



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

November 2008

Historical Happenings

Notes on Cultural Resource Management in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Historical Happenings provides information on the USFWS Cultural Resources Management program. Information comes from sources such as the Regional Historic Preservation Officers, websites, new sources, as well as other cultural resource management professionals.

Issues are also available on the USFWS Cultural Resources website <http://historicpreservation.fws.gov>. Submissions are encouraged and can be made via email. Please contact Eugene Marino at Eugene_Marino@fws.gov for submission guidelines.

FWS Regional News:

Washington Office—

The 2008 FWS Preserve America Grants application period goes ends November 1, 2008. Proposals will be reviewed in Mid-December.

FWS recently presented a poster paper on the grant program at the National Trust for Historic Preservation Meetings in Tulsa.

Region 7—The Iditarod Centennial on Innoko National Wildlife Refuge

Gold! Gold in the Klondike in 1897 and at Nome in 1898 brought gold seekers by the tens of thousands north to Alaska. Seeking an All-American route to the goldfields the U.S. Army Alaska Road Commission sent Colonel Walter Goodwin and three others to scout an overland trail in 1908. That year on Christmas Day two prospectors hit gold on the Iditarod River, triggering Alaska's last big gold rush. Goodwin rushed to mark the trail with wooden tripods during the winter of 1909/1910, so 10,000 newly arrived miners could rush to the gold fields. This influx of people to Alaska led to the formal establishment of Alaska as a Territory in 1912.

Officially called the Seward to Nome Mail Trail, the route became known as the Iditarod Trail. It was used only in the winter to speed people and goods in massive freight sleds across Alaska. The trail was heavily used through 1924/5 when airplanes came into widespread use. Land based trails were neglected, then forgotten, until the revival of long distance sled dog racing in the 1960's renewed interest in mushing. The Iditarod National Historic Trail was one of the first National Trails designated by Congress in 1978. The

designation commemorates the Trail that led to the creation of the Alaska Territory in 1912. In February 2008 Alaska governor Sarah Palin, declared the Iditarod National Historic Trail Centennial to be celebrated over four years from 2008 through 2012. The Centennial covers several milestones including the survey of the trail in 1908, the first Seward to Nome traffic in 1909-1910 and the creation of the Alaska Territory in 1912.

Over 140 miles of the main trail route crosses the heart of the Innoko NWR. Ironically this refuge, today one of the most isolated and remote parts of Alaska, was the heart of a vast transportation and support network, servicing mining camps at Iditarod, Flat, Ganes Creek, Ruby, and Ophir. Towns and roadhouses sprang up to support this far flung development. In the heart of the refuge, the town of Dishkakat, a small Ingalik Indian village, became a commercial hub, with warehouses, a roadhouse, stores and a post office. The main Trail connected with four others at Dishkakat, linking to gold camps east and north of the refuge. Other towns within the refuge included Dikeman, Dishna, Simels and Innoko City. Roadhouses were critical for travelers. Spaced 20 miles apart, over 14 are known to have existed on the refuge. Most of these have never been accurately located. In fact, except for a web of trails leading out of Dishkakat, and a stretch along the southern edge of the refuge, most of the trail is untraceable on the ground. Used in the winter for only about 25 years, not even faint traces left on tundra vegetation are visible.

Since the creation of the Innoko NWR in 1980 the staff has researched the history of the trail to understand its importance to the refuge. In 1994 refuge historian Sally Collins and Regional Archaeologist Debra Corbett visited and mapped Simels Trading post, and

Dishkakat. We found Simels old paddlewheel steamer abandoned in a slough, and located the town of Innoko City at the mouth of the Dishna River. In 1996 a University of Alaska graduate student opened a field school at Dishkakat. The crew excavated in the historic town for six weeks and located the old Native village. The project was burned out by wildfire the next summer and never completed. In 2001 Corbett returned and with Collins and refuge maintenance man Joe Reid visited and documented Rennies Landing, not officially associated with the trail but a later support center for gold mines at Ganes Creek, Ophir, and Cripple.

The Historic Iditarod Trail Alliance secured Fish and Wildlife Service Challenge Grant matching funds of \$16,000 in 2008. Funds from this grant will allow survey of the southernmost segment of the trail from Iditarod to Dikeman. This is the stretch of trail most likely to receive public use. Plans are to locate and record the four known sites, plot the trail route and mark the sites and trail with well placed signs. This contribution to the broader Centennial is an outstanding opportunity to highlight the role of the trail in the refuge's past.

The Iditarod National Historic trail is unique. It is the only National Historic Trail to preserve the appearance and conditions of the trail as it was 75 years ago. As stewards of this remarkable treasure we anticipate working cooperatively with our Partners, the Historic Iditarod trail Alliance and local trailblazers groups, the Bureau of Land Management and the USDA Forest Service to preserve and celebrate this remarkable symbol of America's past.



Figure 1. Located along the Iditarod, Dishkakat this is the last standing cabin in Dishkakat



Figure 2. Simels steamboat paddlewheel found along the trail.

Region 8—will be hosting a Cultural Resources training course in Las Vegas NV the week of December 1, 2008. Registration will be through DOI Learn. Contact Eugene Marino or Nick Valentine for more information.

Other Agency News

DOI—Launches new Secretary of the Interior 2008 Historic Preservation Award. This award recognizes the outstanding contributions of a Federal, State, Tribal, of Local Government Historic Preservation employees.

Recipients will be announced in December

NPS—Kempthorne Dedicates First Centennial Initiative Project at Yosemite's Historic Overlook



Secretary Kempthorne joins the hundreds of well-wishers who attended the dedication ceremony for the refurbished Tunnel View Overlook at Yosemite National Park, above. Below, the original dedication ceremony of the historic Overlook in 1933. Hi-Res



Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne announced the completion of a much-needed makeover to the historic Tunnel View Overlook, the first project of the National Park Service Centennial Initiative. “The rededication of this famous site shows that we can rise to the challenge of reinvigorating our national parks with stunning results,” Kempthorne said. “It is our hope that this project and vistas like this will inspire support and interest in preserving our national parks into the next century.” Hundreds attended the ceremony marking completion of the overlook, a place photographed by thousands daily for its expansive views of Yosemite Valley, El Capitan, Bridalveil Fall, and Half Dome. The celebration was modeled after the dedication marking the opening of the site in 1933 with vintage automobiles, an honor guard and a blessing by Native Americans.

NPS—HABS turns 50

“American Place: The Historic American Building survey at 75” shows accomplishments of this program from its New Deal beginnings to present. The exhibit at the DOI museum will run through November 14.

USFS—has repatriated archaeological collections from a Traditional Cultural Property in Kootenai National Forest. For more information see the Federal Register notice here <http://frwebgate5.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/TEXTgate.cgi?WAISdocID=385590113984+1+1+0&WAIAction=retrieve>

Legislative News

Senate Omnibus Lands Package.

The Senate leadership announced that it will take up a 150-bill omnibus lands package that will be attached as an amendment to a wilderness bill (HR 5151) in an abbreviated, post-election, lame duck session the week of November 17th. The omnibus package includes two key preservation bills which are caught up in the mire of negotiations over the lands package — S. 2262, a bill authorizing the Preserve America and Save America’s Treasures programs, and S. 1139, a bill codifying the National Landscape Conservation System, which was previously listed on the National Trust’s Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places list. Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) has signaled he will continue to raise his previous objections to various elements of the lands package, but Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) has indicated that he believes the Democratic majority has the 60 votes needed to overcome Coburn’s objections and win approval of these key preservation bills.

Training, Upcoming Events, Education, and Volunteers and Friends News

There are a number of activities at the Cathlapotle plankhouse. For information on these events take a look at www.plankhouse.org