

Ester Valley Trail

Revised: 13 August 2013

History

The Ester Valley Trail (aka Ester Creek Road) first appears as a road along the northern bench of Ester Creek Valley, leading to placer and lode mines in the valley in 1908 (USGS Bulletin 525, Plate 11). Over the years, the road location has shifted to accommodate dredging activity. In 1933, the road is in the valley bottom and named Government Road. In later years, the road originated at Alpha Way in Ester, crossed the mouth of Ready Bullion Creek, proceeded west along the north bench of the valley to the head of Ester Creek, then to the crest of the Ester watershed, continuing to Straight Creek, then on to the Cache and Old Saulich sidings on the Alaska Railroad. In the 1970's, because of placer mining activity in Ready Bullion Creek, the road was relocated from the bench in Ester Valley onto private property (patented mining claim) on the valley floor.

Today, the Ester Valley Trail is a route used by placer miners to access mining claims in the valley and is a recreational trail used by snowmachiners, ATV riders, mountain bikers, x-c skiers, runners, trappers, etc. While the trail, and its branches, are not included in the *FNSB Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan*, it forms critical connections to Ester Dome, via the Tri-Con Rd and Willow Creek Trail, and to Old Wood Rd, via the Social Security Mine Trail. For a period of time in the 1990-2000's, the Fireplug Sled Dog Race was held on this route, from Ester to Nenana and return.

As a result of disputes between adjacent mining operators, in June 2011, the road was gated at the property boundary at the mouth of the valley and deep ditches/berms dug on three branch trails (Social Security Mine Trail, Fireplug Trail and Tri-Con Road) to prevent access. "No Trespassing" signs have been placed at these locations. Also, during the summer of 2011, the upper portion of the trail (between Moose Gulch and Willow Creek) has been relocated from the valley floor back to the bench on the north side to facilitate placer mining in the valley bottom.

1) As a public right-of-way, this trail may qualify for RS2477 status based on historical information (1908 and 1933 USGS reports and maps, and 1949 aerial photographs) or it might be considered a branch of an existing RS2477 trail (Ester-Dunbar, RST #70). 2) Right-of-way easements, expressed in warranty deeds, clearly grant passage to neighboring landowners. 3) A prescriptive easement may also exist, since it has seen uninterrupted and open use in its present location since the 1970's.

Usage History

2010. Ester Valley Trail, Tri-Con Mining Road, Social Security Trail and the Fireplug Trail depicted.

TrailMapper.org. Tom Clark.

2010. Trails described. An Essential Ester Dome Trail Summary & Map. Ester Community Assoc, Tom Clark. <http://www.estercommunity.org/committees/esterdometrails.html>.

1999. Right-of-way easement expressed. Deed #401-1999-021542-0 (USMS #813, #799, #1651, #794 & #1650); Grantor: Alaska Gold Company, Grantee: Walter Largent & Roger Moore.

1997. Right-of-way easement expressed. Deed #401-1997-008380-0 (USMS #350); Grantor: Gerald Hassel, Grantee: Walter Largent & Roger Moore.

1993. Right-of-way easement expressed. Deed #401-1993-013997-0 (USMS #356, #357 & #1992); Grantor: Alaska Gold Company, Grantee: Walter Largent.

199?-2012. 2-3 mountain bike rides annually. Fairbanks Cycle Club.

1990-2000. Fireplug Sled Dog Race held on trail route.
1988-2012. Spring x-c ski outings. Alaska Alpine Club & Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks.
1978. Trails depicted. Ester Trails and Greenbelt Proposal. Ester Community Assoc.
1978. Trails depicted. Ester Trails Map. Mike Spindler.
1978. Trails depicted. Aerial photography. USGS-UAF.
1952. Road depicted. USGS topographical map, Fairbanks D-3. [John Bennett]
1949. Road depicted. Aerial photography. FNSB GIS.
1940. Road depicted. USGS Bull #907, Map Plate III, Geologic Map of the Alaska Railroad Region, Yanert Fork To Fairbanks.
1933. Road depicted. Lode Deposits of the Fairbanks District. USGS Bull #849-B, James Hill. p. 121.
1933. Road depicted. Geologic Map of the Fairbanks District, Alaska. USGS Bull #849, Plate 3.
1927. Road work described, Route 7D & 7DD. Alaska Road Commission Annual Report, p. 52-54.
1914. First U.S. Mineral Patents issued for USMS #799, #794, #357, and #356.
1913. Road depicted. A Geologic Reconnaissance of the Fairbanks Quadrangle, Alaska. USGS Bull #525, L.M. Prindle. p. 204.
1911-33. Road depicted. U.S. Mineral Surveys Plats #813, #799, #794, and #1649.
1908. Road depicted. Topographic and Economic Map of the Fairbanks District, Alaska. USGS Bull #525 Plate11 (surveyed 1907), L.M. Prindle & F.J. Katz.
1908. Road depicted. Alaska, Fairbanks Special Map. Alaska Sheet 642 A (surveyed 1907).
1907-37. Road work described, Route 7D. Alaska Road Commission Annual Reports. [John Bennett]