

Wolf Creek Boatworks

Prince of Wales Island

www.SaveWolfCreek.com

Property Description: . Originally called Twelve Mile Arm Boat Shop, this beautiful landmark started out in 1939, building boats out of local SE Alaska timber. For years, Isreal Stevens built and sold skiffs using the same belt driven tools that still operate inside the boat house today. Originally powered by water from the water flume off of Wolf Creek, it was later powered by a large S. Morgan Smith Francis style water turbine. All of the original equipment is still housed within the building, and while modern aluminum skiffs are now built in the boatworks, the building still serves the same function as it did in 1940.

Property history: In late 1939 Israel Stevens began residing on Forest Service land at the mouth of Wolf Creek under a special use permit. The Wolf Creek Boatworks was built by Stevens in 1940, (CRG-346) at the mouth of Wolf Creek to the northeast of the community of Hollis. When Israel Stevens built the boatworks it was originally referred to as the Twelvemile Arm boat shop; the Wolf Creek name came later.

The boatworks machinery was water powered and a flume system was setup to bring water from the creek. A wheel and generator were housed in a shed to the rear of the boatworks. Eventually a water turbine and generator were installed to provide electrical power. A cradle was built inside the open boatworks and eventually a marine rail and grid system was built along the north side of the building. Between 1946 and 1960 a sawmill was co-located with the boatworks and trees in the surrounding area were felled to build the boats. Between 1939 to 1951 Israel Stevens made small skiffs which he sold. Additionally he also built larger boats at the property for himself.

The boatworks changed hands several times between 1951 and 1994, although no boats were built during that period. In 1995, Sam Romey purchased the properties and began the process of restoring the buildings, power systems, and other improvements. Aluminum skiffs are being constructed in the boatworks for the purpose of commercial sale as of 2012.

Why is property endangered?

The land that Wolf Creek Boatworks sits on has been slated for a land swap between the USFS and the Alaska State Mental Health Trust. Of the 1544 acres set to be logged, approximately 7 acres surround the historic boathouse, powerhouse, cabin, and boat grid. These 7 acres being carved out of the exchange will ensure the preservation of the entire historic site.

Although Mr. Romey has offered financial compensation for the homesteaded 7 acres, or an exchange for 7 acres further down the beach that he owns to continue occupying the 7-acre parcel, Mr. Romey stands to be evicted with the boatworks structures and equipment destroyed.

Activities under way to save property: 25 years of restoration, maintenance, improvements, and preservation have gone into the now functioning Wolf Creek Boatworks. Currently the battle to exclude the land from the USFS and AMHLT land swap has hit a dead end and an eviction notice was issued by the USFS which requires all privately owned property to be removed by December 17, 2020 or it becomes property of the USFS which would then be transferred to the AMHLT. This is the equivalent of a forced eviction and confiscation of home without any compensation or recourse. AAHP is involved in support of saving the boatworks as are others. Senator Lisa Murkowski's office is reviewing the situation.

2021: Preservation Alaska and others support saving the boatworks. There is currently a lawsuit filed in court to stop the transfer.

