PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT REPORT
FOR
EXCURSION INLET DRUM SITE
EXCURSION INLET, ALASKA

DECEMBER, 1991

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
410 WILLOUGHBY AVENUE
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801-1795

German POWs at Excursion Inlet, November 1945. AAC

1.0 Introduction and Purpose of the Preliminary Assessment:

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) conducted a Preliminary Assessment (PA) of Excursion Inlet Drum Site, Excursion Inlet, Alaska. The PA is the second of a three-step assessment process which begins with the Site Discovery and concludes, if necessary, with a Site Inspection. The assessment process is intended to identify potential hazardous sites and compare and rank them relative to other sites across the nation. It is not intended to be an extensive or complete site characterization, contaminant fate determination, or quantitative risk assessment.

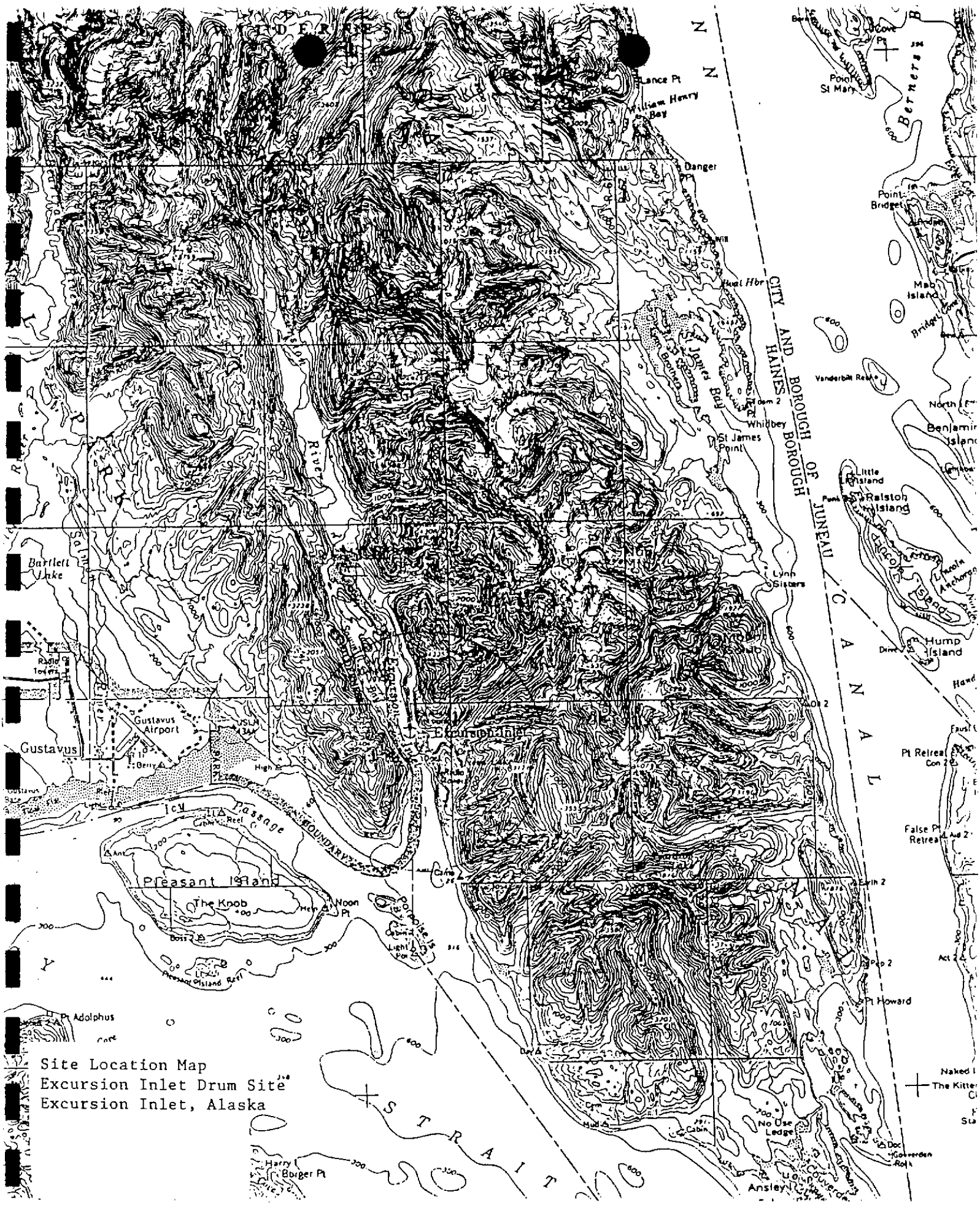
The Excursion Inlet Drum Site PA was conducted to identify potential public health and/or environmental hazards related to the site and, if present, identify the need for further investigative action. The PA is based on information derived from available files and literature pertaining to the site, and a site visit.

2.0 Information Obtained During the Site Visit and File Review:

2.1 Site Location and Description - Excursion Inlet is an eight mile long estuary off of Icy Straits, approximately 40 miles west of Juneau, just east of Gustavus. The property in question is located approximately 1/8 to 1/4 mile to the south of the cannery owned by Ward Cove Packing, at Latitude 58°23', Longitude 135°25'. The Department of Natural Resources legal description is Tidelands Patent # 175 ADL 17881.

2.2 Site History/Potential Problem(s) at the Site - During World War II, with the threat of Japanese attack, it was decided to build a barge terminal someplace in Southeast Alaska to reduce the exposure of cargo ships in the open Gulf of Alaska. The site selected for this terminal was Excursion Inlet, Alaska. Barges could then be towed up the inside passage from Seattle and Prince Rupert, to Excursion Inlet. From there supply barges could carry the cargo across the northern end of the Gulf of Alaska to southcentral and the Aleutians. The Astoria & Puget Sound Canning Company was operating in the Inlet at the time and a small village existed near the site.

Work on the barge facility began in August of 1942. At the peak of construction, more than 2,700 civilian workers were on the job. Included in the construction were 3 docks, sheds, oil docks, cold storage buildings, a water reservoir, warehouse, a large gasoline tank farm, a marine repair facility, and other buildings to house a garrison of 4,000 personnel. A petroleum storage farm was literally imbedded in solid rock near the mouth of the bay.



Site Location Map
Excursion Inlet Drum Site
Excursion Inlet, Alaska

By the time the facility was completed in November of 1943, the Japanese threat was past and the site sat idle for the remainder of the war. The cost of building this facilty was $17 million.

After the war, the army decided to salvage as much of the material from the facility as possible. In June of 1945, after dismantling Camp Hale in Colorado, a group of about 700 German POWs were brought up to Excursion Inlet to dismantle this facility. In January of 1946, the POWs returned to Germany, leaving only 15 buildings intact at Excursion Inlet (Cohen, 1988).

The site was owned by Norman Des Rosiers from sometime in the 1940s until recently. He ran a small milling operation on the property. The property, approximately two acres, is located at the end of the runway about a quarter of a mile south of the cannery. It is bordered on the front by Excursion Inlet, and an unnamed creek to the south of the site. The site is located on the old Department of Defense site as evidenced by the cement pads that cover a large percentage of the property.

Mr. Des Rosiers started construction of an A-frame house on the property several years ago but never completed it. About 10 years ago while digging a waterline, he dug up some drums on his property. The exact number of drums is unclear; somewhere between four and ten. The contents of these drums is unknown, but they were reported to be oozing a black tar like substance. He reportedly gave the drums to the cannery to dispose of (Mrs. Des Rosiers, 1991).

During the site visit by DEC staff, it was noted that there were some rusted drums in the area where Mr. Des Rosiers had excavated. The drums were empty, with the exception of some water in a couple of them. There was a dried black substance on one. Drums containing chemicals were not evident.

Mr. Des Rosiers recently sold the site to Ward Cove Packing. The site is not in use at this time.

2.3 Physical Environment - Excursion Inlet is an eight mile long estuary located off of Icy Strait about 38 miles northeast of Juneau. The Inlet supports a productive commercial and sport fishery.

The bedrock consists of graywacke, mudstone, turbidites, and limestone. The dominate rock type is calcareous graywacke with carbonate clasts, fossil fragments, subordinate feldspar, quartz and volcanic rock. The surficial deposits include alluvium, colluvium, tidal mudflat deposits, and glaciofluvial deposits of Holocene and Pleistocene age (Brew, D.A.).

The water table is very shallow. Local residents south of the site report that their drinking water well is more like a hole in the ground from which they scoop their water (Des Rosiers, Melody, 1991).

The mean annual precipitation is 54.86 inches and the potential evapotranspiration is 20.87 inches. The mean annual temperature is 40.9 degrees F (U.S.D.A., 1968).

2.4 Waste Types, Quantities, and Characteristics - The principal waste types of concern are the unknown contents of buried 55 gallon drums. The contents of these drums were reported to be a tarlike substance. The quantities are unknown. It has been reported that approximately 4 to 6 of these drums were dug up on the property in question when the previous owner was digging a water line. These drums were reportedly given to the cannery for disposal. There are a few drums still remaining at the site where they were said to have been dug up. The drums that remain on site are rusted and crushed and appear to be empty.

2.5 Pollutants, Mobilization, Pathways, and Risks - **Groundwater:** Drinking water is provided for the cannery from an underground spring which feeds a creek located approximately 3 miles east of the cannery site. The water is not filtered, but is chlorinated prior to drinking. This serves the 2 permanent residents and the 350 seasonal residents who are at the cannery during operation between April 1 through September 30. There are several cabins located in the Inlet just south of the cannery. The cabin residents get their drinking water from very shallow wells.

Surface Water: The site is bordered by the Inlet and a large stream which both support a fishery. The potential for contamination from surface water runoff exists, but is low due to the fact that the contaminants of concern are the alleged buried drums. There is no apparent surface soil contamination.

Soil Exposure: The potential for direct exposure to contaminates from soil exposure is low. There is no soil contamination evident at the site. The major concern is the possibility of buried drums.

Air Exposure: The potential for wind transport of contaminated soil is remote. The major population in Excursion Inlet is at the cannery which is approximately 1/4 mile to the north of the site. The cannery has a population of 2 permanent residents and 350 seasonal residents who are present while the cannery is in operation from April 1 to September 30. The remainder of the potentially affected population consists of approximately 10 cabins located from 1 to 4 miles from the site.

3.0 Priority Assessment: No further action is warranted under the CERCLA program for reasons discussed in 4.0.

4.0 Conclusions and Follow-up Recommendations: At this time, there is no evidence of potential contamination from anything other than petroleum products, which are not covered under the CERCLA Program.

Recommendations for this site are as follows:

1. That reports of buried drums be verified.

2. That if the buried drums exist, their contents be identified and the drums removed as necessary.

REFERENCES

U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1968, Potential Evapo-transpiration and Climate in Alaska by Thornthwaite's Classification, Forest Service Paper No. PNW-71

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, 1991, observations during the site visit to Excursion Inlet Drum Site

United States Geological Survey, Water Resources Data, Alaska, Water Year 1987

Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Alaska Habitat Management Guide, Southcentral Region Map Atlas, 1985

Brew, D.A., and Ford, A.B., Preliminary reconnaissance geologic map, southeastern Alaska, U.S. Geological Survey Open-file Report 85-135, 23 p., 2 pl.

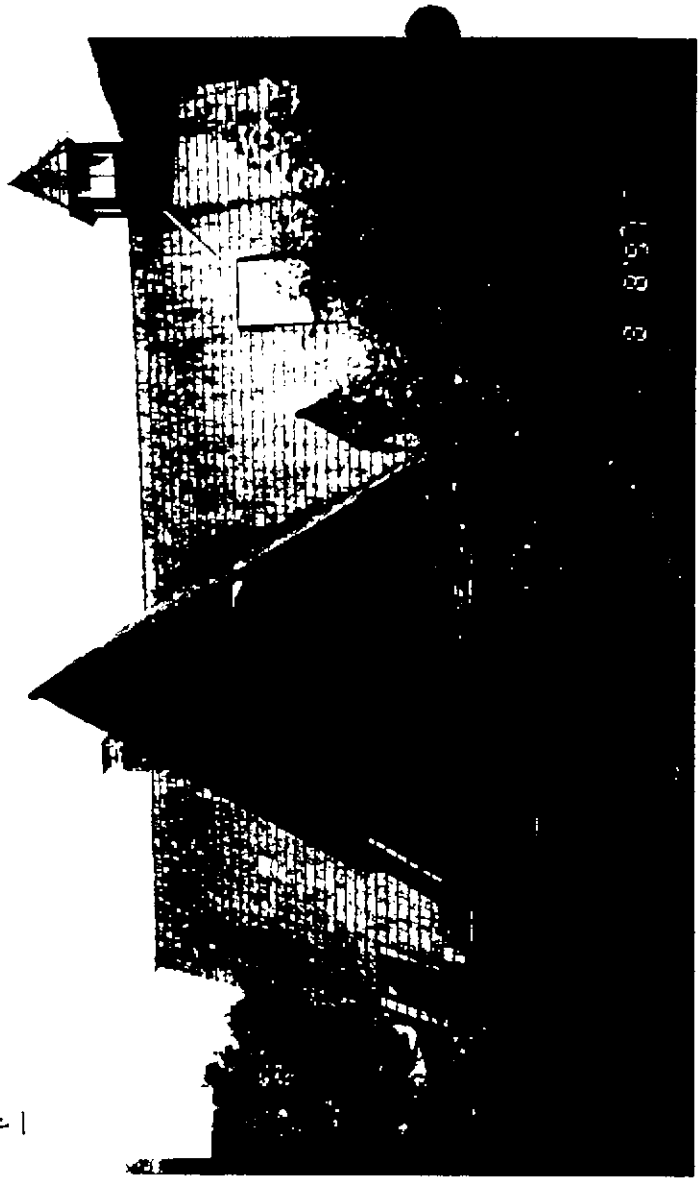
Cohen, Stan, The Forgotton War Volume Two, Pictoral Histories Publishing Company, Missoula, Montana, 1988

Des Rosiers, Mrs., August 13, 1991, phone conservation with B. Potter

Des Rosiers, Melody, August 8, 1991, personal conversation with B.Potter

PHOTO DOCUMENTATION SHEET

Frame number	Date	Taken by	Description
#1	8/8/91	B.Potter	A-Frame
#2	8/8/91	B.Potter	Looking south of site towards cabins
#3	8/8/91	B.Potter	Beach directly south of site
#4	8/8/91	B.Potter	Stream located south of site
#5	8/8/91	B.Potter	Sawmill operation built on cement pad
#6	8/8/91	B.Potter	Cement foundation
#7	8/8/91	B.Potter	Area where drums were dug up
#8	8/8/91	B.Potter	Drums that were dug up
#9	8/8/91	B.Potter	Drums that were dug up
#10	8/8/91	B.Potter	Saw mill operation
#11	8/8/91	B.Potter	View of cannery from the site



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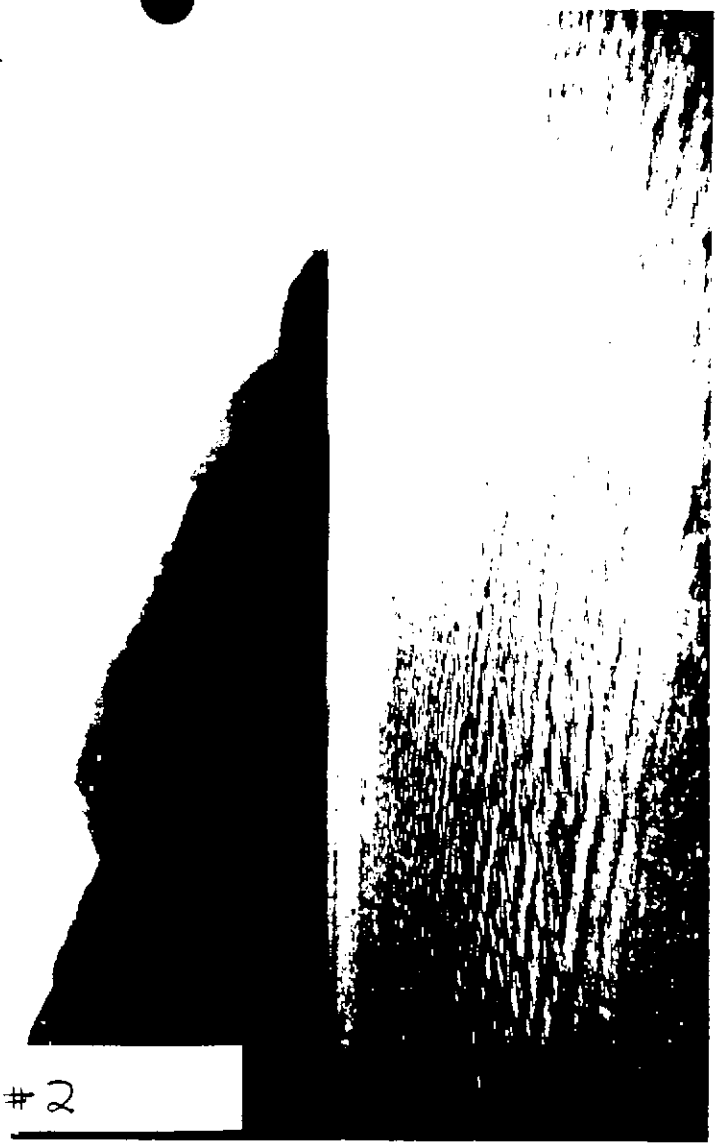

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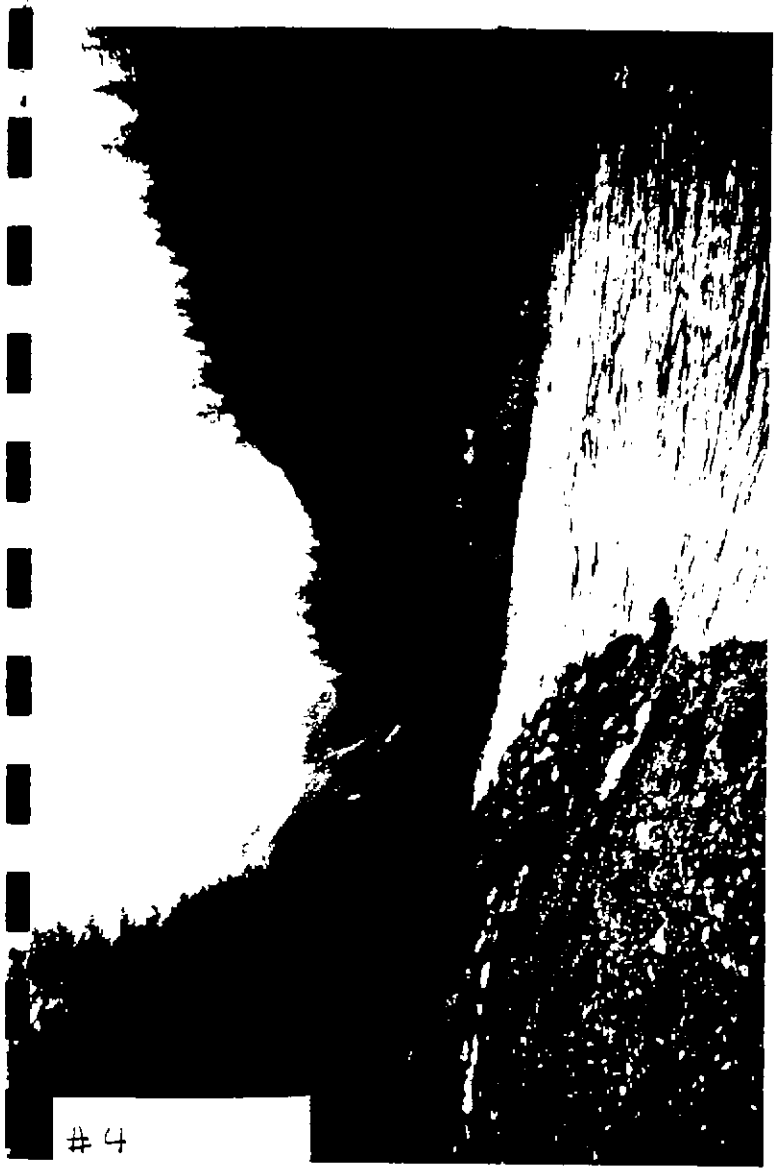

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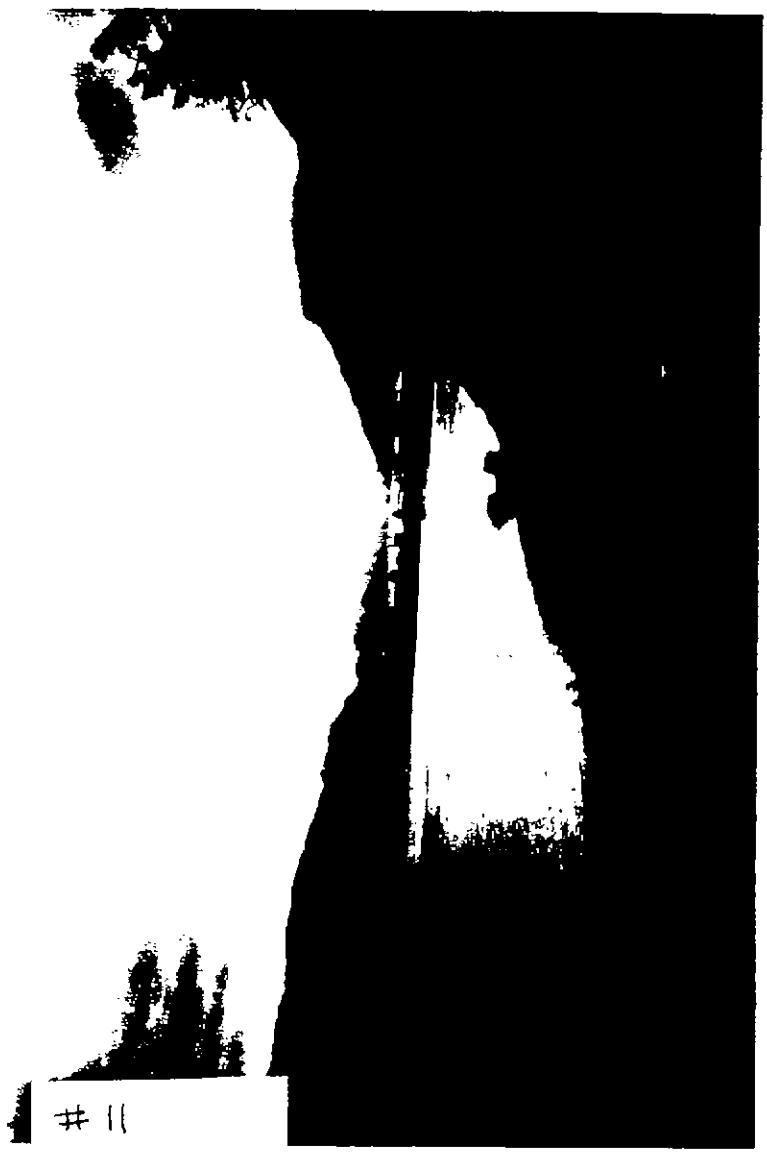

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