

GRANITE/INGHAM  
CREEK TRAIL  
SEN-383

EXCERPT FROM

**SURVEY AND EVALUATION OF THE IDITAROD TRAIL  
AND CONNECTING TRAILS IN THE CHUGACH NATIONAL FOREST**

**DRAFT TECHNICAL REPORT**

**VOLUME 2: NATIONAL REGISTER EVALUATION FORMS**

Prepared for  
USDA Forest Service  
Chugach National Forest  
Anchorage, Alaska

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# PHASE I EVALUATION FORM

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March, 1991

1. Name of Property: Granite/Ingram Creek Trail  
AHRS Site #: SEW-383.
2. Location: Sections 3, 4, 9, T.7N-R.1E,  
Sections 27, 34, T.8N-R.1E.  
Seward C-7 and D-7 Quadrangles.
3. Classification:  
Ownership: Public-federal  
Category of Property: Structure  
Number of Resources within Property:  
Contributing: 0  
Non-Contributing: 0  
Number of Contributing Resources previously listed: 0  
Name of related multiple property listing:
6. Function or Use:  
Historic Functions: Transportation/Pedestrian-related  
Transportation/Road-related  
Current Functions: Not in Use
7. Description:  
The Granite/Ingram Creek Trail extended from near the confluence of Lynx Creek and East Fork Creek northeastward to Turnagain Arm. The trail served gold mining operations on Granite and Bertha creeks, and it was used as an overland route between the head of Turnagain Arm and the gold mining communities of the northern Kenai Peninsula.  
  
The recorded portion of this trail is an abandoned, improved roadway extending from Bertha Creek southwestward to an intersection with the Johnson Pass Military Road. A portion of this roadway was recorded by Buzzell and McMahan in 1986 as the Granite/Ingram Creek Trail. Alaska Heritage Resource Survey maps, maintained by the State Historic Preservation Office in Anchorage, display a trail route from East Fork Creek near the mouth of Lynx Creek to Turnagain Arm. The source of information for the AHRS assumed route is unknown.  
  
The observed northern extent of the road is at the southwestern edge of the Bertha Creek Campground, in SW/SE Section 27, T8N-R1E (Point "A" on attached map). The road runs southwesterly from this point on a route roughly parallel to the Seward Highway but adjacent to Granite Creek and usually no more than 100 meters from

the creek gorge. The road is destroyed for about 300 meters to the north of the crossing of Spokane Creek, where a gravel pit has been operated (Point "B"). The old road picks up at the end of a modern two-track trail extending from the south side of the disturbed gravel pit area. The road is very distinct from Spokane Creek to the intersection with the current Seward Highway in SE/NE Section 4, T7N-R1E (Point "C"). In this area the road is a 3-4 meter wide, level surface up to 1 meter below general ground level, and overgrown with dense alders and especially 10-15cm diameter spruce. Bridges, culverts or curbing were not observed in this segment, but the road surface retains sorted gravel in several locations. Pete's creek and another small stream have eroded the roadway at their beds.

The old road crosses the highway at Point "C" and continues southward about 250 meters, where it intersects the current access road to Johnson Pass trailhead at the edge of an old gravel pit (Point "D"). The old roadbed is raised, in places is 10-15 meters wide, and is distinguished by a linear stand of 7.5-15cm diameter spruce trees between the Seward Highway and the gravel pit.

The old road is lost for about 150 meters in the graveled area. The old road appears to coincide with a current road which exits the southwest extent of the graveled area and eventually leads across Sixmile Creek to the White's Roadhouse site (SEW-105). The old road follows the current road about 200 meters, deviates to the east of the current road for about 300 meters, and then follows the current road to a ford of Sixmile Creek and an intersection with the Johnson Pass Government Road in SE/NW Section 9, T7N-R1E (Point "G").

Definite evidence of the Granite/Ingram Creek trail was not found from Bertha Creek to Turnagain Pass. Creek erosion and highway construction probably destroyed the road from Bertha Creek northward to about 150 meters north of the mouth of Taylor Creek. Alaska SHPO maps indicate the probable route of the trail then crossed to the east side of the current highway and remained to the east of the highway to the tidal flats of Turnagain Arm. The SHPO assumed route from Taylor Creek to Turnagain Pass was intensely surveyed by means of intersecting pedestrian transects between the Seward Highway and the base of the mountains to the east.

A large electrical transmission line generally follows the SHPO assumed trail route from Bertha Creek to Turnagain Arm, and a dozed path was cleared during construction of the line. The transmission line may have followed the old trail route, but if so the old trail has been destroyed. Dozer traces and remains of power poles indicate the transmission line has been reconstructed to a straighter route in some areas, particularly between Tincan Creek and Turnagain Pass.

An extremely faint two-tracked trail was found to extend from the Seward Highway at Point "H" in NW/NW Section 13, T8N-R1E, northeastward about three-fourths mile to Point "I" in NE/SE Section 12, T8N-R1E. At Point "I" the trace appears to ascend at a narrow cut into the slope of an outlying hill. The cut extends about 50 meters and dissipates, and the trace then dissipates into a series of game trails. The trace and cut correspond exactly with the route assumed by SHPO to have been the Granite/Ingram Creek Trail, but the cut may as well have originated from prospecting or construction of an original route of the transmission line, and the ruts and the narrow path within the cut may have originated as game trails or hunting pack trails. Routing of a winter sled trail over this hill trace is illogical, because an easy route is available around the base of the hill and the area to the north of the observed trace is boggy.

Remains of the Granite/Ingram Creek Trail were sought in the area from Turnagain Pass to the tidal flats of Turnagain Arm by means of pedestrian survey transects at about one-mile intervals. Transects were walked from the highway directly to Ingram Creek and then northward to the highway. Two transects crossed Ingram Creek, at about one mile northeast of Turnagain Pass and just above the mouth of Wolverine Creek, and areas about 200 meters wide were examined closely from Ingram Creek to the base of mountains to the southeast. An ephemeral game or pack trail was found on the east side of Ingram Creek above Wolverine Creek, but the trail is unimproved, very rough, and discernible for only about 150 meters.

SHPO maps assume the Granite/Ingram Creek Trail entered tidal flats at the west edge of Section 26, T9N-R2E. This area was extensively surveyed by means of intersecting transects, in the hope that the end of the trail could be found and followed. Several cuts and game trails were found in this area, but the short cuts appear to have served logging operations and/or construction of the transmission line. The



transmission line appears to coincide very closely with the trail route supposed by SHPO maps, but evidence of a trail were not found in the linear power line clearing. A line of dead spruce trees in the tidal flat in Section 26 may represent the route of an earlier road, and the trees may have died as a result of the flat dropping into salt water during the 1964 earthquake.

The trail route assumed on SHPO maps is to the east of Ingram Creek from Turnagain Pass to Turnagain Arm. Use of this route would have necessarily included crossing substantial gorges of Wolverine Creek and three other unnamed creeks and traversing of steep slopes virtually the entire distance from saltwater to the pass. A route west of Ingram Creek, in the general location of the current Seward Highway, is much more topographically probable, and a 1910 map shows the trail in this general location (Sleem 1910). For these reasons and the lack of physical evidence of trail features, the Granite/Ingram Creek Trail is assumed to no longer exist as an identifiable entity from Bertha Creek to Turnagain Arm.

8. Statement of Significance:

Significance Level: N/A

Applicable Criteria: N/A

Areas of Significance: N/A

Period of Significance: N/A

Significant Dates:

Significant Person:

Architect/Builder:

State significance of property:

The Granite/Ingram Creek Trail was used by travellers between the head of Turnagain Arm and the gold mining camps of the northern Kenai Peninsula from 1896 to about 1920, and it is considered to be a connecting trail of the Iditarod Trail (Iditarod National Historic Trail Project Office 1982). The Granite/Ingram Creek Trail was also used by prospectors and miners in the vicinities of Bertha and Granite Creeks at least from 1898 to 1910.

The origin of this trail is unknown. Like most trails in Alaska, this route may have been used by Native peoples during prehistoric or protohistoric times, but archaeological evidence has not been found of such use (Yarborough 1981; Buzzell and McMahon 1986).

Substantial historic use of the route probably began with and as a result of the 1896 gold rush to the Hope

and Sunrise mining districts. Hundreds of prospectors travelled by ship to Portage Bay on Prince William Sound, climbed over Portage Glacier to the head of Turnagain Arm, and then took one of three routes/methods to reach Sunrise or Hope. Walter C. Mendenhall, a geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, described this route in 1898.

During the summer months, or from May to October, inclusive, Cook Inlet may be navigated by deep-sea vessels to Fire Island, and by those of lighter draft to Sunrise City and Knik .... For several years, however, a considerable number of prospectors have desired to reach the Sunrise mining district in the spring before Cook Inlet was open to navigation. In such cases the shorter route and the one usually followed, is by way of Portage Bay. ... After getting to the head of Turnagain Arm, experienced boatmen ... may reach Sunrise City by water after the ice has ceased running, but those who are not familiar with boats, or do not thoroughly know the waters of the arm and their dangerous tides, are inviting disaster by attempting the trip.

Sunrise may also be reached by a trail along the beach from the head of the arm, or in winter, when the snow is firm, by going up the valley of Quartz [Ingram] Creek, and crossing a low divide at its head into Granite Creek, one of the tributaries of Sixmile, and thence following the miners' trail down this creek to Sunrise. This last is the favorite sled route among those familiar with the district. The distance between the mouth of Quartz Creek and Sunrise by this route is reported to be about 40 miles, which is considerably longer than the trail along the shore of Turnagain Arm (Mendenhall 1898:300-301).

Gold prospecting may have taken place along Granite and Ingram creeks prior to the 1896 rush, and those drainages were undoubtedly examined by prospectors on their way to the rich placer deposits on Canyon and Resurrection creeks to the west. At least three prospectors are reported to have worked on Bertha Creek in 1895-1896, and the creek was named for the daughter of one of the men (Barry 1973:62). The gold deposits were scant, however, and the area long remained on the

periphery of Kenai Peninsula mining. At least one hydraulic mining plant was operated near the confluence of Bertha Creek and Granite Creek in 1904-1906, but even large-scale mining methods did not yield profits. Substantial prospecting continued in the Granite/Bertha/Spokane/Ingram creeks area at least as late as 1910 (Seward Weekly Gateway 1/5/1907, 1/15/1910, 7/9/1910).

The Granite/Ingram Creek Trail appears to have been only sporadically used by anyone other than local miners after the 1896-1898 Kenai Peninsula gold rushes, and it appears to have not been the route of first choice when it was used. In February, 1907 three men from Sunrise rowed a boat across Turnagain Arm to Girdwood to obtain a doctor for a seriously ill woman in Sunrise. According to Kenai Peninsula historian Mary Barry, "They put the doctor in the dog sled with three dogs pulling, and took him to the head of the Arm, then to Ingram Creek and to Lynx Creek, where they stayed overnight. There was no trail on this route, so they made their own way from place to place" (Barry 1973:124-125).

Two newspaper accounts in 1907 and 1908 also illustrate the relative unattractiveness of the Granite/Ingram Creek route, and neither of these accounts mentions trail improvements or even the existence of a trail.

Alfred Lowell, the Tyonok-Knik mail carrier, arrived here [Sunrise] today, thinking that he might be able to cross Turnagain arm and same himself a long journey but he was forced to return and go over Granite creek as the arm is not navigable on account of ice (Seward Weekly Gateway 12/14/1907).

James Wylie, John Rimmer, and Charles Deming ... hope to meet the party that went out with Joe Beety last week and cross the arm in a boat. If they fail in this they will return to Lynx creek and go down Granite and Quartz creeks to Turnagain arm, and then go around the arm ... (Seward Weekly Gateway 11/28/1908).

In 1906 Seward businessman Frank Ballaine suggested that the Alaska Road Commission should construct a wagon road from Hope and Sunrise to the point where the Alaska Central Railroad would meet Turnagain Arm. Major Wilse Richardson, chairman of the Alaska Road Commission, promised that a survey would be done,

followed by cutting of a trail and eventual construction of a wagon road. The survey was performed by Alaska Central engineer W.H. Reel and long-time Kenai Peninsula miner Jerry Odale in June, 1906. The route considered for the road followed the southern shore of Turnagain Arm; apparently the Granite/Ingram Creek route was not considered for construction of the wagon road. Reel and Odale reported that the shoreline route was not feasible due to snowslide hazard and the amount of heavy rock work that would be necessary to construct a road. They recommended instead that a wagon road be constructed over the existing Johnson Pass trail from Lynx Creek to Mile 34 of the railroad (Seward Weekly Gateway 6/23/1906, 6/30/1906, 8/4/1906). Work was already underway on the Johnson Pass Military Road when the results of the survey were reported.

A trail of sorts appears to have been developed by 1910 to serve the scattered prospecting and mining operations on the Granite/Ingram creek drainages. In that year Dr. D.H. Sleem, who was a physician associated with the Alaska Central Railroad in Seward, published a remarkably detailed map of the northern Kenai Peninsula and part of Turnagain Arm. Sleem's map shows a trail (not a road) ascending the east side of Granite Creek, crossing Turnagain Pass, and descending the west (north) side of Ingram Creek to a structure near the mouth of Ingram Creek. However, this trail is not shown to continue along Turnagain Arm to a meeting with the railroad (Sleem 1910). The veracity of Sleem's map is somewhat in doubt: most features on the map are quite accurate, but some prominent features are not shown. For example, the Crow Pass Trail, a major wagon road/trail, is not shown running up Glacier Creek on the north side of Turnagain Arm.

The Granite/Ingram Creek Trail appears to have served only local traffic from 1910 until the Seward Highway was constructed in 1950-1951. One knowledgeable long-time resident of the region reported that a wagon road once existed in the Granite/Ingram Creek area, but the exact location and dates of construction and use of the wagon road are unknown (Clark 1981). The recorded road appears to have been constructed or up-graded for automobile use, including grading a level roadbed and minimal ditching. The Bureau of Public Roads is reported to have made improvements in 1931 on the wagon road along the north side of East Fork Creek, and the recorded roadway along Granite Creek might have been improved at that time. However, the lack of substantial wheel ruts may indicate the most recent grading of the roadway occurred around the time the



... represents  
... pattern of history or an event important  
in history (National Register Criterion A). The  
Granite/Ingram Creek Trail is historically parallel to  
perhaps thousands of other ephemeral trails in Alaska  
during the period 1896 to 1920.

Evidence has also not been found that segments of the  
Granite/Ingram Creek Trail physically represent a  
period, type, or method of construction important in  
history (Criterion C), particularly trail or road  
construction during the gold rush period of Alaska  
history. The road segments between Bertha Creek and  
the Seward Highway appear to physically represent ca.  
1925-1950 automobile road construction, and segments  
recorded between the Seward Highway and Lynx Creek do  
not retain sufficient physical integrity to  
substantially or accurately represent trail or road  
construction in the period 1896 to 1920. Evidence has  
not been found that the Granite/Ingram Creek Trail  
might be associated with the life of a person important  
in our past (Criterion B), or that the trail has  
yielded or might yield information important in history  
or prehistory (Criterion D).

The Granite/Ingram Creek Trail has been considered to  
be a connecting trail of the Iditarod National Historic  
Trail (Iditarod National Historic Trail 1982). On the  
basis of research documented above, this trail does not  
appear to have been more than an extremely incidental  
feeder trail to the primary route of the Iditarod  
Trail. Documentation has not been found that the  
Granite/Ingram Creek Trail ever contributed to the  
primary functions of the Iditarod Trail, which were  
transportation of mail, gold, and persons between  
Seward and the interior and Nome gold camps from 1910  
to 1925. The Granite/Ingram Creek Trail is therefore  
recommended to not be a potential element of a National  
Register eligible multiple property group associated  
with the Iditarod Trail.

9. Major Bibliographic References:

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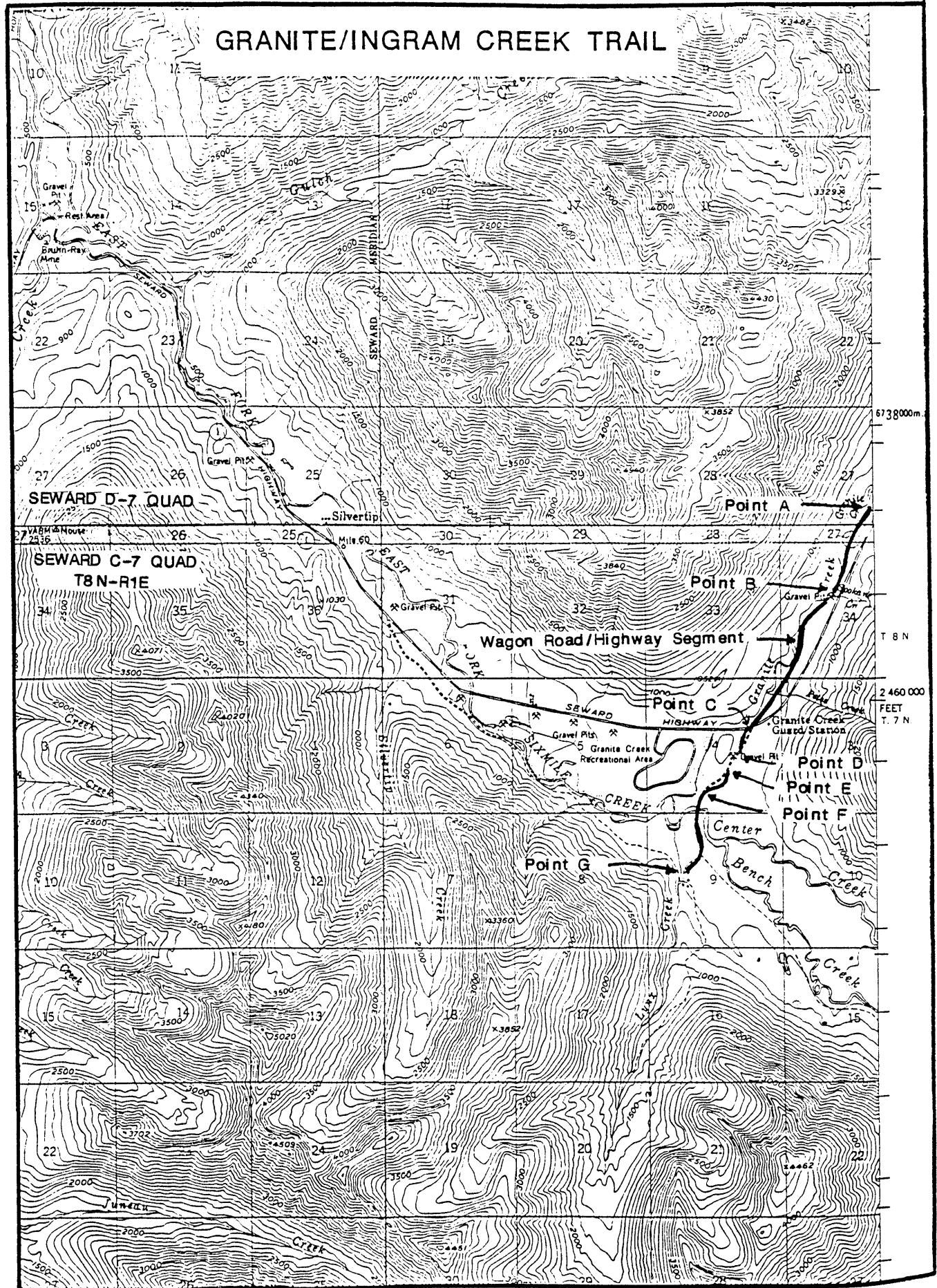
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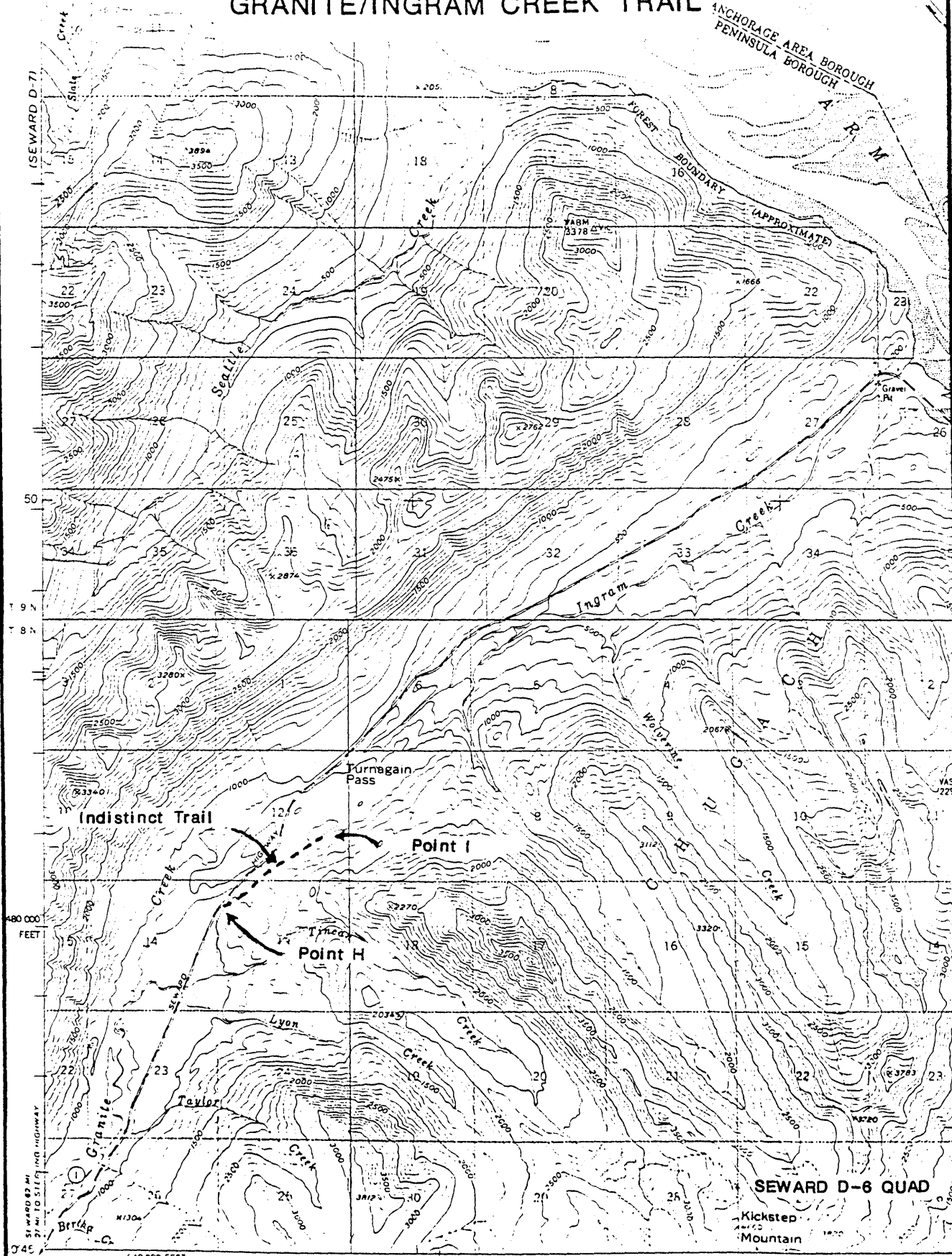
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# GRANITE/INGRAM CREEK TRAIL



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ANCHORAGE AREA BOROUGH  
PENINSULA BOROUGH



GRANITE/INGRAM CREEK TRAIL

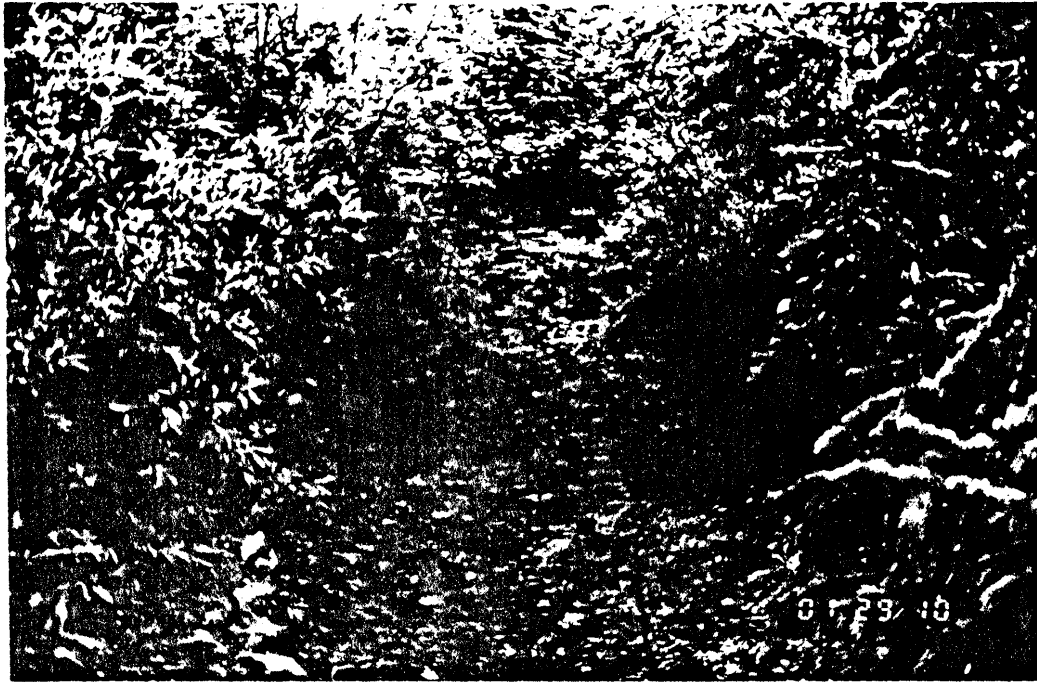


Indistinct Trail in NW/SW Section 12, T8N-R1E, View to NE



Road/Trail Near South End of Gravel Pit to North of Spokane Creek  
View to SW

Granite/Ingram Creek Trail



Old Road to North of Seward Highway, In NE Section 4, T7N-R1E  
View to North



Old Road Departs to Left of Current Road, View to South  
SE/NW/SE, Section 4, T7N-R1E