

Minor Webster Ditch Preliminary Field Notes

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The Minor Webster Ditch extends from a projected origin somewhere near the transition between Shingle Mill Canyon and Merrill Wash to projected fields that are believed in the Cluff Ponds residential area from **N 32.78852 W 109.89012** to **N 32.81529 W 109.86414** with presently verified areas ranging from **N 32.79783 W 109.87312** to **N 32.81298 W 109.86644**. Likely distance is five kilometers or more with elevations ranging from 3540 down to 3280 feet...



There appear to be four distinct areas to this Canal, none of which appear to have hanging or deeply cut portions. The takein area ranges from **N 32.78852 W 109.89012** to **N 32.79783 W 109.87312** and is in very heavy brush. Despite several visits, the exact nature of this section has not been determined and it possibly has been obliterated by the 1983 **Octave** tropical storm.

It is also not yet clear whether the actual takein is separate from or shared with the also unlocated takein of the **Tugood Canal**. There are also several local **CCC** projects, a few aproned check dams such as are at **N 32.78822 W 109.87124** and modest tradeware sherds present in the area.

The second area has been extensively and historically modified. Presumably by Minor Webster and family members residing in the Central area. This area begins at the **McInery** road junction at **N 32.79783 W 109.87312** and routes to a not yet verified transition to prehistoric low energy standards presumably somewhere near **N 32.81069 W 109.86760**.

Hallmarks of the historical modifications are a deep vee cross section perhaps a meter wide along with an apparent canal maintenance road. This portion is quite well preserved and easily traced. The road is somewhat overgrown but possibly remains ATV accessible. Since there is no evidence of modification to the higher takein area or the lower prehistoric area, it is not clear whether or how the canal was actually historically used.

At some point near **N 32.81069 W 109.86760**, the canal transitions to a traditional prehistoric low energy canal structure yet still retains its access road. **This canal reach strongly supports the premise that most, if not all, of the historic bajada canals of the area were in fact modifications of prehistoric originals.** As with many of the bajada canals, typical cross sections are just under a meter wide and 20 to 40 cm deep.

The final destination of the Minor Ditch is unknown, but likely to terminate in flat areas near **N 32.81529 W 109.86414** and north of a developed **private residence** around **N 32.81468 W 109.86486** This reach remains unexplored.

Tugood is a parallel sister canal typically 300 meters further west and lacking any apparent attempts at historical modification. Portions of Tugood are quite pristine and it would seem to be a good possible candidate for preservation or restoration. Many of the non-modified reaches between these two appear quite similar. The normal initial Tugood point of access is often the 4WD trace found at **N 32.81306 W 109.87004**. A significant wash separates the two.

Contact with one or more historians of the Webster Clan might prove useful in resolving questions on this canal.

Some observed features of the Webster Ditch include...

- N 32.78852 W 109.89012** Presumed but unproven takein location.
- N 32.79182 W 109.88065** Heavy brush area difficult to trace.
- N 32.79772 W 109.87301** **McInery** road beginning of historic reach.
- N 32.80625 W 109.86855** Still unexplored extension of historic reach.
- N 32.81298 W 109.86644** Canal resumes low energy prehistoric aspects.
- N 32.81298 W 109.86644** Fairly large mesquite tree midchannel.
- N 32.81468 W 109.86486** Posted **private residence**; possible access point.
- N 32.79666 W 109.87772** Presumed flat destination fields.
- N 32.79666 W 109.87772** Convenient access point for sister Tugood Canal.

Further Webster Ditch work might include...

- 1** — Extend explored northern portion of historical reach.
- 2** — Continue attempting to resolve brush and takein.
- 3** — Continue northern extension of prehistoric reach.
- 3** — Determine whether **Tugood Canal** takein is common.
- 4** — Droning, videotaping, and more photos of the known explored portion.
- 5** — Attempt contact of Minor Webster clan historian.
- 6** — Establish historic use context and activity.
- 7** — Seek equally convincing proof for other historic rework canals.
- 8** — Attempt contact of **private residence** owner.



MINOR1 – Once north of its major historical rework section, the canal clearly resumes its low energy prehistoric aspect. Giving strong credence that virtually all bajada prehistoric canals in fact had prehistoric predecessors. This view is to the north near **N 32.81298 W 109.86644**.



MINOR2 – This large mesquite tree mid-channel suggests that this canal may not have actually been used historically, despite its extensive mid-reach reconstruction. Besides the age of the tree, a long germination time likely also must be factored in. The view is to the north near **N 32.81300 W 109.86644**.



MINOR3 – For some yet unknown reason, the extensive historical modifications ceased before reaching this classic prehistoric reach. White Streaks Canyon can be seen in the background. The view is to the south near **N 32.81297 W 109.86644**.