

50. CULTURAL RESOURCES

50.1 Introduction

The purpose of the cultural resources study was to characterize the existing cultural resources in the Cook Inlet drainages on lands generally surrounding Iliamna and Iniskin Bays. The Cook Inlet drainages study area is shown on Figure 1-4 in Chapter 1. Cultural resources may include historic buildings, structures, and landscapes; prehistoric and historic surface and subsurface sites; and traditional- and religious-use areas. The objectives of the cultural resources field surveys, research, and interviews were to locate, identify, and describe documented and previously undocumented archaeological, historic, and ethnographic cultural resources in the Cook Inlet drainages study area.

Cultural resources research and field work were conducted in 2005 and 2007. To characterize the cultural resources in the Cook Inlet drainages study area, researchers reviewed the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey database, literature, and archival data; conducted cultural resource interviews and consultations; and conducted field surveys. The review of existing data regarding cultural resources in the study area and the effort to identify previously undocumented cultural resources through interviews, consultations, and field surveys helped to inform researchers as to where and what manner of cultural resources were likely to be found in the study area.

During the 2005 and 2007 field seasons, survey efforts for cultural resources were focused around Iliamna and Iniskin bays, as well as in areas with a high probability of containing previously undocumented cultural resources

50.2 Results and Discussion

Prehistoric cultural resources have been found in areas near the study area, including Pedro Bay, Kamishak Bay, Chinitna Bay, and Tuxedni Bay. During the late prehistoric through the historic periods, Dena'ina, Aluttiq, and possibly Yup'ik people have used portions of the Cook Inlet study area. The Cook Inlet drainages were an important part of historic economic activity in this region, with the route of the current Williamsport-Pile Bay Road serving as a traditional portage used for Dena'ina seal and bear hunting and as an historic trade route used by Russians trading in the Iliamna Lake area. American explorers and entrepreneurs also used this route to access the area. Cultural resources from late 18th century Russian and later American exploration and development in the region are present in the study area.

Based on information from the Alaska Heritage Resource Survey database and a review of available literature, four previously documented cultural resource sites are located in the vicinity of Iliamna and Iniskin bays. One of the previously documented cultural resources—the Williamsport to Pile Bay Road (Alaska Heritage Resource Survey code ILI-00132) has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The remaining three previously documented cultural resources have not been evaluated for eligibility for the National Register

of Historic Places. These sites include Dutton (ILI-00005, a historic mining camp), an oil exploration site near Oil Bay (ILI-00038), and AC Point (ILI-00052, the site of an early 1900s Alaska Commercial Company warehouse).

The Cook Inlet drainages study area is located in territory where Dena'ina Athabascan, specifically Iliamna Dena'ina, is spoken. The existing published sources indicate that 24 place names, all of which are Dena'ina in origin, are located in the Cook Inlet drainages study area. Eleven place names are located throughout the area of Iliamna and Cottonwood bays, and others are scattered around Iniskin Bay, Chinitna Bay, and throughout the study area. One cultural resource, the Williamsport to Pile Bay Road (also called the Iliamna Portage Route and the Williamsport to Pile Bay Portage), was reported in the Cook Inlet drainages study area during the cultural resources interviews. The remaining two cultural resource sites in the study area, which were identified during the subsistence and traditional knowledge interviews, are historic camps.

Pedestrian surveys and subsurface testing in the Knoll Head area was conducted in 2005 and 2007. Field surveys in 2005 uncovered two archaeological sites: a rock shelter (ILI-00185) and a hearth (ILI-00186). The Knoll Head area may hold more archaeological sites undiscovered during the reconnaissance survey. No cultural resources were identified during the 2007 surveys.

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Archaeologist documenting sediment stratigraphy of a shovel test in the Knoll Head area.



Shovel test showing evidence (the gray ash and black charcoal layers near the base of the pit) of a possible hearth near Iniskin Bay.



Archaeologist examining a rock shelter site near Iniskin Bay.