



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Natural Resources

DIVISION OF PARKS AND OUTDOOR RECREATION
Office of History & Archaeology

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May 15, 2026

File No.: 3130-1R NPS / 2026-00389

Jeanette Koelsch
Superintendent
Bering Land Bridge National Preserve
214 E Front Street
Nome, AK 99762
Justin_junge@nps.gov

Subject: Cotton Creek Shelter Cabin (BEN-00134), Determination of Eligibility and Effect

Dear Ms. Koelsch:

The Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (AK SHPO) received your correspondence (dated March 26, 2026) concerning the subject project on April 9, 2026. Following our review of the documentation provided, in accordance with 36 CFR § 60.4 and concur that the Cotton Creek Shelter Cabin is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the Alaska Road Commission in the area of transportation with a period of significance from 1917 to present. Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, our office concurs that the stabilization and eventual repositioning will result in no adverse effect to historic properties.

As stipulated in 36 CFR 800.3, other consulting parties such as the local government and Tribes are required to be notified of the undertaking. Our response does not end the 30-day review period provided to other consulting parties.

We look forward to continuing consultation with you to resolve the adverse effect through the execution of a Memorandum of Agreement. Please note that the agency official shall notify the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation of the adverse effect finding (36 CFR 800.6[a][1]).

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please contact Amy Hellmich at 907-269-8724 or amy.hellmich@alaska.gov if you have any questions or if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Schmuck

Nick Schmuck
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

NS:ash



Eligible X Not Eligible

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Cottonwood Creek Shelter Cabin

Other name: Cottonwood Shelter Cabin, Cottonwood Creek Cabin, Cottonwood Cabin, Cottonwood ARC Cabin (BEN-134), Cottonwood Creek Emergency Shelter Cabin, Alaska Road Commission Route 28, ARC Route 28, Aurora Trail Shelter Cabin, Dahl - Candle Trail Shelter Cabin, Dahl - Inmachuk Trail Shelter Cabin, Dahl - Deering Trail Shelter Cabin

AHRS number: BEN-134

FMSS Location (or Asset): 55738

CRIS-HS Number: 037008

2. Location

Map sheet: USGS Bendeleben (D-4) SE, Alaska

Aliquot: Kateel River Meridian, Alaska T. 5 N., R. 23 W., sec. 31

Latitude: 65° 47' 38.1"N **Longitude:** -163° 36' 40.3"W

City or town: 32 Miles Southwest of Deering in the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve, AK

Borough (or Census Area): Northwest Arctic Borough

Land Status: Federal

Verbal Boundary Description: The building footprint.

Boundary Justification: The boundary is the footprint of the Cottonwood Creek Cabin.

3. Description

Ownership of property: National Park Service

Category of property: Building

Property's function:

Historic: TRANSPORTATION/Other: Shelter Cabin

Current: TRANSPORTATION/Other: Shelter Cabin

Materials:

Foundation: None, wood on grade

Walls: Steel (galvanized, corrugated), Canvas (interior wall covering)

Roof: Steel (galvanized, corrugated)

Summary Paragraph:

The **Cottonwood Shelter Cabin** is a small, simple, rectangular, one-story, wood-frame, building, with a side gable roof. The exterior is corrugated, galvanized metal sheathing

attached to the stud frame. Single four-light windows are located just left of center on each gable end, positioned immediately below the roof gable. The building was constructed as a shelter cabin in 1917 (up to 1923) by the Alaska Road Commission,¹ providing relief to winter travelers. Today, it continues to serve this historic function by acting as an emergency shelter. The cabin is located in a solitary setting with low-growing vegetation beside a bank along the Dahl Creek to Candle Trail in the eastern side of Bering Land Bridge National Preserve. It is in good condition and is oriented northwest-southeast, with its single door on the southwest side elevation. The cabin is the only identified contributing resource within the property at this time.

Setting

The **Cottonwood Shelter Cabin** is located on the northwestern portion of the Seward Peninsula, along the 140-mile-long Dahl Creek to Candle Trail (Alaska Road Commission Route 28) in the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve, AK. The surrounding area is tundra with a sparse plant community of low-growing, delicate shrubs, and no trees. The absence of trees is pertinent because it contributed to the selection of materials used to construct the cabin.² The cabin is situated near the edge of an eroding cut bank

Narrative Description:

The **Cottonwood Shelter Cabin** is one-story, has a side gable roof, is rectangular in plan, and measures 17'6" X 11'7" with 6'10" high walls. The roof peak is 11'7" above grade. The roof ridge is oriented in a northwest-southeast direction. The single door is located on the southwest side elevation. Single four-light windows are located just left of center on each gable end, positioned immediately below the roof gable.

The cabin is constructed of dimensional 2" X 2" studs, plates and diagonal bracing, and rafters. Wall studs and rafters are spaced 24 inches on center. The exterior of corrugated,

¹ There is conflicting evidence about the construction date of the cabin, providing a range from 1917 to 1923. G. Frank Willis, "It is a hard country, though": Historic Resource Study, Bering Land Bridge National Preserve (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1986), 165. Willis notes that funds were used for constructing cabins beginning in 1923 however the ARC Annual Reports shows the shelter cabin program being initiated in 1917 with \$20,000 committed to the program overall. The Alaska Road Commission Reports do not mention establishment of a shelter cabin on this route until 1923, but then two years later in 1925 the ARC reports that the stoves have been replaced. An article from the Daily Nome Industrial Worker Newspaper from February 18, 1918 describes many shelter cabins being installed along the routes in the Seward Peninsula including "Three other shelter cabins owned by the Territory were constructed under the subversion of Dan'l [Daniel] A. Jones from money out of the Shelter Cabin fund. Two of these are on Dahl-Immachuk trail...(and the other is located at Calhoun's old roadhouse, between Candle and the mouth of the Kobuk." There has been one historic photograph found from 1926. See additional information in the historic context section.

² Cultural Resources Inventory System (CRIS), accessed November 2024.

galvanized metal sheathing is attached to the stud frame. The interior walls were covered by tent canvas, indicated by remnants still in place.

The cabin is furnished with two single beds each positioned against opposing side walls with heads on the northwest end of the cabin. A small wooden desk or table is attached to the right side of the southeast wall, with a rough wooden bench positioned next to it for seating. A barrel stove, in useable condition, is located on the northeast wall. A chimney pipe extends from the stove through the roof. Artifacts located in the cabin include a kerosene or oil lantern and a fur stretcher hanging to the right of the door.

The structure is in generally good condition. The exterior siding has a few holes that appear to be bullet holes. These will require filling to seal the exterior sheathing. The glass in the window at the northwest gable end is missing. Plywood now covers the window opening. The frame structure originally rested on a surface of sand and gravel with a dirt floor. In 2006, a wood floor was added.³

Cottonwood Shelter Cabin Character Defining Features (CDF)

CDF Exterior

- Rectangular massing
- Gable roof with metal covering
- Corrugated, galvanized metal sheathing attached to a stud frame
- Single four-light windows

CDF Interior

- One room, northwest end for sleeping
- Interior walls covered by tent canvas
- Barrel stove located on the northeast wall

Chronology of the building:

1917	Shelter Cabin Bill authorizes the Alaska Road Commission to build and maintain cabins ⁴
c. 1923	Alaska Road Commission built cabin (Cottonwood Shelter Cabin)
1980	Bering Land Bridge National Preserve is established on December 2.
1992	Archeological Survey No. 001-92-BELA completed by the National Park Service Alaska Regional Office, determining rehabilitation of the cabin is

³ Cultural Resources Inventory System (CRIS), accessed November 2024.

⁴ Alaska State Archives, AS 26697, *Annual Reports Territorial Road Commissioners*, 1917-1918.

not anticipated to have an effect on significant buried archeological resources⁵

- 1994** Rehabilitation completed, including the replacement of the door
- 2006** Maintenance recommendations completed, including the installation of a wood floor over the existing dirt floor. The foundation remained wood on grade and the new joists were hung from the sill plate. A plastic membrane was added to cover the earth floor.⁶
- 2023** Condition assessment completed, determining the cabin is in “good” condition but threatened by the continued erosion of Cottonwood Creek which is within 3'-0" of the cabin’s NE corner

4. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

Criterion A: Yes

Criterion B: No

Criterion C: No

Criterion D: No

Areas of significance: Transportation

Significant date(s): 1917

Period of significance: 1917 to present

Level of significance: State

Significant person(s): N/A

Cultural affiliation: N/A

Architect/Engineer: Alaska Road Commission (ARC)

Statement of Significance:

The **Cottonwood Shelter Cabin** is significant at a state level under Criteria A in the areas of transportation for being the only remaining structure that has retained its integrity associated with the Alaska Road Commission within the boundaries of Bering Land Bridge National Park. The Alaska Road Commission was charged with developing, constructing, and maintaining a transportation system for the Territory of Alaska. Shelter cabins were important components of the transportation system. The cabin continues to be used as emergency winter shelter by the National Park Service, providing a period of significance of 1917 to present.

The cabin represents the challenge of traveling along the 140-mile-long Dahl Creek to Candle Trail. The peninsula's harsh environment makes such shelter a necessity. The

⁵ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “Archeological Survey Report 001-92-BELA,” August 10, 1992.

⁶ Cultural Resources Inventory System (CRIS), accessed November 2024.

Cottonwood Shelter Cabin retains sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to be eligible for the National Register.

Historical information:

Transportation

The Alaska Road Commission on the Seward Peninsula

The Alaska Road Commission was established in 1905. Headed by Major Wilds P. Richardson, the Commission was only able to conduct a cursory survey of the road and trail systems in Alaska during its first year. In surveying the Nome District, Richardson found several light railroads already in use. Among these, the Wild Goose Railway ran from Nome to Anvil Creek (4 miles) in 1900, it was relocated in part and renamed "The Nome Arctic Railway."⁷ Extending from Nome, it ran 16 miles to the Upper Nome River with further augmentations planned in the near future.⁸ The Solomon River Railroad ran from the mouth of the Solomon River (about 35 miles east of Nome) up to the mouth of the East Fork, a distance of approximately 14 miles.⁹ The Solomon River Railroad had stockpiles of materials: ties, and rails, intended for future building. Finally, the Council City and Ophir Creek Railroad ran from Council, on the Neukluk River to No. 15 Ophir, a distance of about 8 miles.¹⁰

The roads on the Seward Peninsula left much to be desired. They consisted of broken sections of beach sands; gulches filled with broken rock varying in size from a few inches to that of a barrel. At one point, during the survey, Richardson noted that the "team could only haul the empty spring wagon," due to the rough road conditions.¹¹

Also, in 1905, Fred H. Moffit, of the United States Geological Survey described the trails on the Seward Peninsula as follows:

⁷ Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Report Upon the Construction and Maintenance of Military and Post Roads, Bridges and Trails; Other Roads, Tramways, Ferries, Bridges, Trails, and Related Works in the Territory of Alaska* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1905), 23-24, (Hereafter ARC, Annual Report with appropriate year); Cornelius W. Hauck, "Narrow Gauge in the Arctic," *Colorado Rail Annual* (1969): 58-71, and Howard Clifford, "Wild Goose, Geese, Gooses?" in *Rails North: the Railroads of Alaska and the Yukon* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, n.d.), 163-168.

⁸ ARC Annual Report, 1905: 25.

⁹ Howard Clifford, "Council City and Solomon River Railroad," in *Rails North: the Railroads of Alaska and the Yukon* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, n.d.), 169-173.

¹⁰ ARC Annual Report, 1905: 25.

¹¹ ARC Annual Report, 1905: 24.

Of the two principal trails, that used by the mail carriers is the more direct, but is not much traveled in summer. It starts from Council, ascends Fish River to a small tributary just north of Mosquito Creek, crosses over the divide to Death Valley, on the head of Tubutulik River, and reaches the Koyuk by way of a narrow mountain pass about 1,200 feet above sea level, and Timber Creek. After crossing Koyuk River and Big Bar Creek this trail continues up First Chance Creek and over a low divide to the head of Gold Run, thence northward along Kiwalik River to Candle. The northern half of the trail is not difficult for pack horses in the summertime if the traveler keeps on the ridges, where the moss is not so widely spread and the harder ground affords better footing.

The second route reaches Lanes landing by way of Nome River and Salmon Lake trail from Nome or by way of Teller and Marys Igloo. A wagon road leads from Lanes Landing to Quartz Creek. From Quartz Creek one travels northeast around the lowlands of Kuzitrin and Noxapaga rivers to Turner Creek, and thence along a low rounded ridge to Aurora and Eldorado creeks. At Eldorado Creek the trail turns eastward, crosses the head of Placer and Esperanza creeks to Goodhope River, and then follows the Cottonwood to Trail Creek, which heads against the Inmachuk.¹²

Noting the mineral wealth already yielded by mines on the peninsula, Richardson proposed extensive road building in the area, primarily a road leading into the heart of the peninsula. This route went via Dry Creek, the Upper Nome River, Grand Central River, Salmon Lake, and Golden Gate Pass to Lane's Landing on the Kuzitrin River and Dahl Creek. From this point, he proposed branching first to serve the Kougarok, Serpentine, and Good Hope River sections; second, a road leading to the Inmachuck, Kugruk (not to be confused with Kougarok), Candle Creek, and Kewalik Districts.¹³

Before the Commission's attention could be directed at the interior, Richardson acknowledged a more urgent need for roads leading from Nome to Council and Nome to Solomon. Both routes had rudimentary roads, built at great expense of both labor and money by private enterprise. Overall, Richardson and the board considered the peninsula urgently needed 300 miles of roads and 1200 miles of trails.¹⁴

Early Trail Work, 1905-1906

¹² Fred H. Moffit, *The Fairhaven Gold Placers, Seward Peninsula, Alaska, USGS Bulletin No. 247* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1905), 68-69.

¹³ ARC *Annual Report*, 1905: 26-27.

¹⁴ ARC *Annual Report*, 1905: 27, 29-30.

ARC work crews began flagging winter trails from Nome to the outlying districts on November 16, 1905. Owing to the environmental constraints of the Seward Peninsula:

where there is no tree, stone or bush to mark the trail or relieve the monotony of the comparatively unbroken tundra, and where winter travel is extremely hazardous, the innovation of flagging the trails was watched and appreciated with lively interest by the traveling public and commented upon freely from day to day by the newspapers.¹⁵

Crews used pieces of lathe, spaced 50 to 150 feet apart, with "turkey red calico flags" measuring 5" x 7", sewn to allow the lathe to pass through the flag which was subsequently tacked fast. W.I. Goodwin, Superintendent of the Nome District, deemed it impracticable to permanently flag the trails or to erect suitable posts marking them because of the shifting drifts of snow and river overflow. Also, a number of trails already had sections marked with telephone and telegraph poles.¹⁶ In 1906, 19 miles of road were surveyed on the Seward Peninsula at a cost twice that for surveying along the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail and more than 6 times that between Hope and Sunrise in the Southwest Alaska District.¹⁷

Candle-Candle Creek Road (Route 26)

Construction began on Richardson's proposed interior road from the northern shore of the peninsula. The Commission contracted with R.J. Kinney to build a road from Candle up Candle Creek to reach the mines in the area. It commenced on August 8 and was completed 20 days later. Work included grading and ditching a road from Candle to Jump Creek, building bridges over Jump Creek and Patterson Creek, and surveying for future improvements to the line to Patterson Creek.¹⁸

A severe storm struck the Seward Peninsula in October 1913 causing extensive damage to the primitive road system, especially between Nome and Solomon, along the southern coast of the peninsula. The town of Solomon was destroyed as was a large part of Nome.¹⁹

Deering-Inmachuk Road (Route 27)

Beginning at Deering, the ARC, again under contract to R.J. Kinney, surveyed, ditched, and crowned three-quarters of a mile of road around the mouth of

¹⁵ ARC *Annual Report*, 1906: 5-6.

¹⁶ ARC *Annual Report*, 1906: 6.

¹⁷ ARC *Annual Report*, 1906: 20.

¹⁸ ARC *Annual Report*, 1907: 32.

¹⁹ ARC *Annual Report*, 1913: 28.

the Inmachuk River. Freight wagons were able to navigate the stream by staying on the gravel and sand bars but could not pass through the extensive tidal flats. Work commenced on July 1 and was completed on August 4. The project included a 24-foot bridge on timber crib abutments.²⁰

Dahl Creek To Candle Trail (Route 28)

The 1913 Annual Report notes that a trail existed between Dahl Creek and Candle. Extending 140 miles, it was assigned Route No. 28. Other roads that date to Richardson's early plans include the 2.25-mile Candle-Candle Creek Road (Route No. 26) and the 25-mile Deering-Inmachuk Road (Route No. 27).²¹ Route 26 was resurfaced at a cost of \$229.10. Work on Route 27 was more extensive. A portion was resurfaced while an additional 3 miles were relocated at a total cost of \$993.98. Apparently, no work was done on the Dahl Creek-Candle Trail (Route No. 28) in 1913.

Two miles of new road were added to the Candle-Candle Creek Road (Route 26) making a total of 4.25 miles of road. Cost of the new road, and maintaining the original, \$3874.92. Three miles were added to the Deering-Inmachuk Road (Route 27) bringing it to a total of 25 miles. One and one-half miles required repairs. Total cost for work on this road, \$2877.78.²²

A suspension bridge was constructed across Taylor Creek on the Dahl Creek-Candle Trail (Route No. 28) at a cost of \$523.10. It spanned 160 feet and was 4 feet wide. The trail was also re-staked during the winter using lathe and red flags at an estimated cost of \$5.65 per mile.²³

Two thousand six hundred feet of willow corduroy with gravel surfacing was laid on the Candle-Candle Creek Road in 1915. Two thousand four hundred twenty linear feet of corduroy was laid on the Deering-Inmachuk Road. Total costs were \$5910.18 and \$4224.00 per mile respectively. No work was undertaken on the Dahl Creek-Candle Trail during the year. According to Daniel A. Jones, Nome District Superintendent, with the exception of the trail between Candle and Inmachuk, "travel over this trail is very light."²⁴

For the most part, road construction throughout the northern portion of the Seward Peninsula relied heavily on the use of corduroy (placing willow branches perpendicular over the road surface) and crowning it with gravel creating the road surface. This method prevented the permafrost from melting when the surface of the tundra was disturbed by road/trail

²⁰ ARC *Annual Report*, 1907: 31

²¹ ARC *Annual Report*, 1913: 30.

²² ARC *Annual Report*, 1914: 21.

²³ ARC *Annual Report*, 1914: 21-22.

²⁴ ARC *Annual Report*, 1915: 16-17.

traffic. As an example, the five-mile-long Candle-Candle Creek Road (Route 26) was built on a hillside on the left bank of Candle Creek, over tundra which covered a glacial formation. A cross-section, exposed by hydraulic mining operations, revealed that the upper two feet of the ground was covered by moss and tundra, below that, there were forty feet of clear ice, then six feet of gravel before reaching bedrock. Without the insulating value of the corduroy, activities along the road would displace the moss and tundra causing the underlying ice to melt.²⁵ The following year, 3382 fifty-pound bundles of willow were cut and tied, hauled and distributed along the route for use in constructing corduroy.²⁶

Very little work took place on the 140 miles of the Dahl Creek to Candle Trail (Route 28) between 1916 and 1921 except for repairing and replacing some of the permanent stakes. Expenses for the trail totaled \$139.00 in 1917, averaging slightly less than \$1.00 per mile.²⁷ In 1918, continuing minimal maintenance to the permanent stakes totaled \$150.00.²⁸

In 1918, the Territorial Road Commission assumed jurisdiction over the Deering-Inmachuk Road. The Candle-Candle Creek Road was turned over to the territory in 1919. Thus, no ARC funds were expended on either road. The Dahl Creek-Candle Trail continued under Federal control.²⁹

In 1920, the ARC shifted its main focus from simply maintaining the existing roads and trails, with new construction on an "as-funds-are-available" basis to a far-reaching proposal to link the existing systems together creating a transportation network, combined with the government railroad, reaching across the territory. This proposal was presented to encompass the years 1921 to 1930, inclusive. It entailed constructing, or improving existing trails to road status, totaling approximately 700 miles. The ARC estimated this would cost an average of \$10,000 per mile between the various districts.³⁰

The proposal was presented in three classes of road building operations. First, the main 700 miles of roads, termed 1921 Roads, would be arrived at through improvements made to existing roads and trails. These would eventually become arterial or feeder highways. Second, additional roads, called Development Roads, whose location had not been determined, would be established as funding became available. These roads could eventually, through improvements, also become arterial roads. Finally,

²⁵ ARC *Annual Report*, 1916: 17.

²⁶ ARC *Annual Report*, 1917: 33.

²⁷ ARC *Annual Report*, 1917: 33.

²⁸ ARC *Annual Report*, 1918: 21.

²⁹ The 1919 Annual Report has been extracted from the *Report of the Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army, 1919*. The copy referred to here is bound with the 1913-1925 ARC *Annual Reports* at the UAF Library, therefore pagination is not consecutive.

³⁰ ARC *Annual Report*, 1920: 62.

realizing the Commission's prime objective, they pointed out that the existing roads and trails must be maintained. Estimates for maintenance costs alone totaled \$200,000 per year.³¹

The proposal to tie together the various mining districts on the Seward Peninsula involved interconnecting Davidson's Landing (head of navigation on the Kaviruk River), Kougaruk, and Candle. This road would run essentially from tidewater, through the Kougaruk Mining District, to Kotzebue Sound at Candle. The Commission noted: "It is of the highest importance for the further development of the Seward Peninsula."³² This road was categorized as a 1921 Road, or a "First Order Road."

Constructing a development road, or "Second Order Road," as money became available, from Nome to the Kougarok District would then tie the major areas of the Seward Peninsula together. It was estimated that this road would be approximately 60 miles long.³³

During 1921, work on the Dahl Creek-Candle Trail (Route 28) consisted of replacing and repairing stakes along the route. A total of \$168 was spent on the repairs.³⁴

In describing winter dog trails, the ARC stated that they "are of extreme importance in the interior bare tundra areas," and they must "above all, be carefully blazed and marked so that travelers can easily follow them. Shelter must be provided, as it is inconvenient, if not dangerous, to camp out in the interior in the wintertime."³⁵

Shelter Cabins

In 1917, \$20,000 was appropriated for shelter cabins along the various trails and roads in the territory. This money was to be expended under the general supervision of the governor by the road commissioners who were to receive five percent of this fund for their services. The Alaska Road Commission also oversaw the shelter cabin fund in addition to performing the work associated with constructing and maintaining the various cabins by means of a co-operating agreement with the Territory.³⁶ Construction costs for shelter cabins and airfields were borne solely by the Territory and not the Federal government.³⁷

³¹ ARC *Annual Report*, 1920: 61-62.

³² ARC *Annual Report*, 1920: 63.

³³ ARC *Annual Report*, 1920: 65.

³⁴ ARC *Annual Report*, 1921: 43.

³⁵ ARC *Annual Report*, 1926: 19.

³⁶ ARC *Annual Report*, 1923: 13. (See also: Chapt. 17, Session Laws 1917)

³⁷ ARC *Annual Report*, 1926: 84.

It appears that the shelter cabins at Aurora and Cottonwood Creeks were constructed during 1917-1918. This is based, in part, on the prominence of the Dahl Creek to Candle Trail (Route 28) as the major route across the Seward Peninsula. Later notations for expenses directly relating to these cabins are not in line with estimates for constructing such cabins on the peninsula and more likely represent maintenance or improvement costs.³⁸

In 1919, an additional \$5000 was appropriated for shelter cabins. The full \$5000 was allotted in 1919, however only \$2700 was expended. This was supplemented in 1921 by an additional \$10,000.³⁹ Five thousand dollars was allotted in 1923.⁴⁰

Fifteen hundred dollars were expended in the Second Division in 1922 on the following projects:

Cabin (Location)	Expense Description	Cost
Choris Peninsula Cabin	Purchasing materials, freight, and "labor of erection"	\$768.41
Christensen Cabin (Topkok)	Purchase cabin and repairs	260.00
Agiapuk Cabin	Repairs	75.00
Boston, Telegraph, and Fox River Cabins	Repairs	135.00
Mouth of Koluk Cabin	Repairs	72.00
Unidentified (probably various cabin locations)	Purchasing stoves, stove-pipe, wood, roofing, etc.	189.59
Total:		\$1500.00

Although the 1922 *Annual Report* narrative shows no work was undertaken on the Dahl Creek-Candle Trail, under "Expenditures in Detail -- Cooperative Fund" the trail is shown to have had \$1140.00 expended on it during the season. The source for these funds is the Federal government rather than the territorial. The report does not elaborate on how the funds were spent (ie, it does not describe specific projects).⁴¹

The Territorial Shelter Cabin Fund continued to grow. Again in 1923, no funds were expended on upgrading or maintaining the Dahl Creek-Candle Trail, however, \$65.35 was spent on the Cottonwood Creek cabin along the

³⁸ G. Frank Willis, *"It is a hard country, though": Historic Resource Study, Bering Land Bridge National Preserve* (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1986), 165. Willis notes that funds were used for constructing cabins beginning in 1923 however the ARC Annual Reports shows the shelter cabin program being initiated in 1917 with \$20,000 committed to the program overall.

³⁹ ARC *Annual Report*, 1923: 14. (See also: Chapt. 30, Session Laws 1921)

⁴⁰ ARC *Annual Report*, 1923: 15.

⁴¹ ARC *Annual Report*, 1922: 96.

trail:⁴² There is conflicting evidence about the construction date of the cabin, providing a range from 1917 to 1923. Willis notes that funds were used for constructing cabins beginning in 1923 however the ARC Annual Reports shows the shelter cabin program being initiated in 1917 with \$20,000 committed to the program overall. The Alaska Road Commission Reports do not mention establishment of a shelter cabin on this route until 1923, but then two years later in 1925 the ARC reports that the stoves have been replaced. An article from the Daily Nome Industrial Worker Newspaper from February 18, 1918 describes many shelter cabins being installed along the routes in the Seward Peninsula including "Three other shelter cabins owned by the Territory were constructed under the subversion of Dan'l [Daniel] A. Jones from money out of the Shelter Cabin fund. Two of these are on Dahl-Immachuk trail...(and the other is located at Calhoun's old roadhouse , between Candle and the mouth of the Kobuk." There has been one historic photograph found from 1926.

Of the \$1500 spent on Seward Peninsula shelter cabins in 1923, \$1000 was for construction and the remaining \$500 going for maintaining existing cabins. Unfortunately, the accounting breakdown is for aggregate amounts, not by cabin. Furthermore, in 1923, all shelter cabin funds for the Seward Peninsula were derived from Territorial rather than Federal monies.⁴³

In 1924, the Dahl Creek-Candle Trail was reported to be in "fairly good condition." As in previous years, no funds were expended on maintaining or improving the trail.⁴⁴

The following shelter cabins were constructed on the Seward Peninsula in 1924 or had maintenance performed on them:⁴⁵

Trail	Cabin Location and Description of Work Performed	Cost
Nome-Council	Fox River: cabin repaired	\$ 6.50
	Timber: cabin repaired	65.00
Kaltag-Solomon	Ten Mile Creek: shelter cabin and dog barn constructed	500.00
Bonanza-Kotzebue	Quartz Creek: shelter cabin constructed	290.00
Kotzebue-Pt. Barrow	Cape Lisburne: shelter cabin and dog barn constructed	674.92
Kotlik-St. Michael	Point Romanov: shelter cabin constructed	275.00

⁴² ARC *Annual Report*, 1923: 113.

⁴³ ARC *Annual Report*, 1923: 125, 126.

⁴⁴ ARC *Annual Report*, 1924: 146-147.

⁴⁵ ARC *Annual Report*, 1924: 153.

Nome-Teller	Cope Wooley: dog barn constructed ⁴⁶	
	Cape Douglas: dog barn constructed	337.90
Teller-Mary's Igloo	Agiapuk: shelter cabin and dog barn repaired	100.00
	Total:	\$2249.32

Out of the total \$2249.32 expended on shelter cabins in the Second Division, \$1749.32 was for construction and the remaining \$500 for maintenance on existing facilities.⁴⁷

The 1925 *Annual Report* refers to Route 28 as the "Dahl Creek-Candle Trail"⁴⁸ and the "Shelton-Candle Trail."⁴⁹ The difference between the two is the twelve miles between Shelton and Dahl Creek. The Nome-Taylor Highway was then designated Route 28A.⁵⁰ By consolidating the route designations for these three routes, the ARC designated the aggregate road/trail system that, by this time, ran continuously from Nome, north to Shelton and Dahl, thence continuing northward to Taylor, and the trail that veered northeast from Dahl to Candle as Routes 28 and 28A. These two routes effectively bisected the Seward Peninsula, connecting the mining areas at Candle, Kougaruk, and Nome. According to ARC Superintendent W.W. Lukens, one of the most important projects on the Seward Peninsula was the "system of local roads serving the extensive mining activities about Nome, the Nome-Shelton Tram and connecting trail extending on through Dahl to Deering and Candle ..."⁵¹

Application of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Criteria:

Criterion A - The **Cottonwood Cabin Shelter** is significant under the NRHP

Criterion A for its association with the transportation development of the Seward Peninsula. The Alaska Road Commission was charged with developing, constructing, and maintaining a transportation system for the Territory of Alaska. Shelter cabins were important components of the transportation system. Because of the vast expanse of land that comprises the territory, simply constructing roads and trails was not enough to insure the safe passage of people and freight. Camping out on the bare tundra of the Seward Peninsula was not only inconvenient, but also dangerous.⁵² Unlike other road and trail

⁴⁶ The costs of the Cape Wooley and Cape Douglas dog barns are both reported as a single figure under Cape Douglas. The original report does not separate the two.

⁴⁷ ARC *Annual Report*, 1924: 158.

⁴⁸ ARC *Annual Report*, 1925: 104.

⁴⁹ ARC *Annual Report*, 1925: 19, 95.

⁵⁰ ARC *Annual Report*, 1925: 104.

⁵¹ ARC *Annual Report*, 1925: 95.

⁵² ARC *Annual Report*, 1926: 19.

systems in the territory during the early part of the century, the Seward Peninsula lacked a system of roadhouses along the various transportation routes. Owing to the danger of camping in exposed areas, in 1917 the Territory and the Federal government took steps to build shelter cabins, spaced approximately one days' travel distance apart, along the major trails and roads on the peninsula.

According to Alaska Road Commission records, there were three shelter cabins along the Dahl Creek to Candle Trail (Route 28). Following the trail in a northeasterly direction from Dahl Creek, these were located at Aurora Creek, Berry Creek, and Cottonwood Creek.⁵³ Of these cabins, the Cottonwood Shelter Cabin is the only remaining structure that retains historic integrity. It is the best-preserved example of the cabins constructed by the ARC on the Seward Peninsula. It is unique in that it is constructed of corrugated steel rather than wood or logs, owing to the barren nature of the peninsula.

Criterion B - The building is not known to be associated with the lives of significant persons, and is ineligible under Criterion B.

Criterion C - The building does not embody the work of a master, nor does it possess high artistic values. It is a simple, corrugated steel cabin. It and is ineligible under Criterion C.

Criterion D - The building is unlikely to yield further information important in understanding local, regional, or national history based upon conclusions reported in Archeological Survey Report 001-92-BELA which is on file with the National Park Service, Alaska Region and the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office. It is ineligible under Criterion D.

Integrity:

The **Cottonwood Shelter Cabin** retains all seven aspects of integrity of Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, Association.

Based off documentation in 1926 and 1985 (see Figure 1 and Figure 2), the **Cottonwood Shelter Cabin** has remained in the location where it was constructed during its period of significance and retains integrity of **Location**.

The general form, massing, and design of the resource has remained consistent. The **Cottonwood Shelter Cabin** is a rectangular, one-story, wood-frame, building, with a gable-front roof. The resource retains integrity of **Design**.

⁵³ G. Frank Willis, *"It is a hard country, though": Historic Resource Study, Bering Land Bridge National Preserve* (US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, n.d.), 165-170.

The **Cottonwood Shelter Cabin** retains the original corrugated, galvanized metal exterior and roof. The window on the northwest side of the cabin is covered with plywood while the southeast window has glass. The single door was documented as missing in 2005⁵⁴ and has since been replaced. The interior of the cabin still retains tent canvas wall coverings. The contributing buildings retain integrity of **Materials**.

The **Cottonwood Shelter Cabin** retains integrity of **Workmanship** of the corrugated, galvanized metal sheathing attached to the stud frame.

The **Cottonwood Shelter Cabin** retains a connection to the feeling of a time or place of early twentieth-century travelers journeying along the Dahl Creek to Candle Trail. The contributing resources retain integrity of **Feeling**.

The **Cottonwood Shelter Cabin** retains a connection to the association of being a shelter cabin for travelers built by the Alaska Road Commission. The resource retains integrity of **Association**.

Resource Table

AHRS ID#	FMSS LOCATION #	CRIS - HS	RESOURCE NAME	CONSTRUCTION DATE	RESOURCE TYPE (Building, Structure, Site, Object)	STATUS (Eligible, Not Eligible, Contributing, Noncontributing)
BEN-134	55738	037008	Cottonwood Creek Shelter Cabin	1917	Building	Eligible

5. Major Bibliographic References

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Clifford, Howard. "Council City and Solomon River Railroad." *Rails North: The Railroads of Alaska and the Yukon*. Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, n.d.

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⁵⁴ Cultural Resources Inventory System (CRIS), accessed November 2024.

Hauck, Cornelius W. "Narrow Gauge in the Arctic." *Colorado Rail Annual* 1969, 163-168.
Mead & Hunt and Cultural Resource Consultants LLC. *Alaska Roads Historic Overview: Applied Historic Context of Alaska's Roads*. Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. February 2014.

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United States Department of the Interior. National Park Service. "Archeological Survey Report 001-92-BELA." August 10, 1992.

Williss, G. Frank. *"Do Things Right the First Time": Administrative History: The National Park Service and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980*. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. 1986.
<https://www.npshistory.com/publications/williss/index.htm>.

Willis, G. Frank. *"It is a hard country, though": Historic Resource Study, Bering Land Bridge National Preserve*. US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1986.

- 6. Form Prepared By:** Heather Feil, Architectural Historian, National Park Service Alaska Regional Office with support by Lily Garcia, Cultural Resources Database Intern, National Council for Preservation Education.

The information on this form was transferred and adapted from a 2006 Determination of Eligibility drafted by Douglas Beckstead, former Historian, National Park Service Alaska Regional Office.

7. Additional Material

Maps:

- Map 1. "Bendeleben D-6, AK." 1978. USGS.
- Map 2. Boundary Map. 2025. Google Earth.
- Map 3. Photo Key Map. 2025. Google Earth.
- Map 4. "Historical Base Map of Bering Land Bridge National Preserve." 1986. NPS.

Photographs:

- Photo 1. Aerial view of Cottonwood Shelter Cabin, NPS Grant Crosby, 2023
- Photo 2. Cottonwood Shelter Cabin with creek, NPS Grant Crosby, 2023
- Photo 3. Cottonwood Shelter Cabin, Southwest, NPS Grant Crosby, 2023
- Photo 4. Cottonwood Shelter Cabin, Southeast, NPS Grant Crosby, 2023
- Photo 5. Cottonwood Shelter Cabin, Northeast, NPS Grant Crosby, 2023
- Photo 6. Cottonwood Shelter Cabin interior bunkbeds, NPS Grant Crosby, 2023
- Photo 7. Cottonwood Shelter Cabin interior kitchen, NPS Grant Crosby, 2023

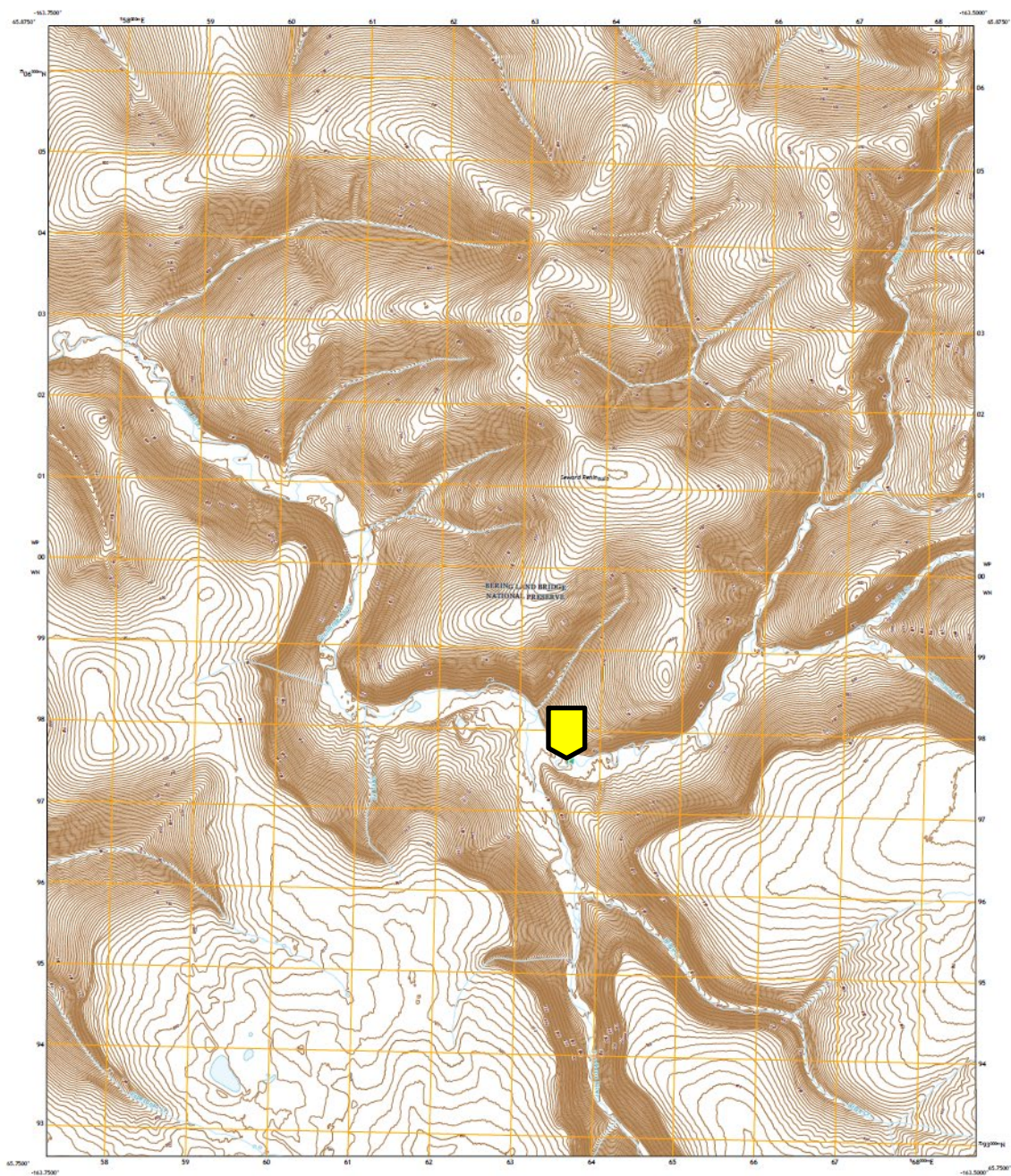
Figures:

Figure 1. "Map of Seward Peninsula the Arctic Gold Fields of Alaska." Compiled by F. J. Monroe, December 1903. Library of Congress.

Figure 2. Cottonwood ARC shelter cabin Dahl Creek-Candle Trail, May 1926. Alaska Road Commission collection, Alaska State Library, Juneau.

Figure 3. Cottonwood Shelter Cabin, 1985. NPS photo by Frank Williss.

Figure 4. Contaminated Site Work – Cottonwood Cabin Site, 2021. NPS E-TIC Drawing.

[illegible]

CONTOUR INTERVAL: 10 FEET
NORTH AMERICAN DATUM OF 1983

This map was produced to conform with the
National Geospatial Program US Topo Product Standard, 2011.
A metadata file associated with this product is available on the USGS website.



1	2	3
4		5
6	7	8

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Expressway		Local Connector	
Secondary Hwy		Local Road	
Ramp		Drift	
Interstate Route		US Route	
		State Route	

BENDELEBEN D-4 SE, AK
2017

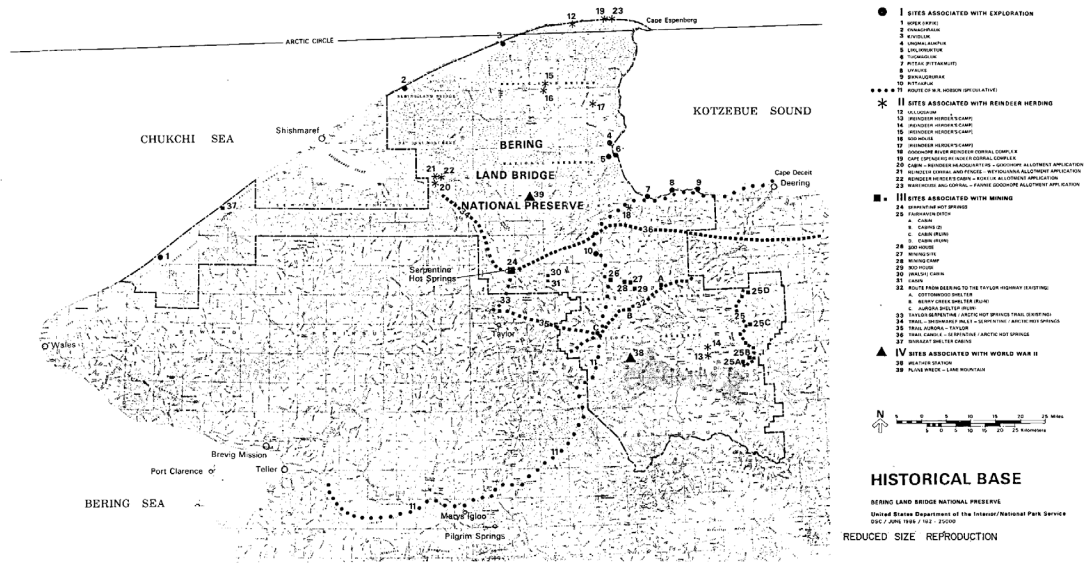
Map 1: Location of the Cottonwood Creek Shelter Cabin Flagged on "Bendeleben D-4, AK." 2017. USGS.



Map 2: Boundary Map – Cottonwood Creek Cabin at the neck of this oxbow along the Cottonwood Creek. Boundary consists of the building footprint with the southeast corner at Latitude: $65^{\circ} 47' 38.1''\text{N}$ Longitude: $-163^{\circ} 36' 40.3''\text{W}$. 2025. Google Earth.



Map 3: Photo Key Map of Cottonwood Creek Cabin– Numbered arrows correspond with the photo numbers listed in the “Photographs” section. 2025. Google Earth.



Map 4: "Historical Base Map of Bering Land Bridge National Preserve." 1986. NPS.



Photo 2: Aerial view of Cottonwood Shelter Cabin, NPS Grant Crosby, 2023



Photo 3: Cottonwood Shelter Cabin with creek, NPS Grant Crosby, 2023



Photo 4: Cottonwood Shelter Cabin, Southwest, NPS Grant Crosby, 2023



Photo 5: Cottonwood Shelter Cabin, Southeast, NPS Grant Crosby, 2023



Photo 6: Cottonwood Shelter Cabin, Northeast, NPS Grant Crosby, 2023



Photo 6: Cottonwood Shelter Cabin interior bunkbeds, NPS Grant Crosby, 2023



Photo 7: Cottonwood Shelter Cabin interior kitchen, NPS Grant Crosby, 2023



Figure 1. "Map of Seward Peninsula the Arctic Gold Fields of Alaska." Compiled by F. J. Monroe, December 1903. Library of Congress.



Cottonwood ARC shelter cabin Dahl Cr. - Candle Trail May 1926

Figure 2. Cottonwood ARC shelter cabin Dahl Creek-Candle Trail, May 1926. Alaska Road Commission collection, Alaska State Library, Juneau.



Figure 3. Cottonwood Shelter Cabin, 1985. NPS photo by Frank Williss.

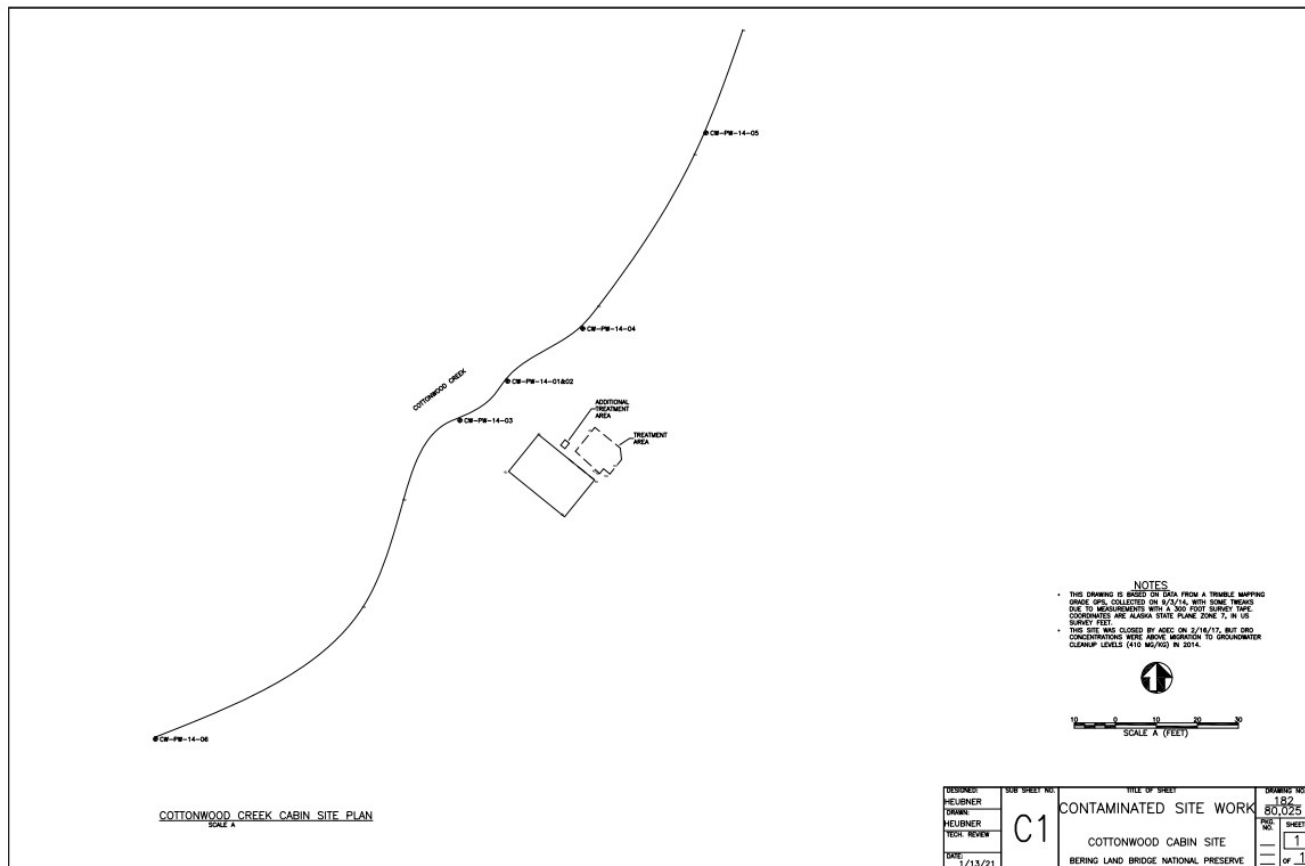


Figure 4. Contaminated Site Work – Cottonwood Cabin Site, 2021. NPS E-TIC Drawing.