

# Some Smith Canal Preliminary Field Notes

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**T**he Smith Canal is a recently abandoned one kilometer long historic canal in the Cluff Ponds area whose Ash Creek takein is at **N 32.81486 W 109.84926** routing to the main Smith Tank at **N 32.82133 W 109.84328**, with elevations ranging from 3152 to 3127 feet...



While there is no direct or clear evidence yet of a prehistoric origin to the Smith Canal, the nearby **Cluff NW** and **Minor Webster Ditch** canals include compelling short low energy reaches highly suggestive of prehistoric origins. Since this canal is situated in a rather obvious riparian area with fairly minor construction problems, **any lack of a prehistoric origin would appear to be highly conspicuous by its absence.**

Further, there are well distributed potsherds in the area as well as a major habitation site nearby. The deepest construct, while large, seems within bounds.

A working premise has been that virtually all historic **bajada** canals were "steal the plans" or "borrow the blueprints" of underlying prehistoric originals. It seems rather obvious that it would be a lot easier to "dig out an old ditch" than to engineer an entire new and properly functioning canal system from scratch.

The canal is easily accessed just off the main Cluff Ranch Road. The takein at Ash Creek consists of an elaborate pair of triple concrete headgates. The use of the western headgate is not presently resolved, but could be local or a part of the **Cluff NW** canal system.

There is a second Smith Pond to the east that appears to be spring fed and at an eight foot higher elevation. While **Acme Mapper** suggests a second "Lower Mud Springs Canal" extending beyond **N 32.81848 W 109.84087** and **N 32.81381 W 109.84126**, this presently appears to be a historic two track and has been largely discredited to date.

Some observed features of the Smith Canal include...

- N 32.81496 W 109.84920** Ash Creek takein point.
- N 32.81496 W 109.84920** Start of unexplored canal portion
- N 32.81864 W 109.84708** End of unexplored canal portion.
- N 32.81864 W 109.84708** Start of explored canal portion.
- N 32.82124 W 109.84311** Western Smith Pond.
- N 32.81953 W 109.84117** Eastern Smith Pond.
- N 32.81643 W 109.84096** Largely discredited vehicle two track.

Further Smith Canal work might include...

- 1** — Revisit the area with Cluff Ponds personnel.
- 2** — Complete unstudied area between takein and road.
- 3** — Attempt to discover stronger prehistoric evidence.
- 4** — Resolve deeper cut as to its prehistoric feasibility.
- 5** — Find intended use of western takein.
- 6** — Study both ponds for prehistoric field origins.
- 7** — Seek out additional historic records.
- 8** — Droning, videotaping, and more photos of the known explored portion.



**SMITH1** – A tilted [Google Earth](#) view of a portion of the Smith Canal route. This is believed to be a historical widening and reuse of a prehistoric original. At present, favorable age evidence remains indirect. The view shown here is to the northeast from [N 32.81855 W 109.84710](#).



**SMITH2** – The water channel width remains typical of area prehistoric constructs. East of the deep vee, build depth approaches two meters, but the total required work seems to remain prehistorically compatible. View shown is to the east near [N 32.64250 W 109.74288](#).



**SMITH3** –The atypical north wall here seems to have been historically built up in an apparent attempt to increase the canal capacity. The view is to the northeast from **N 32.81908 W 109.84566**.



**SMITH4** – Buttressed higher walls apparently demanded modern machinery, but did not seem to alter the original flow rate much. The view here is to the east near **N 32.81900 W 109.84598**.



**SMITHS** – View upstream near the Cluff Ranch Road shows a typical prehistoric sized water channel inside of a much larger historic construct. The view is to the west near **N 32.81890 W 109.84656**.

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