

# 2011

## Independence Mine State Historical Park Preservation Plan



Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor  
Recreation

Department of Natural Resources

8/4/2011

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Located in the scenic Hatcher Pass region in the Matanuska Susitna Borough, Independence Mine was one of the largest producing lode gold mines in Alaska. The property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 and became a state historical park in 1980. It is a popular destination for both local residents and visitors to the state due to the combination of heritage tourism, outdoor recreation opportunities, and outstanding natural beauty.

In 2010, the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (ADPOR) decided to prepare a historic preservation plan for Independence Mine State Historical Park (IMSHP) to provide base line information to effectively manage and sustain the cultural resources and to guide future development and enhancement of the park for visitors. The planning process involved discussing and sharing ideas with park managers, industry professionals, and interested public during public meetings and comment periods.

The *Independence Mine State Historical Park Preservation Plan* is a framework for management, interpretation, and historic property rehabilitation and use. It provides information on the historic character of the park and past preservation efforts and includes an inventory of resources. The study captures current conditions and outlines preservation priorities, evaluates use options, education and outreach opportunities, and supplies an implementation plan. To fully grasp the recommendations made in this plan, it is essential to understand the documented current conditions in Chapter 5 that provide rationale for the all action strategies.

A summary of the identified recommendations includes:

- Preservation strategies for structures and artifacts
- Year-round visitor services
- Enhanced personal interpretation
- Adaptive use for park structures



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



## WHY DO WE NEED A PRESERVATION PLAN?

Since 2009, the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (ADPOR) and the Office of History and Archaeology (OHA) have worked together to develop preservation plans for Alaska's historical parks and sites. These plans help meet the goal to “*sustain Alaska's cultural, ecological, scenic and scientific assets through proactive stewardship pursuant to the division's parks and programs*” outlined in the division's ten year strategic plan.<sup>1</sup> Preservation plans are valuable and dynamic tools used for efforts aimed at preserving and enhancing historical, cultural, archaeological, and anthropological values. A preservation plan can also be used for efforts aimed at promoting the enjoyment and stewardship of heritage resources.

## WHAT IS A PRESERVATION PLAN SUPPOSED TO DO?

This plan provides guidelines to assist division staff in reaching short- and long-term objectives for the preservation and enhancement of cultural and historical resources and in the day-to-day management of these resources. Providing guidelines rather than hard and fast rules, this plan is intended to be a dynamic tool. It may be used to enhance and preserve the park's historical, cultural, interpretive, archaeological, and anthropological values, to promote the enjoyment and stewardship of park resources, to support local recreation and tourism, and to encourage a variety of recreational and educational opportunities in the park for visitors of varying abilities. The plan supports, but does not replace, the National Historic Preservation Act, Alaska Historic Preservation Act, National Environmental Policy Act, or other applicable laws.

## WHAT IS A STATE HISTORICAL PARK?

The “Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework” identifies designations for different types of parks based on their primary values to the public. Independence Mine is a *state historical park* defined as “an area containing an assemblage of significant historical, cultural, archaeological, or anthropological resources from representative eras of Alaska's history or prehistory. The dominant management objective of a historical park is to preserve and interpret historic resources for Alaskans and visitors to the state.”<sup>2</sup>

Historical parks are different from natural parks because they have more infrastructure which requires additional maintenance, personal interpretation, curation, and therefore funding.

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<sup>1</sup> Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, *Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation: Ten Year Strategic Plan 2007-2017*. Alaska Div. of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, 2007), 22-25.

<sup>2</sup> Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, *Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework*. Park Planning Section (Alaska Div. of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, 1982), 8.

Oftentimes, historical parks have high visitation in a compact area placing additional pressures on fragile historic resources and stretching staff responsibilities. In order to fully meet the needs of the visiting public and properly manage these sites, a specialized professional staff is appropriate. Adequately funded and staffed state historical parks provide access, education, and preservation related activities to Alaskans and our visitors.

## PLAN ROAD MAP

The plan has six principal components—goals and objectives, brief historical and cultural background of the park, visitation, current park conditions, action strategies for achieving the outlined goals and implementation priorities, and a plan evaluation. In addition, documents such as architectural survey forms, **list other documents that** are attached as appendices.

## PUBLIC PROCESS

On September 1, 2, and 3, 2010, an interdisciplinary team visited Independence Mine State Historical Park to identify and inventory interpretive displays and historic resources of the park, to evaluate current uses and preservation issues, and to outline interpretive possibilities. A public scoping meeting was held in Wasilla on December 1, 2010, to allow interested public and professionals to voice their concerns related to the use of Independence Mine and to identify appropriate interpretive themes and preservation priorities. A separate meeting was held on December 14, 2010, for the Mat-Su State Parks Citizen Advisory Board. Due to a small turnout at the December 1 meeting, an additional public scoping meeting was held on January 10, 2011.

Over 80 individuals and organizations were notified of the public meetings via phone calls, emails, and letters. The second public meeting was advertised on a local radio station (KMBQ 99.7). Public comments were accepted from December 1, 2010 through January 30, 2011 and during this period, an online survey was available through which 50 people provided input regarding building use, preservation, and interpretation.

Following the public comment period, the planning team compiled additional information, evaluated alternatives, and developed priorities. A draft plan was prepared and distributed for public review in **Month 2011. Result of draft plan internal or agency comments.**



## CHAPTER 2: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES





## ALASKA STATE PARK SYSTEM

In 1982, the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation devised and published a system to manage different types of park units known as the *Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework*. The framework identified designations for different types of parks based on their primary values to the public. Using these guidelines, Independence Mine was designated a *state historical park*. As such, Independence Mine is defined as “an area containing an assemblage of significant historical, cultural, archaeological, or anthropological resources from representative eras of Alaska’s history or prehistory. The dominant management objective of a historic park is to preserve and interpret historic resources for Alaskans and visitors to the state.”<sup>3</sup>

## HATCHER PASS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Hatcher Pass Management Plan was originally written in the early 1980s and adopted in 1986. The plan was revised between 2010 and 2011.<sup>4</sup> The updated plan recommends that a specific historic preservation and interpretive plan be developed to identify priorities for Independence Mine. The Independence Mine Preservation Plan supplements the Hatcher Pass Management Plan, but it does not supersede it. If a management plan is developed in the future specifically for Independence Mine, it will supersede, but not replace this preservation plan.

After reviewing the Hatcher Pass Management Plan, performing a historic property and general conditions survey, holding public scoping meetings in Wasilla, and gathering the views of interested professionals, the planning team identified the following goal and objectives for preservation and interpretation at Independence Mine State Historical Park.

## PRESERVATION PLAN GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The *goal* of the Independence Mine State Historical Park Preservation Plan is to highlight the park’s historic values and strike a balance between preservation, use, interpretation, and development for the benefit and enjoyment of a diverse population.

The plan’s goal is met through four measurable *objectives* associated with facilities, historic buildings, personnel, education, and visitor experience. Each objective has associated action strategies. These action strategies are fully described in Chapter 6.

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<sup>3</sup> Park Planning Section of Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, *Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework*. (Alaska Div. of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, 1982), 8.

<sup>4</sup> Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land and Water, *Hatcher Pass Management Plan DRAFT*. (Alaska Div. of Mining, Land and Water, 2010).

**OBJECTIVE #1:** Enhance the historic character of the park by developing and implementing preservation strategies that recognize the historic landscape, buildings, spaces, and artifacts while accommodating appropriate future uses.

*Action Strategies: Establish and implement Historic Preservation Zones. Rehabilitate identified buildings. Inventory and assess the park's artifacts. Create a curation facility in the Bunkhouse/Warehouse. Initiate a resource inspection tracking system. Conduct conditions assessments as appropriate.*

**OBJECTIVE #2:** Promote a safe and secure year-round operation through adequate staffing levels and partnership development.

*Action Strategies: Stabilize ruinous buildings. Initiate a concessionaire program. Sustain and develop existing and new partnerships. Establish a collections reference team. Hire interns. Create a maintenance facility in the Bunkhouse/Warehouse. Institute an adequate operations budget.*

**OBJECTIVE #3:** Connect a diverse audience to the park's cultural and natural resources using a variety of interpretive themes and methods.

*Action Strategies: Recruit volunteers and develop a volunteer program. Evaluate interpretive displays for relevancy. Implement scheduled interpretive tours, special programs, and new interpretive opportunities. Build a junior ranger program.*

**OBJECTIVE #4:** Evoke a positive intellectual, physical, and emotional visitor experience through active management and interpretation, and continuous improvement of the park.

*Action Strategies: Secure funding for interpretive, maintenance, and collections staff. Conduct an annual selective inventory of site interpretation. Establish a working library. Develop an annual work plan. Adaptively reuse buildings and structures.*

## CHAPTER 3: HISTORY AND CULTURE



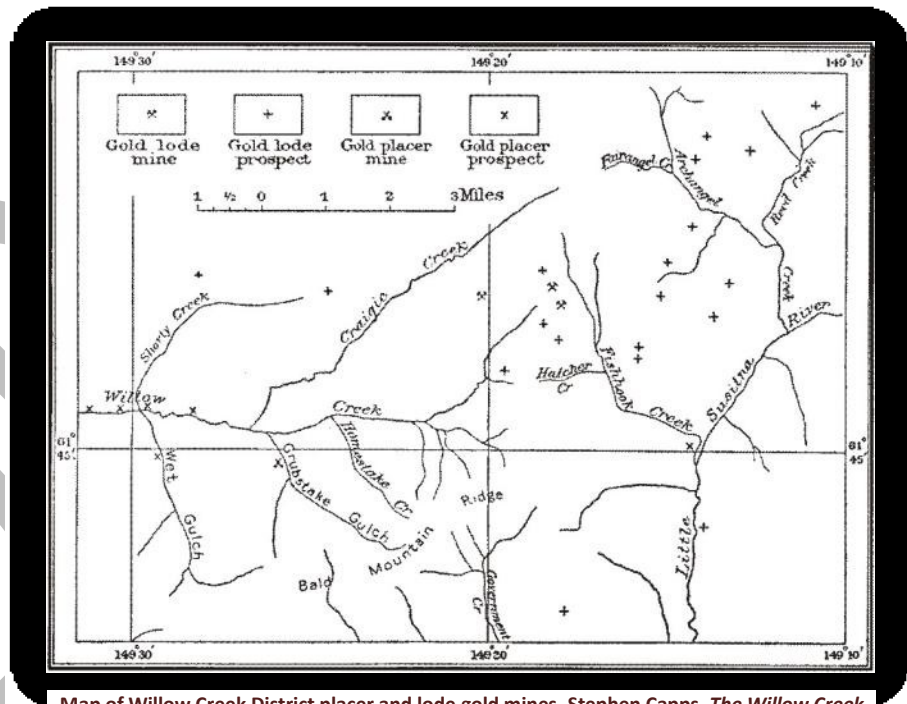
Historic Photograph of Independence Mine and Workshops, Spring 1939. Image from Alaska's Digital Archives, Josette and William Stoll Papers, 1914-1997, (UAA-hmc-0236-s3a-32). [www.vilda.alaska.edu](http://www.vilda.alaska.edu)

## DENA'INA

Independence Mine State Historical Park (SHP) is recognized for its mining history, but Dena'ina Athabascans used the region prior to the mining period. Although no past or present Native settlements are known in the area, the Dena'ina hunted caribou, sheep, and moose in the region. Dena'ina place names provide evidence of use. Some of the known place names for features in the Hatcher Pass area include Government Peak (*K'eda Beq'e Nay'uni*), Bald Mountain Ridge (*Qughun*), upper Willow Creek (*Qughun Betnu*), and the canyon at the headwaters of the Little Susitna River (*Tsattastnu Tl'u*). A map of the mining district in 1899 shows a Native summer trail roughly following the current route of the road from the Little Susitna River to the pass.<sup>5</sup>

## DISCOVERY AND EARLY MINING

Prospectors discovered placer gold in the Willow Creek District as early as 1897, but most placer deposits formed in this district had already been carried away by glaciers. Lode gold deposits were the most valuable prospects in the region. Robert Hatcher discovered lode gold in the Willow Creek District on Fishhook Creek in 1906 at the Alaska Free Gold Mining Company (Martin mine) site on Skyscraper Mountain. One year later, the Alaska Gold Quartz Mining Company discovered the Independence vein on Granite Mountain and they installed the first stamp mill in the district in 1908.<sup>6</sup> Independently and



Map of Willow Creek District placer and lode gold mines. Stephen Capps, *The Willow Creek District, Alaska*, USGS Bulletin #607 (Wash. D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1915), 51.

<sup>5</sup> James Kari and James A. Fall, *Shem Pete's Alaska: The Territory of the Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2003), 258-269.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Capps, *The Willow Creek District, Alaska*, U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin No. 607 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1915), 7, 50, 60.



intermittently managed, various companies operated these two mines on Skyscraper and Granite mountains for the following three decades.<sup>7</sup>

## THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE GOLD RESERVE ACT

Gold mining in the Willow Creek District increased during the 1930s despite the nationwide Depression. On January 30, 1934, President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Gold Reserve Act, ending the gold standard in the United States. One of the stipulations of this act changed the price of gold from \$20.67 per ounce and froze it at \$35 per ounce. The combination of the high price of gold and the lack of jobs in the United States created a steady market for miners and mining companies in Alaska.<sup>8</sup>

## ALASKA-PACIFIC CONSOLIDATED MINING COMPANY

The mines on Skyscraper and Granite mountains went in and out of operation until 1938. In



The old Mess Hall and Apartment Building at Independence Mine. Image reproduced from Alaska's Digital Archives, Stoll Family Papers, 1915-1987, UAA-hmc-0236-s3a-92. [www.vilda.alaska.edu](http://www.vilda.alaska.edu)

that year, the Wasilla Mining Company and the Alaska-Pacific Mines consolidated as the Alaska-Pacific Consolidated Mining Company (APC Mining Company) who collectively managed the Independence, Martin, and Gold Bullion mines. They became the largest producing lode gold mining operation in the Willow Creek District, the second largest in Alaska, and the eleventh largest in the

entire United States. The APC Mining Company built the structures of Independence Mine State Historical Park during the late 1930s and early 1940s. At its peak in 1941, the Independence mine employed 204 people and produced over 34,000 ounces of gold.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Kathryn Koutsky Cohen, *Independence Mine and the Willow Creek District* (Anchorage: Alaska Dept of Natural Resources, Office of History and Archaeology, 1982), 48.

<sup>8</sup> Philip S. Smith, *Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1938*, U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin No. 917-A (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), 33.

<sup>9</sup> Cohen, *Independence Mine and the Willow Creek District*, 3, 48, 58.

## WORLD WAR II ERA

World War II significantly affected gold mining in the United States. In October 1942, the War Production Board issued Order L-208, stating that gold mining was non-essential to the war effort. Most large mining operations closed due to this order. The Independence mine operated at full capacity for the last time in 1942. The mine continued as a small-scale operation due to the presence of scheelite, but APC Mining Company struggled to remain open even as a drastically reduced operation. The mine never fully recovered after World War II and it was shut down for the last time in 1951. By 1958, the company gave up hope of opening the mine again and offered their machinery and equipment for sale.<sup>10</sup>

## SKI RESORT

Skiing was a popular activity with employees and their family members at the Independence mine. After the mine closed, some of the buildings, including one of the bunkhouses, were converted to support a ski area. Rope tows and a T-bar were installed near the mine in the 1960s and the U.S. Army Biathlon team used the site as a training area. A three-hour bus ride took skiers from Anchorage to the mine on the weekends. In the 1970s, the Manager's House was used as a bar and ski lodge. Although the ski area closed by 1980, the area near Independence mine is still a popular place for winter recreation.<sup>11</sup>



Photograph showing skiers at Independence Mine, ca. 1960s. Courtesy of Alaska Lost Ski Areas Project. <http://www.alsap.org/Independence/Independence.htm>

## INDEPENDENCE MINE STATE HISTORICAL PARK

Due to a rise in gold prices, a short-lived mining revival took place in the Independence Mine area in the late 1970s and early 1980s by the Coronado Mining Corporation. They accessed the water tunnel built by APC Mining Company from the Willow Creek side of the mountain, but

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 55-61.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Tower, *Umbrella Guide to Skiing in Alaska* (Kenmore, WA: Epicenter Press, 1997), 69-75.

their mining activities did not last long, partly due to problems in the mill. They halted operations in September 1982.<sup>12</sup> In 1980, Starkey A. Wilson, who owned the claims Coronado was working, donated surface rights and the buildings at the mine to Alaska State Parks who began managing the area as Independence Mine State Historical Park.<sup>13</sup> It is an accessible historical park providing not only a glimpse of Alaska’s mining heritage, but also a place to recreate in all seasons. The historical park has proven to be a well-loved site by many Alaskans and visitors to the state.

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<sup>12</sup> Damon Bickerstaff and Steven W. Huss, "Alaska Resource Data File, Anchorage Quadrangle," U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 98-599, (Anchorage: USGS, 1998), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Cohen, *Independence Mine and the Willow Creek District*, 118.

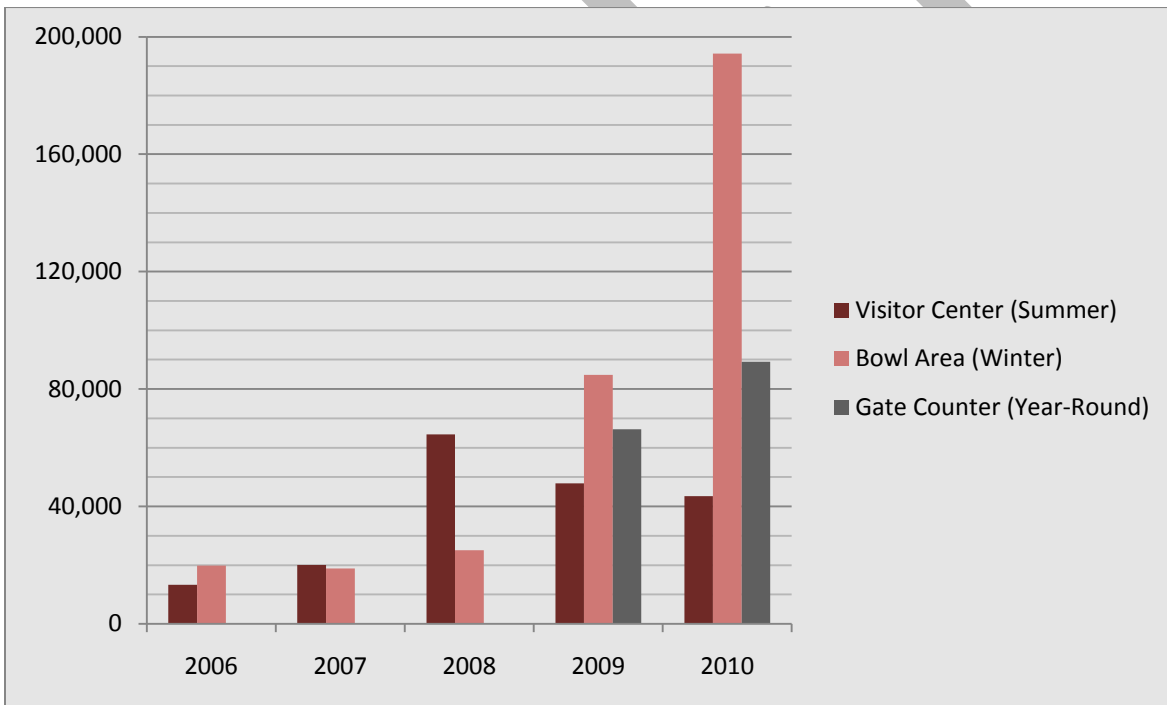
## CHAPTER 4: VISITATION





## VISITATION

Visitation statistics for Independence Mine are collected using different techniques in the summer and winter. During the summer, area rangers count visitors in the Visitor Center. In the winter, visitation for the bowl area is based on vehicles in the parking area. In 2009, ADPOR installed a mechanical counter at the entrance gate, providing the site with statistics based on the number of cars entering the site. Estimates produced from these methods are unofficial and statistically unreliable; however, they are the only data available to illustrate visitor trends. Although the data collected is not precise in the exact number of visitors, it is evident that visitation is increasing at Independence Mine SHP in each of the categories except at the Visitor Center. The decrease in visitation at the Visitor Center in 2009 and 2010 is likely due to low staffing levels and the building being closed.



Graph showing the estimated number of visitors per year at Independence Mine SHP.

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## HERITAGE TOURISM

Visitors seeking heritage tourism opportunities want to experience places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and they want high quality services. The historic resources at Independence Mine are tangible reflections of the mining heritage in the Willow Creek mining district. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, cultural and heritage visitors stay longer on average than all other U.S. travelers. They also spend approximately \$62 more per day than other visitors. Recent studies have also shown that when heritage tourism is promoted, it brings sustainable economic development to nearby communities, especially when public and private entities forge partnerships. Heritage tourism is a growing component of the tourism industry, ranking third behind shopping and outdoor recreation.<sup>14</sup> Independence Mine State Historical Park encompasses a wealth of opportunities for visitors interested in both historic sites and outdoor recreation. Heritage tourism can and should be used as a selling point for visitors to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

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<sup>14</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation, *Cultural Heritage Tourism 2011 Fact Sheet* (Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2011). <http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/heritage-tourism/additional-resources/2011-CHT-Fact-Sheet.pdf>; Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division, Lynn Speno, ed., *Heritage Tourism Handbook: A How-to-Guide for Georgia*, (Atlanta: Georgia Historic Preservation Division, 2010).

## CHAPTER 5: CURRENT CONDITIONS



## LAND USE AND BUILDINGS

The intent of this section is to capture the overall condition and highlight some concerns identified during the site visit in September 2010. Many of the buildings at Independence Mine State Historical Park (SHP) exhibit similar conditions inside and out. This information will then be used to recommend appropriate treatments or alterations to the buildings will be recommended based on the information provided in this section. Additionally, building descriptions will be attached in Appendix A. A table will be compiled to show what buildings exemplify specific current conditions and issues.

### BUILDING INTERIORS

**WATER DAMAGE:** Water damage is evident in many buildings at Independence Mine SHP. Evidence usually consists of heavy staining on the Celotex, often in corners of rooms. The staining appears to be old and was probably caused by moisture entering through the roof, windows, or missing siding. Since ADPOR recently replaced many roofs and windows, the problem is likely been corrected.



**FINISHES:** Fiberboard sheathing, sometimes referred to as Celotex, is used in all buildings at Independence Mine. This wall covering is missing, broken, or damaged in many rooms and buildings throughout the park. Water penetrating the building envelop created moisture damage and mold-related issues. Commonly found mold in the park structures includes black and green molds. Graffiti is found in some rooms; however, much of this graffiti could be significant because it dates from the period of significance.

Historical precedence and preservation standards have not been consistently used to guide installation of newer finishes or interpretation of finishes in buildings and spaces. Spaces are currently presented with a more rustic application than the original finishes. In many spaces, the floors are left unfinished. Modern improvements have been completed in a non-sympathetic manner. Telephone and computer wires are stapled onto walls and are not appropriately concealed.



**USE DAMAGE:** Heavy visitor use in the Manager's House has caused damage to the fixtures and finishes including the wainscoting, wallpaper, and carpeting. Wall finishes are severely scratched and gouged and the wallpaper is peeling and fading. Carpeting is beyond its useful life.

**ROUTINE UPKEEP:** Excluding the Manager's House, it appears that many buildings have not been cleaned or maintained for a number of years. Dirt is evident on the floors, dust is piled on artifacts and ledges, and some windows are not transparent from dirt. Equipment, building fixtures (lights, doors, and windows), artifacts, and tools are haphazardly scattered throughout buildings and the overall park.

**PESTS:** Bird and rodent droppings are present in many buildings.

**ACCESSIBILITY:** Only two buildings (Manager's House and Bunkhouse #2) at Independence Mine SHP have accessible entrances. However, once in those buildings, people with physical disabilities have limited access to interior spaces. For example, visitors can easily enter the Manager's House, but once inside they can only go to the gift shop area. The small museum and living room are located down a small set of stairs that visitors in wheelchairs or walkers cannot easily descend. Hardware is noncompliant, turning areas are tight, and thresholds create obstacles. The interiors of all buildings at Independence Mine SHP present these issues and obstacles to visitors.

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## BUILDING EXTERIORS

**SIDING:** Common conditions on the siding include paint failure, missing siding, weathering, water damage, and general damage. Missing and damaged siding is a condition that does not warrant further explanation, but paint failures will be described below.



**PAINT:** Common types of paint failure that are evident at Independence Mine include pollutants, peeling, crazing, cracking, peeling, and failure possibly due to intercoat bond breaking. Each type of paint failure is briefly discussed below.

*Pollutants* are not an immediate threat to the building and paint. However, all pollutants (grime, dirt, soot, cobwebs) must be removed prior to any new paint



treatment. Organic matter and insects are evident on the buildings throughout the park.<sup>15</sup>

*Crazing* is a condition that should be addressed with relative haste. Hairline cracks in the top surface of the paint are evidence of crazing. Crazing is caused when the bond between the layers has started to fail as moisture enters between the paint and wood, deteriorating the

bond. Failure will continue as moisture continues to get between the paint and wood.<sup>16</sup>

*Intercoat peeling* is another issue that should be addressed quickly. Oftentimes, intercoat peeling is a result of a painting surface that was not appropriately treated prior to paint application or an incompatibility of paint types and substrate. This is most evident on buildings at Independence Mine that have exposed wood.<sup>17</sup>

*Peeling* to bare wood is often due to extreme moisture gathering in the wood and causing expansion of the material so that the adhesion eventually breaks. Peeling can cause rapid deterioration since the protective layer is no longer present.<sup>18</sup>

*Cracking* is evidence of long-term neglect. Cracking is a form of crazing that was not corrected. The holes in the paint continue to capture moisture, causing wood to expand and create bond failure between the paint and the substrate. As the cracking continues, large pieces of paint will flake off the building.<sup>19</sup>



<sup>15</sup> Weeks, Kay D. and David W. Look, "Preservation Brief #10: Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Wood," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, September 1982, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 6-7.

**WINDOWS:** The most apparent window conditions at Independence Mine are seen in the storm windows using inappropriate materials for the district, boarded windows, and broken panes. Other conditions are present at the park, but are less noticeable; however, smaller conditions are very important due to the cumulative distraction presented to the visitor. To fully understand window conditions, *Preservation Brief #9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows* is appended to this document for quick reference.

Individual *window panes* at the Park are either comprised of original glass, replacement glass, or plexiglass (Lexan). Each building of the complex presents a mixture of window materials. To gain an understanding of what material will likely be encountered, each pane type is described below.

The original glass found at Independence Mine is wavy and extremely distinctive. Original glass is easily distinguished when seen in close proximity to replacement glass. Due to the manufacturing processes of newer glass, the waviness disappears, providing a clearer view to the outside.

Plexiglass or lexan were used to replace original glass in storm windows and historic windows in a limited number of buildings. Both materials have a tendency to become opaque due to pitting and they yellow over time. Opaque panes are evident throughout the park and detract from the overall appearance of the buildings. Both materials also have a tendency to break at extremely cold temperatures.

**STORM WINDOWS:** The Manager's House is the only building that currently uses storm windows. However, these storm windows are a hodgepodge of four different types, a surprising fact considering the small size of this building. A twelve pane wood exterior storm window, the one-over-one exterior wood storm window, and plexiglass storms windows are all used. In some cases, the plexiglass has been placed in wood frames while others are simply inserted in the window spaces with no framing.

**FOUNDATIONS:** Many wood pile foundations at Independence Mine were replaced in 2005, with new concrete foundations. In other cases, buildings are still situated on wood piles that are likely rotting or showing signs of decay. Concrete foundations will last longer and provide better stability. Wood skirting surrounds the buildings, covering the actual structural members of the buildings. The skirting allows for access so inspections can occur. The skirting is historically accurate.

**ROOF:** Most buildings at Independence Mine received new corrugated sheet metal roofs during the 2005 rehabilitations. Currently, the roofs are stable. However, two common issues encountered with sheet metal roofs will be described for future reference: galvanic action and fatigue. *Galvanic action* happens when two materials that are completely different in nature

are used in a roofing system. The different chemical compositions of these metals can cause them to react; and this reaction may be catalyzed by rainwater as it corrodes the metals. The second issue is *fatigue*, which is often evident at the joints and near protrusions. Fatigue is likely the most common form of roof deterioration at the site and should be addressed immediately.<sup>20</sup>

	Manager's House	Bunkhouse #2	Bunkhouse #1	Framing Shops	Bunkhouse/Warehouse	Assay Office	Mill Shops	Mill Complex	Apartment House	Electrical Shops	Engineering Office	Mess Hall
<b>Water Damage</b>		X	X		X				X	X	X	
<b>Finishes</b>	X	X	X		X	X			X	X	X	
<b>Use Damage</b>	X	X	X						X			
<b>Routine Upkeep</b>		X	X		X				X	X	X	
<b>Pests</b>	X		X									
<b>Accessibility</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	
<b>Siding</b>		X	X	X							X	
<b>Paint</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	
<b>Windows</b>		X	X	X	X				X	X	X	
<b>Storm Windows</b>	X	X	X		X	X			X	X	X	
<b>Foundations</b>				X		X	X			X		
<b>Roof</b>				X			X			X		
<b>Site Accessibility</b>		X	X									
<b>Amenities</b>												
<b>Ruins</b>				X			X	X		X		
<b>Artifacts</b>		X	X	X			X	X		X		

Table 1: Shows the existing conditions and in which buildings the conditions are found.

## SITE AND LANDSCAPE

**ACCESSIBILITY:** Great efforts have been made to create a park that is as accessible as possible, a difficult task due to the extremely varied topography and the historic positioning of the buildings. Paved areas of the park create a core area that provides outdoor access to all the standing and ruinous buildings. In many cases the accessibility ends at the door steps of the

<sup>20</sup> Sweetser, Sarah M., "Preservation Brief #4: Roofing for Historic Buildings," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, February 1978, p. 6.

historic buildings. The Manager's House and Bunkhouse #2 are the only buildings that can be easily entered by people with varied abilities. Static site interpretation (signs) is appropriately positioned for people of different ages and abilities.

**AMENITIES:** Site amenities are spread throughout the site and include interpretive shelters, benches, trash receptacles, and interpretive signs. Most amenities appear to be in relatively good condition. Benches are adequately spaced for resting. Trash receptacle availability is extremely limited. Bathrooms are located near the parking area and in the Manager's House. No other restroom facilities are operational.

**RUINS:** Ruins are scattered throughout the heart of the park and found in the greater bowl area. Some are standing while others have completely collapsed. Standing ruins present a safety issue to visitors that wander off the trails. Other ruins present a danger to standing buildings as they continue to collapse. In certain instances, ruinous buildings house a variety of artifacts yet to be inventoried.

**ARTIFACTS:** Artifacts are located throughout the park, on the landscape, in buildings, and in ruins. The amount, type, value, and condition of these resources are unknown at this time. A determination to differentiate site debris from artifacts has not been undertaken.

**PARK ACCESS:** Currently, Gold Chord Road, which is paved, is open in summer all the way to the upper level parking, which functions as a "drop-off" zone, provides handicap and staff parking, and is an emergency vehicle access point. When the snow falls, however, this road is only plowed up to the Independence Bowl parking lot, which is approximately a mile from the mine. To access the park during the winter months, visitors must walk, ski, or snowshoe as the area is closed to most motorized vehicles in winter. Only adjacent landowners at Gold Chord Mine, park staff, and contracted facility maintenance crews are allowed motorized vehicle access in winter. The park's roads and trails become popular cross-country ski trails when there is sufficient snow on the ground.

**POWER:** The electrical grid is located nearly ten miles away on Hatcher Pass Road. Two diesel generators provide power at Independence Mine. The generators are relatively new since they were purchased in 2010. At that time, the battery bank and inverter charging system in the Visitor Center was upgraded. These upgrades save fuel and reduce noise. Power is currently supplied to the Manager's House, Bunkhouse #2, and Assay Office.

## MAINTENANCE

Park Staff and volunteers currently perform maintenance tasks, which is generally reactive rather than preventive, with the most pressing issues taking precedence. Overall, the grounds are free of debris and walkways are well maintained. The buildings, however, are neglected



inside and out. Windows are broken, siding is missing, indoor static displays are falling apart and building interiors are dirty. It is unclear whether there is an official approach to maintenance.

## PARTNERSHIPS

ADPOR has well-established relationships with many organizations in the area. Friends of State Parks, Mat-Su provides information to visitors, is a source of volunteers, generates funds for the park, and advocates for Independence Mine. The Archives and Special Collections Department of the University of Alaska Anchorage has an agreement with ADPOR to house numerous collections items on long-term storage that were deposited there by ADPOR in 1981 and 1989. An informal partnership, mostly consisting of information exchanges, exists between the Gold Cord mine and ADPOR. The Dorothy Page Museum in Wasilla has permanent exhibits displaying artifacts and information about the Willow Creek Mining District.

## COLLECTIONS AND RESEARCH

### COLLECTIONS

Independence Mine has a variety of organic and inorganic items in its collections including artifacts, photographs, and research documents. Many of these items are currently stored in boxes at the Finger Lake Office, but others are on display or in storage throughout the park, especially in the Manager's House and Assay Office. An unknown number of artifacts are located in collapsed and collapsing buildings. In February 2009, ADPOR employees retrieved the Starkey Wilson collection from Texas. This collection was auctioned from Wilson's storage unit, and then sold on eBay by Martin Pigg. Friends of State Parks, Mat-Su purchased the collection from Pigg and donated it to ADPOR. The Starkey Wilson collection includes many research documents, photographs, and artifacts related to the Willow Creek District. It is currently stored in boxes at the Finger Lake Office.

The park's collections have not been evaluated in recent years and many of the items are stored in unsecured locations in an uncontrolled environment. ADPOR made several attempts since the winter of 2004 to organize and inventory Independence Mine collections. Employees learned to use PastPerfect museum software and began writing a mission statement to guide the selection of appropriate items for a permanent collection. ADPOR staff digitized approximately 150 photographs and negatives, but the hard drive that contained the database crashed and the project ended due to lack of funding. In November 2007, Independence Mine requested and received additional grant funding from the Office of History and Archaeology to resume the project. By the end of December, digital photos of artifacts contained in eight

boxes at the Finger Lake office had been taken and a photo inventory was made of the visitor center, bunkhouses, warehouse, engineering office, apartment building, and mess hall. These images were stored on a computer and backup CD. ADPOR never finalized the mission statement meant to guide a collections policy.

In addition to Independence Mine collections, artifacts associated with the site are on display at the Dorothy Page Museum in Wasilla. The University of Alaska Anchorage houses a variety of photographs, reports, research documents, and artifacts in two collections. The Stoll family collection includes papers, maps, and photographs related to Independence Mine and Alaska-Pacific Consolidated Mining Company (APC Mining Company) from 1922-1987. The APC Mining Company collection provides researchers an opportunity to view administration and operation records, historic files, interviews and correspondence, photographs, negatives, slides, maps, and building plans. Many items in this collection were deposited by ADPOR in 1981 and 1989. The agreement for the deposit is for long-term storage of research materials relating to Independence Mine. The University's Archives and Special Collections Department must house the collection under appropriate conditions, make the records accessible to the public, provide copies for ADPOR employees at the cost of duplication, and allow the division to inspect the collection. The collection may return to the division if the University fails to meet these conditions.

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## RESEARCH

Numerous bulletins produced by the United States Geological Survey describe the geology and early history of mining at Independence Mine.<sup>21</sup> The most comprehensive history of Independence Mine was written by Kathryn Koutsky Cohen in 1982 for Alaska State Parks.<sup>22</sup> Cohen's study, *Independence Mine and the Willow Creek District*, covers a variety of topics including the discovery of gold in the region, the numerous mines operated in Willow Creek District, transportation, technology, the lives of miners, and an overview of life at Independence Camp. The bibliography is useful for researchers, but the location of some of the sources is no longer accurate. This study is no longer in print due to the use of an outdated printing technology.

## PARK STAFF

Independence Mine State Historical Park is managed as a unit of Alaska State Parks' Matanuska-Susitna/Copper River Basin Area. DPOR staff that manages this large area, comprised of 24

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<sup>21</sup> Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources, Geological and Geophysical Surveys, Digital Collection of Alaska Mining Publications (Fairbanks: Alaska Dept of Natural Resources) available from <http://www.dggs.dnr.state.ak.us/pubs/>.

<sup>22</sup> Cohen, Kathryn Koutsky, *Independence Mine and the Willow Creek District* (Anchorage: Alaska Dept of Natural Resources, Office of History and Archaeology, 1982), 48.

units, has a Park Superintendent, two Ranger II, four Ranger Is, three Natural Resource Technician IIs, a Maintenance Generalist Journey II, a Maintenance Generalist Sub Journey II, an Office Assistant II, an Administrative Officer I, and an Accounting Clerk I. Only a seasonal permanent Park Specialist is assigned specifically to Independence Mine during the summer months. A Ranger I assigned to the Hatcher Pass Management Area services Independence Mine in addition to all units in the Management Area. Area-wide maintenance staff also work in Independence Mine as necessary and practicable. The duties performed by the Park Ranger, Park Specialist, and maintenance staff include performing maintenance activities, gathering trash, collecting fees, administering park operations, and providing public safety and visitor services to park users, which severely limits the amount of time they can devote to any single unit under their care.

Volunteers are an integral component of Independence Mine management. Current volunteerism allows the small staff to provide basic services to residents and visitors and occasionally put on special events such as guided interpretive tours inside some of the buildings. Volunteers also help make Independence Mine a more visitor friendly park by providing their service in the visitor center (Manager's House) and by providing literature and mementos for sale there. Currently, full-time, seasonal volunteers are housed on the second floor of Bunkhouse No. 2.

Independence Mine boasts a very active and engaged volunteer base including the Friends of State Parks, Mat-Su who have taken on and successfully accomplished many projects for the benefit of the park and its users. Volunteer programs such as these demonstrate local support and incrementally improve local sponsorship of park programs through active engagement—residents that work in the park generally support park efforts.

## INTERPRETATION

“Interpretation is a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and meanings inherent in the resource.”<sup>23</sup> At Independence Mine, visitors are presented with a unique recreational and educational opportunity enhanced by the historical significance of the park and its extraordinary natural and cultural setting.

The following section provides a summary of current personal and non-personal interpretation in and about the park.

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<sup>23</sup> National Association for Interpretation, Definition Project, “Definition of Interpretation”, [http://www.definitionsproject.com/definitions/def\\_full\\_term.cfm](http://www.definitionsproject.com/definitions/def_full_term.cfm) (Accessed July 22, 2010).

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## PERSONAL INTERPRETATION

Personal interpretation occurs when one person is interpreting to another, such as during a guided tour.

### **GUIDED TOURS**

Underground tours of the water tunnel and mine camp tours have both been offered to park visitors in the past. The Friends of Mat-Su State Parks group offered the *underground tours* once a year as fundraisers until the mine entrance was deemed too dangerous for public access in 2009. Park rangers and neighboring miners were generally involved as tour guides, but the Friends of Independence Mine were in charge of everything else regarding these fundraisers. This tour cost \$100.00 per person and lasted approximately three hours. A waterproof jacket and pants, rubber boots, and hardhats were provided and, after the tour, the group was taken to the privately owned Hatcher Pass Lodge for lunch.

*Independence Mine camp tours* have been offered yearly, except for in 2010, for many years. These tours are free to the public and last approximately an hour. These tours are currently offered from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. every day are lead by four volunteers and the Park Specialist. During these tours, visitors get to see the inside of the Manager's House, the Schoolroom in the Engineering Office and Warehouse, the Apartment Building, the No.1 Bunkhouse, and the Mess Hall or Cookhouse while the tour guide explains the uses and history of these buildings and their role in everyday life and operations of Independence Mine. These tours are based on a training paper prepared by former park ranger Pat Murphy.

### **PRIVATE COMPANY TOURS**

Private tour companies also provide visitors with guided tours of the Independence Mine camp. However, these companies are not given access to the inside of the mine camp's buildings, so the tours are strictly outdoors unless the museum in the Assay Building and the visitor center in the Manager's House are open at the time of the tour. All private tour companies must obtain a commercial use permit prior to taking tour groups through Independence Mine.

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## NON-PERSONAL INTERPRETATION

Non-personal interpretation occurs when the person interpreting is removed and replaced with another type of media, such as an interpretive display, audio tour, or self-guided brochure.

**VISITOR CENTER/MANAGER'S HOUSE:**

The historic structure that once was the residence of Independence Mine's manager has been adapted to serve as a visitor center and living quarters for volunteers. The lower level serves as the visitor center that volunteers operate. The old living room and dining room area is furnished with chairs and couches lined up against the wall and serves as a small-scale museum with displays of artifacts from Independence Mine's period of operation. Historic photographs of people and structures of Independence Mine, most from circa 1940 adorn the walls. Overall, this space serves to give visitors an overview of the mine manager's lifestyle in the more general scope of the mining camp.



ADPOR rehabilitated the kitchen to interpret the mine's period of peak operation. Visitors are presented with opportunities to make an emotional and intellectual connection to this site when the building is open. This room contains a few noteworthy interpretive displays such as a "Touch Tunnel", an interactive display titled "People of Independence Mine", and "From Mine to Money" a mixed-media display. Other interpretive panels

include "Hard Rock Mining" and "Independence Mine..." Two table-top displays of mining artifacts portray the working hours of a miner's life. These panels, photos, and artifacts interpret life at the mine.



Much of this interpretive material is effective and deserves the space it occupies; however, there are too many displays and, as a result, the space is cluttered and the effectiveness of the interpretation is reduced.

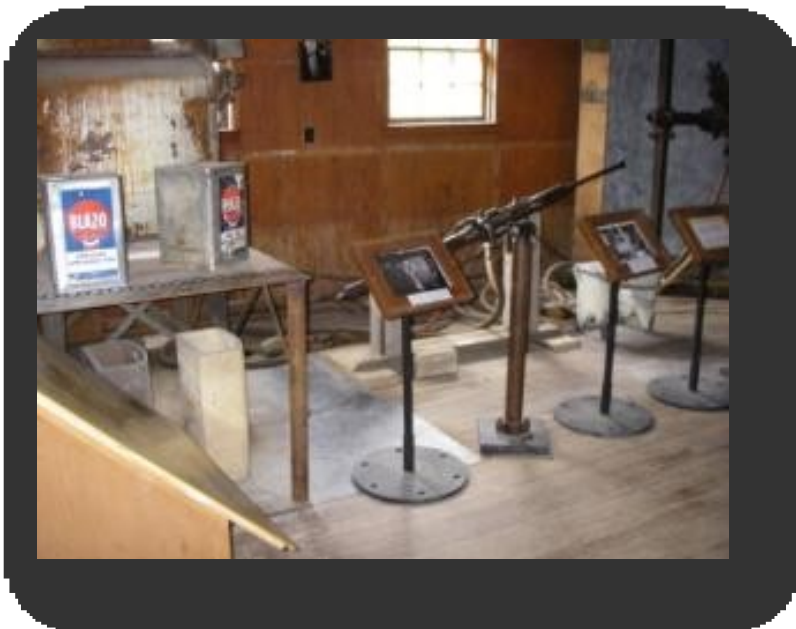
**MUSEUM/ASSAY OFFICE:**

Historically, the Assay Office housed the essential operations of testing the quality of gold ore and efficacy of the mill extraction process and retorting (separating the mercury from the gold by distillation). Much of the equipment used in these processes remain in the building and now interpret the history of mining operations to park visitors. Upon entering this building, an interpretive panel and bench in the main hallway welcomes them.



The *retort room* contains an array of historic equipment including the old retort furnace, barrels, and a wooden slide and container. In a corner of the room, a panel that is mounted on a small pedestal illustrates the retorting process that took place in this room.

The *furnace room* is next and contains historic equipment, artifacts, and photos related to the processes occurring in this room. The photographs are mounted on free-standing pedestals with descriptive captions directly below them. Fuel cans, a wooden bench, a metal table,



hoses, pipes, and other pieces of large metal equipment are exhibited behind a linked chain pedestrian barrier. A large interpretive panel on a wooden block pedestal describes the process of fire assaying in which the furnace was crucial for providing the right temperatures to separate the gold from other minerals.

The **balance room** contains a safe that is originally from Fern or Rae Wallace Mine and a small wooden platform on which the Heusser

Gold Balance once sat. A payroll tracker that looks much like a hand-written version of an excel spreadsheet is mounted on one of the walls and allows the visitor to get a glimpse of how business was conducted and there, what some of the employees were paid, and how often they were paid.

The **bucking room** is across the hall from the balance room and contains an assortment of artifacts and furniture. The first thing that the visitor encounters upon entering the room is an empty shelving unit. A Mueller full front oil-fired bake oven is located on a pad at the rear of the room. Worktables line the outer wall and are covered with various pieces of equipment including a chipmunk crusher, pails and other containers, hoses, wooden frames, and other scraps. Hefty trusses are attached to the wall at the sides of the windows supporting a metal bar near the top of the windows with wheels or gears attached.

At the front of the room is an interpretive panel on a wooden block pedestal that reveals how the bucking room was used during the 1930s and '40s operation of Independence mine. A drill display at the front of the room on the floor next to the interpretive panel is currently unidentified unless a staff member is there to explain what it is. A shelving unit with a few artifacts and a small wooden worktable with a metal top are on the wall opposite the windows.

The next room at the front of the building directly across the hallway from the retort room is the **laboratory**. Historically, this room contained chemicals used to detect iron, lead, copper, and zinc in the ore samples. Today this room contains a map of Alaska, a panel about the gold rush hanging on a wall, and a panel interpreting the laboratory and the types of gold ore and scheelite tested at the assay office. This panel is mounted on a wooden block pedestal and the lower left-hand corner of the panel is broken.



### ***BUNKHOUSE NO.1***

The first floor of Bunkhouse No. 1 is furnished to represent the period when employees of the mine bunked here. The entry room has two pool tables, black and white photos portraying life



at the mine and in the bunk house, a water fountain, an old fire hydrant, a wooden bench, and a sconce-style light fixture on a pillar between the two pool tables. One of the tables is in good condition but the other is in disrepair and the playing surface is littered with broken pieces. These tables were donated by Lucky Shot Mine, however, and did not originally belong at Independence Mine. A “dry and change” room contains a large

closet space for hanging wet work cloths and restroom facilities (not in working order).

The second floor contains bunk rooms; four of these rooms have old furnishings designed to evoke a sense of the mine’s heyday. The furnishings look old, worn, and dilapidated and, therefore, they misrepresent what was known as the best lodging for miners in the Willow Creek Mining District. The rooms used as exhibits have cords across the doors restricting visitors from entering these rooms. The rest of the rooms on the second and third floors are mainly empty.

### ***BUNKHOUSE NO.2***

The first floor of Bunkhouse No.2 housed a small movie theater for the workers and inhabitants and doubled as a classroom for the children of Independence Mine during the daytime. Today, the “Theater Room” is occasionally used as a classroom for avalanche trainings and is equipped with foldable tables and chairs and a few smaller wooden tables. A local resident returned the original film projector to Independence Mine in 2009.



A first floor room is dedicated to interpreting life of the miners and muckers with outdated interpretive panels, photos, and shelves exhibiting old mining equipment along the walls. The equipment displayed on the shelves is not labeled adequately; they evoke a sense of the past, but they do not provide visitors with appropriate opportunities for intellectual and emotional connections.

### ***APARTMENT BUILDING***

Four small apartments are located in the apartment building. Each has a living area, kitchen, and full bathroom downstairs and small sleeping area with a closet upstairs. Two of these units are decorated to represent the time period in which they were inhabited. The rug, upholstery, and other fabrics on display are period, but they are tattered, stained, and worn.



### ***ENGINEERING OFFICE AND WAREHOUSE***

The Engineering Office and Warehouse accommodated the first schoolroom at Independence Mine. The schoolroom is currently static museum depicting a typical period classroom with a teacher's desk and chalkboard at the front of the class and seating for the students in back. The furnishings are sparse and inaccurately represent the period. The collection of historic books in this room did not originally belong to the school at Independence Mine, but are accurate to the period; many of these books are damp. The maps contribute to the classroom display, but they are not historically accurate and detract from any attempt at interpreting the room. The desks are from Palmer. The schoolroom exhibit creates a visually stimulating, but underutilized display that has potential for personal interpretation and "living history" programs, despite limited funding and staff time.

### ***MESS HALL***

The Mess Hall housed the kitchen and dining hall on the first floor, housing on the second floor and storage in the basement. First floor rooms contain original built-in furniture and large, cumbersome equipment. The kitchen area and dishwashing machine display a few dishes and there is a table in the dining area that is set for dinner. Behind this table are





two bare tables. This area is roped off to prevent visitors from entering the display. Upstairs, one of the supervisors' apartments is currently a static display with sparse furnishings.

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## INTERPRETIVE PANELS

There are 32 panels located outdoors throughout Independence Mine SHP that deal with a variety of topics such as historic uses of specific mine buildings, gold and gold mining, the Willow Creek mining district, life at the mine, and an orientation to Hatcher Pass. Most of these panels were designed and installed in 2001 or 2002, the only exception being the panel titled "Echoes of Independence" that was produced in 2009 and is displayed on the historic Mill Trail above the trestle. In this section, the panels are grouped by content and discussed as groups. Please refer to [Appendix X](#) for a more detailed account of the park's interpretive panels.

**INTRODUCTORY PANELS:** The seven introductory panels are located near the park's entrance. Two are in the parking area in a Type A kiosk; one presents a brief overview of Independence Mine's history and some activities that the park offers. The other introduces the larger Hatcher Pass area and provides a brief description of recreation opportunities with a map to orient visitors to Hatcher Pass.

Above the parking area and near the Manager's House is a six panel Type C kiosk. One of these panels is a duplicate of a panel located in the parking area and provides a brief overview of Independence Mine's history and park activities. The other five panels present an introduction to the site including:

1. timeline of important events worldwide, and specific to Alaska and Independence Mine
2. definitions for mining-specific vocabulary with visual representations
3. a discussion of the gold-bearing Talkeetna Mountains geological formation
4. an overview of the two types of gold mining
5. a brief description of family life at Independence Mine's Boomtown

These panels were completed in 2001 and 2002 and are in excellent condition, with a bit of fading from constant exposure to sunlight. An outdated Alaska State Parks logo is located on the lower right hand corner.

**HISTORIC FEATURE PANELS:** Historic feature panels identify each of Independence Mine's historic buildings and their role in the operation of the mine and the daily activities of the mining camp's residents. Independence Mine boasts 16 historic feature panels. Most of these panels are placed next to the structures or sites they interpret.

ADPOR produced and installed historic feature panels in 2001 and 2002 and appear in excellent condition though they have faded some from constant exposure to the elements. The "Framing Shop" panel is the only panel in the park that is damaged. The lower, left-hand corner of this



panel is missing; however, this deformity does not interfere with the panel's content and it is not immediately noticeable.

**DAILY LIFE PANELS:** Four panels are dedicated to interpreting daily life at Independence Mine. They allow visitors to take a step into the area's past and imagine what it was like to live and work at the mine during its peak years of operation. However, the content of these panels do relate to structures and activities at Independence Mine, just like the content of the historic feature panels relates the structures to the mine and the mining camp's daily activities.

Produced in 2001 and 2002, these panels are in excellent condition, though a bit faded from constant exposure to the elements.

**BROCHURES:** There currently are no brochures produced by ADPORA that deal specifically with Independence Mine. A previously-produced brochure was last printed in 2008 and visitors make the need for a brochure known on a daily basis during the summer months. However, the Interpretation and Education Program is designing a brochure for the Hatcher Pass East Management Area, which includes Independence Mine. This brochure meets ADPORA standards for Alaska State Park brochures. This brochure will provide a welcome message with a brief introduction to the park, a short history section, descriptions of the park's highlights, and safety information. The centerfold will contain a map of the Hatcher Pass East Management Area and will highlight recreational opportunities in connection to the map.

## CHAPTER 6: ACTION STRATEGIES



### PRESERVATION ZONES

To facilitate continued preservation, development, program expansion, visitor growth, and general enjoyment of Independence Mine by residents and visitors, the planning team devised preservation zones. These designations are intended to guide development, use, interpretation, and preservation treatments. Preservation zones do not change the land-use designations identified in the *Hatcher Pass Management Plan*. They provide additional guidance to park staff, design professionals, park management, and the public as they make building- and area-specific decisions and recommendations related to historic preservation and interpretation.

The planning team established four preservation zones for Independence Mine, each with a unique preservation objective for the buildings, rooms, archaeology and landscape. These objectives will be used to guide decisions in each zone, while preserving and interpreting the historic resources at the park.

### PRESERVATION ZONE ONE

*Preservation Zone One* is identified in rooms of specific buildings such as the Manager's House living room and two apartments in the apartment house. The spaces that are identified for restoration are primarily interpretive in nature. The remainder of these buildings is identified for a different distinct preservation treatment. The overall goal of these spaces is to recreate and interpret what life was like at Independence Mine in 1942.

**The primary preservation treatment in Zone One is restoration.** Cultural assets in this zone represent an important historical function of the historic resource, are critical to understanding the resource and to the visitor experience, embody distinctive qualities (such as unique materials, features, details, or craftsmanship), or achieve additional significance due to associations with important people, styles of architecture, or events. The highest priorities in Zone One should be maintaining, preserving, and protecting all historic resources. Work that takes place in this zone should follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Restoration and use the period of 1942 to guide decisions. The overall definition of restoration is "*the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its*

history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period.”<sup>24</sup> The Restoration Standards are attached in Appendix B.

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## PRESERVATION ZONE TWO

*Preservation Zone Two* encompasses the Mine Shops, Mill Ruin, Framing Shop, Plumbing, Sheet Metal, Electrical and Storage Shops, and the majority of the landscape. These areas are mostly ruinous in nature and that quality has become, over time, a character-defining element of the park. Items on the landscape should be preserved, to the greatest extent possible, in place.

**The primary treatment in Zone Two is Preservation.** Areas designated as Zone Two are historically important to the understanding of the overall resource, augment the visitor experience, represent distinctive qualities (such as unique materials, features, details, or craftsmanship), or achieve additional significance due to associations with important people, styles of architecture, or important events. Zone Two areas are designated when specific uses for the property have not been identified, but stabilization is necessary for future use, or when the level of deterioration has become a character-defining feature of the area. *“Preservation is defined as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property.”*<sup>25</sup> All resources in Zone Two should receive regular monitoring in order to assess the condition. When work on Zone Two resources is needed, a “soft touch” approach should be taken (Appendix B). Public safety must always be a high priority when allowing nature to take its course. The ruinous nature must remain intact at these locations, to the greatest extent feasible.

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## PRESERVATION ZONE THREE

*Preservation Zone Three* includes the Assay Office, Bunkhouse #1, Bunkhouse #2, Manager’s House, Bunkhouse/Warehouse, Apartment House, Engineering Office & Commissary, and Mess Hall, all standing buildings. The core of the park along the ADA accessible pathways should be used as a rehabilitation zone.

**The primary treatment in Zone Three is Rehabilitation.** Areas designated as Zone Three may embody characteristics or features that are distinctive in their own right, and contain spatial relationships from the period of significance, but are secondary to the historic district as a whole. These areas are less significant than Zone One areas. Still, every effort should be made to retain original features and fabric in rehabilitation areas. New materials and features can be introduced in rehabilitation zones if done sensitively and the intact primary character-defining

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<sup>24</sup>

<sup>25</sup>

features are retained. *“Rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.”*<sup>26</sup> All work conducted in Zone Three must adhere to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation (Appendix B).

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## PRESERVATION ZONE FOUR

**PRESERVATION ZONE FOUR** comprises the lower parking area and boom town. These areas are mostly away from the interpretive core of the park and allow for continued development.

**The primary treatment in Zone Four areas is renovation.** Zone Four areas are those areas where changes will not significantly diminish the historic character and value of the property as a whole. Modifications, renovations, and intrusions are acceptable; however, additions must still be sympathetic to the historic nature of the park. Zone Four areas can accommodate more changes than other designated zones. Zone Four areas are often undistinguished or repetitive in nature unless they represent a part of a larger ensemble of features, or are closely associated with other more significant site features.

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## MANAGER’S HOUSE

The Manager’s House should be used as a visitor center and administrative offices for the Independence Mine complex. To adequately function as a visitor center, a complete redesign is necessary and should address accessibility, use areas and programming. An effective visitor center should allow visitors to orientate themselves,



reflect on their visit/tour, provide park staff with a chance to greet guests, and offer merchandise. To facilitate this use, the entirety of the Manager’s House is identified as a Zone Three (Rehabilitation) using the established Preservation Zones.

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To fulfill this objective, many tasks should be undertaken to create a great Visitor Center. Priorities include developing an accessibility plan for the entire first floor, providing access to the deck from the outside, repairing wainscoting, fabricating storm windows (glass and wood), replacing carpeting, creating gift shop space that flows with the building's interior, repainting the entire house, using appropriate wall coverings that are based on historic evidence, and replacing light fixtures with ones that are based on historic evidence.

There are many spaces and features of the building that define its character. The exterior features that should be retained include the overall shape of the building, the stone chimney, horizontal wood siding, exposed rafters, metal roof, wood windows and doors. Important aspects of the interior include the fireplace, volume of space in the great room, stairs, wainscoting, wall finishes, balcony, railings, and doors.

Secondary spaces have more flexibility for change. Some of these spaces include the upstairs bedrooms, bathrooms, interpretive room, and gift shop room.

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## BUNKHOUSE NO. 2

Appropriate uses for Bunkhouse No. 2 include a rotating collection space, teaching space, and static interpretive displays. Proposed uses for specific spaces are identified in Figure #???



Bunkhouse #2 should be the second stop visitors make after leaving the Manager's House. The lobby space should be used as a functioning classroom and a theater for interpretive programs with appropriate period furnishings. The infirmary and first aid rooms could be rehabilitated as interpreter office space and gift shop. The drying room could be reused as rotating collection space. A long range

goal could include using the third floor as staff and volunteer housing.

To quickly understand historic accommodations at Independence Mine, two to four rooms on the second floor should be furnished and restored for interpretive purposes. In the short term, rest of the second and third floors, as well as the first floor bathroom should be secured with no visitor access. Uses for these spaces should be periodically reassessed if park needs change and require use of these spaces such as additional staff and volunteer housing on the third floor. If

visitors are allowed on the second floor or third floors, a second means of egress must be established. Before staff housing is permitted on the third floor, a plan should be developed to secure the rotating collection on the first floor and static interpretive display on the second floor. It is important to consider separation between visitor programs and staff living spaces.

Overall, the appropriate treatment for this building is rehabilitation (Zone Three) including interior spaces in the building. The interior spaces are further subdivided to provide more room-by-room specificity. The bunk rooms on the second floor to be used for interpretation should be restored to the fullest extent possible making them the exception.

Primary characteristics that should be retained are the entire exterior of the building including the overall shape of the building, horizontal wood siding, color pattern, windows, porch, exposed rafters, roof material, and doors. Interior elements that should be preserved include the stairwell, theater space, doors, existing wood paneling, light fixtures, wood ceiling, and hallways on the second and third floors.

Secondary spaces that should be given more flexibility include the Infirmary, Nurse's Quarters, bathroom, and locker room. Individual spaces on the second and third floor should also have an adequate amount of flexibility to ensure future use.

Work that should be done immediately includes painting, repairing windows, controlling pests, insulating (first floor), installing a vapor barrier (first floor), installing sheetrock (first floor), fabricating wall treatment (first floor), establish rotating collection space, establish interpretive office space, acquire film equipment, refinish floors, construct new built-in tables, ensure the entire first floor is accessible

Items that should be considered in the future includes stair thresholds, second means of egress on the north bathroom areas of the second and third floors, configure sample bunkrooms on the second floor for interpretive purposes, and install appropriate period finishes.

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#### BUNKHOUSE NO. 1

Bunkhouse #1 should be used for visitor lodging and accommodations. To use this building to the fullest extent, ADPOR should allow a concessionaire to use the building and in return for the use, the concessionaire could rehabilitate the building to approved ADPOR standards.

Rehabilitation standards (Zone Three) should be applied to the entire building. Fire and safety will be an important component of any rehabilitation. A second means of egress must be included in any rehabilitation as well as meeting all fire and safety requirements. An



appropriate location for a new stairwell is in the bunkrooms on the EAST side of the building. A door leading outside from this stairwell is necessary.

Accessibility must also be addressed and accommodations should be made on the first floor for accessible rooms. If a porch is added to the building, appropriate accommodations should be made to have the main entrance completely accessible.

The arctic entry should be

appropriately rehabilitated to stop the entry from pulling away from the rest of the building as it is currently doing. . All lexan window panes should be replaced and storm windows fabricated and installed.

Primary characteristics of the building that should be retained to the fullest extent possible are the entire exterior including the siding, paint color, windows, doors, roof material, exposed rafters, and porch. Interior primary characteristics are limited to the following spaces: lobby, wood doors, second and third floor corridors, room numbers, wood floors, wood stairwells, and radiators.

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#### ASSAY OFFICE

Two primary uses were identified for the Assay Office– the first floor should be museum space and the second floor should serve as storage space for frequently used collections or consumptive use objects. The Assay Office should be mostly educational in nature, have established hours of operation, and interpret objects



housed in the first floor space with a clear educational mission and flow. Rehabilitation (Zone Three) standards should be used when work is conducted at this location.

The most pressing issue at the Assay Office is the foundation. A new foundation should be provided for the building. Flashing near the chimney should be inspected to ensure it is adequate. The exterior needs to be painted. Water damaged fiberboard on the interior should be replaced. Appropriate light fixtures that adequately illuminate displays and objects should be installed. Floors should be refinished.

Exterior primary character defining features at the Assay Office include the wood siding, paint color, windows, exposed rafters, doors, and roof material. Interior character defining features include wood floors, first floor plywood wall coverings, doors, elbow brackets that support ???,

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### ENGINEERING/COMMISSARY

Interpretation and stabilization should be the focuses of the Engineering/Commissary Building. The portions of the building that were historically used as the Engineering Office and the Commissary should be restored and interpreted with static displays. Other areas of the building, including the second floor and basement, should be stabilized and preserved for a future use. The overall treatment at the Engineering/Commissary building is Rehabilitation (Zone Three).

Immediate issues that should be addressed include exterior painting, window repair, and general cleaning of the interior. Spaces that should receive priority treatment include the commissary and engineering offices (located at the two ends of the building) for interpretive purposes.

Primary characteristics of the building's exterior include the wood siding, wood multi-light windows, paint color, roof material and configuration, porch, doors, and exposed rafters. Interior primary characteristics include flooring, spatial configuration, kiln, and trim.



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## APARTMENT HOUSE

Appropriate uses at the Apartment House include interpretation and artifact storage. The first floor apartments on the street side should be restored and appropriately furnished to convey everyday life at Independence Mine during the period of significance. The entire second floor can be used to store cleaning supplies and consumptive use objects that may be used in the



apartments in the future. The first floors of the apartments on the non-street facing side should be cleaned and repaired in the simplest way possible. No identified use is assigned to these spaces. The prevailing treatment for the Apartment House is restoration (Zone One). The two first floor apartments on the street should be restored while the other first floor spaces should be preserved. Second floor spaces should be rehabilitated.

The primary concern that should be addressed immediately is mold removal. Other issues that warrant attention prior to allowing visitors to enter the building include installation of wall and ceiling finishes, furnishings, paint, installation of appropriate light fixtures, window repairs, installation of appropriate floor and window coverings, and exterior painting.

Exterior character defining features include the roof material, windows, horizontal wood siding, paint color, and arctic entries (NO EXPOSED RAFTERS). Interior character defining features include the stairway, kitchen cabinets, celotex wall finish, doors, and under stair storage.

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## BUNKHOUSE/WAREHOUSE

The bunkhouse/warehouse should become the hub of maintenance and curatorial activities at the park. Ideally, the basement and first floor will house maintenance operations and equipment. The basement should be used for storage of equipment and large scale items that require repair from maintenance or curatorial staff. The first floor should be used for maintenance activities including but not limited to wood working, window repair, painting, and celotex repair.



The second and third floors should be used as curatorial space. The old school room could be used for processing and summer office space. Other rooms on the second floor should be equipped as storage space. Additional storage can be located on the third floor.



The most important changes that must take place in this building include first floor connectivity, proper ventilation in the first floor maintenance area, adequate equipment in both functional areas, and detailed requirements for collection storage.

The appropriate treatment for this building is Rehabilitation (Zone Three). Primary character defining

features of the bunkhouse/warehouse include the following exterior features: wood siding, paint color, windows, doors, porch, roof material, exposed rafters, and stairs. Interior character defining features include the light fixtures, heating pipes, trim, and wood floors.

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#### MESS HALL

The overall treatment for the Mess Hall is Rehabilitation (Zone 3). Different uses in different spaces will be necessary to fully occupy and use the building. The first floor should be used by a concessionaire. Potential uses include rental spaces for conferences or special events. A catering business could be located on site, reusing the kitchen spaces, dining hall, and lobby. The basement space could also be incorporated into this concessionaire space. The second floor should be used by ADPDR for staff and volunteer housing. Minor reconfiguration could take place to fully use the space. Ideally, five to seven people could occupy the second floor as programs and needs evolve and require onsite housing. All fire and safety requirements must be met prior to any occupation by staff or volunteers.



Rehabilitation priorities for the Mess Hall include painting, window rehabilitation, and rehabilitation of the two large apartments. The large apartments are well preserved spaces and are in overall good condition. To make them habitable, they need insulation, vapor barrier, electrical, and new drywall. Flooring should be refinished. Missing built-ins should be reconstructed. New appliances should be placed in the spaces. Doors need to be finished. The boarding rooms in the rear of the building should be reconfigured into one apartment and a new kitchen installed when the need for additional housing is demonstrated. The kitchen, dining hall, and lobby should be rehabilitated by a competitively selected concessionaire. In return for a long-term lease, a concessionaire should rehabilitate the interior space for a new



use. All work must adhere to OHA rehabilitation standards that will be specified in all agreements. An appropriate process for approval will be outlined in agreement documents.

Primary characteristics of the exterior include the wood siding, paint color, roof configuration, roof material, massing, windows, doors, porches, railings, exposed rafters, and water table. Interior character defining features will be identified for specific spaces. Important characteristics worthy of preservation in

the mess hall and lobby include the wainscoting, radiators, light fixtures, chair rails, quarter round, and doors. Characteristics of the kitchen that should be preserved include the wood-paneled wall and ceiling surfaces, built-ins, light fixtures, and meat hooks. Character defining features of the apartments include the built-ins, floor finishes, baseboards, trim, radiators, kitchen cabinets, doors, chair rail, and wainscoting.

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## MILL COMPLEX

The appropriate treatment for the Mill Complex is Preservation (Zone 2). Attempts can be made to preserve important characteristics of the mill including the trestle and end walls. However, the overall approach should be to preserve the remains as ruins. At this point, the centrally located mill ruin is a character defining feature of the site and should be preserved in its current condition. Efforts should be made to ensure the continued collapse of this structure does not impact other area resources including the Plumbing, Sheet Metal, Electrical, and Storage Shops. The debris scatter should be examined annually, to ensure it is not applying unnecessary pressure on standing remains.

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## TRESTLE

The trestle, located behind the back mill wall, should be reconstructed. A thorough record of the current trestle should be captured to inform the new design. Recordation could include a written description of the current structure, locating existing drawings, and photo documentation.

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## WATER TUNNEL

A study should be completed that addresses the structural integrity of the structure, identifies safety issues in the tunnel, identifies safety issues in the mine, and outlines the feasibility of a potential rehabilitation. ADPOR should implement the reasonable recommendations outlined in the study.

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## PLUMBING, SHEET METAL, ELECTRICAL, AND STORAGE SHOPS

These shops should be stabilized as soon as possible. An appropriate treatment is Preservation (Zone 2). In order to have a future use, the structures must remain standing. It is in the interest of ADPOR, to maintain existing buildings and stabilize them. Efforts should be made collect artifacts in accordance with the park's collection mission and policy.



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## FRAMING SHOPS

The framing shops should be primarily used for interpretive purposes to demonstrate the restoration and decay process during the short-term. The Framing Shops are identified for a Preservation Treatment (Zone Two). In the future, an appropriate new use can be identified. After all other buildings at Independence Mine are stabilized, parks needs should be evaluated to determine an appropriate use for the Framing Shops.

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## MINE SHOPS

Preservation (Zone Two) is an appropriate treatment for the Mine Shops. These buildings are beyond repair and should be managed as a ruin. Efforts should be made to ensure continued

collapse does not create an unsafe park. Collection of artifacts should be a priority and follow the park's established collection mission and policy.

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## POWER

ADPOR should explore using alternative energies to reduce the reliance on expensive diesel generators. Power should be supplied to all buildings when they are actively used for housing, staff, or interpretation.

## PARTNERSHIPS

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### PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Independence Mine should attempt to expand existing partnerships and develop new ones with organizations, individuals, institutions, and agencies. Partnerships will help Independence Mine reach a wider audience, create more education programs, conduct better research, host a broader range of events, maintain the buildings and collections, and develop targeted programs. A group of volunteers used as a reference team could provide knowledge, labor, and support for a variety of activities and projects in the park. Potential new partners could include, but are not limited to the following:

- Mat-Su Borough
- Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Mat-Su Borough School District
- Alaska State Museum
- Museums Alaska
- Palmer Historical Society
- Wasilla-Knik Historical Society
- Chickaloon Traditional Village Council
- Native Village of Eklutna
- Knik Tribal Council
- Hatcher Pass Lodge
- Gold Cord Mine
- Mat-Su Ski Club
- Mining History Association

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### CONCESSIONAIRE PROGRAM

A concession is a private business operating under a contract with ADPOR. It can enrich visitor experiences by providing products and services not normally provided by state employees. Many states have large concession programs in their state park system and Independence Mine

should use these existing programs as guidance for developing a program suited for Alaska.<sup>27</sup> Concession contracts in the State Park system are subject to restrictions found in Alaska Statute 41.21.027.

Selecting an appropriate concessionaire for Independence Mine should begin by inquiring about any concerns at the local level and seeking comments from the park advisory board. Any interested parties from the regional business community should submit a proposal. ADPOR should then review the proposals and conduct interviews to determine who best fits the needs of visitors to Independence Mine and the mission of Alaska State Parks, followed by seeking public comment about the preliminary decision. After the selection process is complete, the concessionaire should sign a written agreement with ADPOR. Some terms covered under a typical agreement could include, but are not limited to, length of the agreement, maintenance, rent, and insurance.

**BUILDINGS:** The Independence Mine public opinion survey concluded in February 2011. It revealed that many people are interested in year-round lodging, dining, and event space rental options in the park. Bunkhouse #1 has been identified in this plan as a space for visitor lodging and accommodations. The Mess Hall is an ideal building for providing dining options and rental space for special events and conferences. A viable option for providing these functions, while meeting visitor needs, is to secure an approved professional concessionaire for each of the operations.

The concessionaire would be responsible for renovation and maintenance while ADPOR retains ownership of the buildings. In return for renovation and maintenance work, a long-term written use agreement should be offered to the concessionaire. After it expires, all improvements made during the agreement would become property of ADPOR. Specific maintenance stipulations should be included in the contract and ADPOR should give approval before any structural improvements are implemented. In exchange for the opportunity to operate a business at Independence Mine, the concessionaire should pay an annual rental fee to ADPOR. Other state park systems choose to charge either an annual lump sum fee or a percentage of gross receipts, whichever is greater. The annual fee should be based on fair market rent. In addition to an annual fee, the concessionaire should provide ADPOR with proof of an insurance policy.

**INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS:** Providing visitors with multiple interpretive opportunities has the potential to create stewards of the park and its valuable resources. To promote an enhanced visitor experience at Independence Mine, a professional concessionaire could charge a fee to

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<sup>27</sup> Some state park concessionaire programs provide information online including California, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. ([http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=22551](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=22551)); (<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/business-opportunities-with-state-parks/index.htm>); (<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/lodges/becoming.htm>)



offer a variety of year-round, regularly scheduled programs and tours. The concessionaire may be responsible for guiding tours, staffing the visitor center, assisting with cleaning, maintenance, and curatorial duties, developing and providing an orientation film, and assisting with rotating exhibits. All interpretive programs led by a concessionaire should work closely with park staff and follow the interpretive guidelines outlined in this plan.

## COLLECTIONS AND RESEARCH

The Independence Mine collection has many cultural, academic, and interpretive values and should be preserved to the fullest extent possible. Systematic research will further guide management decisions, create better interpretive possibilities, and more accurately depict historic resources.

### COLLECTIONS MISSION

An effective mission statement can be used to guide direction and management of Independence Mine's collections. Using the unfinished mission statement for Independence Mine and mission statements from museums in Alaska as a guideline, the following was developed:

*The **MISSION** of the Independence Mine collection is to identify, collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret cultural materials that illustrate hard rock mining and community life in the Independence Mine bowl area.*

### MUSEUM SPECIALIST

In order to carry out this mission and to establish a museum program at Independence Mine, ADPOR should initially hire a short-term consultant who is trained in museum studies, archives, curatorial studies, or public history with relevant coursework in collections management. The consultant will complete the tasks necessary to develop the museum and collections program for future management. This work includes designating a secure storage area, separating the collections into manageable categories for an official permanent collection, and creating an inventory database. The consultant will also be responsible for developing and implementing a long-term, on-site storage plan for all objects accessioned into the permanent collection. The consultant will adhere to established standards in the field of collections management.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> A useful tool in the development phase of collections management at Independence Mine would be an existing handbook for historic sites such as the three-part Museum Handbook produced by the National Park Service's Museum Management Program. <http://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/handbook.html> Also see Daniel B. Reibel, *Registration Methods for the Small Museum* (Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press, 2008); Rebecca A. Buck and Jean Allman Gilmore, eds., *The New Museum Registration Methods*, 2d ed. (Washington, DC: American Assn. of

Organizations with existing standards include the National Park Service, the American Association of Museums, and the American Association for State and Local History.

The Alaska State Museum's statement of purpose includes assisting and advising in the development of local museums. Independence Mine should use assistance from the State Museum during the initial development of a museum program.<sup>29</sup> The consultant should also be available to train a permanent employee at Independence Mine assigned to the management of the museum collection. All decisions made during this initial phase should be documented and used as standard operating procedures for future management purposes such as personnel transitions.

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#### REFERENCE TEAM

A volunteer-based reference team could provide labor and support to make the early stages of a museum program more efficient. Members of a reference team could include volunteers and advocates assisting with tasks such as identification, research, photographing, and labeling objects. The reference team can also assist with annual cleaning and inventory projects as well as assisting with numerous other projects throughout the park.

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#### INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT

Assigned staff should accomplish a complete inventory, consisting of an itemized listing of all objects within the collection in a usable database. The early stages of inventory and assessment will assist in establishing control of the park's collections. The inventory should include objects that are on exhibit or in storage in the park as well as objects that are owned by State Parks but are not physically located at Independence Mine. Staff should collect and inventory any artifacts that are in collapsed or collapsing buildings only if the task is safe to accomplish.

Park staff may consider acquiring reproductions of documents and photographs that are currently housed at the University of Alaska Anchorage Archives and Manuscript Department. This would keep the originals at the University where they are more accessible to researchers, but it would provide staff with documents and photographs for interpretive programs. All reproductions should be clearly identified as in an accessible, but unobtrusive location on the object and in the inventory.

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Museums, 2001); John E. Simmons, *Things Great and Small: Collections Management Policies* (Washington DC: American Assn. of Museums, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> At this time, the Museum Outreach Coordinator at the Alaska State Museum is Scott Carrlee.

**DATABASE SOFTWARE:** PastPerfect Museum Software is a user-friendly museum collections database that utilizes standardized terminology for man-made artifacts. Many museums in Alaska use it and it is appropriate for use at Independence Mine. Because other museums use this software statewide, Independence Mine staff will have a network of experienced people who can assist with many aspects of PastPerfect.

**SORTING COLLECTIONS:** Park staff should sort objects into at least two groups for an official permanent collection and hands-on interpretive uses. Objects accessioned in the official permanent collection should fit the collections mission stated above and should be significant or rare objects. Consumptive use objects that may be used for hands-on programs and displays may deteriorate more quickly. Any objects chosen for consumptive use purposes at Independence Mine can be reproductions or duplicates of objects in the permanent collection. Consumptive use objects should be included in the inventory, but should not be accessioned in the permanent collection.<sup>30</sup> During the sorting process, park staff should identify and find an appropriate use for any object that is not relevant to the site or mission.

**NUMBERING SYSTEM:** Every object in the inventory should be assigned a number for identification in the cataloging system. An appropriate tripartite numbering system (i.e. 2011.01.001) is kept simple. The first number is the year in which the object was catalogued (2011.xx.xxx), the second number identifies the source of the collection (xxxx.01.xxx), and the third number identifies the individual object within the year and series (xxxx.xx.001). In the short-term, staff may write the artifact number on small paper tags attached to the object with cotton thread. Ideally, the tags should eventually be removed and each number should be physically attached to the artifact without harming it. In addition, the artifact number should be listed in a database that specifies the object's location.

As part of the inventory process, digital photographs should be taken of each artifact in the permanent collection. Each artifact should be placed in a plastic bag for protection and the bag should be labeled with the artifact number, but it should not be sealed closed. Once artifacts are exhibited, it is difficult to catalog them. Before any new exhibit is designed, each artifact should be processed in the inventory.

**ASSESSMENT:** The condition of the collection as a whole should be assessed during the inventory process. A course of action and management strategies should be outlined for organic and inorganic objects and decisions should be documented for future management

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<sup>30</sup> Assigned staff should make a clear separation between objects that are preserved in the permanent collection and objects that are designated for consumptive use. An artifact ranking system that defines significance, rarity, and value can assist professionals in making these decisions. The Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village Preservation Policy may serve as a guideline: <http://www.cool.conservations.org/byorg/henryfordmuseum/preservation-policy>

purposes. Each object should be assessed for damage and the type, extent, location, and reason (if known) should be recorded. The treatment plan should take into consideration the mission of the collection. Artifacts should be cleaned if necessary, but appropriate cleaning methods should be used to prevent permanent damage.

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## ANNUAL INVENTORY

After the initial inventory and accession process is complete, staff should conduct a random sample inventory of all catalogued museum property once per calendar year and submit the results to the superintendent. Accomplishing an annual inventory provides accountability and assures that no loss or damage goes unnoticed.

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## MUSEUM PROTECTION AND VISITOR SERVICES MANAGER

ADPDR should hire a long-term employee who is trained in museum studies, historic preservation, or public history with experience in visitor services and resource interpretation. This employee could potentially be classified as a Museum Protection and Visitor Services Manager. Responsibilities could include collections management, visitor services, interpretation, volunteer coordination, education and public outreach, and special event planning. This employee could partner with other state historical parks to maintain collections databases for sites with small collections.

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## LONG-TERM CURATION

An on-site, centrally located collections facility would best serve the needs of Independence Mine. The park has ample building space to provide an appropriate location for long-term curation and storage. The Warehouse/Bunkhouse would be an ideal location. When designing a collections facility, park staff should be mindful of any possible agents of deterioration including threats from exposure to inappropriate climate conditions, theft, and vandalism.<sup>31</sup> Objects in the collection would be more secure in a single location with a full-time employee on staff. By centrally locating the collections, the park provides a location for research to take place and provides opportunities for educational programs and tours. For a long-term curatorial program, some equipment and supplies should be kept on-site including, but not limited to shelves, boxes, folders, cleaning and care supplies, plastic bag stock, and a hand-held heat sealer for artifact storage.

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<sup>31</sup> The Canadian Conservation Institute outlines the “Ten Agents of Deterioration” on their website: <http://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/crc/articles/mcpm/index-eng.aspx>

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## RESEARCH

**INDEPENDENCE MINE PUBLICATION:** A comprehensive study of the Willow Creek District was published shortly after Alaska State Parks began managing Independence Mine. The book and the bibliography, *Independence Mine and the Willow Creek District* by Kathryn Koutsky Cohen are useful tools for staff at Independence Mine and academic researchers. This study is, however, currently out-of-print and the bibliography is no longer accurate for some sources. The study should be revised and republished so that it is widely available. ADPOR may consider working with a local non-profit, such as the Friends of State Parks, Mat-Su to publish the book for sale in the bookstore and other locations. Some gaps in the previous research should be included in the revision such as information on minority history, Boom Town, Martin Mine, and recreation history.

**WORKING LIBRARY:** Another helpful tool for research and interpretive program development would be a small on-site, working library to house reference documents and books commonly used by staff. This would provide staff with immediate access to accurate information for visitor queries and for tour and program development.

## PARK STAFF

If other recommendations in this plan are to be followed, such as inventorying and cataloging the historic artifact collection, managing this collection for the benefit of Alaskans, visitors, and general research, providing ongoing care and maintenance of the buildings of Independence Mine, and providing an improved visitor experience with personal interpretation and scheduled tours, it will be necessary to hire additional staff members and ensure that all park employees receive the necessary training to allow them to perform their duties satisfactorily. Volunteers are integral to maintaining and running the park; however, they cannot be expected to take the place of professionals or to dedicate significant portions of their time to the operation of Independence Mine without any form of compensation. ADPOR recommends hiring the following positions strategically to ensure optimal park operations as other recommendations in this plan are implemented:

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## MUSEUM SPECIALIST CONSULTANT

ADPOR recommends hiring a short-term consultant to help jumpstart the process of inventorying and categorizing the artifact collection and caring for it properly. The consultant will complete the tasks necessary to develop the museum and collections program for future management. Duties and responsibilities would include:

- Designating a secure storage area



- Separating the collections into manageable categories for an official permanent collection
- Creating an inventory and database for the collections
- Developing and implementing a long-term, on-site storage plan for all objects accessioned into the permanent collection
- Training a permanent employee to manage the museum collections
- Developing, documenting, and using standard operating procedures based on the initial decision-making process

Qualifications for this position would include:

- Professional training in museum studies, archives, curatorial studies, or public history
- Experience in collections management

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#### MUSEUM PROTECTION AND VISITOR SERVICES MANAGER

ADPOR recommends that a museum protection and visitor services manager be hired for the long term to work at Independence Mine. The person hired for this position would be responsible for performing the following duties:

- Management of Independence Mine's artifact collection
- Visitor services
- Interpretation
- Volunteer coordination
- Supervision of seasonal staff dedicated to interpretation
- Education and public outreach
- Special event planning

Desired qualifications for this position include:

- Professional training in museum studies, historic preservation, or public history
- Experience in visitor services and heritage resource interpretation
- Ability to effectively communicate interpretive messages about the park's historical, cultural, and natural resources to visitors using different media types
- Working knowledge of preservation strategies for historical buildings and structures
- Understanding of the cultural and historical background of life and hard-rock gold mining in the Talkeetna mining district
- Basic knowledge of geology and the various forms of gold mining

This employee could partner with other state historical parks to maintain collections databases for other sites with small collections.

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## SEASONAL MAINTENANCE STAFF

ADPDR recommends hiring a seasonal employee to be in charge of park maintenance between May and October when the park is most heavily used. This seasonal maintenance staff member would be responsible for the following:

- Conducting regular maintenance activities
- Ensuring that damage due to vandalism is remedied promptly
- Addressing safety hazards as needed

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## INTERNSHIPS AND ALASKA CONSERVATION CORPS

The division recommends offering internships or Alaska Conservation Corps (ACC) positions to high school and college students. The interns or ACCs could carry out preservation treatments to historic buildings, conduct preliminary research on Independence Mine and preservation technologies, conduct interpretive tours, provide personal interpretation to park visitors, and assist with everyday maintenance of the park depending on the intern or ACC's interests, abilities, and field of study. Offering internships or ACC positions to Alaskan students provides the division with an opportunity to help further the education of Alaskan youth and provide them with work experience. The hired students would, in turn, help the division provide improved services to the public.

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## VOLUNTEERS IN THE PARK

The division recommends the continuing to work with volunteers to assist rangers in certain maintenance and construction projects in the park and to help provide adequate visitor services, special programs, personal interpretation, etc. Park staff should continue to work closely with the Friends of Independence Mine and should also identify volunteer opportunities and conduct outreach to the community to fill any additional need for volunteers. Volunteer opportunities could include building inspections/monitoring, building maintenance (periodic repainting, window repairs, etc.) personal interpretation, and visitor contact, trail maintenance, vegetation control, graffiti removal, among other things. To have an effective volunteer program, all volunteers must be trained and appropriately supervised.

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## TRAINING

ADPDR recommends that all park staff receive the training they need to perform their duties satisfactorily. Ideally, all employees are hired with a skill set appropriate to their jobs and sufficient knowledge in their areas of expertise to perform their assigned duties. However, the skills and knowledge needed to maintain historical parks in a manner that is responsible

towards both the resources and the visitors are constantly evolving and require constant improvement. Therefore, regular training is recommended for new and current staff members to keep their skill sets and knowledge base up to date and ensure that management and operation strategies used in this park do not become outdated, but rather that they be cutting edge.

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## STAFF HOUSING

On-site housing for staff is necessary to ensure that the park and its resources are buffered from the amount of vandalism common to unoccupied sites and to attract seasonal employees and volunteers. ADPOR recommends that on-site housing be provided for long-term full time volunteers that is comfortable and provides for personal space. Appropriate spaces to be adapted for volunteer residence include, in order of preference, the apartments in the mess hall and the third floor rooms in Bunkhouse No. 2.

## INTERPRETATION

Interpretation is meant to enhance a visitor's experience by revealing what makes the site or resource significant, and is a valuable management tool because it "... forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the [visitors] and meanings inherent in the resources"<sup>32</sup> prompting an appreciation of the resources that fosters stewardship.

Interpretation at Independence Mine will not only tell visitors what is significant about the site, but also aim to help visitors understand the park's value as part of the heritage of Alaska and the United States, to encourage preservation, and to instill a sense of community ownership in the park.

The following section provides a summary of ADPOR's recommendations for personal and non-personal interpretation at Independence Mine.

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## INTERPRETIVE THEMES

THEMES are the primary messages visitors should understand about a particular interpretive site or presentation. Themes bring a sense of continuity to a site and assist planners when organizing the content for interpretive materials. Each interpretive product developed will support the primary interpretive theme and one of the subthemes listed below.

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<sup>32</sup> NAI definition of interpretation [http://www.definitionsproject.com/definitions/def\\_full\\_term.cfm](http://www.definitionsproject.com/definitions/def_full_term.cfm) (07/22/10).

### **PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEME:**

*Independence Mine was the one of the largest producing hard-rock gold mine in the Willow Creek District during the 1930s and 1940s around which a vibrant community grew. After the mine closed in 1951, the site became a haven for heritage tourism and outdoor recreation.*

### **SUBTHEMES:**

- 1) **OPERATIONS:** The people of Independence Mine worked long hours and long days using a variety of equipment to effectively operate the hard rock gold mine.
- 2) **SOCIAL:** The wide range of people in the Independence Mine community created a diverse social atmosphere year-round.
- 3) **BUILDINGS:** Each building played an important individual role in the operations and life at Independence Mine.
- 4) **POST MINING:** Although small scale, sporadic mining occurred after 1950, Independence Mine evolved into a year-round destination providing a glimpse of Alaska's mining heritage and a place for outdoor recreation.
- 5) **NATURAL HISTORY:** The scenic Hatcher Pass region supports thriving ecosystems adapted to its harsh environment.
- 6) **PREHISTORY:** Place names indicate that early people used the area seasonally for subsistence purposes.

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### **PERSONAL INTERPRETATION**

Personal interpretation occurs when one person is interpreting to another. Authors Lisa Brochu and Tim Merriam provide an excellent summation of personal interpretation in their book, "Personal Interpretation: connecting your audience to heritage resources":

*"Personal interpretation is one of the most powerful approaches to interpretation because the interpreter can continually adapt to each audience. If you are practicing personal interpretation, the opportunities for you to make emotional and intellectual connections are numerous, because you can learn about the guest and apply what you learn to enhance her or his experience. However, personal interpretive services are usually available for a limited amount of time each day and perform variably, depending upon the skill of the interpreter and how she or he feels at any given time. And personal interpretation is usually more expensive than nonpersonal approaches, when one considers the cost per visitor contact."<sup>33</sup>*

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<sup>33</sup> Brochu, *Personal Interpretation: connecting your audience to heritage resources*, 23.

**GUIDED TOURS:** Guided tours are an essential component to providing an enhanced visitor experience at Independence Mine. The numerous interpretive panels throughout the park enhance the opportunities but they are not an appropriate replacement for guided tours. ADPOR recommends more opportunities for visitors to participate in interpretive programs led by park staff. Ideally, formal interpretive programs should be offered at regularly scheduled intervals, especially on weekends and periods of high visitation. To assist visitors, the schedule of programs should be prominently displayed at visitor contact stations and on the park's website.

In addition to regularly scheduled tours of the mine camp, special events held at the park would provide unique opportunities for specialized interpretive programs. Special events create an occasion to highlight a specific aspect of Independence Mine and have the potential to attract new and repeat visitors. A weekend during which park staff and volunteers host programs that highlight the mine's geology; a scheduled partnership program with Gold Cord Mine to tour a functioning mill; or an evening "lantern" or "flashlight" tour held during the spring or fall season are some examples of special events that could be held at the park. Special programs have the potential to attract a more diverse visitor group, enhance the public's appreciation for the park and its resources, incent the public to become more involved, and help the park build a stronger support system that would allow for improved visitor experiences all around.

**PRIVATE COMPANY TOURS:** Private tour companies interested in providing guided activities at Independence Mine should submit a proposal to ADPOR for approval, highlighting details of the company's tour program 30 days prior to the requested start date.

**PERSONAL INTERPRETATION GUIDE:** It is recommended that ADPOR prepares an interpretive guide to Independence Mine for tour guides, volunteers, and park employees to use when sharing the site's mining history. This guide will provide direction for personal interpretation and ensure that the park's primary theme and subthemes are adequately and effectively presented to the interested public. This guide will briefly develop each of the subthemes and provide examples and suggestions for creating an effective interpretive experience for a diverse audience.

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## NON-PERSONAL INTERPRETATION

Non-personal interpretation occurs when the person interpreting is removed and replaced with another type of media, such as an interpretive display, audio tour, or self-guided brochure. At Independence Mine, non-personal interpretation will enhance visitors' experiences when they are visiting independent of a tour, when the buildings are closed, or outside scheduled times for oral presentations. Non-personal interpretation presents a consistent story and message



and is not susceptible to a guide's skill or feelings, as described in the "Personal Interpretation" section.

Some action strategies are applicable to most of the non-personal interpretive infrastructure at Independence Mine. Common action strategies include the following:

- Any photographs and artifacts on display in the buildings at Independence Mine should be clearly and consistently labeled in an attractive manner to reach a broad audience. Each of the labels should identify the scene or object and provide a date, or approximate date, and a brief description of the object's function.
- Interpretive panels displayed in the park, both inside and outside buildings, should be placed strategically to prevent overwhelming the visitor. Any unused panels that have no foreseeable future use should be properly disposed.
- Park staff should develop a plan for maintenance and upkeep of interpretive displays to ensure a safe, clean, and high-quality visitor experience.
- All period furnishings should be cleaned and restored to the 1941-1942 appearance to provide an accurate representation of the site. If an item is beyond repair, replicas are permissible.

**VISITOR CENTER/MANAGER'S HOUSE:** The visitor center is often a first point of contact; therefore, static interpretation in this building is important to the visitor experience. The existing interpretive displays should be updated to enhance the effectiveness of message presentation and use of space. ADPOR recommends critically evaluating the existing interpretation throughout this building for effectiveness and consistency of the message with the primary interpretive theme to determine which displays and panels should remain.

**MUSEUM/ASSAY OFFICE:** An orientation panel with map of the building should be placed in the entrance hall to guide visitors through the museum in a suggested path. All interpretive panels in the building should be updated to improve appearance and to communicate the message in an effective, yet concise manner.

Logistics that need to be addressed in the museum include providing a trash receptacle in the entrance, purposefully placing updated displays, and installing consistent and adequate light fixtures to highlight displays and enhance visitor safety. The second floor should remain closed to the public and used for rotating collections storage.

**BUNKHOUSE NO. 1:** Bunkhouse No. 1 is an ideal structure for overnight lodging options at Independence Mine and should be managed by a concessionaire. The primary purpose for this building is not interpretation. Any interpretive displays should be located in the lobby and consistent with the identified interpretive themes. Period photographs would greatly enhance any common spaces in Bunkhouse No. 1. Displaced artifacts should be relocated to an appropriate setting or stored with the remainder of the park's collection.

**BUNKHOUSE NO. 2:** The planning team recommends that the first floor of Bunkhouse No. 2 be used as a visitor orientation center; it should be the second stop visitors make after leaving the Manager's House. The accessibility of this building should be enhanced whenever possible. The lobby space should be a flexible space used both as a classroom and a theater with appropriate period furnishings. The artifacts currently on display in the Engineering Office and Warehouse schoolroom should be evaluated prior to relocation. Only the artifacts that are accurate and relevant and can be used as consumptive use objects should be relocated to the new schoolroom display. Sensitive objects can be stored on site and displayed for special events. Interpretive films, illustrated talks, and slideshows should take place in the classroom/theater. This space can also be reserved for training and other classroom activities.

The infirmary and first aid rooms could be used as interpreter office space with modern accommodations. While films are presented, this space could provide the interpreter with a place to continue work. The drying room could be reused for rotating displays where visitors could learn more about Independence Mine while waiting for scheduled showings of presentations in the lobby.

After a second means of egress is established, two to four rooms on the second floor should be furnished and restored for interpretive purposes. The rest of the second and third floors, as well as the first floor bathroom should be secured to prevent visitor access.

**APARTMENT HOUSE:** The two apartments on the street side of the Apartment House should be restored to accurately represent living quarters for the families of the managers and foremen. The second floor should be secured to prevent visitor access and the other two apartments should be used for artifact storage. A sign could be placed on the stairs to notify visitors that the second floor is restricted. The sign should include a brief description of the historic use of the second floor and provide a photograph to ease curiosity.

**MESS HALL:** The Mess Hall is an ideal structure for conferences, special events, and food services. It should be managed by a concessionaire. The primary purpose for this building is not interpretation. Any interpretive displays should be located in the lobby and dining room. Reproduction tableware would be appropriate for food service. Period photographs and any historic equipment from the Mess Hall would greatly enhance any common spaces. Displaced artifacts should be relocated to an appropriate setting or stored with the remainder of the park's collection.

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## INTERPRETIVE PANELS

For the purposes of this section, interpretive panels will be addressed based on location. Outdoor panels share many of the same current conditions and will be discussed together. A

short discussion on indoor panels is also included. Panel titles should be available in Braille for visually impaired visitors.

**OUTDOOR PANELS:** The current number of outdoor interpretive panels is appropriate; however, additional panels should be discouraged to prevent overwhelming visitors with too much information. These panels should be reevaluated every five years for physical damage or discoloration. Content should also be reevaluated at the same time. If a panel needs replacing, adjustable height pedestals and mounts should be considered to allow for viewing during winter months.

**INDOOR PANELS:** Most indoor interpretive panels need to be replaced due to age and quality of content and graphics. Some indoor displays are appropriate, but a thorough assessment should be completed to determine appropriate quantity and location for panels to enhance the visitor experience, rather than detracting from it.

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## INTERPRETIVE BROCHURES

**ORIENTATION BROCHURE:** In addition to the East Hatcher Pass Management Area brochure, a site-specific interpretive orientation brochure is recommended for Independence Mine and it should be available in a small number of additional languages for international visitors. It should include a brief history of the mine camp and a map displaying recreational opportunities and a suggested route for visiting the historic area. Brochures should be available at the park near the entrance and in the Manager's House and Bunkhouse No. 2. Park staff should ensure that the brochures at the entrance are well stocked at all times.

**THEME-SPECIFIC INTERPRETIVE BROCHURES:** Staff should also develop theme-specific interpretive brochures that expand on topics relevant to Independence Mine. Effective theme brochures can fulfill an individual visitor's desire to learn more and create opportunities to enhance the public's comprehension of the inherent intellectual and emotional connections to the park's resources. Park visitors can greatly benefit from these theme-specific brochures before, during, and after their visit. These brochures could include numerous themes such as the geology in the Willow Creek Mining District, children at the mine camp, the Stoll family, Boomtown, prehistory, and natural history.

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## NEW INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES

**AUDIO TOURS:** Podcasts should be developed by the professional interpretive staff of Independence Mine. It is recommended that podcasts be made available on Independence Mine's state website for visitors to download onto their audio devices from their homes, hotels, etc. Due to the lack of internet and cell phone service in the park, downloading stations should

be available for visitors in the Manager's House and Bunkhouse No. 2. Recommended topics for podcasts include an audio version of an interpretive tour and audio versions of interpretive panels for the visually impaired or for those unable to read. It is recommended that podcasts be made available in other languages as well.

**JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAMS:** Junior Ranger programs should be developed for Independence Mine that would enhance the visitor experience for children in different age groups. At least two programs should be developed—one for children between the ages of 4 and 7, and one for children between ages 7 and 12. Both programs should aim to encourage children to learn more about Independence Mine and the area's history, to foster an interest in the park and its historic resources that would translate into stewardship, and to encourage a responsible approach to outdoor recreation. A **junior conservator program** could also be developed that would allow children to learn about the park's historic resources, why they are important, and how to take care of them. A junior conservator program could make use of the collection's consumptive use items for hands-on experiences. Each junior program should make use of activities appropriate to its specific age group.

**INTERPRETIVE FILM:** A short interpretive film that introduces visitors to Independence Mine's history and significant resources should be developed and ideally played in the original theater room in Bunkhouse No. 2.

**PARK WEBPAGE:** ADPOR should provide clear and accurate pre-trip information on Independence Mine's webpage that is both helpful and enticing. The information displayed on this webpage should be relevant, up-to-date, and formatted in a manner that is logical and user-friendly.

The webpage should provide visitors with links to downloadable interpretive podcasts and brochures, driving directions, facility hours, and a facility map. Another link titled "Things to do" could provide visitors with trail maps and descriptions, a detailed and up-to-date schedule and brief description of programs and activities, ski routes, and information for all activities that regularly take place in the park, whether seasonally or year round.

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## EVALUATION OF INTERPRETATION

Creating guidelines for evaluating the effectiveness of interpretive sites and materials is an essential part of the planning process. It helps managers measure whether goals and objectives are being met. Evaluations determine what is working, what is not working, and enable managers to make changes.

There are several different methods for evaluating the effectiveness of interpretive programs—what matters is that some type of evaluation takes place.

### ***PERSONAL INTERPRETATION***

The types of personal interpretation programs offered, the program outline, delivery style, and accuracy of information should be evaluated regularly and updated or changed as necessary and appropriate. The following are a few of the methods that may be used to conduct such an evaluation:

- **Program Outlines:** Program outlines should be used by presenters and their peers to determine whether the presenter's stated objectives are met—the measurable component.
- **Visitor Comments:** Presenters should solicit oral comments during informal conversations with audience members at the conclusion of their presentations to gauge the program's effectiveness. This method should be used along with other methods.
- **Exit Questionnaires:** Audience members participating in a guided tour or presentation should be given an exit questionnaire that reveals whether the program objective was met and solicits ideas for improvement.
- **Direct Observation:** Direct observation—having a volunteer or other staff person observe the audience's reaction during the guided tour or presentation—is a good method for evaluating the effectiveness of a program, including the presenter's ability to engage the audience and keep them interested. The evaluator should wear plain clothes so that he or she is able to blend in with the audience; this would enable the evaluator to observe the program and the reactions of visitors without interfering with the program or influencing the visitors' responses to the program.

### ***NON-PERSONAL INTERPRETATION***

The number of panels, the relevancy of interpretive elements to changing visitor demographics, the accuracy of information, and panel placement should be evaluated at least once every two years to ensure efficient use of these interpretive resources. The following are methods that may be used to evaluate non-personal interpretation such as panels, brochures, cell phone interpretation, etc.:

- **Panel/Media Outline:** Planners, managers, volunteers, etc. should use the objectives stated in the outlines for panels or other media to determine whether those stated objectives were met. The objectives are written to be measurable.



- **Exit Questionnaires:** Park users could be given an exit questionnaire with pointed questions to determine whether the interpretive program’s objectives were met and the themes communicated, and that solicits ideas for improvement. Administering this type of evaluation tool can be challenging because independent travelers may not visit at scheduled times. Options could include signage that notifies visitors about online questionnaires, asking volunteers to hand questionnaires to visitors during the peak season, and offering short questionnaires to visitors in buildings identified as points of contact.
- **Indirect Observation:** Indirect observation—having a volunteer or other staff person observe how visitors react to interpretive exhibits—is a good method for evaluating the effectiveness of each display, including its ability to *attract* and *hold* a visitor’s attention.
- **Suggestion Box:** Suggestion boxes or guest books could be placed in the visitor center and in other high traffic areas to provide visitors a place to share their thoughts, suggestions, and ideas with park managers. A system should be established whereby the comments and questions are retrieved regularly and the data entered into a usable, electronic document for park managers. Paper and pencils would also need to be supplied and restocked or electronic devices provided and their batteries charged regularly. A digital “suggestion box” on the park’s webpage would yield helpful post-trip insights.

## MAINTENANCE

### STAFF

To continue preservation efforts at Independence Mine and protect the substantial state investment, year-round maintenance staff should be employed. Duties for the maintenance employee could include activities such as rehabilitate damaged windows, paint buildings, maintain grounds, clean secondary spaces, investigate building issues, lead maintenance volunteers, and organize work parties.

### MAINTENANCE FACILITY

To house a professional maintenance staff, a maintenance facility is needed at IMSHP. This facility should be located in the Bunkhouse/Warehouse’s basement and first floor. Equipment, including tools, features, fixtures, and materials, can be stored at this location as well as an appropriately equipped summer office space. The facility will need to be appropriately rehabilitated so staff can repair wood features such as wood windows and siding and have a dry

space to paint features. The basement should store larger equipment that can be used on the site such as lawn equipment, ski trail grooming equipment, and snow machines.

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#### ANNUAL WORK PLAN

The information collected through resource tracing and condition assessments will inform a fully developed annual work plan for maintenance staff. Cyclical maintenance should be known and a plan developed prior to March of each year.

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#### RESOURCE INSPECTION TRACKING

To gain a greater understanding of the speed of deterioration, changing conditions, safety issues, and vandalism, resource inspection forms must be completed a minimum of twice per year for all standing buildings and structures. As additional site features are documented and recorded, those archaeological and historic properties should be inspected once per year by staff or volunteers that received adequate training to inspect the resources. To track inspections, staff and volunteers may use the Alaska Building Inventory Form attached in Appendix ????. Drawings and photographs should accompany each forms.

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#### CONDITION ASSESSMENTS

Any preservation, restoration, or rehabilitation of a historic property must start with a thorough condition assessment. Prior to commencement of work on any buildings, condition assessment forms must be completed and submitted to the Matanuska-Susitna Copper River Valley Superintendent and the Office of History and Archaeology. Ideally, condition assessments should be updated every five years. The Condition Assessment form is attached in Appendix ????. These assessments will provide the information needed to prioritize the work on specific buildings and the urgency of repairs. Thorough digital photo documentation must accompany all reports. Photos should be taken that capture each elevation, significant preservation issues, significant building features and the setting. Condition assessments should be completed for all buildings located in the park.

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#### OPERATIONS BUDGET

An operations budget should be developed specifically for Independence Mine State Historic Park. Historic Parks, especially IMSHP, presents unique challenges to managers that natural parks do not. Historic parks require staff to interpret the resources, maintenance personnel that rehabilitate and maintain the historic buildings. Management should be active, not passive. Active management of IMSHP will be cost effective in the long run because large capital projects will not need to be undertaken and visitors will likely contribute to site projects

if they know how their money is being appropriated to interpretation and preservation of the park.

## IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

Based on professional guidance, public meetings, and the public opinion survey, numerous projects and action strategies were identified for Independence Mine. All of the projects are important, but some of them are more urgent. Some tasks cannot take place until another is first accomplished. The following lists provide guidance for decisions pertaining to the preservation and interpretation of the valuable resources at Independence Mine. Smaller projects are placed next to larger projects in order to make the list more practical and feasible. Ideally, the projects should be accomplished in order as they appear, but changes are permissible based on funding.

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### TOP PRIORITIES

1. ***ASSAY OFFICE REHABILITATION AND FOUNDATION REPLACEMENT***
2. ***PAINT ALL BUILDING EXTERIORS***
3. ***CONDUCT A WATER TUNNEL SURVEY AND IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS***
4. ***PROVIDE EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER HOUSING***
5. ***HIRE STAFF COLLECTIONS STAFF AND MAINTENANCE STAFF***
6. ***SOLIDIFY GOLD CORD PARTNERSHIP***
7. ***CREATE CURATORIAL/MAINTENANCE FACILITY IN THE BUNKHOUSE/WAREHOUSE***
8. ***STABILIZE AND REHABILITATE RUINOUS BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES***
9. ***INVENTORY AND ASSESS THE COLLECTION***
10. ***CONSTRUCT A VISITOR ORIENTATION CENTER IN BUNKHOUSE NO. 2***
11. ***INITIATE A CONCESSIONAIRE PROGRAM TO DEVELOP AND DELIVER INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS***

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### HIGH PRIORITIES

1. ***EXPAND VOLUNTEER BASE***
2. ***LOCATE A CONCESSIONAIRE FOR BUNKHOUSE NO. 1***
3. ***PARTNER WITH DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR PARK ACCESS SNOW REMOVAL***
4. ***FABRICATE STATIC DISPLAYS IN THE APARTMENT HOUSE***
5. ***REDESIGN VISITOR CENTER AND ADDRESS INTERIOR ACCESSIBILITY***
6. ***UPDATE ASSAY MUSEUM***

7. **ADDRESS EQUIPMENT NEEDS FOR CURATION, INTERPRETATION, AND MAINTENANCE**
8. **IMPROVE TOILETS AND INCREASE TRASH RECEPTACLES WITHIN THE PARK**
9. **PRODUCE BROCHURES AND INTERPRETIVE HANDOUTS**
10. **RESOLVE EGRESS AND FIRE SAFETY ISSUES IN BUNKHOUSE NO. 2**
11. **UPDATE INTERPRETIVE PANELS AND TRAFFIC FLOW IN PARKING AREA**
12. **FIND CONCESSIONAIRE FOR MESS HALL**
13. **COMMISSARY/ENGINEER'S OFFICE INTERPRETIVE DISPLAYS**
14. **IMPLEMENT AN EVALUATION PROCESS FOR FACILITIES, VISITOR SERVICES, AND EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**
15. **REPAIR AND REPLACE WINDOWS THROUGHOUT THE PARK**
16. **REVISE AND RE-PUBLISH THE BOOK, INDEPENDENCE MINE AND THE WILLOW CREEK DISTRICT**
17. **FORMALIZE THE NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL SYSTEM AT INDEPENDENCE MINE**

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## CHAPTER 7: PLAN EVALUATION





This plan reflects the best efforts of the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation to analyze the resources of the park, to provide recreational and interpretive opportunities that enhance the visitor experience, and to protect the historical, cultural, archaeological, interpretive and anthropological values for which the park was established. This plan is expected to remain relevant to the park's management for approximately 20 years; however, intermediate reviews and appropriate modifications are expected and encouraged.

When evaluating this plan, the resulting quality of the visitor experience and resource protection—not the number of recommendations completed—should be used to assess the plan's effectiveness. Ideally, the plan would be re-evaluated every five years and updated as necessary to ensure its continued relevancy and usefulness. However, the director may initiate a review at any time, and it is strongly recommended that the plan be reviewed via a public process every 10 years at the very least.

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