

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Property

\_\_\_\_\_  
County and State

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

## SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 00001058

Date Listed: April 10, 2007

Property Name: Bear Creek Fishweir #2

County: Tishomingo

State: Mississippi

none  
Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

for Daniel J. Viree  
Signature of the Keeper

April 10, 2007  
Date of Action

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Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 8. Statement of Significance

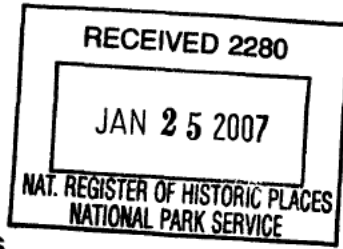
Maritime history is hereby removed as an area of significance.

[This change was made in consultation with and approved by the National Register staff of the Mississippi SHPO.]

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The Mississippi State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

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**DISTRIBUTION:**

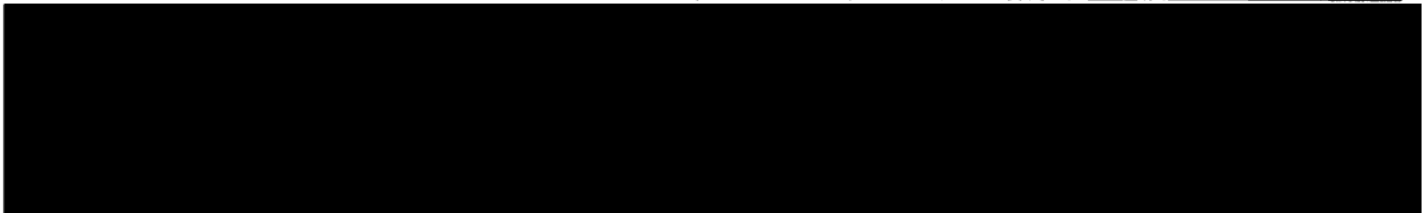
- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name: Bear Creek Fishweir #2  
other names/site number: 22-Ts-1605



**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally  statewide \_\_\_ locally. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kimberly H. P. Paul \_\_\_\_\_ JAN. 23, 2007  
Signature of certifying official Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register,  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_ determined eligible for the  
National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the  
National Register  
\_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

for \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action  
Daniel J. Kinz 4/10/07  
Signature of the Keeper

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**5. Classification**

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**Ownership of Property:** public-State**Number of Resources within Property:**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

**Category of Property:** structure

## Contributing

## Noncontributing

1

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**

0

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**6. Function or Use**

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**Historic Functions:** Subsistence/ fishing facility**Current Functions:** Landscape/underwater

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification(s):** Other/ fishweir**Materials:**

foundation:

roof:

walls:

other: Stone/ large sandstone rocks

**Narrative Description:**

See Continuation Sheets

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**Applicable National Register Criteria**

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

Engineering  
Maritime History

**Period of Significance**

unknown (prehistoric to 1930s)

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Criteria Considerations:**

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Significant Person(s)**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation(s)**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

N/A

**Narrative Statement of Significance:**

See continuation sheets.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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**Bibliography** See continuation sheet.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Mississippi

Department of Archives & History

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property: < 1 acre

UTM References:	Zone 16	Easting: 390820	Northing: 3830160	Zone	Easting	Northing
	A					C
	B					D

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description** See continuation sheet.

**Boundary Justification:** See continuation sheet.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section: 7

Page: 1

Bear Creek Fishweir #2  
Tishomingo County, Mississippi

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**Narrative Description:**

The weir is a double-wing structure constructed of large flat slabs of sandstone readily available on nearby hillside slopes, with a long wing angled across the creek and a shorter wing nearly parallel to the west bank (see attached diagram). At the opening in the apex of the V-shaped structure there is a short chute with rocks piled on either side, now mostly underwater and somewhat scattered, with a length of about 11 meters. The long wing angles d [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The current is strong, especially through the weir opening, and parts of the creek are quite deep, even with the water at a low level. These factors made the longer wing inaccessible except by boat, which was used to transport a stadia rod across for measurements used in preparing the diagram.

The rocks shown in the wings on the diagram, other than the key ones plotted with the transit, are estimated in size and placement. The only rocks actually measured were in the short, accessible wing, and these ranged mostly in the 40-50 cm size, with a few larger and lots in the 30 cm range. It is assumed that those in the longer wing were of similar size. In the case of both wings, the rock piles began against the bank and ran out into the creek, so the only opening was the gap in the apex of the "V" of the weir, where presumably some type of trap was placed. No remains of a trap were noted in the chute because the water was too deep and swift there to see the stream bed. It seems unlikely that any portion of a trap remains, although there could be broken-off anchor posts imbedded in the creek bottom. On the short wing, the rock spread (width) was about 4 meters near the bank and about 2.5 meters about midway. There was a small cypress tree growing up through the middle of the short wing near the bank, shown as a dark circle on the diagram.

[REDACTED] The chute length of about 11 meters is estimated due to its inaccessibility. The water level was between 5 and 10 cm below the datum point, which was set up arbitrarily on the sandbar next to the west wing, and the rock in the wings protruded up to 22 cm above the datum level, i.e. ca. 27 to 32 cm above the water at that time. In the case of both weirs in the park, it seems unlikely that the rocks were piled very much higher than they now appear, so the weirs were likely used only at those times of the year when the water level was low in the creek. There are presently impoundments upstream from which the water is periodically released, greatly affecting the level of water in the creek at times which might not have been the case in earlier years when the weirs were in use. Information above from Connaway (ND).

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section: 8

Page: 2

Bear Creek Fishweir #2  
Tishomingo County, Mississippi

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**Narrative Statement of Significance:**

The significance of the Bear Creek Fishweir #2 lies primarily in two areas, engineering and maritime history. These two areas are inter-related in this case in that the techniques used to construct the weir, the design principles by which it operated, and its function are all derived from an historical continuum dating back thousands of years in prehistoric North America. Fishweir technology and utilization have been recorded over most of North America from, for example, as early as the Sebacook Fishweir in Maine, dating between 1,760 and 6,100 B.P. (Petersen et.al. 1994: 197-223), until as late as the 1950s. Other North American examples date back as early as 3770 B.P. at Straight Creek, Alaska (Moss and Erlandson 1998: Table 1); 4560 B.P. at Atherley Narrows, Ontario (Johnston and Cassavoy 1978: Table 1); 4590 B.P. at Glenrose Wet, British Columbia (Moss and Erlandson 1998: Table 1); and 5717 B.P. at Boylston Street, Massachusetts (Decima and Dincauze 1998: Table 1). Hubbert and Wright (1987: 100) estimate the use of fishweirs at least as early as the Middle Archaic period, possibly earlier in the Southeast. In Alabama, many of the earlier rock fishweirs were repaired and used by Euro-Americans up until the early 1950s when they were outlawed there (Hubbert and Wright 1987: 100). Such weirs were in use in Tennessee at least up until ca. 1939, although the State Department of Game and Fish tried to discourage their use by dynamiting them as early as 1915 (Cobb 1978: 45). The use of weirs to catch game fish and the construction of weirs that completely blocked any running streams were outlawed in Mississippi in 1922 (Laws of Mississippi 1922), but with certain restrictions were still in use as late as 1938 (Connaway ND).

The design and construction techniques remained essentially unchanged over the long period of time mentioned above. With the exception of tidal weirs and special types built as traps around flowing springs and lake banks, the basic design is a V-shaped dam with an opening for a trap at the downstream apex of the V. Depending on availability of materials, the dams were constructed of either large rocks or wooden poles or posts driven into the stream bottom, or combinations thereof. The preferable rock dams were more stable against stream current force. If posts were used, some form of obstruction was attached or woven between them to prevent fish from escaping. This included brush, limbs, woven mats, boards, hogwire, and chicken wire. In both cases, there was usually a short chute constructed at the mouth of the weir where the trap was placed.

In prehistoric times, traps varied, including woven baskets, fenced enclosures, nets, and other similar devices. In historic times, traps were usually constructed like a rectangular box, sloping upward toward the lower or downstream end, with open slats in the bottom for passage of water and small unusable fish. The slats were arranged in tiers, stair-step fashion, so that fish passing over them would fall behind the end of each step and get caught there. Though the Bear Creek Fishweir #2 had a chute at the apex, no evidence of the trap was visible. Anchor posts would be the most likely part to survive, but if any portions of them remained, they were obscured by deep water and strong current.

The function of the weir also remains unchanged through the ages, that of mass procurement of fish for food at times when local communities, both prehistoric and historic, were dependent to some extent on natural resources for subsistence. At a certain time of year when some species of fish are spawning, these weirs were operating at their peak and were of great economic importance to the people who used

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section: 8

Page: 3

Bear Creek Fishweir #2  
Tishomingo County, Mississippi

---

them. They provided an easily acquired meat source in areas and at times when meat may not have been plentiful. This was especially true during prehistoric times, during the early European settlement of this country, and even during the depression era of the 1930s.

The Bear Creek Fishweir #2 represents one of the better preserved fishdams recorded to date in Mississippi, exemplary of the style and construction techniques used both during the prehistoric and historic periods, up until the early twentieth century, one that has now all but disappeared. It served to feed numerous people scattered about the area, possibly on farms or small communities in the historic period. It is significant in that it illustrates the practical application of specific design and construction techniques to build a structure to serve certain human needs, the procurement of a necessary type of food, namely protein.

There are eight other known fishweirs upstream on Bear Creek (Bear Creek #1, 22-Ts-1604; Leatherwood A & B, 22-Ts-1611; Mann, 22-Ts-1609; Cain, 22-Ts-1612; Boggs, 22-Ts-1610, Bear Creek #9, 22-Ts-1613; and Bishop in Alabama). There was also another large fishweir downstream from these, called Fishtrap Hollow Fishweir (22-Ts-1606), that has been well documented regarding origin and construction, along with a photograph of it still in use in 1925. Unfortunately, it is under Pickwick Lake and is in undetermined condition. All were of stone or stone-filled wood crib construction. Several have remains of fall traps imbedded in the apex openings. The Bishop weir in Alabama has most of the trap still buried under gravel in the chute.

The particular significance of the Bear Creek weir #2 is that it is one of the better preserved specimens of rock weirs in the state, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Many of the other recorded weirs in the state are remnants that have suffered damage from flooding and floating debris, and from intentional destruction by game wardens, with portions that have been blown out, leaving only remnants that are barely recognizable as weirs. The Leatherwood weir (22-Ts-1611) was destroyed by game wardens in the 1930s, the Mann weir (22-Ts-1609) has been mostly leveled out by flooding. The Cain weir (22-Ts-1612) was destroyed or buried for the most part by channelization for the Bear Creek Floodway by TVA in 1971-72. The Bishop weir on Bear Creek in Alabama is still in good condition, but in all cases a lot of the rocks in the dams have been scattered or displaced by strong currents or debris. By comparison, Bear Creek #2 (and Bear Creek #1) are better preserved and seem to have been the subject of more recent maintenance and repair.

The weir is also significant in that it was the result of human effort, possibly a community effort, and activity to serve their needs during difficult times. If this particular weir was used historically, which could easily be the case since others were known to be in use on Bear Creek in the early twentieth century, it would thus fit into the context of local community history and significance, as well as representing the state-wide significance of similar endeavors in other parts of Mississippi during this particular time frame. It would be an expression of late nineteenth through early twentieth century community life and community involvement and sharing in an economic endeavor that cannot be readily seen in other remaining structures from that period.

By comparison, several of the Bear Creek weirs are known to have been built and used in the early twentieth century, so it seems likely this one was as well, although some could have originated with prior



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section: 8

Page: 4

Bear Creek Fishweir #2  
Tishomingo County, Mississippi

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Indian construction. For example, Bear Creek #1, according to 82 year old Curtis Leatherwood, was either built or rebuilt by his father, William W. Leatherwood. Curtis thinks there were existing rocks there at the site before the 1920s. Its historic use has therefore been documented but its origin is still in question. The Leatherwood weirs A and B, about three miles upstream from Bear Creek #1, were built in the 1920s according to Curtis, who says they were built and used by the Leatherwoods, including himself as a young man, and some others in the community. The younger men gathered the rocks and the older men hand hewed the wooden beams to be placed in the trap. Parts of these beams are still in or near the weir remnants, and one appears to have been a crib structure. According to Curtis, several people in the community had designated days that they could collect all of the fish from the weir for that day, demonstrating the community use similar to other known weirs. The Cain weir has been documented through interviews with family members and others as having been used in the 1920s as a local community endeavor, with three Cain families and other families involved. Travis Cain, a small boy at the time the weir was operating, says that it was built by members of the Valley community, including his father and grandfather, and was strictly a local subsistence device, never used commercially. This weir ceased operation around 1928-1930 after it was changed to conform to a law that required it to have an opening for fish to bypass it and few fish were caught thereafter. The Mann weir, according to the late William H. Mann, was built, maintained, and operated by his father, James H. Mann, in the early twentieth century. It had to be repaired every year due to damage to the stone dam and wooden fall trap by flooding and floating logs, a similar occurrence with the other weirs. Mr. Mann occasionally sold fish on his way to school for spending money, but the weir was not a commercial enterprise.

It might also be considered of national significance in that it reflects an historic function and technology that was in common use over most all of North America for thousands of years, but which is no longer legal and thus relegated to a niche in the prehistoric and historic past. It is typical of such structures that were commonplace throughout much of North America during past times, serving a function that has since been replaced by other commercial enterprises and technologies. This structure is a good specimen of its type and thus an important example of a particular building practice during its limited time in history, related to its predecessors through a cultural tradition carried on for millennia by prehistoric peoples and inherited by Euro-American settlers. It is part of our heritage that is fast disappearing through such modern practices as stream channelization, along with natural erosion, silting, and channel displacement.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section: 9

Page: 1

Bear Creek Fishweir #2  
Tishomingo County, Mississippi

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**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section: 10

Page: 5

Bear Creek Fishweir #2  
Tishomingo County, Mississippi

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