

Existing land uses in the True North project area are classified as follows:

LBCS 1000 (residential)

Cleary Summit Subdivision (on Pedro Dome)

Skiland Subdivision

Olnes Subdivision

Haystack Subdivision

Chatanika area settlements

LBCS 2000 (shopping, business or trade)

Bed and Breakfasts

General store

Lodges

Restaurant

Ski lift

Commercial dog mushing rides

Commercial snow machine rentals and tours

LBCS 4000 (infrastructure related) GVEA power lines

LBCS 5000 (travel or movement)

Steese Highway

Elliott Highway

Pedro Dome Road

Fairbanks Creek Road

Fish Creek Road

Smaller local (FHWA classification) subdivision roads

LBCS 7000 (leisure activities)

Multiple use trails

LBCS 8000 (natural resource-related activities)

3.17.1 LOCAL LAND USE

Cleary Summit and Pedro Dome

Eight cabins or homes at the crest of Cleary Summit on the east side of the Steese Highway in Skiland Subdivision are home to approximately 15 permanent residents. Twelve full-time residents own or rent nine cabins or homes on the west side of the Steese Highway in Cleary Summit Subdivision. In addition, approximately 19 FNSB residents use 13 homes or cabins in this area either seasonally or occasionally for recreational purposes including downhill skiing, snowboarding and berry picking.

For many years, most of the privately held land west of the Steese Highway at the summit along the easternmost end of Pedro Dome / True North Road has been limited to leasehold status. Recently, a local partnership purchased this tract, the Cleary Summit Subdivision, with intentions of subdividing and selling individual lots for development purposes.

In addition to the residences along Pedro Dome / True North Road, there are several commercial/industrial land uses. The telephone utility that serves the local area is located just off the Pedro Dome / True North Road. In addition, Alascom maintains the Alyeska repeater sites located at the crest of Pedro Dome where an emergency helipad also is located. Pedro Dome / True North Road also is currently used by private vehicles as well as heavy trucks and equipment traveling from the Steese Highway and from Fort Knox en route to the mining exploration sites on the west side of the dome.

Approximately, one-third of the LBCS 1000 (residential land use) cabins are wood frame structures that range from approximately 20-to-40 years old. Several small cabins have been constructed recently. About one-half of the houses are one-to-three bedroom structures built since 1985. The remaining four homes are high-end residential structures in terms of market value; construction was completed on one of these in 1999 and is yet to be completed on the other.

Two year-round residents of Cleary Summit own and operate bed and breakfast establishments; one has one unit, the other has three bedrooms with a separate living room and kitchen for B&B guests. A musher offers another commercial land use on the summit, sled dog rides.

One year-round Cleary Summit resident owns several businesses (LBCS 2000) on this hilltop. One is an electric company; the second is a ski area, which includes a ski lift, a sledding hill, a ski lodge and a mine bunkhouse that has been converted into an aurora-viewing lodge.

Olnes and Haystack Subdivisions

The Olnes Subdivision is accessed from the north side of the Elliott Highway just northwest of Hilltop. Much of the land in this subdivision is designated "Rural Settlement Area" in the FNSB Land Use Plan, which is an adopted element of the FNSB Comprehensive Plan.

Roads in the subdivision are dirt and not maintained by the FNSB. Approximately 20% of the properties in the subdivision have constructed improvements on site.

The western face of the ridge site of the proposed True North Mine site faces the easternmost lots of the Olnes Subdivision. Four developed properties within this subdivision are located on Olnes Loop after it turns north to run parallel to the True North east ridge.

Haystack Subdivision is accessed off of the Elliott Highway, near the 11½ mile grocery store. The FNSB Comprehensive Plan designates much of the land within this subdivision "Rural Settlement Area;" however, those lots south and southwest of the summit of Haystack Mountain are on lands designated as High Mineral Potential Land" and "Reserve Area" which are defined as reserved for "hunting, trapping, fishing, mining, recreation, agriculture."

Haystack is a FNSB subdivision with paved, maintained roads, with approximately 16 percent of the properties improved. The first group of homes off the Elliott within the subdivision is representative of some of the older homes in the subdivision.

They are approximately one half mile off the Elliott Highway. The True North property can be seen from very few of the properties in the Haystack Subdivision.

A small general store is the only commercial land use in Haystack Subdivision. The southern boundary of the property is located adjacent to the Elliott Highway and on the west side of the access road to Haystack Subdivision.

3.17.2 REGIONAL LAND USE

Steese Highway Corridor

Even though the True North project would not use the Steese Highway (with the exception of one crossing point), this description is included because the Steese is used regularly by local residents.

Two commercial land uses in the Chatanika area are destinations for Fairbanks area residents: the Chatanika Lodge and the Chatanika Gold Camp (Old F.E. Company). Awl Alaskan Kennels and the Long Creek Trading Post are the only other commercial land uses in a five-to-seven mile stretch commonly referred to as Chatanika. While recent State of Alaska Division of Elections precinct records document 64 registered voters in the unincorporated Chatanika District 210, this number is clearly low as a population estimate since not all residents likely are registered to vote. The residential population in this area will be best documented in the 2000 Census. Year-round residents from the Chatanika, Cleary Summit and Skiland settlements travel down this corridor to work, school and medical care in other sections of greater Fairbanks. Some are regular commuters, but most report a preference for infrequent trips “to town.” In addition, visitors to the area, miners, and residents of Central and Circle City travel along this corridor, though less frequently, en route to and from Fairbanks.

Residents in this area report use of the Steese Highway corridor for cycling and walking. Some residents currently report nuisances caused along this stretch of highway by 1) high speed passenger vehicles, and 2) slow moving vehicles such as school buses, motor homes, tour buses and trucks with heavy industrial loads. Attempts to pass the latter have been cited by area residents as potential hazards.

Skoogy Gulch at Mile 19 is considered by area residents to be the most dangerous section of the Steese Highway in the proposed project area.

The Steese Highway corridor in this area falls under the “High Mineral Potential Land” designation in the FNSB Comprehensive Land Use Plan, with two exceptions: 1) one half mile south of Chatanika along the Steese Highway falls under the “Reserve Land” designation for “hunting, trapping, fishing, mining, recreation, agriculture, and 2) one half mile northeast of its junction with the Elliott Highway, the Steese Highway corridor falls within the “Outskirt Area” land use designation.

There are two FNSB Title 18 Zoning Ordinance designations in the transportation corridors study area: General Use District GU-1 and Mineral Lands District ML. The permitted uses in the GU-1 Zone are listed in Title 18 as “any use except for correctional facilities.” The permitted uses in the ML Zone are 1) all uses related to mineral exploration, extraction and processing; 2) all secondary uses in support of mining activities; 3) bed and breakfast homestays; 4) bed and breakfast residences; 5) timber harvest, except as would restrict mining activity; and 6) outdoor recreational land uses except as would be a basis for restricting mining activity.

Elliott Highway Corridor

Industrial grade vehicles traverse the Elliott Highway en route to and from the oil fields on the North Slope and Fairbanks, Anchorage and the Lower 48 with heavy loads. En route, they pass the turn off to both the Haystack and Olnes subdivisions. Just south of the Olnes Subdivision cutoff is the Hillside Café where locals and truck drivers stop for meals, lunches to go, packaged beverages, showers and restroom facilities.

Trail Systems

The mine operators in the area have worked with trail user groups in successful efforts to accommodate trail uses through areas owned by the mining companies. A well-developed trail system in this area, connected to the Chatanika Lodge, is used

by skiers, cyclists, walkers, snowmachiners, fourwheelers, and occasionally by equestrians. It is maintained primarily by a well-organized user group.

This multi-use trail system trail system includes, but is not limited to, the following formal elements:

- An often steep trail runs through the valley and connects Chatanika Lodge to Haystack Mountain.
- Another trail bends south and southeast from Chatanika Lodge up to Cleary Summit.
- Another connector trail in this system runs from Cleary Summit south to link up with Chena Hot Springs Road at 11 Mile.
- Another forms a loop south from Chatanika Lodge and then west turning northeast to rejoin the trail to Haystack Mountain.
- Another links the latter south and west to link up with the Elliot Highway Corridor.
- Pea Run, a 62-mile loop trail, half of which roughly parallels the Steese Highway Corridor south from Chatanika Lodge, crosses the Elliott Highway south of Hilltop and then heads north along the Trans Alaska Pipeline Corridor before it turns northeast to head back to the lodge.

Several trails culminate on or near Cleary Summit, including the historic Circle to Fairbanks Trail, the Fairbanks Creek Trail, and a connector link to the Gilmore Trail.

3.18 SUBSISTENCE

No evidence of recent traditional subsistence use of resources exists within the Fort Knox project area (Marcotte, 2000).

3.19 CULTURAL RESOURCES

The True North project area received comprehensive cultural and heritage resource studies in 1995 and 1996 (Higgs, 1966; Higgs et al., 1997). Overall, the upper Dome Creek and upper Spruce Creek areas are considered to be at the margin of extensive but sporadic historic mining activity in the Pedro Dome area.

When Euroamericans came up the Tanana River in the first decade of the twentieth century, they intended to trade with the remote Athapaskan groups subsisting off the land. The discovery of gold in the creeks north of the river, however, brought in a flood of prospectors staking claims in what would be established as the Fairbanks mining district. Dome Creek was among the first to be explored. By 1905, speculators set up a supply town known as Dome City near the center of the creek basin. The events that transpired on upper Dome Creek contributed to and are a reflection of the peaks and dips in Fairbanks' regional growth. Drift mines lined the creek and lode prospectors inspected the hillside for the source of the placer deposits.

Thirty-eight historic properties were located within the True North claim block (Higgs, 1966; Higgs et al., 1997). All sites found were related to historic mining that had occurred since 1901. No prehistoric or historic Native sites were found. Of these 38 historic properties, only five were expected to require additional levels of documentation to assess their eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. All five sites were located outside of the proposed Hindenburg and East pits and the ancillary facilities proposed for development by the True North project. The historic Davidson Ditch, which runs through the claims block, is already on the National Register of Historic Places. No portion of the Davidson Ditch would be directly impacted by project development.

Five historic properties were located within the proposed ore haul road corridor to the Fort Knox Mill (Williams, 2000). None of the sites was considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

3.20 VISUAL RESOURCES

This section describes visual resources of the True North project area in two parts. The first describes the viewshed of the True north mine site. The second describes that of the ore haul road from the mine site to the Fort Knox Mill.

3.20.1 MINE AREA

This description has been taken largely from Mining Public Consent (2000a), which contains additional information and pictures of many of the views described below.

Land cover, such as forest or scrub vegetation (or lack of) affects views, as does landscape character, including human-made disturbances such as road development or exploration activity. Variations in the color and texture of the landscape due to natural or human-made disturbances also affects views. Vegetation in the project area is typical of interior Alaska. Section 3.5 (Vegetation) contains a more detailed description of the dominant plant communities to be found in the area.

Visual Character and Quality

Figure 3.20-1 presents the True North Mine site view shed. This is defined as the area from which a viewer would be able to see one or more mine site facilities, including isolated points of higher elevation.

Both Spruce Creek and the Davidson Ditch, adjacent to the proposed mine site, are more heavily vegetated due to the hydrology and seasonal flooding. As a result, they appear visually less disturbed with natural vegetation along their corridors. The coloring of this vegetation contrasts, at times, with the disturbed areas of Shepard's drill and test blast area and the Hindenburg Pit.

The Shepard's drill and test blast area appears more earth colored, due to the absence of natural vegetation. The visual quality of the Shepard's drill and test blast area (i.e., natural appearance) is reduced because of these existing disturbances.

The Hindenburg Pit area is larger than the Shepard's drill and test blast area; however, only portions are currently disturbed. Earth colored access roads and exploration terraces break the natural color formations of the landscape. These disturbed areas have altered the existing topography, vegetation and natural colors of the terrain on predominately the southeast side of the project site.

The Pedro Dome / True North Road also appears earth colored, due to the removal of vegetation during road development. However, due to topography, and the road alignment traversing the lower elevation of Pedro Dome, the access road is not always visible.

The Dome Creek drainage (south and west of the True North mine site), and Little Eldorado Creek drainage (north of the mine site), contain extensive disturbed areas from historical mining activity that consist of a complex of upland and wetland communities. This has transformed these creek channels into a band of exposed soil, tailings, and pounded muddy water, resulting in a brown color that contrasts with much of the surrounding landscape.

In addition, both Dome and Little Eldorado creeks appear to have natural-looking ponds of water surrounded by wetland and upland vegetation, interspersed with earth colored channels of brown, muddy water.

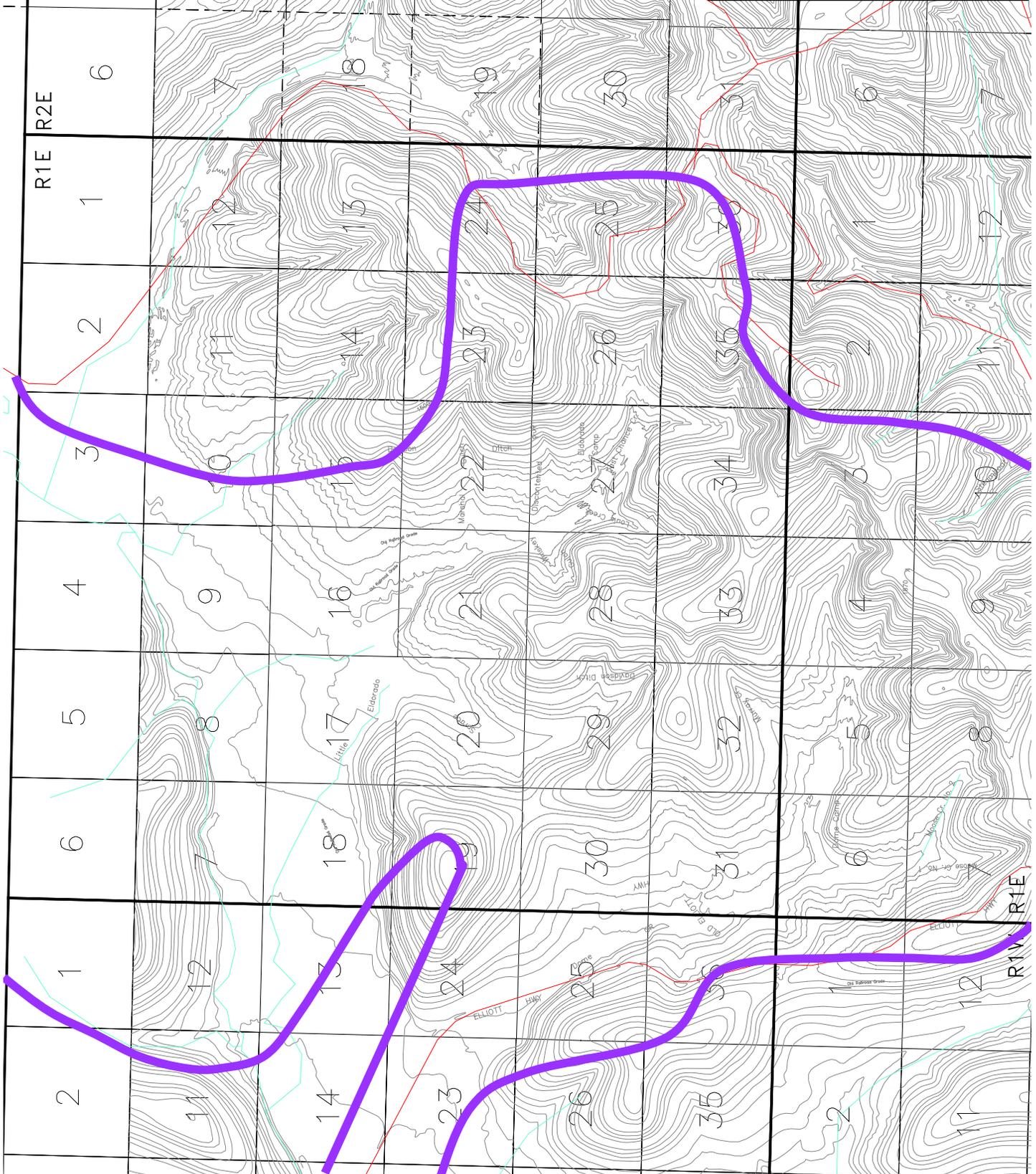
The northern end of Little Eldorado Creek drainage is dominated by black spruce bog, floating emergent vegetative (aquatic) communities, and deciduous shrub wetlands. Most of the uplands in this area are either former tailing piles deposited on wetlands now colonized by upland vegetation, or locations where the natural hydrology has been altered by both historic and current mining activity.

3.20.1.1. EXISTING MINE FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Following are the equipment and support facilities currently operating at the True North Mine site:

2 drill rigs	1 well
1 D-8 cat	6 to 9 pick-up trucks
Drill support equipment	3 100-ton haul trucks
1 water truck	

Due to the existing disturbances, the visual quality (i.e., natural appearance) of many areas of the True North mine site, and surrounding vicinity, is diminished. The contrasting lines and color of existing facilities, roads and equipment have modified the surrounding landscape. Many of these existing facilities and activities can appear as visually distracting elements of the landscape. They also can be considered points of visual interest.



**True North
Mine Vicinity
View Shed**

Figure 3.20-1

3.20.1.2. VIEWERS

The majority of residents in the mine site viewshed are located in the adjacent higher elevations surrounding the True North property. However, due to topography, the viewshed also includes areas along the Elliot Highway, west of the mine site, including the Hillside Café.

Most residents of the Haystack and Olmes subdivisions, west and northwest of the True North mine site, are in the view shed as would be some recreational users. The latter include multi-use recreational trail users such as hikers, skiers, snowmachiners, mountain bikers, equestrians and berry pickers. These trail users oftentimes share the True North road network with mining activities, especially during snowmachine season.

The residents and businesses along the proposed ore haul road corridor between the True North Mine and the Fort Knox Mill, especially along the Pedro Dome / True North Road and at Cleary Summit, are not actually within the view shed of the mine site. These residential and commercial uses in the Cleary Summit area are described in Section 3.17 (Land Use). This area is described below in Section 3.20.2 (Ore Haul Road).

Existing road access to the True North Mine site is from the Steese Highway to Cleary Summit, then along approximately 6.5 miles of existing gravel road skirting the south side of Pedro Dome.

3.20.1.3. NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL LIGHT CONDITIONS

Seasonal light changes can also affect the viewshed. Generally speaking, the viewshed is affected by winter light conditions. Because there is a longer period of daily darkness during the winter, the daylight views of the project site are minimized by lack of sufficient natural light.

However, human-made light sources, such as vehicle lights, or other necessary project facilities or equipment lighting, can then be a source of light disturbance in the viewshed. Artificial light is currently operating at the True North Mine site in the

form of three mobile light plants. Each plant has four adjustable lights. These lights currently operate in fall, winter and early spring darkness during working hours. In addition, a water truck and 6-9 pick-up trucks (with headlights) currently travel to and from the project site on the Pedro Dome Road / True North and Fish Creek roads.

Observers on the Elliott Highway and the Pedro Dome / True North Road, and those in the Olmes and Haystack subdivisions, can observe the existing artificial light sources at the True North Mine site. This artificial light includes existing vehicle traffic associated with the project, as well as existing exploration activity lighting.

3.20.2 ORE HAUL ROAD

Landscape Character

The area is composed of rounded landforms without strong complexity, but generally well-ordered. Vegetation patterns have been altered by previous mining activity and road/residential construction, but are generally well-ordered. Scars are readily apparent in the foreground and middle ground due to the contrast with soil colors where road construction has taken place. The roads are particularly apparent during winter when the white snow contrasts strongly with the vegetation and even background landscape exhibits the scars (LDN, 2000).

Foreground views (within ½ mile) of Cleary Summit and adjacent neighborhoods provide little variety and little unity. Structures and roadways generally take away from the intactness of the landscape, though some individual residences have fit well within the forest at lower elevations. Patterns have been strongly disrupted by roads and residential construction. The vegetation has some contrast, but not strong variety. In general the scenic attractiveness of the area in the proximity of Cleary Summit and adjacent neighborhoods should be considered “indistinctive” (LDN, 2000).

The middleground area (up to four miles distance) provides moderate to low variety, providing a generally homogenous landscape. It provides a moderate level of vividness, owing to some variety in vegetation and topography. Unity is generally good though the area has been disturbed to a great degree, detracting from its

intactness. It is not a unique landscape for Alaska, though it would appear more unique to visitors than to residents. The middleground view would be considered to be “indistinctive” in scenic attractiveness (LDN, 2000) .

The distant views are strong in variety and vividness. The Alaska Range is visible in clear weather, and even in cloudy weather, the views of complex terrain patterns, vegetation patterns, and valley floors is striking. The distant view is coherent and intact. Though not unique in Alaska, it is unique to many visitors who stay in the area. The distant view is “distinctive” with respect to scenic attractiveness (LDN, 2000).

Scenic Integrity

Integrity is defined as “1) The state of being whole, complete, entire or unbroken and; 2) a sound unimpaired or perfect ‘condition’.” The area that would be visually affected by the ore haul road has been significantly altered. Fish Creek Road and the Steese Highway are significant elements in views. The alignments of the road do not respect line and form of vegetation or terrain and contrast greatly with other landscape features. They do not dominate, but are highly evident in views (LDN, 2000).

Other human improvements at Cleary Summit also do not add to the scenic integrity. Vegetation at Cleary Summit tends to be open with little opportunity for screening of human improvements. Colors of roofs of many of the structures also highly contrast and are highly visible. While some of the structures offer historical perspective and have aged well, others dominate the skyline and contrast with terrain (LDN, 2000).

Overall, the human improvements provide a deviation from the landscape character that is evident, though not dominant, and provide a low expression of the landscape character. Overall, the immediate Cleary Summit area provides “low to moderate” scenic integrity while middleground views provide a “moderate” level of scenic integrity. Distant views provide a “high” level of scenic integrity (LDN, 2000).

3.20.3 RESIDENTS

The resident population is composed of 17 full-time residential cabins or homes and 13 recreational/seasonal cabins or homes in the two subdivisions that comprise the ridge top area generally referred to as Cleary Summit. This population represents a particularly sensitive public that has a strong affinity for the general remoteness of the area and the high views of surrounding terrain. They greatly appreciate the aurora displays and two of the residents have bed and breakfast /lodging businesses at this location that cater to Japanese and other visitors primarily for aurora viewing. The residents clearly would prefer an unaltered landscape from that currently visible (LDN, 2000).

3.20.4 VISITORS

The visitor population is predominantly skiers in winter daylight hours and aurora viewers during the winter nights. The summer population includes those staying in bed and breakfasts and lodges in the greater Fairbanks area. Skiers number in the hundreds. Aurora viewer numbers are documented in greater detail in Section 3.16.6 (Economic Activity in the True North Study Area) and can number over 100 per night (LDN, 2000).

Skiers would be concerned about the overall quality of their visual environment and their ski experience. They would generally be concerned about foreground or middle ground views that might be distracting. Primarily, though, they are focused on the immediate physical activity and would not have strong responses to background changes (LDN, 2000).

Aurora viewers are a visually sensitive public. They are primarily focused on the aurora activity, thus primary expectations revolve around the ability to view the aurora. They would prefer to enjoy a wilderness experience if provided the opportunity, however, the area in which viewing occurs is a highly modified landscape (LDN, 2000).

Summer visitors generally would be a visually sensitive public as well. They too could have an expectation of a “wilderness” experience; however, most lodging is located in an existing disturbed landscape. They would have less concern for foreground views unless it were distracting as a result of frequency or dust. This concern would probably dissipate with distance, though would still be of moderate concern in the middleground views (LDN, 2000).

3.21 RECREATION

Local area residents, recreational property owners and renters, as well as Fairbanks area residents, come to the Cleary Summit / Skiland / Chatanika area to downhill ski, cross country ski, ski jour, snowboard, snowmachine, cycle, motorbike, fourwheel, run, hike, walk, dog mush, view the aurora, sight-see and photograph vistas. Grouse, ptarmigan and moose hunters also frequent the area in the fall months, as well as berry pickers.

The absolute number of recreational users of the area has not been documented. However, it is known that the 27 year-round residents and 19 seasonal residents who use the area for recreational purposes are joined each winter by recreationists from across the borough, as well as tourists, for these activities.

The heaviest recreational use of the area is on weekends and holidays during the ski and aurora-viewing season, which is concentrated from October through March, though this season has been documented as starting in September in 1999 and 2000.

A downhill ski area with beginner-to-advanced slopes, a chairlift, a day lodge, a coffee shop, a gift shop, equipment rentals and lessons is located in the Skiland Subdivision. The ski facility operates on weekends and holidays during daylight hours during the season, and by appointment, unless temperatures fall below -20 degrees. This facility is available for rent during the summer months. In addition, a snow machine tour company at the summit provides both equipment rentals and guided tours for visitors to the area. A dogsled ride business with the requisite dog yard sells rides primarily to tourists.

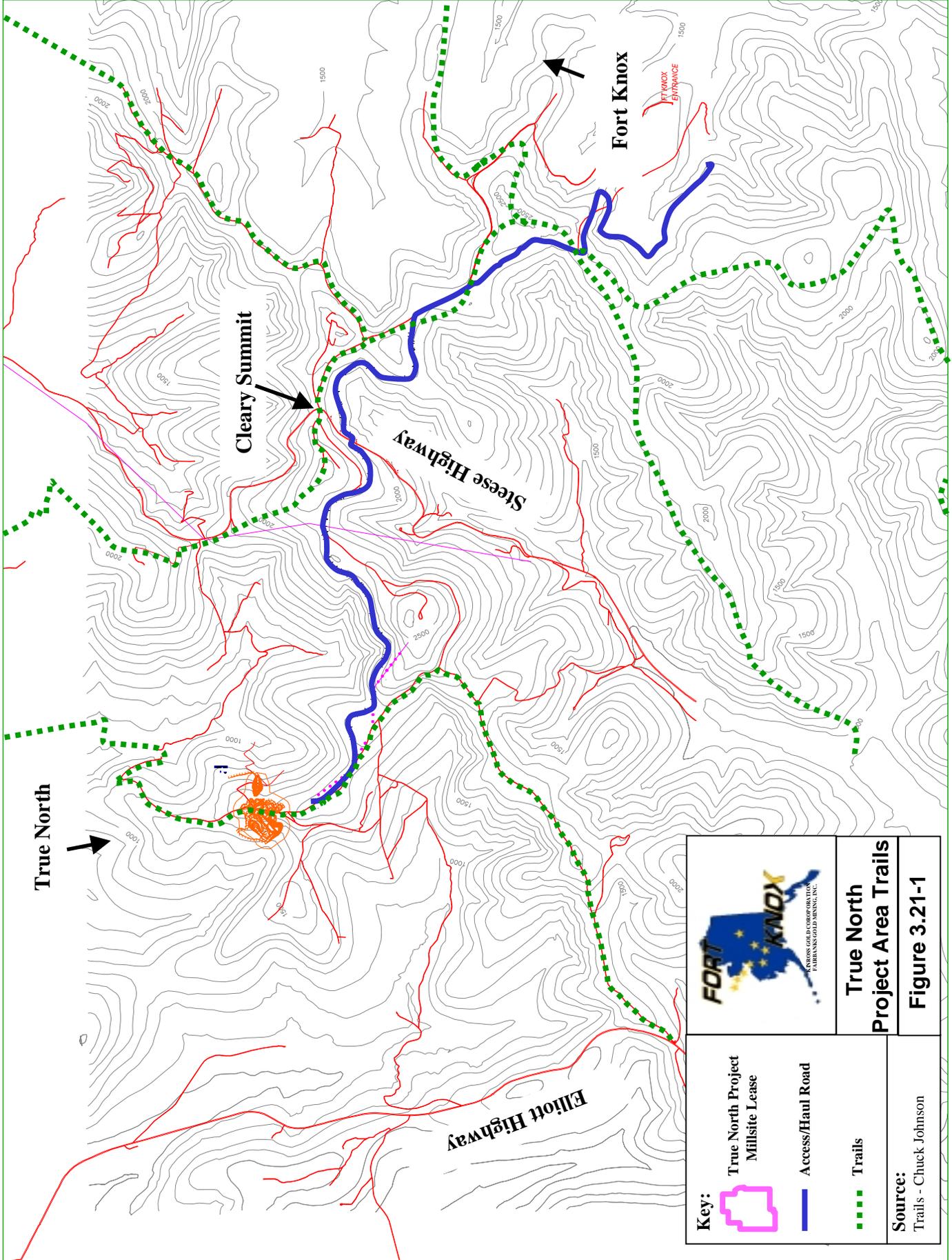
A well-developed trail system in this area, connected to the Chatanika Lodge, is used by skiers, cyclists, walkers, snowmachiners and occasionally by equestrians. It is maintained primarily by a well-organized user group. While many of the local trail systems run through or around the Cleary Summit / Skiland area as well, most reach far beyond the land near the hilltop before they culminate or loop back to Chatanika (Fig. 3.21-1). This multi-use trail system includes, but is not limited to, the following formal elements:

- An often steep trail runs through the valley and connects Chatanika Lodge to Haystack Mountain
- Another trail bends south and southeast from Chatanika Lodge up to Cleary Summit
- Another connector trail in this system runs from Cleary Summit south to link up with Chena Hot Springs Road at 11 Mile
- Another forms a loop south from Chatanika Lodge and then west turning northeast to rejoin the trail to Haystack Mountain
- Another links the latter south and west to link up with the Elliot Highway corridor
- Pea Run, a 62 mile loop trail, half of which roughly parallels the Steese Highway corridor south from Chatanika Lodge, crosses the Elliott Highway south of Hilltop and then heads north along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Corridor before it turns northeast to head back to the lodge.

Several trails culminate on or near Cleary Summit including the historic Circle to Fairbanks Trail, the Fairbanks Creek Trail, and a connector link to the Gilmore Trail. In addition, local residents report using Fish Creek Road, Barnes Creek Road, Fairbanks Creek Road, and Pedro Dome Road for walking, running, cross-country skiing, ski-journing, snowmachining and cycling.

While a few small portions of the historic Davidson Ditch have been cleared for use by snowmachiners, four-wheelers, hikers and cross-country skiers, it does not qualify as a developed trail system.

Just south of the Olnes Subdivision cutoff the Chatanika River crosses under the Elliott Highway. A boat launch is located at this point and is used by riverboats to access both the



	<p>True North Project Area Trails</p>	<p>Figure 3.21-1</p>
<p>Key:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> True North Project Millsite Lease Access/Haul Road Trails 	<p>Source: Trails - Chuck Johnson</p>	

upper and lower Chatanika River. Borough residents and other recreational users float the Chatanika River by canoe as well. These non-motorized river runners access the Chatanika from a variety of different points along its banks.

3.22 TRANSPORTATION

Current exploration activity at the True North site requires minimal traffic crossings at the intersection of Fairbanks Creek Road and the Steese Highway . Six-to-nine pick-up trucks driven by geologists, mining engineers and environmental personnel cross at this point an estimated 12 times per day en route from the FGMI administrative offices located at Fort Knox to the True North site. Two water trucks traverse the True North site itself, but do not cross the Steese Highway as they use a groundwater source on site.

Current north/south traffic on the Steese Highway is composed primarily of 1) residents in the Chatanika area who make regular trips to Fairbanks for goods and services, 2) less frequent trips by residents further north of Chatanika along the Steese Highway and from the communities of Central and Circle City, 3) placer miners active in the Central District between May and October, 4) Fairbanks area residents and tourists heading to the restaurants or recreational destinations in the area, and 5) Poker Flat Rocket Facility employees and seasonal researchers.

Both year-round residents and recreational property owners in the Cleary Summit area travel regularly from their residences along Fairbanks Creek Road and Pedro Dome Road to the Steese Highway/Fairbanks Creek road intersection and turn south to make the trip to (and from) Fairbanks. Trips by these residents and recreational property owners north to the Chatanika area are also frequent.

Traffic from Fairbanks on weekends and holidays during the ski and aurora viewing season from November through March travels north along the Steese Highway with some travelers making the turn east to the Skiland recreation area. Pedro Dome Road experiences substantial road traffic from August 1 through November 1 each year during the hunting and berry picking seasons. The remaining traffic continues on to destinations further north.

In addition, mine personnel travel to and from the operating mine at Fort Knox 6 miles east of the Steese Highway/Fairbanks Creek Road intersection at the top of Cleary Summit on a daily basis. An estimated 52 employees make the trip in to the mine site at ~7 am and depart at ~7 pm; an estimated 52 employees make the trip in at ~7 pm and depart at ~7 am; and an estimated 53 employees make the trip in between 6 and 7 am and depart at ~5 pm. These are conservative estimates.

The actual annual average daily traffic (AADT) volumes for the five-year period from 1995 to 1999 for the stretch of the Steese Highway between Fox and Cleary Summit are shown in Table 3.22-1.

Table 3.22-1 Recorded annual average daily traffic (AADT) values for the Steese Highway between Fox and Cleary Summit	
Year	AADT
1995	1,710
1996	1,704
1997	1,328
1998	1,266
1999	1,294

Source: ADOT/PF (2000)

Note that AADT values actually decreased 24 percent between 1995 and 1999. That is likely because the 1995 and 1996 figures cover part of the period of Fort Knox Mine construction. Following construction, traffic decreased and since 1997 reflect only mine operating levels.

The baseline traffic described above contributes to the character and level of use overall for the Steese Highway north of it's intersection with the Elliott Highway at Fox. The Northern Region of the ADOT/PF has determined that this segment of the Steese Highway is "underutilized as designed."