



File Code: 2360

Date: January 26, 2012

Subject: Ruth and Morning Star Mine Clean-up, Opal Creek Wilderness and Cultural Resources

To: Pete Jones: Region 6 On-Scene Coordinator

I have reviewed the project proposal involving cleanup at the Ruth mines Level 4 and 5 and Morning Star mine and the potential work associated with accessing these mines for cleanup. Below is a brief history of the archaeological work completed over the past 25 years and proposed mitigation measures to insure protection of cultural resources.

In 1985 the Little North Santiam Mining District (LNSMD) was evaluated to determine its eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (Cox 1985). The LNSMD includes Capital Mine, Crown Mine, Silver King Mine, Wolz Mine, Silver Star Mine, Black Eagle Mine, Santiam Group, Frenchman's Cabin, East Gold Creek, Merten Sawmill, Jawbone Flat, Bueche Group, Ruth Mines, and Morning Start Mine. Cox evaluated these historic properties and determined the mining district not eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) based on criteria set forth by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with the Forest Service's determination in with the exception of the Amalgamated Mining and Milling Company complex (Jawbone Flats, Ruth and Morning Star mines) which SHPO felt was National Register-eligible. This information was subsequently sent to the National Park Service, Keeper of the NRHP and they disagreed with SHPO's findings and felt that only the Jawbone Flats area was eligible and that all other related sites, structures and objects were not due to the extensive deterioration and loss of integrity. This determination stands today until such time that the National Park Service receives further documentation that clearly establishes the significance of the larger mining district.

That being said, Cox's 1985 evaluation did not consider the potential for subsurface or archaeological deposits; only the above ground features. Based on the 1997 and 1998 cultural resource monitoring of the Little North Santiam Mining district (Kelly 1999), some of the mining sites appear to still contain an archaeological component that was not considered in the original evaluation. This data can potentially provide us with valuable information not available in written accounts regarding camp life, living conditions and dates of occupation. For this reason, I recommended that any known subsurface archaeological deposits be considered prior to future ground disturbing projects proposed in the Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area (Kelly 1999). SHPO concurred with these recommendations in 2002.

In regards to the current proposed project activities, much of the Ruth Level 4 buildings were destroyed by the 1964 flood and subsequent flood events. Some of the historic building material is now incorporated into the tailings within the creek bed. The remaining archaeological



components of Ruth Level 4 include the mine, ore cart tracks and some equipment used in conjunction with the mining activities.

For Ruth Level 5, there are no cultural resource concerns with blocking the access road to vehicular traffic. In fact, this is greatly appreciated and will help protect any remaining mining equipment at the site.

For Morning Star the only remaining cultural evidence includes the mine and some wooden material, presumably the remains of ore bunkers, which lay in the bed of Blue Jay Creek.

It is my understanding that Gold Creek bridge is no longer safe for vehicular crossing and that some or all components will need replacing. Constructed in the 1970s and stabilized in 2010, the bridge is most likely not eligible to the NRHP but a determination still needs to be made prior to commencing any work on the bridge. None of the bridges in the Little North Santiam Mining district were included in Cox's 1985 evaluation.

Mitigation Measures:

- Ruth Level 4: Leave as much ore cart track as possible leading out of the mine and leave all of the associated mining equipment on site.
- Morning Star: If any mining equipment is exposed during clean-up, leave on site outside of creek bed.
- Evaluate Gold Creek Bridge to determine its eligibility to the NRHP.
- Several archaeological remains associated with Gold Creek must be protected during any construction work Gold Creek bridge site.
- Evaluate the "Half Bridges" to determine their eligibility to the NRHP prior to any permanent or temporary stabilization work OR assume eligibility and complete HABS HAER Light documentation along with some type of further mitigation (i.e. interpretation on or near the site or the web).

IF you have any questions regarding the above information please don't hesitate to call or email,

Sincerely,



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Enclosures

Cc: Grady McMahan, District Ranger

References

Cox, James

1985 Little North Santiam Mining District, Cultural Resource Evaluation Report, United States Department of Agricultural Forest Service, Willamette National Forest.

Kelly, Cara McCulley

1999 A Revised Cultural Resource Inventory of the Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area, Detroit Ranger District Willamette National Forest.