

Southeastern prehistoric site is discovered

JUNEAU—The site of an ancient human settlement was discovered while building the access road to a new salmon hatchery on Baranof Island, says the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

The site is at Hidden Falls in Kasnyku Bay on Baranof's east coast. Actually, there are two prehistoric levels at the site. One is near the surface and the other is six feet underground. An archeologist from Sitka said the site must be at least several thousand years old.

The importance of this discovery rests partly on the fact that there are very few archeological sites from prehistoric times in Southeastern Alaska. Important discoveries already excavated include areas of Yakutat Bay, Angoon, and a site at Glacier Bay National Monument which is about 10,000 years old.

"Age is not the only important factor," said Stan Davis, archeologist. "The fact that this site is on the coastal islands is even more significant. The Glacier Bay Site at Groundhog Bay is a mainland site. We have needed to know who was in the islands, if anyone, during the early years before the Tlingit culture was fully developed. We have dated sites in Siberia of 30-40,000 years. On the Alaskan side of the former land bridge (now the Aleutian Islands), our oldest date is 11,000 years. Yet we know there were people living on the tip of South

America at least 13,000 years ago. Where did the migration southward occur? Who were the people who filtered southward and when did it happen?

Some of the answers to Davis' questions may be soon found. Under his direction, a team of archeologists hired by the Forest Service will spend the summer at Hidden Falls. The northern portion of the site, which contains the lower cultural level and will later accommodate sewer and water lines for the salmon hatchery, will be excavated first.

Meanwhile, construction of the F.R.E.D. (Fisheries Rehabilitation Enhancement and Development) hatchery is continuing, as earth moving equipment and archeologists with hand trowels work side-by-side. "By the time the sewer and water lines have to be laid, we expect the north side of the archeological site to be excavated. If everyone continues to work on schedule, both the hatchery and the excavation should be finished by next fall," said Bob Roys of F.R.E.D., a division of the State Department of Fish and Game.

The hatchery is being developed in the National Forest under a special use permit from the U.S. Forest Service. The law requires the Forest Service to protect all cultural sites on National Forest land.