shaktolik (150), Koyuk (120), Elim (170), Golovin (120), White Mountain (90) and Nome (2,500). With the exception of Anchorage and Seward, a majority of the persons in these towns and villages are of Indian or Eskimo descent (Natives).

Economy

Along the route, the highest median family income in 1970 was $13,593 within the Anchorage census division compared to $3,744 reported for the Kuskokwim division, the area of lowest family income along the route. The most
important sectors of the economy along the route are government transportation, and general services, especially in the Anchorage area. Many persons in the small towns and villages along the route are unemployed or employed only seasonally. Activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and berry picking contribute a substantial portion of the local subsistence economies. Seasonal work such as commercial fishing, fire fighting, and trapping also provides an important source of cash for fuels, snowmachines, food supplies, and other needed items.

Some gold mining is presently occurring along the route in the Ophir, Flat, Poorman, and Nome areas. Commercial harvesting of timber is taking place in the Seward area. The degree to which this contributes to local economies is not known.

**Transportation**

Because of the vast land area, sparse populations, and rugged topography, much of the State traversed by the Iditarod route relies heavily on air rather than surface transportation.

Between Seward, Anchorage, and Knik, a major highway system exists. The Alaska Railroad also connects Seward and Whittier with Anchorage and Fairbanks. Numerous airfields exist in the region including Anchorage International Airport. Vehicular access is limited to either end of the historic trail segments across Crow Pass and Indian Creek Pass.

Beyond Knik, no portion of the historic route is road accessible by highway. However, short unconnected roads exist between Sterling
Landing just south of McGrath through Takotna to Ophir, between Iditarod and
Flat and Discovery, between Poorman and Ruby, and between Solomon and Nome.
Numerous airstrips are found at the various settlements in the area, and
McGrath, Galena, Unalakleet, and Nome are served by regular commercial jet
service. The villages along the Yukon, including Ruby and Kaltag, and the
villages around Norton Sound are served at least once a week by the smaller
commercial aircraft.

In addition to these major airfields, numerous bush strips exist over the
route area. Many other natural landing sites also are used by float planes,
ski planes, and large-tired small planes.

Both the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers are major navigable rivers, and villages
along these rivers are supplied by barges.

A planning map published by the State Department of Highways in July of 1974
shows possible long-range needs for extensions of the existing surface trans-
portation net along most of the historic route.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IDITAROD ROUTE

Location

The trail surveyed by Goodwin in 1908 ran from mile 54 of the Alaska Railroad
north of Seward around Turnagain Arm, over Crow Pass, around Knik Arm to Knik,
to Susitna, to Happy River to Pass Creek, over Rainy Pass, down Dalzell Creek
to the Rohn River (or Tatina River), across the South Fork of the Kuskokwim
to Big River, to the present-day site of McGrath, to Takotna, to Ophir, to
Dishkaret, to Kaltag, to Unalakleet, up Norton Sound to Umigalik River, across
the Sound to Isaacs Roadhouse on Bald Head, and along the shoreline to Nome.

During clearing and marking of the Rainy Pass-Kaltag Trail in the winter of
1910-1911, some route changes were made and additional trails marked. Most
notable of these additions were the trail from Dishkaret to Dikeman and on to
Iditarod and Flat, and the trail from Iditarod up Bonanza Creek, down Fourth
of July Creek to Takotna. In addition to these routes, a third trail connect-
ing the surveyed route with the Iditarod district existed in 1910. This trail
provided a direct route between Ophir and Iditarod crossing the Dishna River
near Windy Creek and intersecting the Dikeman-Iditarod Trail near Moore Creek.

Although the surveyed route crossed Crow Pass from the present town of Girdwood,
a new trail was constructed from Girdwood down Turnagain Arm and over Indian
Creek Pass in the fall of 1908. As this route avoided the avalanche problems
and extreme steepness of Crow Pass, it was used and improved during construc-
tion of the Kaltag-Rainy Pass Trail in the winter of 1910-1911. However,
Goodwin rebuilt the trail through Crow Pass in the summer of 1911 avoiding some
of the snowslide areas. He favored this route because it was 15-20 miles
shorter and had only about a mile of "bad going" as opposed to 5 miles reported
for the Indian Creek Pass route. Both the Indian and the Crow routes were
used until the railroad was completed around the mountains via Anchorage in 1918.

Other branch trails include the glacier route between Whittier and Portage
and the route from Passage Canal down the Twentymile drainage to the railroad.
Two main trails were used to reach Hope and Sunrise, one crossing Moose Pass from the railroad and up Quartz Creek, the other leaving the railroad grade at Trail Creek, up Johnson Creek and down the Sixmile Creek drainage. A trail from Muktuk which intersected the Kaltag-Dishkaket trail was used as a shortcut to carry mail and supplies to the Iditarod from Fairbanks. The old route from Lewis Landing to Ophir followed the North Fork down to the Innoko then up this river through Cripple to Ophir. When Cripple developed as a mining center, a winter route was established to connect it with the Ruby-Long-Poorman district to the east.

In the early twenties, summer trails were constructed linking Ophir with Poorman and Ruby and linking Flat with Takotna. When the Alaska Railroad was completed to Nancy, a new winter trail was built from there to Susitna.

Beginning in March of 1973, each year a sled dog race is held from Anchorage to Nome. Because this race is billed as the Iditarod Trail race, the race route is also shown on the accompanying maps. This route varies substantially from the old Rainy Pass-Kaltag Trail in the vicinity of the Alaska Range and between Ophir and Kaltag. The race route has gone through Ptarmigan Pass rather than Rainy Pass reportedly to avoid avalanche danger. In order to pass through Native villages along the Yukon, the race route follows the newer summer trail out of Ophir through Bear Creek and Folger to Poorman, over the road to Ruby, and down the Yukon through Galena, Koyukuk and Nulato to Kaltag.

In many areas, the route crosses sea and lake ice, rivers, and open tundra areas. Here, no trail as such was built, but rather tripods or stakes used to mark a route. Most of these were replaced every year and trail alignments could vary by as much as a mile or more from year to year.
The originally surveyed Rainy Pass-Kaltag Trail which bypassed the Iditarod-
Flat area was roughly 850 miles in length from Seward to Nome. From Seward to
Iditarod following the most common route was approximately 540 miles; from
Knik, roughly 390 miles. The three "turnoffs" from the survey route to
Iditarod were each roughly 90 miles in length. The dog sled race route is
reported to be 1,049 miles long from Anchorage to Nome.

Table I gives the approximate mileage of the various trail segments.

**Physical Condition of Route**

Only a few miles of the hundreds of miles of the historic route are currently
maintained as trails. The U. S. Forest Service maintains a 4-mile summer
hiking trail which generally follows the old trail alignment up to Cross Pass
from the Girdwood area. Another 22-mile trail following the branch route up
Johnson Creek and down Bench Creek to the Hope-Sunrise area from the railroad
is also maintained by the Forest Service. A 20-mile crude winter trail exists
over Indian Creek Pass and a 4-mile segment up Indian Creek to the Pass has
recently been improved for summer use by the State Division of Parks.

A local Girl Scout Council, under the direction of the State Division of
Parks, has reestablished the historic trail between the Forest Service
Crow Pass trail and the end of the road leading up the Eagle River valley.
This 21-mile recreation trail is located within Chugach State Park and is
maintained by the Division of Parks.
Other segments, although not being publicly maintained, continue to be passable winter trails through use. These include segments in the McGrath-Takotna area, between villages along Norton Sound, between Kaltag and Unalakleet, and between Knik and Susitna. In the past several years, the State Department of Highways has provided local villages monies and materials for flagging and marking trails between the various villages from Kaltag to Nome. Many of these routes follow the historic Kaltag-Nome trail. Because of changing snow and ice conditions, windfalls, and brush growth, these trails can vary in location by as much as a mile or two from year to year. Unless well traveled, breaking trail along these routes by foot, dog team, or snow machine can be a grueling ordeal.

The summer trails developed in the early 1920's between Ophir and Flat and between Poorman and Ophir are believed to be utilized occasionally by vehicles primarily involved in mining operations.

The segment over Rainy Pass through the Alaska Range is still visible in places, although badly overgrown by brush and altered by snow and rock slides in places. This segment is passable by foot, in summer and possibly winter. A jeep road and summer trail is also utilized over a part of the old Portage Glacier route from Whittier to the pass area overlooking the glacier.

Most of the remaining segments are either not readily locatable or are too altered or overgrown to permit travel. Except for those segments over mountain passes, virtually all remaining portions of the route are ill suited for summer travel. As the historic trails make ample use of frozen lakes, rivers, muskegs, and marshes, summer trail conditions are extremely poor if not non-existent. Additionally, the winter snow conceals an extremely rough ground surface in
Other segments, although not being publicly maintained, continue to be passable winter trails through use. These include segments in the McGrath-Takotna area, between villages along Norton Sound, between Kaltag and Unalakleet, and between Knik and Susitna. In the past several years, the State Department of Highways has provided local villages monies and materials for flagging and marking trails between the various villages from Kaltag to Nome. Many of these routes follow the historic Kaltag-Nome trail. Because of changing snow and ice conditions, windfalls, and brush growth, these trails can vary in location by as much as a mile or two from year to year. Unless well traveled, breaking trail along these routes by foot, dog team, or snow machine can be a grueling ordeal.

The summer trails developed in the early 1920's between Ophir and Flat and between Poorman and Ophir are believed to be utilized occasionally by vehicles primarily involved in mining operations.

The segment over Rainy Pass through the Alaska Range is still visible in places, although badly overgrown by brush and altered by snow and rock slides in places. This segment is passable by foot, in summer and possibly winter. A jeep road and summer trail is also utilized over a part of the old Portage Glacier route from Whittier to the pass area overlooking the glacier.

Most of the remaining segments are either not readily locatable or are too altered or overgrown to permit travel. Except for those segments over mountain passes, virtually all remaining portions of the route are ill suited for summer travel. As the historic trails make ample use of frozen lakes, rivers, muskegs, and marshes, summer trail conditions are extremely poor if not non-existent. Additionally, the winter snow conceals an extremely rough ground surface in
most places due to stumps, fallen trees, low brush, frost-heaved hummocks and
tussocks, and other obstacles.

Topography

Topography varies from the tidewater lagoons, spits, and barrier beaches of the
Seward peninsula to the high rugged peaks of the Alaska Range and Chugach
Mountains. From Seward to Knik Arm, the route traverses narrow valleys through
the Kenai and Chugach Mountains. Relief is great with 3,000-5,000 foot peaks
rising 2,000 to 3,000 feet about the valley floors. Crow Pass is
approximately 3,500 feet in elevation while Indian Creek Pass is 2,300 feet.

From Knik to the south slope of the Alaska Range, gently rolling lowlands of
the Susitna River valley are traversed. Rainy Pass provides a comparatively
short gentle route through the rugged Alaska Range reaching an elevation of
approximately 3,350 feet. Peaks in the area exceed 5,000 feet. From Farewell
Lake on the north side of the Alaska Range to Takotna, the route crosses the
extensive Kuskokwim River valley. Relief is low and elevations range from
400 to 1,000 feet.

The low mountains, hills, and ridges of the Kuskokwin Mountains extend north-
east to southwest across the Ophir and Iditarod region in the upper Innoko
River drainages. Relief is moderate with most ridges and peaks between 2,000
and 3,000 feet dissected by broad valleys 200-1,000 feet in elevation.

Similar relief is encountered crossing the Kaïyuh Mountains which are
separated from the Kuskokwim Mountains by the low flats of the Innoko River.
After crossing the Yukon River at Kaltag, the route follows the broad Unalakleet River valley through the adjacent Kaltag Mountains averaging 2,000-3,000 feet in elevation. After reaching Unalakleet, the trail generally stays at or near sea level as it skirts the barren coastline of Norton Sound to Nome.

(START TAPE #2)

Vegetation and Timber

The different climatic zones, permafrost conditions, topography, and soils encountered along the route combine to provide a wide variety of vegetative ecosystems. Alpine tundra is found in the passes in the Chugach Mountains, the Alaska Range, and the Kuskokwim Mountains between Ophir and Iditarod. Wet tundra is found in areas around Norton Sound. Over much of the Seward to Turnagain Arm area, a coastal western hemlock-Sitka spruce forest system exists up to an elevation of 2,000-3,000 feet. From Knik to the Alaska Range, lowland spruce-hardwood forests and bottomland spruce-poplar forests are encountered.

On either side of Rainy Pass, an upland spruce-hardwood forest is present up to an elevation of approximately 2,500 feet. The Kuskokwim valley is largely covered with lowland spruce-hardwood forest as is the Innoko River valley. The valleys through the Kuskokwim Mountains, the Kaiyu Mountains, and Kaltag Mountains are generally covered with upland spruce-hardwood forest. A major high brush system is located in the Nome area.

Throughout the forest areas, many open areas of muskeg, marshes, shallow lakes, and grass tussocks are found. Dense willow and alder thickets are common along rivers and streams.
Commercial harvesting of Sitka spruce is occurring in the Seward area. Some areas of the Susitna River and Kuskokwim River and Yukon River valleys contain stands of timber of sufficient size for commercial harvesting. Commercial land is defined by the U. S. Forest Service as land which is either producing, or capable of producing, more than 20 cubic feet of annual growth per acre, providing it has not been reserved or deferred from timber harvest. Both accessible and inaccessible lands are included. Unstocked lands which are capable of the growth rate are also included. No data is available on the number of acres of commercial forest land along the trail route.

Soils

Except in the Anchorage area, very little detailed study of specific soil types has been done. Thus, only very general types and distribution of soils are discussed.

In the Cook Inlet area and Susitna River valley, well-drained, strongly acid silt loams are found over very gravelly to loamy materials. Extremely shallow, rocky soils are found in the Chugach Mountains and Alaska Range areas. Some areas of the Susitna Valley also contain poorly drained soils.

Over much of the remaining route, poorly drained soils with a thick organic mat and permafrost are dominant. Along the Yukon River are poorly drained, moderately deep silt loam soils associated with sandy and loamy soils of low terraces. In some of the higher areas, such as the Golovin area, are also found well-drained thin soils with dark surface layers.
Although soil and climatic factors prohibit agricultural development over much of the area, several areas have been identified as being potential for agricultural lands. A thin corridor along the Yukon River is reported in Resources of Alaska, published by the Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission in July 1974, to contain lands where 25-50 percent of the soils are suitable for agricultural use. Both lowlands and uplands in the Kuskokwim River valley near McGrath have been similarly identified. Much of the Susitna River valley is reported to contain lands where more than 50 percent of the soils are suitable for agriculture. Lands in the Knik and Anchorage area contain 25-50 percent marginal soils for agricultural uses.

**Water Quality**

Because the region is generally only very sparsely populated and little development has taken place, the rivers and lakes along the historic route are still largely free of man-caused pollution and are believed to be of high water quality.

The waters of the Yukon, Kuskokwim, and Susitna Rivers are extremely discolored largely due to the presence of fine suspended materials from melting glaciers in their upper drainages. Rivers flowing through extensive low-lying areas, such as the Innoko, are characterized by a very dark, tea-color due to the presence of decaying organic matter in the water.

Except in the Anchorage area, waters from rivers and lakes are commonly used without treatment for drinking purposes and are used by most villages as the primary water supply.
Large game animals are common throughout the region, although most populations are sparse in relation to land area because of the harsh climatic conditions and absence of available winter food. Caribou, moose, Dall sheep, black bear, brown/grizzly bear, and wolves are locally present in varying concentrations. Important waterfowl areas are located in the Innoko and Kuskokwim valleys and along the shores of Norton Sound. Small fur-bearers including lynx, wolverine, beaver, mink, land otter, weasel, marten, and muskrat are abundant over much of the interior. Common raptors in the area include northern bald eagles, golden eagles, osprey, and a variety of hawks and owls. In addition, the endangered American peregrine falcon is believed to be present in the area.

Sport fish species common in various areas of the route include grayling, arctic char northern pike, lake trout, rainbow trout, and five species of salmon. In the Norton Sound region, along the Yukon, and in the Seward area, commercial and subsistence fishing of salmon plays an important part in the local and regional economies.

Geology

Because the route covers such a vast area, the general geology of the route is presented by the several different physiographic divisions of Alaska as described in the U. S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 482 (1965), "Physiographic Divisions of Alaska," by Clyde Wahrhaftig.
The Seward to Anchorage portion of the route lies within the Kenai-Chugach Mountains division. The Kenai-Chugach Mountains are composed chiefly of dark-grey argillite and graywacke of Mesozoic age that are mildly metamorphosed and have a pronounced vertical cleavage that strikes parallel to the trend of the range. A belt of Paleozoic and Mesozoic schist, greenstone, chert, and limestone lies along the north edge of the division. All these rocks are cut by granitic intrusions.

The portion from Anchorage to Skwentna lies in the Upper Cook Inlet-Susitna lowland. Bedrock beneath the lowland consists mainly of poorly consolidated coal-bearing rock of Tertiary Age. This rock is mantled by glacial moraine and outwash and marine and lake deposits.

A short stretch between Skwentna and the Happy River is included in the Broad Pass Depression. Patches of poorly consolidated Tertiary coal-bearing rocks, in fault contact with older rocks of the surrounding mountains, show that this depression marks a graben of Tertiary age. Most of the bedrock consists of highly deformed slightly metamorphosed Paleozoic and Mesozoic rocks that are also exposed in the surrounding mountains. Ground moraine mantles the lowlands.

Most of the Alaska Range (southern part) is underlain by large granitic batholiths, intrusive into moderately metamorphosed and highly deformed Paleozoic and Mesozoic volcanic and sedimentary rocks, which form scattered areas of lower mountains. Structural trends are generally northerly, but change abruptly to northeasterly and easterly northward across Rainy Pass. Well-bedded Jurassic and sedimentary rocks form prominent hogbacks and cuestas dipping southward off the south flank of the range toward Cook Inlet.
From Farewell to McGrath, the route traverses the Tanana-Kuskokwim lowland. The outwash fans grade from coarse gravel near the Alaska Range to sand and silt along the Kuskokwim. Parts of route area have thick loess cover. Scattered low hills of granite, ultramafic rocks, and Precambrian schist rise above the outwash. Tertiary conglomerate in the foothills of the Alaska Range plunges beneath the lowland in a monocline, and the heads of the outwash fans may rest on a pediment cut across this conglomerate.

The route(s) between McGrath and Ruby and Kaltag fall within the Kuskokwim Mountains, the Innoko Lowlands, and the Koyukuk Flats along the Yukon River. Most of the Kuskokwim Mountains are made of tightly folded Cretaceous rocks that strike northeast. Graywacke upholds the ridges, and argillite underlies the valleys. Some Paleozoic sedimentary rocks and Precambrian schist are also present. The Innoko Lowlands are generally underlain by the same bedrock but are mantled by river-flood plain deposits and by windborne silt. The lowlands along the Yukon are also underlain by water-laid and windborne silt. Sand dunes are common; northeast-trending scarplets and low rises that cross the lowland presumably mark active faults.

The Nulato Hills include the route between Kaltag and Unalakleet. Almost all the hills are composed of tightly folded sandstone, conglomerate, and shale of Cretaceous age. The rocks are cut by northeast and north-trending faults.

The bedrock in the Seward Peninsula area around Norton Sound is chiefly Paleozoic schist, gneiss, marble, metamorphosed volcanic rocks, all of which are cut by granitic intrusive masses. Structural trends in the metamorphic rocks are
chiefly northward. In exposures of beach placer deposits along the south coast, layers of till are interbedded with beach and shore deposits that are both above and below sea level; it is, therefore, possible to correlate glacial advances in the Seward Peninsula with the history of rise and fall of sea level in late Cenozoic time. Much of the coastal lowlands are underlain by Quarternary sand and silt. Basalt flows and cinder cones are of Tertiary and Quarternary age. Other bedrock hills consist of Cretaceous sedimentary rocks, but by early Tertiary intrusions, and of crystalline rocks of unknown age.

A large segment of the route from Seward to the north side of the Alaska Range was generally covered by glacial ice several times during the Pleistocene ice age. Glacial advances and retreats have significantly influenced geologic features throughout the region. The coastline around Norton Sound and much of Interior Alaska Range were generally ice free during Pleistocene times.

Mineral Resources

The segment of the route between Kaltag and Nome passes through several areas identified as having potential for mineral development. (Resources of Alaska, A Regional Summary, Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission, 1974). In the Nome area, potential development of gold, lead, zinc, silver, barium, tin, antimony, and tungsten is indicated. In addition, the Unalakleet River area and most of the route along the east shoreline of Norton Sound is identified as having low potential for oil and gas.

The Iditarod-Ophir-Takotna region is identified as having high potential for gold development. In addition to gold, tin is listed as having high potential in the Poorman area.
An area in the Kuskokwim valley east of McGrath traversed by the route is identified as having low potential for oil and gas. Although high potential for gold, copper, lead, and zinc is indicated in areas to the north and south, no potential is identified along the route through the Rainy Pass region.

Moderate to high potential of oil and gas locations is identified over the lower Susitna River valley. Coal deposits are also indicated over this region. High potential for chromium, nickel, platinum, copper, and gold development is indicated in the Upper Cook Inlet and Chugach Mountain region traversed by the route.

Placer gold mining is currently taking place in the Ophir, Flat, Poorman, and Nome areas where numerous claims dating back to the early 1900's exist. It is not known how many claims are being worked or how much gold is being produced. However, except in the Nome area, less than a dozen persons are believed to be involved in mining activities at each of the locations.

Land Ownership

Most of the land along the route is currently in public ownership. However, it should be noted that the status of land ownership is in a transitional stage. This is due to selections resulting from the Alaska Statehood Act and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. (Table II presents the current and potential status of land along the route.) The State currently owns most of the trail area from Girdwood to the Alaska Range while the remainder is in Federal ownership. With the exception of the section from Seward to Girdwood which is owned by the Alaska Railroad through the Chugach
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEGMENT</th>
<th>MILES</th>
<th>LAND STATUS (in miles)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seward - Girdwood</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75 mi. Alaska Railroad (U.S.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girdwood - Eagle River</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40 mi. Chugach State Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>(via Indian Creek Pass)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 mi. Chugach National Forest</td>
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<tr>
<td>(via Crow Pass)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29 mi. State highways, roads</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 mi. U. S. Army Reservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 mi. private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eagle - Knik*</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>35 mi. State highways, roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20 mi. State tidelands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knik - Susitna*</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21.5 mi. State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.5 mi. private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15.0 mi. Mat-Su Borough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susitna - Old Skwentna</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Virtually all in State ownership (some may be transferred to Mat-Su Borough).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(via Alexander Lake)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Skwentna - Rainy Pass</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Virtually all in State ownership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodge*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rainy Pass Lodge - Farewell</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Virtually all selected for ownership by State.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farewell - McGrath*</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Approx. 65 mi. proposed for inclusion in Yukon-Kuskokwim National Forest; 15 mi. withdrawn for selection by Native corporations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>McGrath - Takotna*</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Virtually all withdrawn for selection by Native corporations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takotna - Ophir*</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Virtually all overlain by State-owned road through Native and State selected lands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Takotna - Iditarod - Ophir Loop*</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>170 mi. selected by State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15 mi. withdrawn for Native selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location 1</td>
<td>Location 2</td>
<td>Miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophir</td>
<td>Dishkaket</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishkaket</td>
<td>Kaltag</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaltag</td>
<td>Unalakleet*</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unalakleet*</td>
<td>Solomon*</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon*</td>
<td>Nome*</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBTOTAL - Main Route</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,099</td>
</tr>
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**Other Branch Segments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location 1</th>
<th>Location 2</th>
<th>Miles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moose Pass - Sunrise</td>
<td>(via Summit Lake)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moose Pass - Granite Creek Guard Station (via Johnson Pass)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Chugach National Forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granite Creek Guard Station - Canyon Creek</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunrise - Hope</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whittier - Portage (via Portage Lake)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(via Twentymile)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchorage - Fort Richardson*</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susitna - Nancy</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Approx. 30 mi. through State selected lands; 25 mi. proposed for inclusion in Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge.
- Approx. 15 mi. withdrawn for Native selection; 15 mi. on (d)(1) lands (BLM); 36 mi. proposed for Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge.
- 41 mi. withdrawn for Native selection; 50 mi. proposed for Unalakleet National Wild River (BLM); 5 mi. in (d)(1) lands (BLM).
- Virtually all withdrawn for Native selection.
- Overlain by State highway through Native selected lands.
- 34 mi. overlain by State highway; 10 mi. Chugach National Forest
- Overlain by State highway.
- 10 mi. Chugach National Forest
- 7 mi. overlain by State highway
- Chugach National Forest
- 4 mi. Anchorage Municipality
- 8 mi. U.S. Army reservation
- 15 mi. State patented land
- 7 mi. Mat-Su Borough land
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mileage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susitna - Old Skwentna (via Skwentna Airfield)*</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>State patented land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainy Pass Lodge - Rohn (Tatina River (via Ptarmigan Pass)*</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>State patented land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farewell Lake - Bear Creek (via Fairwell FAA Airfield)*</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>State patented land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganes Creek - Flat (summer trail)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>State patented land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Creek - Cripple Landing</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>State selected land.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cripple Landing - Lewis Landing</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>45 mi. State selected land</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cripple - Folger</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>State selected land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishkaket - Moose Creek (via Dikeman)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>20 mi. (d)(2) (proposed National Wildlife Refuge - FWS); 47 mi. State selected land</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magitchlie Creek - Nulato</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>45 mi. Native selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 mi. State selected land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophir - Folger*</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>State selected land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folger - Poorman*</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>State selected land.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poorman - Ruby*</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Overlain by State highway.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruby - Lewis Landing*</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Yukon River (Statehood claim).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis Landing - Galena*</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Yukon River (Statehood claim).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galena - Nulato*</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Yukon River (Statehood claim).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nulato - Kaltag*</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Yukon River (Statehood claim).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golovin - Topkok (via White Mountain)*</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Native selected land.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUBTOTAL - Other Branch Segments** 938

**TOTAL** 2,037

*Segments utilized all or in part in the Annual Iditarod Trail Race.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>MILES</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Federal</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>U. S. Forest Service</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bureau of Land Management</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish and Wildlife Service</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U. S. Army</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska Railroad</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>393</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State</strong></td>
<td>1,279.5</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Governments</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Native Corporations</strong></td>
<td>336</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Private</strong></td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>2,037</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1/ Includes existing roads and highways and the Yukon riverbed.

2/ Public easements have been proposed along all or most of this distance.
National Forest, the federally owned segments are managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

The Alaska Statehood Act and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 set in motion substantial changes in future land ownership and management in Alaska. Approximately 40 million acres are to be selected for ownership by Native corporations and 103 million acres by the State of Alaska. Additional millions of acres of public domain lands have been recommended by the Department of the Interior for addition to the National Park, National Wildlife Refuge, National Forest, and Wild and Scenic Rivers Systems.

Most of the land around Norton Sound from Unalakleet and Nome has been withdrawn for Native selection. Similarly, most of the land along the Yukon River from Ruby to Kaltag has been withdrawn for Native selection, although the Yukon River itself is claimed by the State. The villages of Takotna and McGrath are selecting lands along the route in the Kuskokwim River valley. The Village of Eklutna is selecting several townships through which the route passed.

The State of Alaska has made land selections covering most of the route through the Alaska Range and through the Kuskokwim Mountains. In addition to State lands already patented in the Susitna River valley, the routes over Crow Pass and Indian Creek Pass are included in Chugach State Park.

Of the millions of acres proposed for addition to the four national conservation systems, three proposals include lands along the route. The Innoko lowlands
around Dishkakett are included in the Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge proposal and the Kuskokwim River valley between the Alaska and McGrath is included in the Yukon-Kuskokwim National Forest proposal. The lands surrounding the upper 50 miles of the Unalakleet River are included in the Unalakleet National Wild River proposal.

Most Native lands were to have been selected by December of 1975, all State lands by 1985, and action on proposed additions to the national systems is to be taken by December 1978.

In addition to Native lands which will be privately owned, numerous tracts are in private ownership between Seward and the Knik area. Some private lands and an undetermined number of mining claims also exist in the Iditarod-Flat, Ophir, and Takotna areas.

Virtually all of the route was part of the territorial system of roads and trails and was maintained by the Alaska Road Commission using Federal and/or territorial monies. The State of Alaska maintains that a right-of-way still exists in the name of the State along all such roads and trails pursuant to revised Statute 2477 authorized by Congress in 1866.

The current Bureau of Land Management land status records show a reservation under 44LD513 (Department of the Interior Land Decisions) for the section of the route between Kaltag and Unalakleet. As such, this segment would be reserved for public purposes in Federal ownership should patent be transferred.
Section 17(b) of the Native Claims Act directs the Secretary of the Interior to reserve easements for public use and access as he determines are necessary on lands selected by villages or regional corporations. The Bureau of Land Management is currently receiving recommendations from various agencies and the public for easements, including portions of the Seward-Nome route, across lands selected by Native corporations. Easements must be identified prior to the final conveyance of patent to the various corporations over the next several years.

A general listing of land status by segment is found in Table II. Land status has not been identified for all branch segments identified in Table II. It is expected that several of the minor branch routes listed in Table II will not be designated as part of the National Historic Trail.

**Land Use**

With the exception of few small towns and villages, most of the route is located in a primitive environment with little evidence of man. Some mining is taking place in the Flat, Ophir, and Poorman areas. Hunting, fishing, trapping, berry-picking, and wood cutting is taking place around villages and towns. Guiding operations for hunting, fishing, and hiking utilize the route area in the Alaska Range and Susitna valley and probably other locations.

In and near the Anchorage urban area, substantial lands have been developed for transportation, commercial, residential, and to a lesser extent, agricultural purposes. Some timber harvesting is occurring in the Seward area. A major segment of the historic route near Anchorage passes through Chugach State Park and Chugach National Forest.
Some reindeer grazing may be occurring along the route on the Seward Peninsula.

Historic and Archeologic Resources

Gold Rush History

Although popularly known as the Iditarod Trail, only a portion of the Seward to Nome route was constructed and used to reach the Iditarod gold fields. The route is composed of trails resulting from several gold strikes occurring in different areas at different times.

This route can be best discussed in three segments: Seward to Knik and Susitna; Susitna to Kaltag; and Kaltag to Nome.

Seward-Susitna

Gold was first reported on the Kenai Peninsula by Russian fur traders as early as 1834. However, it was not until 1888 when King found placer gold in the Hope area that serious interest in prospecting and mining in the region developed. Between 1888 and 1896, many claims were staked in the Hope-Sunrise area and across Turnagain Arm in the area of what is now Girdwood. News of strikes in the Sunrise district stimulated a rush in 1896 which brought 2,000-2,500 people into upper Cook Inlet area.

Many of these people came by steamer to the Native village of Tyonek on the west shore of Cook Inlet. Here they transferred to shallower-draft boats to reach the settlements in the upper Inlet. Hundreds of persons also sailed to Passage Canal in Prince William Sound; disembarked near the present town of Whittier; and walked across the divide and Portage Glacier to the head of
Turnagain Arm and to Hope and Sunrise. In 1794, the English explorer, Vancouver, reported this portage route being used by Russian fur traders who in turn were following a route used by Natives for hundreds of years.

A second rush to the area took place in 1898, probably more as a result of the Klondike Stampede and its overflow than from recent strikes in the Sunrise area. The summer of 1898 brought an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 persons into Cook Inlet.

Sunrise and Hope were destinations for most; however, the old fur trading center of Susitna and the emerging trade center of Knik attracted many. Most came directly to the area by water, but many again used the glacier trail from Passage Canal. Crevasses restricted safe travel by this route to winter and spring months and an alternate route on Billings Creek and down the Twentymile River drainage was occasionally used in summer.

In 1898, Mendenhall explored a route from the head of Resurrection Bay near the present town of Seward to the Hope-Sunrise area and then around Turnagain Arm, over Crow Pass, and across Knik Arm to Knik. At this time, travel from Resurrection Bay to the Hope-Sunrise area and over Crow Pass had been undertaken occasionally by prospectors, but no trails as such existed.

Cook Inlet was not navigable during the winter months. Susitna, Knik, Sunrise, and Hope were dependent on winter mail and supplies coming from the ice-free landing sites in Passage Canal and Resurrection Bay. With the growing population in the upper Inlet and with the desire to maintain communications and supply lines, a system of trails soon developed.
Crude winter trails for pack horses and dog teams were developed through use
between Resurrection Bay and the Sunrise area and between Sunrise and Knik
and Susitna by 1900. In 1902, the first regularly scheduled mail contract
was let between Resurrection Bay and Sunrise and Hope.

After the strikes in 1902 and 1906 in the Yenta River and Willow Creek districts,
winter trails from Seward to Susitna were well established providing transpor-
tation for mail, supplies, and travelers.

Between 1904 and 1906, approximately 50 miles of the Alaska Central Railroad
were constructed from Seward towards Turnagain Arm. By 1911, the railroad,
then under the name of the Alaska Northern Railroad, had been completed around
the eastern end of Turnagain Arm to Mile 71 at Kern Creek.

Susitna-Kaltag

Travel into the upper Kuskokwim and Innoko River country before 1905 was
limited to a few Russian explorers in the 1830's and 1840's, to several USGS
and military exploration parties at the turn of the century, and to occasional
prospectors.

In the summer of 1906, a prospecting party led by Thomas Ganes crossed from
the Kuskokwim River into the upper Innoko drainage and struck gold on Ganes
Creek. That winter, news of the strike caused a stampede by miners mostly
from along the Yukon River. These early rushers crossed overland from
Kaltag and from the trading post of Lewis Landing on the Yukon. When naviga-
tion opened that summer, 800 to 900 people came down the Yukon from Fairbanks
and up the Innoko to the Indian settlement of Dishkaket. Several hundred
persons also sailed from Nome up the Yukon and Innoko. From Dishkaket, people
lined or poled up river to Ganes Creek.

During the winter of 1907-1908, men and supplies were transported overland
from Kaltag and Lewis Landing by dog team to the town of Moore City on Ganes
Creek. A strike on nearby Ophir Creek in early 1908 left Moore City deserted
and the new town of Ophir sprang up.

W. A. Dikeman and John Beaton descended the Innoko in late summer of 1908
and went up one of its major tributaries, the Haiditarod, or as it later be-
came known, the Iditarod. On Christmas Day 1909, it is reported that they
struck gold on Otter Creek. News of the Iditarod strike was slow to spread,
and the summer of 1909 brought only several hundred persons into the area,
mainly from the Innoko district and from along the Yukon River. Little
mining was done that summer because of poor transportation and a lack of
equipment and supplies, but considerable claim staking took place.

During the winter of 1909-1910, optimistic reports of rich strikes were wide-
spread. Approximately 2,000 people steamed up and down the Yukon and up the
Innoko and Iditarod Rivers when navigation opened in the summer of 1910. In
all, an estimated 2,500 people stampeded to the Iditarod developing the new
towns of Dikeman at the low water head of steamer navigation; Iditarod, at
the extreme head of navigation; and the mining towns of Flat, Otter, Boulder
(Sounder), and Discovery.
The Iditarod strike and production of gold in 1910 prompted the Alaska Road Commission to begin work on the Seward to Nome trail. Surveyed by W. L. Goodwin in 1908, this route was to provide a more direct winter transportation route to Nome and access to the Innoko district gold strikes. During the winter of 1910-11, nearly 1,000 miles of trail were marked and cleared from Nome to the Alaska Northern railhead which was at Kern Creek, 71 miles north of Seward. Although most of the new trail work was done between the present site of McGrath and Susitna, considerable work was also done marking and repairing the existing routes between Kern Creek and Susitna; between Nome and the Ophir area; and the branch routes to Iditarod and Flat.

This route was authorized by the Alaska Road Commission as the Rainy Pass-Kaltag Trail, but because the Iditarod mining district was the most common destination, it became known as the "Iditarod Trail." From 1911 to 1925, hundreds of people walked and mushed over the trail between Iditarod and Knik or Seward. The trail from Kaltag to Iditarod and to Ophir was used to take people and supplies in from the Yukon.

As new gold districts developed in the upper Kuskokwim area and in the Long-Poorman-Cripple area, various branch and connecting trails developed around the Iditarod Trail. Several segments were upgraded to wagon roads, notably the portage route between Takotna in the Kuskokwim drainage and Ophir on the Innoko, and between Iditarod and Flat.

The first reports of gold on the Seward Peninsula in 1888 received little attention by the outside world. However, in the late fall of 1898, news of the
strike at Anvil Creek drew hundreds of gold seekers down the Yukon from the Klondike. Steamers from other parts of Alaska and from Seattle started out for the Bering Sea and the Nome area. Freeze-up caught most of the boats coming down the Yukon, and most of the ocean-going vessels got no further than the tip of the Alaska Peninsula.

Although most waited out the winter, several hundred persons continued down the Yukon River by dog team and on foot. They left the river at the Indian Village of Kaltag, crossing the historic Native portage route into the Unalakleet River drainage. From the Eskimo village of Unalakleet on Norton Sound, they traveled around the Sound to Nome.

In the next 2 years, thousands of people rushed to Nome, first to the placer deposits in the several creeks in the area, and then in 1900 to the gold-bearing sands of the Nome beach. Nome was easily reached by steamer with no overland travel required.

As Nome grew quickly into Alaska’s richest mining region, its population swelled to 12,488 in 1900. Communication with other areas was badly needed during the many months when navigation was not possible. In 1900 and 1901, a telegraph line was constructed from Nome to Fort Gibbon at the Tanana-Yukon confluence. Between Nome and St. Michaels, the first sea cable in Alaska was installed. From St. Michaels, the line went north to Unalakleet, then over the portage route to Kaltag and up the Yukon River. The sea cable was replaced by the first long-distance wireless telegraph in the United States by 1903.
Winter mail was also carried along the Yukon between Nome and Dawson at the turn of the century. The Fairbanks gold strike in 1902, and the subsequent rush to the Alaskan interior stimulated development of the mail route from Valdez to Fairbanks. By the winter of 1905-1906, the trail from Valdez brought mail to Fairbanks which in turn was carried down the Yukon by dog team to Kaltag, over to Unalakleet, and around Norton Sound to Nome.

**Historic Trail Remnants**

Highways, the Alaska Railroad, wagon roads, and tractor trails have been superimposed on many old trail segments, especially in the Seward to Susitna area and around Ophir and Iditarod. However, traces of the historic route are still visible in the alpine areas of Indian Creek, Crow, and Rainy Passes. Although very overgrown, sections can also be seen in the forested areas between Knik and McGrath because of the relatively slow rate of tree growth in this region.

From Kaltag to Unalakleet, the historic trail and telegraph route can be observed. Some telegraph wire and a few of the supporting tripods still can be found along the route. The trail from Unalakleet to Nome generally followed the barren shoreline and ice of the Norton Sound. Only a few short segments which cut across peninsulas of forest or tundra are still visible. Most of these are still used today by Native people traveling between villages.

Virtually the entire length of the Seward to Nome route was covered at regular intervals by roadhouses. Every 15 to 30 miles (1 day's hike or mush) these roadhouses provided food and lodging to mail carriers and
other travelers. Even before a new trail was completed, choice roadhouse
sites were staked along the route. As Goodwin thrashed his way through virgin
territory between the Kuskokwim River and Rainy Pass in the winter of 1910-11,
the only people he reported seeing were two men selecting sites and putting up
roadhouses.

South of the Alaska Range, only the old roadhouse at Skwentna has survived fire,
vandalism, firewood gathering, streambank erosion, and decay which claimed
the various roadhouses over the years. North of the Alaska Range, several
roadhouses are still standing. More modern trapping cabins and lodges have
been built at several of the old roadhouse locations such as Rainy Pass and
Farewell Lake. Between Kaltag and Unalakleet, some of the old telegraphic
relay stations and line cabins are still standing. The Cape Nome roadhouse,
located 14 miles east of Nome, was built around 1900 and is reported to still
be in good condition. At other roadhouse locations, decaying remnants of log
structures have been reported.

Tools, implements, and equipment hauled over the old route undoubtedly were
lost or abandoned over the years. Such articles dating back to the late
1890's may still be present along the trails because of the relatively slow
rate of oxidation and decomposition due to low precipitation and low mean
annual temperatures.
Related Historic Sites

Five historic sites located along or near the Seward to Nome route are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Table III lists these sites, the date they were entered on the Register, and their significance.

In addition to these sites, the town site of Iditarod has been nominated to the Register pending approval by Doyon, the Native Regional Corporation. Iditarod is now a ghost town. Only a few buildings remain where once 600-700 people lived. In its heyday, the town had a telephone system, a tramway, two newspapers, four hotels, three lumber companies, a fire hall, nine saloons, a school, and churches.

The nearby mining town of Flat is now nearly deserted also. From a peak of 400 people, only a few miners live there today, most seasonally. However, unlike Iditarod, many old structures are still remaining in and around Flat, and both old and newer mining equipment can be seen.

Historic structures and mining implements in and around Ophir also exist, although the extent and condition of these historic resources is not known. No population was reported for Ophir in the 1970 census, although several small gold mining operations have recently been reactivated and several people are known to be living in the area.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Date Entered</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hope Historic District</td>
<td>4/25/72</td>
<td>Evidence of gold mining activity on the Kenai Peninsula dating back to 1888.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, Eklutna</td>
<td>3/24/72</td>
<td>Russian missionary activity associated with fur trading in Cook Inlet dating back to mid-1800's.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knik</td>
<td>7/23/73</td>
<td>Knik, once the largest community on Cook Inlet, served as regional trading and transportation center from about 1898 to 1917. Includes Knik Museum containing materials dating back to Knik's heyday and &quot;Dog Mushers Hall of Fame&quot; commemorating the long history of dog mushing in Alaska.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iyatsyet Site, Cape Denbigh Peninsula, Norton Sound</td>
<td>10/15/66</td>
<td>One of earliest such sites found, dating back to 6000 B.C., it has given definite sequential evidence of coastal occupation beginning with the Denbigh flint industry. Site has given substance to the assumption that the first people in the Americas came south from Alaska.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anvil Creek, Nome</td>
<td>10/15/66</td>
<td>Alaska's great gold rush began when the first large gold placer strike was made here on September 20, 1898.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For hundreds and perhaps thousands of years prior to the coming of white men to Alaska, Native peoples traveled, hunted, trapped, fished, and lived throughout the route area. Much of this activity was concentrated along the major waterways and sea coasts where food sources were more abundant and travel easier. Native dog mushers who predated the gold stampeder by perhaps thousands of years utilized portions of the route.

The segment between Kaltag and Nome is of particular anthropological and archeological significance. The Seward Peninsula area is where some of the earliest sites of the New World man have been found and where the most evidence has been discovered of sequential migrations of people from Asia entering North America via a Bering Sea land bridge. Additional archeological sites, such as the one on the Cape Denbigh Peninsula undoubtedly exist in the route area which could reveal more information about ancient inhabitants of the region and perhaps about the origins of man in North America.

The route between Kaltag and Unalakleet was being used as a portage trail between the Yukon River and Norton Sound for hundreds of years prior to the Gold Rush. Eskimos from Norton Sound and Athabaskan Indians from the Yukon valley traded and raided over the route.

Identification of Historic and Archeological Resources

As mentioned in the above discussions ("Related Historic Sites" and "Pre-History and Archeology"), additional sites with historical or archeological significance
undoubtedly exist in the route area. In order to meet the requirements of
Executive Order 11593 and Section 106 of
the National Historic Preservation Act, the following measures are proposed:

1. The agency or agencies responsible for management of the trail will
identify properties, located within the
impact area of the trail, included in the National Register, including the
most recent supplements.

2. The management agency will conduct a complete cultural survey to
identify and evaluate potential National Register sites. This will be done
in consultation with the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer and prior
to the completion of management plans.

3. Acquisition and/or protection of significant sites, structures, or
remnants will be necessary to help prevent theft or vandalism due to increased
public knowledge of the historic route and
related sites.

4. All other requirements of 36 C.F.R. Part 800, where applicable, will
be met. Consultation with the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer will
continue and the management
agencies will afford the Advisory Council the opportunity to comment on manage-
ment plans. Only then will the management plans be published in the Federal
Register.

*At the time of this writing, the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer
has been notified by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. See Appendix A for
his official counsel on the measures for compliance described herein.
Most current recreational use of the route occurs in the Seward-Susitna region. Between Seward and Girdwood and between Eagle River and Knik, most of this use is in the form of driving for pleasure, picnicking, and sightseeing. A highway and railroad cover much of these segments.

A jeep road and trail from Whittier up through Portage Pass also receives summer hiking and recreational vehicle use. The U. S. Forest Service recreational trails up the Crow Pass and across the Bench Lake-Johnson Lake Pass receive heavy summer use by hikers. Two public use cabins on these trails have been reserved most days of the summer. Summer use of the Crow Pass trail is estimated at 300 persons per week, while 50 persons per week are estimated to use the Bench Lake-Johnson Lake Pass trail.

The 22-mile Bench Lake trail also receives winter use by snow machiners and cross-country skiers. An avalanche destroyed the public cabin at Bench Lake during March of 1975.

A hiking trail through Chugach State Park from Crow Pass down to Eagle River (approximately 21 miles) also receives summer hiking use. The Eagle River valley is also used heavily in the winter by cross-country skiers and snow machiners. The 20-mile Indian Creek Pass section between Anchorage and Indian is traversed annually by hundreds of cross-country skiers. The improved trail up Indian Creek to the pass also attracts substantial summer hiking use.
Between Knik and Susitna, the many trails and seismic lines receive substantial winter use by dog mushers, snowmobilers, and cross-country skiers. Most of this use takes place within 10–12 miles of Knik. Some summer hiking use of the historic Iditarod Trail occurs up to 4 miles from Knik.

Hiking, fishing, hunting, and berry picking are popular summer and fall activities all along the road system in this area. Such activity is occurring along the route, although it may not be associated with a specific trail or route segment. Similarly, cross-country skiing and snow machine use occur over much of the route in the winter where the highway or railroads provide access to adjacent day-use areas. An annual train trip sponsored by the local ski club brings hundreds of cross-country skiers into the Grandview area along the railroad trail 50 miles north of Seward.

Beyond the Susitna River, recreation use is primarily non-trail oriented. Fly-in fishing and hunting are the principal activities. This use is not very extensive or intensive at the present time. Some hiking and wilderness guiding is taking place across Rainy Pass, although the level of this use is believed to be low. Some recreational hunting, fishing, and travel around the several towns and villages along the route is probably taking place, although most such activity is geared to a subsistence life-style. Present winter recreational use is even lighter. Some recreational snow machine use and cross-country skiing probably occurs in the Nome area, the McGrath area, and west of the Susitna River.

An exception to this light activity is the Anchorage to Nome sled dog race. Each March since 1973, approximately 40 mushers and 400 dogs have traversed
major portions of the Iditarod Trail, although only roughly half the entrants
make it to Nome.

Future Use

Recreation use along the route is expected to increase dramatically in the
Seward to Knik region. Hiking, cross-country skiing, and off-road vehicle
use will continue to rise as the population in Southcentral Alaska expands.

Use along the developed trails has increased several fold over the past 3 to
5 years and this trend is expected to continue. Limitations to this increase
will be the number of cabins available for overnight use, especially in
the winter, and increasingly crowded trail conditions causing people to seek
other recreation areas.

Sport hunting and fishing activities are expected to increase significantly
in most areas of the route, especially in the Susitna Valley as more people
travel further to find limited populations of fish and wildlife. Trail-oriented
activities along the historic route are not expected to increase substantially
due to lack of developed trails, difficult access, and harsh climatic conditions.

Probable Future Environment Without the Proposal

In general, the future environment of the route area is expected to vary little
without the proposal than with the proposal.
Without the proposal, it is probable that the few remaining historic structures and implements found along the route would be destroyed or damaged by fire, vandalism, natural decay, removal, and other causes.

It is possible without the proposal that public access and recreational use along the historic route could be blocked in the Knik area by private landowners. Also, without the proposal, public lands along the route could be disposed of and public access lost.
III. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The primary purpose of the proposal is to commemorate the historic significance of the Iditarod route. Related actions would be the signing of certain segments, the acquisition of approximately 1-1/2 miles of the route in the Knik area, the preservation and possible acquisition of several selected historic sites and structures, and the retention of a right-of-way along the route through publicly owned lands.

The impacts of the proposal are based on the following assumptions:

1. Amendment of the National Trails System Act to include a category of National Historic Trails which would not require the development of a continuous recreational trail and which would not prohibit the use of motorized vehicles along the route.

2. The State of Alaska and involved municipal (Borough) governments identification and retention of a right-of-way along the route through State or Borough lands.

3. Right-of-way identification across publicly owned lands that would not be restricted to a particular mode of travel, but could be used at some later time for construction of a road, railroad, hiking trail, off-road vehicle trail, or other transportation facility.

4. Native corporation's identification and actuation of a right-of-way along the route through their holdings.
The proposal does not affect existing jurisdiction or responsibility of the State of Alaska over fish and wildlife resources along the route for subsistence or sport purposes. Fishing, hunting, and trapping would continue under applicable Federal and State regulations. Other subsistence activities, such as berry picking, wood cutting, etc., would also continue along the route under existing permit requirements for wood and logs.

The use of power boats and snow machines, commonly used by local villagers in hunting, trapping, and fishing activities and in travel between villages would continue along the route. As is the case now on public lands, off-road vehicles could be regulated if significant environmental damage was occurring or user conflicts arose. No such controls are anticipated in those areas where subsistence uses are occurring.

Placer mining is currently taking place along the proposed route in the Flat, Ophir, Poorman, and Nome areas. Most of this mining occurs on valid mining claims. No acquisition or infringement on these claims is proposed. Sufficient public land, and in most cases road right-of-way, is present in these areas to insure public access along the general route through these historic mining areas.
In these and perhaps other areas where potential for additional mineral development is high, the location of a right-of-way along the route would be designed to avoid potential conflicts with mining. Furthermore, the retention of an approximately 25-foot right-of-way would not remove significant amounts of land from possible mining activities.

There are several historically significant sites such as the townsites of Iditarod, Flat, and Ophir where historic structures, implements, or other remnants of the Gold Rush era may merit protection or rehabilitation. Some of these sites or structures may be located on mining claims or privately owned mining sites. Under this proposal, the land manager would first seek to work with the claimant or site owner in protecting or restoring the historic remains. If such a cooperative agreement could not be worked out, the site, structure, or remnant would be purchased. Although such a purchase would attempt to limit acquisition to the minimum necessary to protect the historic values, it is possible that some small parcels of lands used in mining activities would be purchased.

**IMPACT ON TRANSPORTATION LAND USE**

Several major segments of the proposed route include highways, roads, the Alaska Railroad, and rivers used by barges. The proposal would not alter current uses of these transportation arteries. It is proposed that several signs identifying and describing the historic route be placed along portions of the route overlain, parallel, or accessible by the highway net in the
Seward to Knik area. The impact of such signing on traffic flow is considered slight.

Substantial segments of the proposed route near towns and villages are currently used by local people in traveling between villages, camps, and hunting, trapping, and fishing areas. In the summer months, the Yukon River segment included in the proposed route is used by motor boats. However, most of this local use is by snow machine and, to a lesser extent, dog sled and snowshoeing during the winter season. The proposal will not prohibit such use and will regulate off-road vehicle use along the route only if significant environmental damage is occurring. No such regulations are anticipated.

The proposal also calls for the acquisition of approximately 1-1/2 miles of right-of-way through private lands in the Knik area, the retention of a right-of-way along the historic route through public lands, and the protection and possible acquisition of significant historic sites or structures along the route. The proposal also would permit the construction of roads along most of the trail right-of-way if desired at some future time.

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (P. L. 89-670), as amended, defined as a national policy:

... that special effort should be made to preserve the natural beauty of the countryside and public park and recreation lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites.
Section 4(f) specifically requires that the Secretary of Transportation:

shall cooperate and consult with the Secretaries of the Interior, Housing and Urban Development, and Agriculture and with the States in developing transportation plans and programs that include measures to maintain or enhance the natural beauty of lands tranversed. After the effective date of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1968, the Secretary (of Transportation) shall not approve any program or project which requires the uses of any publicly owned land from a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, State, or local significance as determined by the Federal, State, or local officials having jurisdiction thereof, or any land from an historic site of national, State, or local significance as so determined by such officials unless (1) there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of such land, and (2) such program includes all possible planning to minimize harm to such park, recreational area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site resulting from such use.

Although the State Department of Highways currently is not proposing any construction of new roads along the proposed route, a Highway Department planning map dated July 1974 identified possible long-range needs for surface transportation along most of the route. Because of the linear nature of the Iditarod Trail, there is some possibility that planned transportation projects could conflict with the declaration of national policy expressed in Section 4(f).
If a transportation project or program also:

1. required the use of public or private land from an historic site;

2. required the approval of the Secretary of Transportation because it was funded under the Federal Aid Highway Act or other license, grant, plan, or agreement, etc., requiring the approval of the Secretary of Transportation; and

3. was found to be of Federal, State, or local significance as determined by the officials having jurisdiction over them;

then the Secretary of Transportation could not approve it unless he first consulted with the Secretaries of the Interior, Housing and Urban Development, and Agriculture to secure their counsel before he determines that there is no "prudent and feasible alternative" and that "all possible planning to minimize harm" has been included. The assistance and guidance given to the Secretary of Transportation in the consultation process help him to assure that the legal provisos of Section 4(f) are being accomplished adequately. The ultimate decision on the applicability of Section 4(f) rests with the Secretary of Transportation (unless a Federal court intervenes).

All historic sites subsequently identified and included in this proposal would involve consideration under Section 4(f) if a transportation project was proposed which would impact those sites. Such considerations could
require relocation of routing of special design which could increase costs of the project or possibly preclude development in the locality if there were no feasible and prudent alternative.

Only one segment of the route could be considered a new recreation area as a result of this proposal. Acquisition of 1-1/2 miles of trail right-of-way easement through private lands in the Knik area is proposed and this section along with the remaining proposed section between Knik and the Susitna River currently receiving significant recreation use would be considered recreation lands under Section 4(f) if a transportation project were proposed along the route. Due to these considerations, construction costs could be increased and alignment of the transportation routes altered.

The other existing recreational sections are all dedicated trails within Chugach State Park and Chugach National Forest and would require consideration under 4(f) with or without the proposed action.

Over virtually all of the route west of the Susitna River, no significant historic remains of the route itself, such as wagon ruts, exist. Because no recreational development is proposed over most of the route, because only small isolated sites are proposed for historic preservation, and because the proposal specifically permits the construction and inclusion of highways and other surface transportation systems over the route, it is not intended that 4(f) considerations are applicable to the proposed route itself but only to the specific historic sites and recreation areas incorporated in the National Historic Trail designation.
Overall, the short-term impacts on transportation are considered slight. The long-term impacts could be slight to moderate depending on the alignments of surface transportation projects which might be proposed in the future.

IMPACT ON LAND OWNERSHIP AND USE OF LAND

It is proposed that a right-of-way or easement be acquired through approximately 1-1/2 miles of private land in the Knik area. It is also proposed that, should it not be possible to work out a cooperative management agreement with involved landowners or claimants to protect specific historic resources, such sites, structures, or remnants would be purchased. A right-of-way through involved Federal, State, and Borough lands would be retained in public ownership.

The precise number of privately owned historic sites that might require acquisition, is not known, but the total area should be less than 30 acres. Coupled with the 5 acres to be purchased in the Knik area for trail right-of-way, a total of not more than 35 acres would be removed from private ownership. The trail segment to be purchased in the Knik area is currently used by recreationists, and an alignment would be chosen to avoid all dwellings, agricultural areas, and other private developments. Some increase in recreation use can be expected in the Knik area due to increased public knowledge of the historic route brought about by the proposal. Increased littering, trespassing, and some loss of privacy could result on private lands due to this increased use.
Some historic sites may be located on private lands used for guiding, mining, or residential purposes. To the extent they are acquired, some infringement on these private lands and businesses could result. The amount of land acquired would be minimized to that necessary to protect the historic resources involved. Although public visitation of such historic sites would be low, occasional inspections may result in some loss of privacy of landowners.

A right-of-way approximately 25 feet wide through the approximately 1,700 miles of public lands would result in the withholding of about 5,750 acres from future disposition to private land ownership. Approximately 500 miles of the route, or 1,700 acres, is overlain or closely paralleled by roads, railroads, and watercourses, or is located on formally dedicated State Park or National Forest land which would remain in public ownership regardless of this proposal. The route traverses literally millions of acres of public lands which could not be disposed of or developed by the private sector, without specific Federal legislation.

IMPACT ON RECREATION

Near the Anchorage urban area are several existing route segments which are receiving significant recreational use by hikers, cross-country skiers, snow machines, and dog mushers. Publicity resulting from this action will cause an undetermined increase in recreational use of these segments. Increased crowding, littering, erosion, user conflicts, and other related impacts could result from this increased use. It is not known to what degree these impacts could be attributed to this action. Existing use is currently
contributing to these impacts and future use is expected to increase sub-
stantially with or without the proposal.

Acquisition of a trail right-of-way or easement in the Knik area will insure
public recreational use of that segment in the future.

The proposal calls for the study of segments for potential development as
recreational trails. Such a study could lead to subsequent development of
additional recreational trails and facilities which would contribute to satis-
ifying the demand for trail-oriented recreation in the Anchorage urban area as
identified in the current State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Under the proposal, significant historic sites or structures would be identi-
fied and protected. Increased awareness and publicity of these sites will
result in a small increase in recreational visitation for historic
interpretive purposes.

Due to the proposal, increased attention would be placed on those route seg-
ments not accessible from the highway system or developed as recreational trails.
A small increase in the amount of hiking, cross-country skiing, snow machining,
and dog sledding might result, especially between the Susitna River and the
Alaska Range.

The proposal calls for the signing of various portions of the route which
follow or are accessible from the existing road systems between Seward and
Knik. Such marking and interpretative signing will increase travelers' and
recreationists' appreciation of the area's history and possibly increase the
enjoyment of pleasure driving along the route.
The retention of a right-of-way through public lands and acquisition of a short segment through private lands will insure continued use of the route by the annual Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. This race has attracted great statewide attention and even national news coverage. As a spectator sport, the economic value of the race is of statewide significance. The proposal would further increase public attention to the race.

Use of off-road vehicles could be regulated if significant environmental damage or user conflicts were occurring. Regulation of off-road vehicles is presently occurring on all but one section of the route currently receiving significant recreational use. The section between Knik and Susitna receives use by snow machiners, dog mushers, and cross-country skiers during the winter months. If significant user conflicts develop or are in existence, the land manager may propose regulations along the route in this section which would seek to alleviate these conflicts. Some loss of freedom of recreational travel may result.

IMPACT ON WATER QUALITY

Existing water quality along most of the proposed route is high. The proposal would not result in any actions that would significantly affect water quality.

Some increase in recreational use of existing trails near the Anchorage area due to the proposal might result in increased disposal of human wastes which may enter streams or lakes and erosion problems along trails possibly resulting in an increase in sediments in streams. These impacts due to the proposal are slight.
The retention of or acquisition of an easement or right-of-way, the protection of historic resources, and signing along portions of the route will not have significant impacts on scenic qualities of the route area. Signing would only occur along existing roads or highways and would not impair views or disturb vegetation in the area.

Increased recreational use of the few existing recreation trails along the route due to this action may result in increased terrain or vegetation damage, littering, and chance of fires. Such occurrences could impact local scenic values. Because recreational use is expected to increase with or without the proposal, and because similar impacts can occur with existing use levels as well as increased levels, the impact of increased recreational use due to this action on scenic values is not perceived, but is expected to be minor.

IMPACT ON SOILS AND VEGETATION

No actions in the proposal will result in significant disturbance or destruction of existing soils and vegetation along the route. The management of the route area would provide for the regulation of off-road vehicles if their use resulted in significant damage to soils or vegetation along the route.

Increased use of existing recreational trails included in the proposal would result from increased publicity of the route. Such use could cause increased soil compaction, loss of plant cover, erosion, and threat of forest fires along these existing trails.
Except for fires, such impacts would be confined to a narrow trail area already receiving these impacts.

IMPACT ON TIMBER

Commercial harvesting of timber is occurring in the Seward area. Potential commercial timber harvest areas have been identified along the Yukon River, in the Kuskokwim River valley, and in the Susitna Valley. Firewood and house logs are being cut near villages along the route. No timber is being harvested along the specific route in the Seward area, which coincides with the Alaska Railroad right-of-way, and no impact on timber harvesting by the proposal would result in this area.

Potential timber harvesting or wood gathering within a 25-foot right-of-way along the route would not necessarily be prohibited by the proposal. However, whether or not permits or leases for the taking of timber were issued, the amount of such timber affected within the route right-of-way or easement would be minimal in relation to timber available in the surrounding region.

IMPACT ON FISH AND WILDLIFE

A variety of large game animals, smaller mammals, birds, and fish are found throughout the route area.
Increased public awareness of the historic route and increased use of existing recreational trails are expected due to the proposal. Such use could increase disturbances of animals in the local area causing them to move to different areas. Hunting is presently permitted along some trails and increases could reduce local game populations. Increased fishing could also lead to reduced numbers and size of individual fish in local populations.

The proposal will not affect the jurisdiction or responsibility of the State of Alaska over fish and wildlife resources associated with the Iditarod route. Fishing, hunting, and trapping would continue under applicable Federal and State regulations.

IMPACT ON WATER RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

No proposals currently exist for water resource development projects along the route. Any future proposals which would involve historic or recreational resources of the proposed route might be required to include replacement, salvage, or other mitigating actions which could increase project costs.

IMPACTS ON HISTORIC AND ARCHEOLOGICAL FEATURES

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (P. L. 89-665) states:
The head of any Federal agency having direct or indirect jurisdiction over a proposed Federal or federally assisted undertaking in any State and the head of any Federal department or independent agency having authority to license any undertaking shall, prior to the approval of the expenditure of any Federal funds on the undertaking or prior to the issuance of any license, as the case may be, take into account the effect of the undertaking on any district, site, building, structure, or object that is included in the National Register. The head of any such Federal agency shall afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation established under title II of this Act a reasonable opportunity to comment with regard to such undertaking.

The National Register of Historic Places, as published in the Federal Register of February 10, 1976, contained five sites associated with the Iditarod Trail. Identification of other significant historic and archeological resources along the route and protection of these resources through rehabilitation and/or acquisition projects is also required by Executive Order 11593, "Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment."

Professional surveys and an increase in public awareness of the Iditarod route will probably result in the discovery of additional historic and cultural resources. In some cases, increased awareness will result in the maintenance of structures or remnants which might otherwise be damaged, destroyed, or removed in the near future due to fire, flooding, vandalism, and natural decay.
Conversely, increased publicity of the route and an increase in visitation of historic sites and structures could result in possible loss of historic remnants through vandalism and souvenir collection.

At this time, the most likely conclusion is that, if implemented, the proposal will result in an effect on sites eligible for or already on the National Register. Whether the effect will be "adverse" or "not adverse" cannot be determined at this time. Rather, this determination would be made later, if legislation is passed authorizing the trail, by the agencies responsible for implementing its management.

See Appendix A for the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer's letter of concurrence on the methods proposed in this statement to achieve compliance with Executive Order 11593 and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

IMPACT ON LOCAL ECONOMY

Few, if any, resources found within the proposed 25-foot wide route corridor are currently contributing significantly to local economics. Subsistence activities occurring within or adjacent to the proposed route, such as hunting, fishing, and trapping, would not be affected by the proposal.

Active mining areas and mining claims would be avoided in the location of the right-of-way to be retained. In most cases, a road right-of-way is currently owned by the State of Alaska through these areas.
Vehicle uses, both on-road and off-road presently occurring along the route, which may play a role in local economies, will be permitted by this proposal. Off-road vehicles could be regulated if significant environmental damage or user conflicts occurred.

The proposal is expected to result in an increase in recreational use of existing trails near the Anchorage urban area.

Food, gas, recreational equipment and related purchases made by these additional recreationists could raise revenues of local businesses slightly.

**IMPACT ON WILDERNESS VALUES**

Large sections of the route are accessible only by airplane and are highly primitive showing little evidence of man.

No developments are proposed in those areas having wilderness values. Some increase in recreational use of existing trails and other route areas may result in greater disturbance of soils, vegetation, and wildlife along these trails. Some portions of these trails traverse areas showing little evidence of man, except for the trail itself.

The proposal provides for the regulation of off-road vehicles along the route if significant environmental damage occurs.
IV. MITIGATING MEASURES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

Measures to mitigate environmental impacts resulting from the proposed inclusion of the Iditarod National Historic Trail in the National Trails System include the following:

1. An inventory of historic resources along the proposed route and acquisition and/or protection of significant sites, structures, or remnants to help management agencies prevent theft or vandalism due to increased public knowledge of the historic route and related sites.

2. An inventory of route segments having potential for development as new recreation trails or extensions or improvements to existing recreational trails is proposed. This action could lead to the development of additional recreational resources which could help distribute the increase of recreational use of existing trails due to the proposal. The distribution of use could also lessen the possible environmental impacts of intensive or concentrated use on soils, vegetation, wildlife, and recreation experience.

3. The regulation of off-road vehicles if increased use of some trail segments resulting from this action caused significant environmental damage or user conflicts.

4. The establishment of a right-of-way through Federal lands, the acquisition of right-of-way through State and local lands, and the acquisition of right-of-way or easement through private lands to minimize interference
or infringement on existing and potential private lands, dwellings, mining
sites, agricultural areas, and other developments.

5. **Signing** along existing road systems would be located where traffic
interference would be minimized and views unobstructed.

6. **Multiple use** of rights-of-way retained through public lands to provide
for development of future complimentary transportation facilities.
V. UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Minor unavoidable adverse environmental impacts will occur as a result of the proposal.

1. Additional regulations to protect the existing environment and recreational experience from increasing numbers of recreationists using existing trails along the route. Regulations on use would cause a loss of personal freedom in traveling when, where, or how a person might desire.

2. Increased litter, water pollution, fire threat, soil compaction, and disturbance of plant and animal communities with increased recreational use of existing trails cannot be fully mitigated.

3. Some loss of private lands through acquisition of trail rights-of-way or easements and possible acquisition of historic sites and structure, will result. Thus, prerogatives of private use of such lands or structures would be removed. The property tax base would be reduced minutely. Some historic resources may be located on mining claims and some lands utilized in mining activities may be infringed upon.

4. Some removal or damage of historic resources not located or adequately protected due to theft or vandalism resulting from increased public awareness of the historic route and related sites may occur.

5. If future construction of roads involving Federal funding takes place along some segments of the route, higher costs of transportation facilities
may result in order to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on historic sites or
recreational areas associated with the route, in accordance with Section 4(f)
Inclusion of the Iditarod National Historic Trail in the National Trails System would result in no actions foreclosing or lessening long-term productivity of the included area. Existing short-term uses of the environment along the route will remain substantially unaltered under the proposal.

The retention of an approximately 25-foot-wide right-of-way through public lands, the acquisition of an approximately 1-1/2-mile right-of-way or easement and the possible acquisition of selected historic sites or structures will have minimal long-range economic impact on existing or potential private lands or properties.
VII. REVOCABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES WHICH WOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE PROPOSED ACTION

No significant physical changes to the existing environment are planned in the proposal. Any uses or environmental impacts caused by the proposal, such as signing, increased recreational use, and protection of historic resources, would not result in irreversible or irrevocable losses of resources.

Designation of the Iditarod National Historic Trail can be modified or reversed by the Congress should it be in the national interest at some future time.
Alternatives considered to the proposed designation of the Iditarod National Historic Trail within the National Trails System are as follows:

1. No action.

2. Designation of fewer route segments.

3. No reservation or acquisition of rights-of-way, easements, or historic resources.

4. Designation as a National Scenic Trail.

5. Designation as a National Recreation Trail.

6. Inclusion of the route in a State trails system.

7. Inclusion of the route on the National Register of Historic Places.

**ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION**

The approximately 2,037 miles of route associated with the Iditarod Trail would not be designated an historic trail within the National Trails System. No rights-of-way would be retained through public lands, no rights-of-way or easement would be acquired along approximately 1-1/2 miles of private lands,
and an inventory and protection plan, including possible acquisition, would not be implemented for significant historic resources along the route. Also, a study of segments for potential development or improvement as recreation trails would not be undertaken and signing of segments of the route would not occur.

**Impacts**

Public knowledge and appreciation of the historic route and related sites would not be as great, thus reducing the impact of increased visitation on existing recreational trails and historic resources.

Public lands along the route could be disposed of at some future time. Private ownership and/or development of the route could prevent public access along the route which could adversely affect current uses of route segments for recreational, subsistence, and commercial purposes. Historical resources could also be adversely affected. Some economic benefits might result from private ownership of these public lands through property taxes and utilization of resources along the route such as timber, agricultural production, or mineral extraction.

Private lands in the Knik area would not be acquired or infringed upon thereby not restricting prerogatives of individual owners. Public access could be blocked in this area and substantial existing recreational uses curtailed.

Historic sites, structures, and other remnants would not be commemorated or protected. Many of these structures and other remains currently found along
the route would be destroyed, damaged, or removed within the near future due to vandalism and the forces of nature.

Potential development or improvement of selected segments as recreational trails as a result of the proposed study might not occur. To the extent these trails fulfilled local demand for trail-oriented recreation, no action would adversely affect recreational resources.

Possible future development of roads along the route might not involve higher costs or engineering problems incurred in conforming to provisions of Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (P. L. 89-670) to avoid or mitigate impacts on historic or recreation sites identified by natural historic trails designation.

ALTERNATIVE 2 - DESIGNATION OF FEWER ROUTE SEGMENTS

All the approximately 2,037 miles of historic routes would not be designated. Rather, only selected segments would receive national commemoration and protection of rights-of-way and historic resources. Segments considered for designation were: (1) the route from Seward through Knik to the Iditarod gold fields, and (2) the route from Knik to Iditarod.

Impacts of Designation of Seward-Iditarod Route

This action would commemorate and increase public appreciation of the primary historic route used in connection with the rush to the Iditarod gold fields.
Related historic routes not designated would not be commemorated and would thus receive little publicity or appreciation.

Historic sites or structures would not be identified or protected along undesignated routes and would probably be damaged, destroyed, or removed in the near future. Portions of the routes between Iditarod and Nome traverse public lands where a right-of-way would not be reserved. If disposed of, future public access along those route segments could be lost. Such existing uses of the historic route, such as the annual Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, could be curtailed or altered. Any future development of resources by private owners of the right-of-way area could result in some beneficial impacts on local economics.

Purchase of little, if any, private land is anticipated along the route between Iditarod and Nome. Thus, impacts of such acquisitions would be minimal with or without the proposal along this segment.

Possible future development of roads along the route from Iditarod to Nome might not involve higher costs or engineering problems incurred in conforming to provisions of Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act to avoid or mitigate impacts on historic sites identified by designation of that segment.

The adverse impacts of increased recreational use due to designation would not change by omitting the Iditarod-Nome routes as all the existing recreational trails are located within the Seward-Iditarod segment. Little difference in impact would be expected in adverse impacts on historic resources due to increased public awareness because a majority of historic sites and structures
are located in the Seward-Iditarod segment, and because those located along
the Iditarod-Nome segment are extremely remote.

**Impacts of Designation of Knik-Iditarod Route**

Impacts would be similar to those described for the Seward-Iditarod route
except for those associated with recreation. All existing developed recreational
trails are located between Seward and Knik. Without the designation, these
trails would probably not attract as many recreationists. Both the heightened
recreational experience due to historic appreciation and the adverse impacts
on soils, vegetation, wildlife, and other environmental components caused by
this increase in use would not occur.

With the possible exception of the Knik-Susitna segment, no designated seg-
ments of the historic route would be accessible from the existing highway
net. Thus, historic appreciation and recreational use of the route would be
more restricted and less interpretative signing would occur.

**ALTERNATIVE 3 - DESIGNATION WITHOUT RESERVATION OR ACQUISITION**

**OF RIGHTS-OF-WAY, EASEMENTS, OR HISTORIC RESOURCES**

The approximate 2,037 miles of historic routes would be designated as a National
Historic Trail within the National Trails System. No other actions would be
proposed.
The routes would receive commemoration and national recognition. Recreational uses of existing recreational trails along the route could be expected to increase and some adverse environmental impacts would occur due to this increased use. Also, some increase in the quality of recreational experience due to the increase in historical appreciation could be expected. Some increase in spectator interest and appreciation of the annual Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race might be expected.

The remaining impacts on existing and potential private lands, historic resources, and future transportation projects would be similar to those associated with the No Action alternative. Vandalism and removal of historic resources along the route would be greater than with the No Action alternative because public knowledge of the historic route and related resources would be greater.

ALTERNATIVE 4 - DESIGNATION AS A NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

The National Trails System Act (P. L. 90-543, 1968) created a category of trails known as National Scenic Trails. National scenic trails are designated only by Act of Congress. Because of their special characteristics, national scenic trails should be capable of promoting interest and attracting visitors throughout the United States.

National scenic trails are designed for hiking and other compatible uses. The Act prohibits the use of motorized equipment on those trails. They should be
extended trails, usually several hundred miles in length, and be continuous
where feasible. National scenic trails should have adequate public access at
reasonable intervals to allow for trips of various lengths and they should be
primarily land-based.

Thus, all or major portions of the historic route would be designated a
national scenic trail and a continuous summer hiking-type trail could be con-
structed. Recreation sites would be developed and connecting trails
either developed or improved.

Existing roads and rivers would not be included in the designation.

**Impacts**

The construction of a major recreational trail would increase recreational
facilities and opportunities significantly. This resource would substantially
increase Statewide trail-oriented recreational uses and probably would attract
out-of-state visitation. Economic impacts of this recreational use could be
moderate on local businesses. Historic resources would receive significant
recognition and protection and would also attract significant visitation.

The construction of a trail and subsequent use would also result in disturbance
of soils, vegetation, wildlife, and possibly water quality, and wilderness
values along an approximately 25-foot corridor, several hundred miles long.
If not adequately protected, historic resources could be readily removed or
damaged by increased visitation.
The construction of a continuous hiking-type trail 300 miles long would cost an estimated $10,000 to $20,000 per mile or $3,000,000 to $6,000,000. Maintenance and management costs would run $200 to $300 per mile or $60,000 to $90,000 per year. A 1,099-mile trail (Seward to Nome) would cost more than three times these amounts. Such expense would have an impact on Federal monies available for other projects and would contribute significantly to the local economy.

This alternative could preclude or substantially alter possible future transportation development projects along the route. Such projects would have to be evaluated in terms of their impact on the recreational and historical facilities under provisions of Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966.

The National scenic trail designation would prohibit the use of vehicles along the route. Sections of existing road systems would not be included and would have to be avoided in the trail alignment. Off-road vehicle use for subsistence, recreational, and perhaps commercial purposes is presently occurring along some sections of the route. Prohibition of these uses would cause significant adverse impacts on local travel between villages, on hunting, trapping, fishing, and other subsistence uses, on access to mining and guiding areas, and on recreational off-road vehicle use.

ALTERNATIVE 5 - DESIGNATION AS A NATIONAL RECREATION TRAIL

The National Trails System Act (P. L. 90-543, 1968) provided for the designation of National Recreation Trails. Inclusion in the National Trails
System as a National Recreation Trail requires approval by the Secretary of the Interior (or Secretary of Agriculture if National Forest lands are involved). To qualify, a trail must be ready for public use and be reasonably accessible to urban areas (2-hours travel time).

Probably only the Johnson-Bench Creek Trail and the Crow Pass Trail administered by the Forest Service, the Eagle River segment from Crow Pass administered by the State Division of Parks, and the Indian Creek Pass Trail also managed by State Parks would currently qualify as National Recreation Trails. These trails have a combined mileage of approximately 67 miles. The land managers must consent to the national designation.

Impacts

Most of the historic routes associated with the Iditarod Gold Rush era would not be commemorated and receive national recognition. Most historic resources would not be protected and would probably be destroyed, damaged, or removed in the near future. Public access along most of the historic route would not be insured. Potential development of additional recreational trails along the route probably would not occur.

Those trails designated would receive increased publicity and use. The recreational experience would probably be increased due to increased historic appreciation. Increased use would cause some adverse impacts on soils, vegetation, wildlife, and other environmental components associated with the immediate trail area.
Other impacts discussed for the No Action alternative would be similar to those associated with the non-designated portions of the route.

ALTERNATIVE 6 - INCLUSION OF THE ROUTE IN A STATE TRAILS SYSTEM

No state trails system currently exists. However, the "Alaska Recreation Trail Plan," (1975) part of the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, recommends a State legislatively established Alaska Trail System. The plan recommends that all government agencies should identify trails of historical significance on their land and accept responsibility for their management, including maintenance and interpretation. It further recommends that the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation's study of Alaska's Gold Rush Trails should identify those historic trails which are worthy of inclusion in the National Trail System and should propose jurisdictional responsibilities for the trails, and recommend appropriations of funds to upgrade, interpret, and maintain them. All designated national trails in Alaska should be included in the Alaska Trail System.

Impacts

Inclusion in the proposed State Trails System would be dependent on inclusion in a national system. Impacts would be the same as those previously described with designation as a national historic trail.

If only those segments located on state lands were included in the state system, impacts would vary somewhat. Several hundred miles of routes traversing
Federal lands would not receive recognition, nor would any of the route receive national commemoration and publicity. Historic sites on Federal lands would not receive any special protection and those on State lands would not necessarily be protected by virtue of inclusion of the route in the State Trails System.

Rights-of-way through Federal lands would not necessarily be reserved and could be disposed of at some later time. Public access could be denied and some economic benefit from property taxes or resource developments could result from private ownership of the route.

Inclusion in only a state system would probably not increase use of existing recreational trails on State lands as much as national designation. Adverse impacts on soils, vegetation, wildlife, and other environmental components along the trails due to increased use would be less than with national designation.

ALTERNATIVE 7 - INCLUSION OF THE ROUTE ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The Historic Sites Act of 1935 and the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 called for a list of properties worthy of preservation for their historic value. Within Alaska, nominations for inclusion on the Register are made by the State Historic Preservation Officer in the State Division of Parks. The Secretary of the Interior accepts these nominations of districts, sites, buildings, and structures which are significant in American history in that they are associated with the events
that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
they embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of
construction; they have yielded, or may likely yield, information important
in prehistory or history; or other criteria.

Sites included on the National Register need not be federally owned. Regardless
of ownership, these sites are eligible for Federal matching grants to the State
for acquisition or restoration projects.

Under existing Federal and State criteria, it is not known how many sites along
the route, or if all or portions of the route itself, would qualify for inclusion
on the National Register. The Bureau of Land Management is preparing
a proposal to the State Liaison Officer requesting nomination of the entire
Seward-Nome Trail to the National Register.

**Impacts**

If the entire route or major portions would qualify, inclusion on the National
Register would commemorate and give national attention to the historic resources
of the route. Grants could be made available for the protection of historic
resources. Rights-of-way through public lands would probably be retained,
thus insuring public access.

Emphasis would be placed on historic preservation rather than recreation use.
The acquisition of private lands in the Knik area would probably not occur
with such designation and future public access could be blocked. A study of
potential recreation trails along the route would not be undertaken and the
possibility of additional recreational facilities along the route would be greatly reduced.

Only a slight increase in recreational uses of existing trails along the route would be expected. Adverse environmental impact associated with an increase in recreational use of trails would be minimal.

Further construction of transportation projects along the route would be subject to both Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (P. L. 89-665). The latter section states that any Federal agency having jurisdiction over any Federal or federally assisted undertaking shall take into account the effect of the undertaking on any historic resource included in the National Register.

Such consideration could result in the relocation, redesign, or possibly prohibition of a road or railroad which may be proposed along the route.
IX. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION WITH OTHERS

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF PROPOSAL AND PREPARATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The study of the Gold Rush trails in Alaska, and specifically the Iditarod
Trail or Seward-Nome Route, was a cooperative effort under the leadership
of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

At an initial study meeting held in Anchorage on January 15, 1974, the follow-
ing agencies were in attendance:

- Alaska State Department of Environmental Conservation
- Alaska State Department of Highways
- Alaska State Department of Fish and Game
- Alaska State Division of Parks
- Alaska State Historical Commission
- Alaska Bicentennial Commission
- Bureau of Land Management
- National Park Service
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission
- U. S. Forest Service
- Office of the Governor, Planning and Research

In addition, an observer from the Alaska Federation of Natives was present.
During 1974 and 1975, several aerial and on-the-ground field inspections of the route were made in which representatives from the following agencies participated:

- Bureau of Land Management
- National Park Service
- Alaska State Division of Parks
- Office of the Secretary (Interior)

In November of 1974, a preliminary analysis of the Seward-Nome route including findings and recommendations was distributed to over 50 Federal, State, and local agencies; Native corporations; citizen groups; and private individuals for review and comment.

Meetings were held in May and June of 1975 with Alaska State Division of Parks, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the National Park Service to discuss proposed revisions in the preliminary report.

Although there has been close coordination and consultation on the analysis of the Seward-Nome route, the conclusions and recommendations are those of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.
April 8, 1976

Re: 3330-1 (Iditarod Trail)

Maurice H. Lundy
Northwest Regional Director
U.S. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation
915 Second Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98174

Dear Mr. Lundy:

As requested in your letter of April 2, 1976, we have reviewed the preliminary draft environmental impact statement for the proposed Iditarod National Historic Trail.

We concur with your finding that the proposed trail designation will have an effect on properties on, or eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places; and that the effect will not be adverse if the procedures described in the "Background of the Historic and Cultural Aspects of the Iditarod Trail DES" attachment to your letter are followed.

Please call or write if we can provide more information.

Sincerely,

Russell W. Cahill, Director
State Historic Preservation Officer

WSH/ml