

**Steele Creek Roadhouse & Community Rehabilitation, July 2012**



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## Steele Creek Roadhouse & Community Rehabilitation, July 2012

Cover: Steele Creek Roadhouse, July 2012, after rehabilitation efforts.

Location: Steele Creek Community (49-EAG-00144), Fortymile river mile 22.8R

Participants: Robin Mills (BLM-FDO Archaeologist), Kevan Cooper (BLM-FDO Realty), Nick Moser (BLM-FDO Realty Technician), Lauren Cottle (SCA volunteer), Allie Little (BLM-FDO Archaeologist Technician), Eric Yeager (BLM-FDO Outdoor Recreation Planner), Tim DuPont (BLM-FDO ORP), Colter Franz (BLM-FDO Maintenance), Wyatt DuPont (BLM volunteer)

Date(s): July 14 – July 20, 2012

### **The Undertaking:**

This project involved earthmoving drainage work around the Steele Creek Roadhouse and Structures B and C at the Steele Creek Community townsite (49-EAG-00144), located on the Fortymile River at river mile 22.8R, inside the Fortymile National Wild & Scenic River corridor, managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (Figure 1). In addition, an insulated hanging joist floor was installed in Structure C, a single-room, single-floor domestic log cabin which measures 22' in length and 16' wide; a new porch was built on to the short-axis east side of the Roadhouse, to replace the dilapidated one that was destroyed in 2009 when the sill logs on this side of the building were replaced; and vegetation was thinned between the Fortymile River and the Roadhouse for the purpose of enhance visibility of the site from the river in order to increase recreational visitation in the future. See Figure 2 for a plan view of the site

### **September 2011:**

Most building supplies for the new floor intended for Structure C (joists and hangers, plywood, and insulation) were purchased in September 2011, and transported for winter storage to the BLM Chicken Field Station.

### **July 2012:**

In July 2012, eight employees and one volunteer associated with the BLM-Fairbanks District Office (see employee list, above) set out for the Fortymile, five on July 14 and four on July 15. The July 14 crew overnighted at the BLM Chicken FS, and then the following day (15<sup>th</sup>) transported equipment and supplies (including the construction material previously brought to Chicken) to the Steele Creek townsite from the main bridge over the Fortymile River, utilizing river transport supplied by local river guide Larry Taylor (Figure 1). They overnighted at Steele Creek. The 2<sup>nd</sup> crew that left Fairbanks, on July 15, was transporting an IHI mini-excavator and 4WD ATVs. They overnighted at Chicken, and the following day (16<sup>th</sup>) drove to MP105 on the Taylor Highway, which is the trailhead for the existing overland trail to the Steele Creek site. They drove the IHI and ATVs overland to the site, after first dropping off all of their gear and supplies at the Fortymile Bridge for river transport to the site. They arrived at the site early afternoon on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

For the rest of that day, and the following July 17 and 18, the entire crew performed the tasks outlined above (drainage work; vegetation thinning; floor; porch).

In regards to the earth moving exercise, the goal was to improve drainage away from the buildings at the site, in order to maintain the longevity of the new log foundations that had been replaced under the buildings since 2006. Drainage ditches and contouring around Steele Creek Structure A had previously occurred in 2006 when its new foundation was installed, so attention focused on Structures B and C, and the Roadhouse itself. Immediately west of Structures B and C is a large sloping hillside, which annually feeds a large quantity of melt water down towards the buildings. In addition, Structure C had settled into the ground at least a couple of feet, and the slope sediments had migrated downhill and up against the building. As a result, the western side and southwest corner of the building was ~ 3 feet below present ground surface. What was decided was that the IHI mini excavator would dig a water diversion trench about 10-12 feet upslope of Structures B and C, directing water away and around the buildings to the north. The IHI also lowered the ground surface at the southern back side of Structure C to divert water away from the building on that side.

Similarly, the 60' long, two-story Roadhouse had settled at least 2-3 feet into the ground over the past 110+ years, and its new foundation was replaced in this position as it was coeval with the floor inside the building. Thus, the new foundation of the building was present in a builder's trench a couple of feet below the present ground surface. What was decided was that the IHI would dig the earth away from, and slope the new ground surface away from, the Roadhouse on all sides. By doing so, we essentially lowered the surrounding ground surface around the building, removing the builder's trench in the process. Prior to doing so, numerous archaeological test pits were dug around the Roadhouse looking for buried features and other cultural deposits. None were located. Monitoring of the soil removal noted only a few "old" looking artifacts that were collected up and hung on wall nails inside the locked Roadhouse.

See Figures 3-9 for the excavation of the diversion ditch upslope of Structures B and C, and removal of soil on the south end of Structure C.

See Figures 10-21 for the contouring of the ground around the Steele Creek Roadhouse

See Figures 22-26 for construction of the new floor inside Structure C.

See Figures 27-31 for construction of the new porch on the east side of the Roadhouse.

See Figures 32-34 for thinning of trees between the Roadhouse and the Fortymile River.

The project ended a day ahead of schedule. Overland and river transport from the site was accomplished on July 19; some of the crew overnighted at the Chicken FS, while others returned all the way to Fairbanks

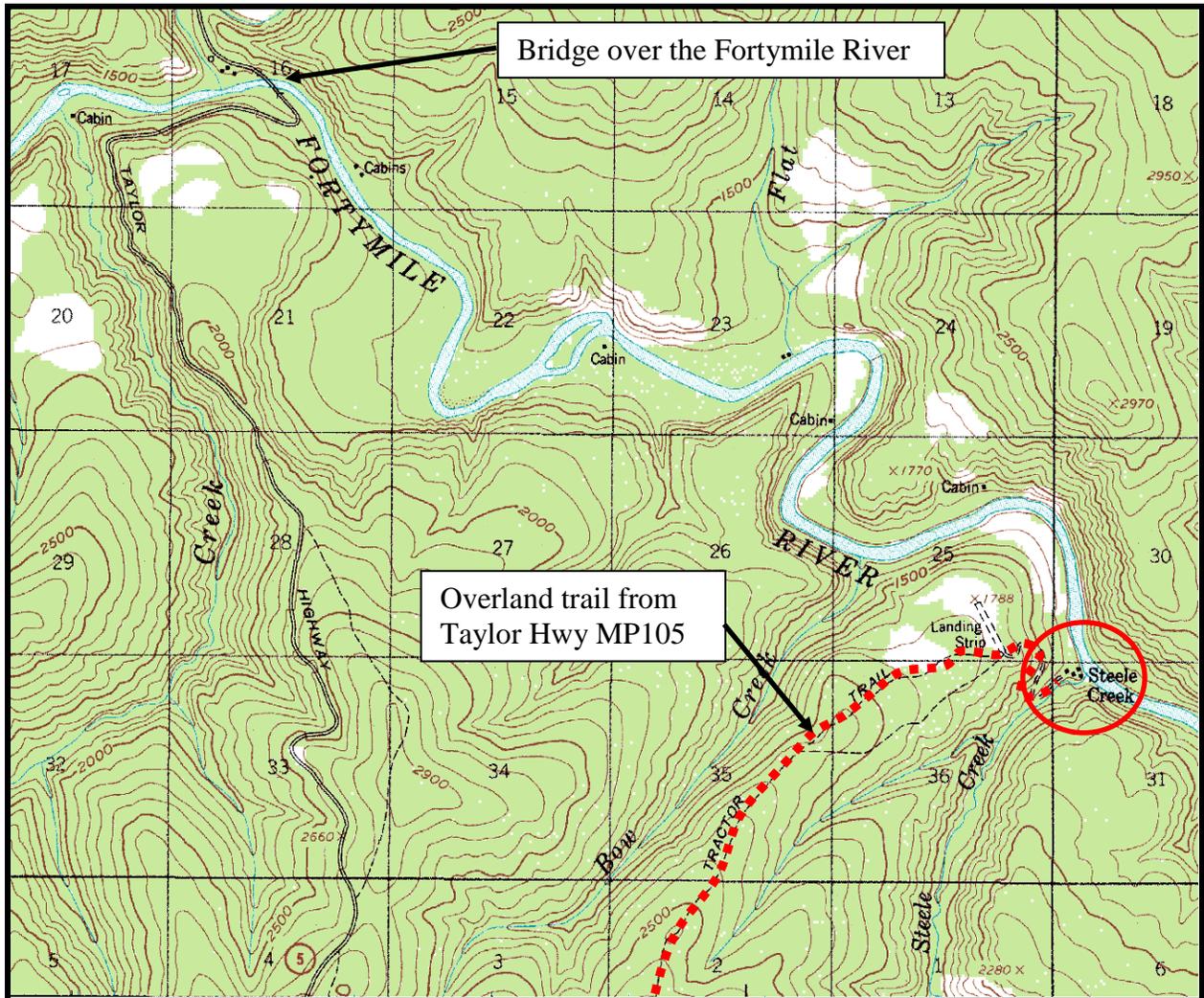


Figure 1. Portion of Eagle B-1 USGS quad map, 1:63,360 scale. Each section is 1 mile squared. Map shows the Taylor Highway crossing the Fortymile River at highway MP 112.4 and river mile 16.2. The Steele Creek site is found at river mile 22.8 on the south bank (circled).

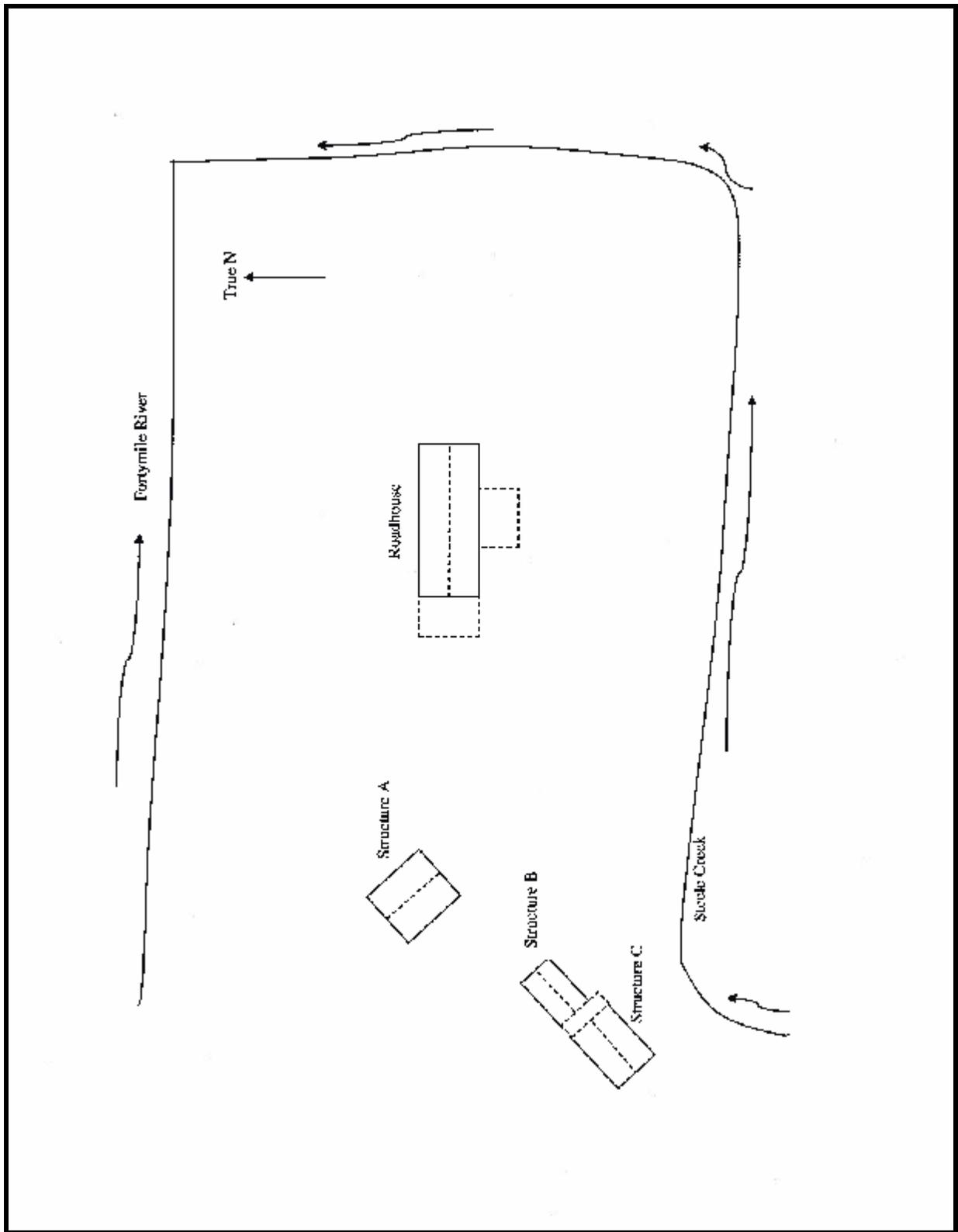


Figure 2. Steele Creek Community (49-EAG-144). Scale: Structure A measures 20'x24'; Structure C measures 16'x22'; main body of the Roadhouse (solid outline) measures 20'x52'.



Figure 3. Removing soil and recontouring around the southern back side of Structure C.



Figure 4. Ground recontouring around the southern back side of Structure C.



Figure 5. Ground recontoured downslope of Structure C to direct water away from the building and into Steele Creek.



Diversion ditch dug here to divert water around Structures C and B.

Figure 6. Slope abutting up against the west side of Structure C.



Figure 7. Digging diversion ditch upslope of Structures B and C.



Figure 8. Water diversion ditch dug upslope of Structures B and C.



Figure 9. Finishing off water route from the end of the ditch to the north side of Structure B.



Figure 10. Soil removal and contouring of ground on the north side of the Roadhouse.



Figure 11. Soil removal and contouring of ground on the north side of the Roadhouse.



Figure 12. Soil removal and contouring of ground on the north side of the Roadhouse.



Figure 13. Finished recontoured ground on the north side of the Roadhouse.



Figure 14. Soil removal and contouring of ground on the east side of the Roadhouse.



Figure 15. Finishing up a wide, contouring drainage chute away from the northwest corner of the Roadhouse.



Figure 16. Soil removal and contouring of ground on the south side of the Roadhouse.



Figure 17. Soil removal and contouring of ground on the south side of the Roadhouse.



Figure 18. Finished recontoured ground on the south side of the Roadhouse.



Figure 19. Soil removal and contouring of ground on the west side of the Roadhouse.



Figure 20. Finished recontoured ground around the Roadhouse. View from the west.



Figure 21. Finished recontoured ground around the Roadhouse. View from the northwest.



Figure 22. Insulation and joists for the new floor in Structure C.



Figure 23. Installing the hanging joists for the new floor in Structure C.



Figure 24. Installing blueboard insulation between the hanging joists for the new floor in Structure C.



Figure 25. Installing blueboard insulation and the upper plywood flooring in Structure C.



Figure 26. The finished floor in Structure C.



Figure 27. Location of the new porch on the east end of the Roadhouse.



Figure 28. Building the new porch on the east end of the Roadhouse.



Figure 29. Building the new porch on the east end of the Roadhouse.



Figure 30. Building the new porch on the east end of the Roadhouse.



Figure 31. Nearing completion of the new porch on the east end of the Roadhouse.



Figure 32. Thinning of trees between the Roadhouse and the Fortymile River. Area already thinned, and river visible.



Figure 33. Thinning of trees between the Roadhouse and the Fortymile River. View towards the Roadhouse, pre-thinning. Contrast with Figure 34.



Figure 34. Thinning of trees between the Roadhouse and the Fortymile River. View towards the Roadhouse, post-thinning. Contrast with Figure 33.