

The South Fork American River

A Draft Management Plan



Prepared By:

Bureau of Land Management
Folsom Field Office
March, 2003

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Section I – General Description of Planning Area	5
Section II – General Management Directions	9
Planning Assumptions	9
Planning Constraints	10
Vision Statement	11
General Management Principles	11
Relationship with Laws, Policy, and Other Planning Documents	11
Special Area Designation	11
Lands	12
Bio-diversity	12
Riparian Communities	12
Trails	12
Roads	12
Use of Firearms	12
Threatened or Endangered Species	13
Timber Management, Sales and Harvest	13
Noxious Weed Control	13
Fuels Management	13
Gold Seeking, Mining Claims and Development	13
Commercial Uses of Public Lands	14
Noise Levels	14
Rights-of-Way	14
Cultural Resources	15
Visitor Capacity	15
Adaptive Management	15
Monitoring	16
Cooperative Management	16
Relationship Between BLM and the Local Community	16
Plan Amendments	17
Section III – Individual Parcel Descriptions and Management Actions	
Miner’s Cabin Planning Unit	18
Ponderosa	22
Parcel C	23
Dave Moore Nature Area	24
Greenwood Creek	27
Norton Ravine	31
Pine Hill	33

INTRODUCTION

The South Fork American River is considered by many as one of the finest recreation resources in the state, within easy driving range of several major metropolitan centers.

The BLM long ago recognized the recreational values of the South Fork, and began acquiring private property along the river that would benefit the public. To date, approximately 1,633 acres have been acquired by the BLM from people who wanted to sell to the Government. These lands are in addition to the approximately 2,531 acres of the original public domain along the river that have never been in private ownership.

In 1996, El Dorado County initiated a planning process to update their 1984 South Fork American River Management Plan. At that time, the BLM made a decision to delay planning for the public lands within the river corridor until El Dorado County completed its plan. The BLM's intention was to wait, then produce a Federal plan that complemented the County plan. This made sense because there is far more private land subject to County regulations than there is Federal land along the South Fork.

In the mean time, other issues came up that required the BLM to begin planning for the public lands before EL Dorado County's Final River Management Plan was finished. These issues include the status of the public lands under the General Mining Law, an often-stated public desire to take advantage of the recreational opportunities available on the acquired lands, and the BLM's own internal requirements for land use plans.

These factors, coupled with additional delays in the El Dorado County planning process, prompted the BLM to begin its own planning.

To produce a management plan for the public lands, the BLM decided to use the community-based, or collaborative, planning process. This relatively new technique directly involves the local community in the formulation of a draft plan.

Beginning in September, 2000, the BLM sponsored and facilitated a series of public meetings in the vicinity of the South Fork American to produce a plan. An outreach effort ensured people knew of the meetings and had the opportunity to participate. The meetings occurred twice a month, on the average, for a total of forty-eight meetings, with the last held in June, 2002.

Public attendance at the planning meetings varied from meeting to meeting. Nearly all the participants were local residents, but a few were from outside the immediate area. Those few either owned property along the river, or had a special interest in the area. The participants in the planning process brought with them first-hand knowledge of the river corridor and its uses, and ideas of how the Bureau could best manage the river.

The basic strategy was to achieve a consensus among meeting participants on the various issues; consensus being defined as 80% of the persons present. Consensus often means compromise, and compromise doesn't always come easily. Discussions were occasionally quite lively, but from the BLM's perspective, very productive. Even a casual observer could tell these people not only knew what they were talking about, but were inspired to directly assist the Bureau in

formulating a river management plan.

This document is the result of all those meetings. It reflects the values of local residents and river users, as well as the practical concerns of implementation. It is also consistent with laws and policies that reflect the views of the American people. It should be noted that this process did not develop a recommendation for status under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act for the South Fork – this will be analyzed when the Bureau conducts a review of the Folsom Field Office Management Framework Plan

This is a plan that will guide the management of the public lands along the South Fork American River well into the future, providing for public use and for protection of natural resources.

Plan Organization

The Management Plan is divided into three sections. The first is an overview of the entire river. The intention of the Overview is to place the Federal lands into perspective.

The second section consists of general management directions that will be applied equally to all the Federal lands covered by the Management Plan.

For the third section, the public lands along the South Fork American River were divided into seven distinct Planning Units to facilitate the planning process. Each planning unit is physically separated from other planning units by private property. The planning units are Miner's Cabin, Ponderosa Parcel, Parcel C, the Dave Moore Nature Area, Greenwood Creek, Norton Ravine, and Pine Hill.



*Coloma, California, 1905
Used with permission of the California Geological Survey*

SECTION I

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING AREA – THE BIG PICTURE

This plan will affect only the Federal lands along the 21-mile stretch of the South Fork American River between Chili Bar and Salmon Falls Bridge in El Dorado County, California. It contains detailed information on how the Federal lands will be used, and how they will be developed.

The Federal lands, however, are a portion of a much larger resource, most of which is not in Federal ownership or under Federal control. To understand the reasoning behind the proposals for the Federal parcels, one must take a look at the entire resource.

Overview – Environmental Setting

The South Fork American River drains a 804-square mile watershed in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Elevations range from 490 feet above sea level at Folsom Lake to about 10,000 feet along the crest of the Sierra. Nearly all the watershed is located within the Eldorado National Forest.

The South Fork is located in the Western Metamorphic Belt of the Sierra Nevada physiographic province, which consists of steeply dipping metasedimentary and metavolcanic rocks of Paleozoic and Mesozoic age. The Planning Area itself is at lower elevations, mostly under 2,000 feet above sea level, in the western Sierra Nevada foothills. This is a rugged area covered with grasses, oak, pine, and chaparral grading to oak and conifer forests bisected by deep canyons cut by the South Fork American River and other year-round streams.

The plant communities in the vicinity of the South Fork American have been classified as part of the Foothill Pine Belt, which in reality encompasses a wide variety of plant habitats (i.e., montane hardwood-conifer, blue oak-foothill pine, mixed chaparral, riverine, and riparian) supporting numerous animal species.

Overview – Cultural Resources (Prehistoric)

Prior to the Gold Rush, the lands along the South Fork were occupied by the Nisenan, or Southern Maidu people, a hunter-gatherer culture. In general, they were peaceful folks who often migrated to higher elevations during the summers, and traded with other tribes who lived in the Great Valley or by the coast. For the Nisenan, the Gold Rush of 1849 was a catastrophe, literally the end of the world as they knew it. Their population plummeted dramatically as Gold Rushers entered their lands. Many of the Nisenan occupation sites, villages or hunting camps, located close to water courses, were obliterated by placer mining activities. Only a few sites remained intact. Today, the most commonly seen artifacts are bedrock mortars, usually located near water and a source of acorns.

Overview – Cultural Resources (Historic)

As every California fourth-grader is taught, on January 24, 1848, James Marshall picked up a glittering pebble from the tailrace of a sawmill he was building for John Sutter in Coloma Valley along the South Fork American River. The sequence of events that stemmed from that simple

act transformed California from a pastoral, sparsely-populated Mexican settlement to a bustling American state practically overnight. Over the next several years, miners from every corner of the world swarmed all over the Sierra Foothills, digging up and washing river gravel in a frantic search for gold. By 1853, the easily obtainable placer gold was mostly gone, and interest was shifting to hard rock mines.



*Mining on the American River, 1852. Daguerreotype by George H. Jackson.
From the collection of Matthew R. Isenburg.
Used with permission of the California Geological Survey*

As the Forty-Niners either left California or went to work in one of the hard rock mines, others moved into the Mother Lode. Agriculture became more common, especially ranching and the growing of orchards. The timber industry became well-established, supplying the need for wood in the mines and other places. A number of the original mining camps prospered as established communities.

Water development on the South Fork began in the early 1850s as support for mining operations, and has continued ever since. Currently, the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, the Sacramento Municipal Utilities District, and the El Dorado Irrigation District operate a system of dams, reservoirs, ditches and canals on the South Fork for the production of hydroelectric power. The amount of water flowing through the project area during most of the year is regulated by releases from a series of upstream reservoirs operated by PG&E, SMUD, and EID.

Land use within the South Fork corridor is currently a mix of commercial, residential, industrial, agricultural, and recreational uses. Commercial rafting outfitters own or lease, and operate campgrounds, parking and staging areas along portions of the river. Additionally, a number of recreation-oriented and other small businesses are located in the area, predominantly near the communities of Coloma and Lotus. Industrial land uses in the area include relatively small mining and rock quarrying operations, including sand and gravel, building stone, decomposed granite, and decorative rock. Agricultural lands within the river corridor include scattered small

farms and cattle grazing.

Private properties containing large family homes with river-front views commonly adjoin planning area parcels. Many residents living in this area enjoy the peaceful solitude associated with remote, low-density locations. The largest communities in the planning area vicinity, Coloma and Lotus, have experienced considerable growth associated with the recent population and economic boom. Ranching and farming have taken a back seat to automobile tourism and white water rafting, along with other river-based sports, which currently drive the area's economy.

Overview – Outdoor Recreation

Similar to most outdoor areas, the South Fork American and adjacent lands have provided opportunities for a wide variety of outdoor activities. These activities include water-related activities, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, gold panning, bicycling, and camping, among others. Opportunities for land-based recreation are somewhat limited because of the small size and scattered nature of the public lands – for instance, there is no long-distance recreational trail system because it would have to pass through private properties. Currently, the Dave Moore Nature area offers a nature trail that is designed for handicapped persons along with a picnic area. Portions of the Pine Hill Planning Area in the vicinity of Weber Creek are used by off-road vehicle enthusiasts for their activity.

Prospecting – the recreational search for gold – has a special significance along the South Fork American because of the river's role in the California Gold Rush. Much of this activity takes place in the river itself, but several tributaries were also historically good sources of placer gold. These days, serious prospectors make use of suction dredges to gain access to the deeper portions of the river where early miners could not go.

In more recent times, the South Fork American River has become one of the most heavily used rivers in America for white water rafting and kayaking. About 25 years ago, commercial white water rafting began to increase in popularity along the South Fork. It continued to increase until the mid-1990's when it peaked, and then dropped off slightly.

The South Fork offers outstanding opportunities for white water recreation because of its proximity to major population centers, and year-round flows. It has become one of the nation's most popular rivers for a number of reasons, including short shuttles between access points, several trip options, high spring flows, and dependable boating flows during the summer months when other rivers have dropped too low. These factors combine to create a recreational resource well suited to beginning and intermediate boaters. The South Fork offers a wide variety of experiences, from pastoral to highly social. Depending on time of day or day of week; the same runs provide a wide range of experience, in response to water release and flow patterns. This range of opportunities is only limited by the knowledge and flexibility of river users, and by public access.

From the viewpoint of a river recreationist, the South Fork can be roughly divided up into three distinct segments:

Upper

The stretch between Chili Bar and Coloma contains the narrowest and steepest section of the

river area. Canyon sides rise almost from the river's edge to heights of some 600 to 800 feet above its level, within a horizontal distance of only four to six tenths of a mile; average slopes are greater than 35 percent. Rapids are numerous, and can be dangerous because of their length and the abrasive sedimentary and volcanic rock.

Middle

Beginning about one mile above Coloma, and continuing downstream to Clark Mountain, the canyon walls open up and the gradient subsides to between 10 and 15 percent. Alluvial terraces border the river most of the way to Clark Mountain. With the exception of a few rapids created by quartz-laden granite ledges, this stretch is relatively easy Class I and II. The middle reach is quite popular with beginners in kayaks – they put-in near Coloma, and float to the BLM's Greenwood Creek parcel to take out before the river flows into the rougher rapids of the lower gorge. Much of the land along the middle stretch is privately-owned. In this area, a range of campgrounds and access points provide a support network for river recreation.

Lower

Between Clark Mountain and Folsom Lake, the topography of the river corridor begins to resemble that of the first segment. It differs mainly in that the canyon is not as deep; canyon sides rise only some 400 to 600 feet above the river; and slopes are not as steep, averaging between 20 and 25 percent. The bedrock underlying this stretch is by far the hardest of the river, comprised of mainly of chert, gabbro, and amphibolite. The rock has weathered to create “pool and drop” style rapids.



*Dave Moore, medically retired from the BLM at age 35 with Multiple Sclerosis, was able to attend the dedication of the Nature Area named for him.
BLM Photo*

SECTION II

GENERAL MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

All plans make some assumptions about the overall planning environment. These are essentially conditions that planners take for granted or accept as true, work with, but have little or no power to change. These assumptions were developed in consultation with the South Fork Planning Group.

1. The population of El Dorado County and the surrounding area will continue to increase through the foreseeable future. Private lands along the South Fork American River will continue to be developed consistent with the County General Plan.
2. Because of its Gold Rush history, year round recreation opportunities and close proximity to major population centers, recreation demand in the South Fork American River Planning Area is high, and will probably increase in the foreseeable future.
3. The Federal Lands along the South Fork American River will remain in Federal ownership unless disposal meets the objectives of the plan.
4. With a strong appreciation and respect for private property, the Bureau of Land Management will continue to acquire land within the river corridor by purchase, donation, or exchange on a willing seller, willing buyer relationship with the purpose of promoting objectives of the vision statement.
5. Large amounts of property along the South Fork American River will remain privately-owned.
6. Newly acquired lands will not be opened to mineral entry or location under the General Mining laws, except in cases of national emergency.
7. The Public lands will continue to attract large numbers of users who desire mechanized or non-mechanized access to the river and to the public lands along the river.
8. The Bureau of Land Management will manage the BLM lands, recognizing that their activities will be affected by other management plans.
9. The natural environment along the South Fork American is not pristine wilderness. The river ecosystems have been impacted over the past 150 years by intensive gold mining, human settlement, hydropower development, sustained agriculture, and recreation use.
10. It is anticipated that there will be no significant changes in water flow in the South Fork American River in the foreseeable future.

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

Planning constraints form the parameters, or limitations, in the scope of a plan. They clearly state what the plan will not cover, or define how something will or will not be accomplished. As with the Planning Assumptions, these were developed in an open forum in consultation with the South Fork Planning Group.

1. No plan alternative will be selected which results in significant adverse environmental impacts.
2. The acquired federal lands are currently withdrawn from mineral location and entry (not open to mining claims for 50 years). The original public domain lands, approximately, 2,531 acres of the larger planning area, are currently segregated (segregation is an action which closes the lands to the mining laws for a five year period). This land is withdrawn until February 9, 2007. This plan must determine whether these segregated lands will continue to be withdrawn or be reopened to mineral entry.
3. This plan must be consistent with federal laws, regulations, and policy, and, to the greatest degree possible, the applicable local and state laws.
4. All legal prior existing rights of mining claimants will be recognized.
5. Planning actions will be constrained to BLM managed lands within the boundaries of the South Fork American Planning Area.
6. Newly acquired lands will not be open to the mining law (subject to mining claims).
7. Planning actions and capital developments will be subject to financial constraints and availability of funds.
8. Planning decisions will be based on available data, with only limited crucial inventory work completed by BLM and volunteers to direct and perfect planning decisions.
9. This plan will provide management decisions needed to address problems associated with the shooting area on the Ponderosa Parcel.
10. Restrictions may be placed on public use to protect sensitive natural and cultural resources. Restrictions may also be imposed to protect private property and provide for public health and welfare.
11. No planning decisions will impact recreational navigability of the South Fork American River within the planning area.
12. During the planning process BLM will not issue any permits, leases or rights-of-way, within the planning area which would alter the character of the area or impede planning decisions. Annual Special Recreation Permits will continue to be issued as long as they do not impact or change the character of the area.
13. The BLM will not use condemnation as a management tool.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision statement contained in a plan such as this one is basically a description of the long range goals of the management plan. The purpose of a good vision statement is to clearly define the purpose of the plan, and to describe what the planning area will be like 20 years from now.

Vision Statement:

The public lands along the South Fork American River will continue to provide an enjoyable, educational experience for visitors, and to contribute to the quality of life in the local community. The South Fork American will be managed in a fashion that recognizes human needs through a partnership between the BLM, State Parks, El Dorado County, other agencies, landowners, businesses, the community, and recreational users.

Cultural resources, including both prehistoric and historic, will be protected and preserved. The different ecosystems found on the public lands will be protected and enhanced, and, where desirable and practical, restored to pre-Gold Rush conditions. Reasonable public access to the river and the public lands will accommodate a wide range of recreation uses, including, but not limited to boating, hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, bicycling, recreational gold-panning, and suction dredging, consistent with resource protection. The public lands will be managed in a way that respects and protects private property rights, and balances competing uses. Environmental education will be an important aspect of public land management. Where appropriate to implement this vision, the public lands may be supplemented by the acquisition of additional property.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

The following management guidelines, or policy statements will apply equally to all parcels of public land which make up the South Fork American River Management Area. These reflect a mixture of conformance to Federal law and policy, and of recommendations from the South Fork Planning Group.

Relationship with Laws, Policy, and Other Planning Documents

Management of the public lands along the South Fork American River is guided by the Sierra Planning Area Management Framework Plan (MFP), as amended in 1988. The Management Plan for the South Fork American River will be an amendment to the MFP to implement decisions contained in this plan. Topics and issues not specifically addressed in the South Fork Plan will continue to be guided by the MFP.

Special Area Designation

During the public planning process, participants unanimously recommended the South Fork of the American River for Special Area status. This is consistent with BLM regulations [43 CFR 8372.0-5 (g)] which authorize Special Area designation when it is determined that resources on the public lands require special management and control measures for their protection. The public lands of the South Fork contain extraordinary recreation values, and are part of a region that occupies a unique place in California history. Because of the South Fork's proximity to a major metropolitan area, the need to manage for large numbers of recreationists, and fragile

riparian and cultural areas, the BLM will initiate procedures for Special Area designation.

Lands

It is the policy of the BLM to retain the public lands in the vicinity of the South Fork American River in Federal ownership, unless specifically stated otherwise. The BLM shall make a reasonable effort to acquire additional property where it is clear the acquisition will enhance the public benefits currently available on the public lands. Newly acquired lands within the general South Fork Planning Area will become part of the South Fork American Special Management Area and subject to management guidelines and planning decisions associated with the nearest or most similar special area parcel of public land which ever is most appropriate.

Bio-Diversity:

Biodiversity is defined as the full variety of life and it's associated patterns and processes. It includes the variety of living organisms, the genetic differences between them, and the communities and ecosystems in which they occur. From a practical perspective, in general, the more diverse an ecosystem is, the more stable it is.

For the South Fork American, this means that a mosaic of all habitat types common to the area, and typical of this elevation in the western Sierra Nevada will be encouraged and maintained. This will include a variety of plant communities in different stages of succession.

Riparian Communities:

Riparian, or streamside, plant communities are ecologically very important. They are productive for wildlife, and help prevent erosion. All identified riparian communities will be protected to the greatest degree possible under the law to protect water quality and biological productivity. This will include perennial and intermittent streams as well as other wetlands. Riparian communities associated with artificial ponds on public lands will also be maintained.

Trails

In general, the BLM will construct trails in the different parcels to enhance recreational opportunities. Some of these will be multiple-use trails, designed for more than one type of non-motorized user. Others, such as at the Dave Moore Nature Area, will be more restrictive. The BLM shall avoid building trails that may lend themselves to trespass on private property.

The BLM will study the feasibility of a trail along the river between Chili Bar and Salmon Falls Bridge, and, if possible, take steps to construct the trail.

Roads

The BLM will designate routes for motorized access to the different parcels. Off-road vehicle use will be confined to designated routes of travel.

Use of Firearms

The use of firearms for hunting is an allowable activity on all parcels except for the Ponderosa Parcel, Parcel "C", and the Dave Moore Nature Area. All parcels will be closed to target

shooting.

Threatened or Endangered Species:

By law, all plants or animals identified as Threatened or Endangered by the Federal Government, or as Rare or Endangered by the State of California will be given special preference for protection and management.

Species which are candidates for listing by either the Federal or State governments will be given special attention.

Timber Management, Sales and Harvest:

A conventional timber harvest is extremely unlikely along the South Fork American River, except possibly as a part of a fuel reduction project.

No standing tree, dead or alive, may be cut down without the approval of the BLM. Sale of timber is basically an auction, conducted by sealed bid, with the high bidder getting the timber. The opportunity to submit a bid must be equally available to all. Bidding will begin at the appraised fair market value of the timber to be sold.

Noxious Weed Control

It is the policy of the BLM to eradicate populations of noxious weeds. Each parcel along the South Fork American River shall have a Noxious Weed Control Plan to expedite this policy. The principle weeds along the South Fork include scotch broom and star thistle.

Fuels Management

The BLM shall prepare a fuels management plan for each planning unit except for the Ponderosa Parcel. The purpose of these plans shall be to reduce the potential for wildfire.

Gold-Seeking, Mining Claims and Mineral Development

Mining for gold has a long history along the South Fork American. The Great California Gold Rush began here with the discovery of placer gold in river deposits in January, 1848. In just a few years, thousands of miners removed huge quantities of gold from the river and its tributaries, leaving behind only enough to tantalize a hobbyist or historical buff.

Over the years, many people have complained to the BLM about the use of the term “mining” when it is applied to casual prospectors on a recreational outing. To these individuals, mining is a serious economic activity by which people earn their living, not a hobby. Their point is well-taken. Unfortunately, the General Mining Law of 1872 makes no distinction between the two different levels of gold extraction. This problem with terminology can lead to some confusion when planning for the public lands.

All acquired public lands along the South Fork American River are withdrawn from the General Mining Law of 1872 for 50 years, and the original public domain lands are closed to mineral entry until 2007. This means these lands are not open to the filing of mining claims although pre-existing claims are still valid. This is important to recreationists because the holder of a

mining claim has the exclusive legal right to all the locatable minerals on that claim. The public can freely look for gold on unclaimed federal lands along the South Fork, but must get the permission of the claimholder before prospecting on an existing claim. Recreational gold-seekers can use non-mechanized equipment such as shovels, pans, and sluice boxes on the South Fork. Sluice boxes, however, must be less than six feet in length.

Prospectors are also allowed the use of suction dredges to look for gold. In addition to the required California Department of Fish and Game permit, gold dredge users must obtain a recreation use permit from the BLM to use their dredges on the South Fork where there are no mining claims. These permits will be issued on a first come; first served basis. There must be at least 200 feet between dredges, unless the permit holders themselves agree to work closer. All dredges must have a four-stroke engine. Mufflers with spark arresters will be required on dredges to reduce noise. Noise will be monitored to determine disruptive noise levels. No gas container larger than 2 ½ gallons will be near the water. Active dredging will occur only between the hours of 7 am and 5 pm (unless otherwise stipulated) from the last weekend in May through October 15. Dredging will not be allowed within 300 feet of private residences along the river. Unless land on both sides of the river are public lands, dredge users must stay within 25 feet of the public land shoreline to avoid trespass.

Dredge operators who do not comply with the stipulations and conditions contained in their permit will have their permits terminated.

All mining claim operators must comply with Federal regulations 43 CFR 3715 and 3809, and with state and local laws and regulations.

The BLM will use the adaptive management process to address conflicts between gold-seekers, other river users, and private property owners.

Commercial Uses of the Public Lands:

The public lands are available for public uses for which a fee is charged for participation, or when natural materials are gathered for sale, however, a Special Recreation Permit must be obtained from the BLM. These uses could include commercial gathering of natural materials (such as mushrooms), fund-raising events, guided whitewater rafting, or commercial filming or photography.

Noise Levels

Noise from recreational users on the South Fork American is a controversial issue among local residents. The primary source of complaints are gold dredgers with loud engines, and exuberant whitewater rafters. The BLM shall adopt noise levels established by El Dorado County as their own, and enforce them on the federal lands covered by this plan.

Rights of Way:

Requests for the granting of a right-of-way over Federal land for various purposes, including access roads, power lines, water lines, or telephone lines, will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and evaluated for conformity to management goals and objectives. Applications for a right-of-way must be made to the BLM.

This is the Federal equivalent of an easement under state law. Unlike easements, which are attached to a deed, rights-of-way are assigned to an individual for a specified time period, usually 30 years. There is an annual fee, based on the amount of land contained in the right-of-way. A right-of-way can be transferred to another person, should the holder sell their property. A right-of-way will not normally be approved unless it is consistent with the overall Vision Statement for the South Fork American Planning Area, the Goals Statement for the individual planning unit, and the appropriate VRM class.

Cultural Resources:

History comes alive along the South Fork American River. The heritage of the California Gold Rush is a powerful force in the area to this day. Relics of those times are commonplace, and a number of people carry on in the traditions of the “Days of Forty-Nine.”

On the public lands, protection of cultural resources is required by law. All artifacts will remain in situ unless removed as part of an authorized archaeological investigation.

Visitor Capacity:

Visitor, or Carrying Capacity, is defined as the number and type of visitors that can be accommodated in an area with no unacceptable impacts on the quality of either environmental resources and/or recreational opportunities. Easily-measured threshold levels for various impacts will be established that will indicate if a site is beginning to exceed its prescribed visitor capacity. This will give managers an opportunity to resolve problems before they become serious.

Visitor Capacity thresholds will be established where needed based on the results of the monitoring program.

Adaptive Management:

The BLM will follow the principles of Adaptive Management on the public lands of the South Fork American River. Basically, this means that if a management problem arises, the BLM will first propose the least restrictive solution to resolve the problem. If that doesn't work, then a more restrictive action will be taken. Essentially, the BLM will progress from the least restrictive solution to a problem to the more restrictive until the problem is resolved.

Monitoring:

An active program of monitoring conditions will be instituted. The information from the monitoring program will be compared to baseline data to identify trends, and to evaluate progress in achieving management goals and objectives. For effectiveness, the monitoring objectives must be closely tied to management objectives. Monitoring methodology must be simple and consistent.

Federal or state listed rare, threatened and endangered species will be given special attention, and a list of the species that are likely to occur along the river in the Planning Area will be prepared. Basic inventory of soil and water conditions, and current fuel loading by soil/plant association and site will also be completed.

1. The BLM shall develop and implement a monitoring system to continuously evaluate the following indicators:

- Number of unauthorized trails developed
- Photographs from established photo points for signs of erosion, soil compaction, or significant vegetation loss
- Site observations on current use and behavior
- Evidence of trash, human waste
- Illegal dumping
- The waiting time to use toilets
- Number of Vehicles
- Numbers of people using the area at one time
- User displacement
- Complaints
- Vandalism
- Crowded conditions
- Noise

2. Docents and volunteers will be part of the monitoring program.

3. The Monitoring Program will be evaluated for effectiveness on a continuing basis.

Cooperative Management:

The relationship between the BLM and the following agencies and individuals should be explored. Where mutual objectives exist, a cooperative management agreement should be negotiated and implemented.

US Bureau of Reclamation
US Fish and Wildlife Service
California Department of Parks and Recreation
California Department of Fish and Game
California Department of Forestry
California Department of Boating and Waterways
El Dorado County
Local law enforcement
American River Conservancy
Private property owners
Commercial owners & outfitters
Clubs and organizations
Volunteers /Docents

Relationship Between the BLM and the Local Community:

The BLM shall prepare an annual report to be presented to the local community at a public meeting. At that meeting, the public will be given ample opportunity to raise issues related to this plan.

The need for Plan Amendments will be discussed at these annual meetings. Any member of the public, organization, or the BLM may propose a Plan Amendment.

Plan Amendments

To be effective, a plan must have some flexibility built into it. This is because even the best of plans sometimes have unforeseen consequences which might be undesirable. On the other hand, plans that are easy to change have no stability--one of the main reasons for having a plan in the first place.

The South Fork American River Management Plan can be modified, however, if a good case can be made for the change. For example, if the monitoring program or an independent research project produces information which would justify a change, then a plan amendment should be prepared.

Plan amendments will be treated formally. The BLM will prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA), and submit both the proposed amendment and the EA for public review. A plan amendment will not be finalized until the public review process has been completed.

Occasionally, small changes in the plan may be made administratively. These would be directly related to the policy of using the Adaptive management strategy to resolve problems.

SECTION III

INDIVIDUAL PLANNING UNITS

Each planning unit has its own unique characteristics, mix of physical and biological resources, and recreational uses. Because of this, each unit was closely examined by the South Fork Planning group, and management prescriptions tailored for the planning unit. Each has a Goals Statement – a declaration of how the planning unit will be managed.

MINER’S CABIN PLANNING UNIT

Description of the Area

Just downstream of the Chili Bar Dam, the South Fork winds its way through a very steep canyon into the Miner’s Cabin Planning Unit. Named after a Gold Rush-era cabin site, the public lands in this area total 1,043 acres, 392 of which are part of the original public domain. Three parcels of land, totaling 651 acres, were acquired by the BLM to support significant botanical and wildlife diversity, as well as education and recreational opportunities. This area is rich in mining history and cultural sites, but it is probably best known today for two Class III rapids: Meatgrinder and Triple Threat.

On the south side of the river, several heavily-wooded side drainages flow into the South Fork. This biologically diverse corridor provides critical habitat for many wildlife species. The South Fork American, and its many small tributaries, and healthy riparian zone, support rainbow and brown trout, and a variety of native fish, as well as many native amphibians.

North-facing slopes in the Miner’s Cabin Planning Unit are dominated by canyon live oak and black oak on steeper wetter areas, and interior live oak and blue oak in drier areas. Other plants include California buckeye, flowering ash, deer brush, birch-leaf, mountain mahogany, coyote brush, and California coffeeberry. Chaparral, live oak woodland, and grassland occur on south-facing slopes in the river canyon. The riparian area of the South Fork American River is dominated by white alder and arroyo willow.

Present Management Situation

The dominant use is recreation, activities such as fishing, swimming, gold panning and dredging, hiking, and whitewater boating are the most common. Access by any means other than boat is difficult, giving the area a primitive back country feel. Presently, there are no major use conflicts. The acquired lands are withdrawn from the Mining Law of 1872, and the public domain lands are segregated. There are no existing mining claims.

Commercial raft companies, organized groups, and private individuals use the BLM land at the

Miner's Cabin site for lunch and rest stops. In 1995, BLM installed a composting restroom facility at the Miner's Cabin site to accommodate recreation use on the upper river. The public has expressed a desire to increase access opportunities other than by the river.

The BLM has identified the Miner's Cabin site itself as a place that can accommodate a large number of users – up to 200 at any one time, thus taking pressure off other parcels. The community supports current use patterns, but the BLM must continue to monitor this site to protect it from overuse.

The 131- acre Wilkinson parcel, acquired by the BLM in 2000, carried the restriction that future use and management of the property shall be that the property remain in an undivided and undeveloped state for wildlife, recreational and educational purposes.



*Miner's Cabin Parcel, looking downstream toward Maya Rapids
Photo by BLM*

Goals Statement

The highly scenic Miner's Cabin Planning Unit contains very steep hillsides and highly flammable vegetation with poor public access. Because of these conditions, management priority will be to protect the essential character of the area. The natural beauty of the parcel will be maintained primarily by encouraging low impact, non-intrusive recreational activities in a day use setting. Commercial uses, camping, and other organized group uses will be allowed only with a BLM permit. Cultural sites will be protected, and where practical, interpreted for public use and enjoyment with an emphasis on sites associated with the Gold Rush of 1849. Areas where high visitor use occurs will be managed to protect the physical, social, and environmental resources. The BLM will seek to acquire land to improve public access should the opportunity arise. The Miner's Cabin Planning Unit will be managed for a VRM Class II.

Management Actions

General:

1. The Miner's Cabin Planning Unit shall be primarily a day-use area, unless an overnight camping permit is obtained from the BLM.
2. No open fires during the fire danger season, generally from Memorial Day through October 31.
3. The current withdrawal from the Mining Law of 1872 will be continued on public domain land.
4. Hunting shall continue to be allowed.
5. Target shooting shall be prohibited.
6. The Miner's Cabin Planning Unit will be managed for a VRM Class II.
7. The Maya Rapids beach on the north side of the river is for day-use only. There will be no camping or gold dredging at this location.
8. The Miner's Cabin Planning Unit is closed to livestock grazing.

Access – Roads:

1. The Wilkinson Road, from Highway 49 to the river, shall be maintained for vehicle use by agency or emergency vehicles on official business only. Public use of Wilkinson Road shall be by non-motorized means.
2. The entire area is closed to the use of off-road vehicles.

Access – Trails:

1. The BLM shall investigate the possibility of constructing a trail along both sides of the river beginning at Chili Bar and going downstream to the public lands.
2. The BLM will investigate the possibility of constructing a ridge-top trail to the river from the Stewart Mine Road and/or Highway 193.
3. If feasible, the BLM shall build a hiking trail on the Coloma/Lotus Ditch.
4. The BLM will avoid building trails which may lead to trespass on private property.

Camping:

1. Overnight camping will be by BLM permit only in one of six specified sites. The specified camping site furthest upstream will be available for general use, but not for long-term gold dredgers or boaters. Fees will be assessed for camping.
2. No open campfires or cooking fires will be allowed during fire season, generally from Memorial Day through October 31.
3. Overnight permittees must have self-contained sanitary equipment.
4. Campsites will be hidden from the river if possible.

Facilities:

1. The BLM shall provide trailhead parking at Chili Bar (if possible), and in the Red Shack area where Wilkinson Road intersects Highway 49.
2. The BLM shall provide sanitary facilities along the river for both trail users and overnight users in a strategic location out of the flood plain, if possible. Sanitary facilities will also be placed in the Red Shack area, the Old Ditch Trail, and the Maya Rapids area.
3. The BLM shall construct a trail from Highway 49 in the vicinity of the Red Shack, down the Old Ditch Road to the river.

Gold Seeking and Gold Dredge Use:

1. The Miner's Cabin Planning Unit will continue to be withdrawn from mineral entry. Recreational prospecting, including dredging with certain restrictions, is a legitimate activity in the Miner's Cabin Planning Unit.
2. A maximum of three dredges with intake nozzles three inches in diameter or larger on a two-week permit will be allowed at any one time. A dredging permit must be obtained from the BLM.
3. One of the dredges may have an intake nozzle up to eight inches in diameter. The length of stay for the eight inch dredge will be 28 days, which may be extended for an additional 28 days if there is no demand for the site, and if the site has been inspected for permit compliance by the BLM. Eight inch dredges will be restricted to areas where water is at least 10 feet deep.
4. The other two dredges will have intake nozzles less than eight inches in diameter. The length of stay will be fourteen days, with a possible extension of an additional fourteen days if there is no demand for the site, and if the site has been inspected for permit compliance.

5. Backpack Gold dredges with an intake nozzle three inches in diameter or less may be used on a casual, day-use basis if the operator signs a permit at a BLM-established check-in point.

Ponderosa Planning Unit

Description of the Area

The 10-acre Ponderosa Parcel is off the river, and is bisected by Marshall Grade Road. The east half is part of a Recreation and Public Purpose Act lease for a privately-run campground. The west half was used by the California Department of Parks and Recreation under a free use permit to remove decomposed granite for trail construction purposes.

Present Management Situation

The parcel has been the site of a unauthorized target shooting area, and over the years has become a problem area. This area was closed to shooting on September 1, 2000.

Goals Statement

The Ponderosa Parcel shall be retained by the Federal Government for open space and other community purposes. The shooting ban shall be made permanent and the quarry closed. Erosion will be controlled, and damaged areas shall be reclaimed and rehabilitated to bring the parcel from a VRM Class III to a VRM Class II. The lease for Ponderosa Park campground will be continued until the lease expires. Two years before the lease is up, in 2006, the BLM will conduct a community planning session to determine the future of the lease area. The mineral withdrawal will be continued.

Management Actions

General

1. Public use of the parcel shall be limited until the restoration effort shows results.
2. The parcel shall be kept fenced to discourage casual public use until the restoration effort shows results.
3. The parcel shall be closed to the use of ORVs.
4. The parcel shall be closed to all firearms use. There will be no hunting with any type of weapon.
5. The parcel shall be closed to grazing leases.

6. The quarry shall be closed.
7. The BLM shall continue to issue special use permits, provided that they are consistent with the vision statement, management goals, and VRM class III guidelines.

Camping

1. When reopened for public use, the parcel shall be day use only, with no camping.

Vegetation Management

1. The BLM shall prepare and implement a plan to restore native vegetation and control erosion.

Recreational Gold Seeking

1. Keep the mineral withdrawal.

Planning Unit C

Description of the Area

Parcel C is approximately 10 acres of public domain land. It consists of mostly river gravels with some riparian vegetation. . Local access is by river only, and because of this, the parcel gets public use through commercial permits.

Present Management Situation

Parcel C is used by several commercial raft companies, under a permit, as a lunch and overnight stop.

Goals Statement

Parcel C shall be retained for public use. The BLM shall attempt to obtain an easement for public access from adjacent property owners, but only if they are willing. Panning and sluicing for gold will be allowed, but not dredges. Parcel C will continue to be managed for overnight camping. The BLM will manage for VRM Class II. Continue the existing system for issuing recreation use permits.

Management Actions:

General

1. The BLM shall keep current fire restrictions, as stipulated in special use permits, in place.
2. The BLM shall work with interested parties on the evaluation of commercial tent sites.
3. The parcel shall be closed to hunting.
4. The BLM shall attempt to obtain an easement for public access.
5. The BLM will issue no more than three Special Recreation Use Permits at any one time.
6. The BLM will issue no more than one organized group (up to 25 people) permit at a time.

Vegetation Management

1. The parcel shall be closed to grazing leases.

Recreational Gold Seeking

1. Keep the mineral withdrawal.
2. Panning and sluicing are allowed, but no suction dredges.

Dave Moore Nature Area

Description of the Area :

The Dave Moore Nature Area consists of 126 acres of public domain land adjacent to Highway 49 and the South Fork American River. The terrain is fairly flat, with piles of gravel and cobbles scattered throughout the parcel. A riparian forest of white alder, black cottonwood, willow, and bigleaf maple is found in the Dave Moore Nature Area, along the shores of the South Fork American River. Away from the immediate river course and its benches is an interior live oak woodland with blue, black, and valley oak along with digger and ponderosa pine. Patches of chaparral are interspersed in this oak woodland. Two 10-acre parcels, considered part of this unit, are isolated from the primary parcel; neither has public access.

Vegetation is recovering from past disturbances, and consists of oaks, scattered pines, brush, and riparian species. Access to the parcel from Highway 49 is a gravel road that leads to the parking

area. There is a restroom facility at the trail head. A trail designed for people of all physical abilities runs from the parking lot to the river, and back. The flood of January, 1997 destroyed much of the trail closest to the river. The Dave Moore Nature Area is a popular spot for school groups and families, especially in the spring when wildflowers are at their peak.



*Mushroom Rock – A landmark along the trail to the river at the Dave Moore Nature Area
Photo by BLM*

Present Management Situation

The Bureau of Land Management recognizes the potential for the Dave Moore Nature Area as a great asset to the local community and to the physically challenged. The existing trail was developed with the help of many agencies and volunteers. Many school groups use Dave Moore for educational and interpretive purposes. Environmental Traveling Companion (ETC), a nonprofit group dedicated to introducing the physically challenged to the natural world, is an adjacent property owner, and their clients continue to use the area for recreational and spiritual activities. Many local residents use the trail for exercise and river access. The two isolated 10-acre parcels and the portion of the Dave Moore parcel north of Highway 49 are presently under a grazing permit. The portion of the Dave Moore parcel north of Highway 49 also contains a portion of a landing strip.

Most of the Dave Moore Nature Area is under mining claims. Persons who wish to look for gold must obtain the permission of the claimholder to do so.

Goals Statement

The Dave Moore Nature Area, except for the two isolated ten-acre parcels, will be retained in its entirety by the Federal Government. It will be primarily a day-use area with the primary

function of providing an interpretive experience to the public. The long-term management goal is to develop a loop trail to the river that is a barrier-free nature trail for use by schools, the physically-challenged, and the general public. The Area will be open for use year-round. The BLM will continue the practice of requiring special recreation use permits for camping. Recreation activities will be restricted to those compatible with the enjoyment of nature, including hiking, jogging, picnicking, birdwatching, fishing, and other low-impact uses. Intrusive activities such as ORV use, mountain biking, horse riding, hunting, general firearms use, and other conflicting activities will not be allowed. The mineral withdrawal will be maintained. Potential fuels will be managed to reduce the potential for wildfire while maintaining wildlife habitat. Manage as VRM Class II.

Management Actions

General

1. The area will be managed as a day-use area, open all year-around.
2. The BLM shall provide interpretation of parcel resources.
3. Open fires will be allowed by special BLM permits on a case-by-case basis.
4. The amphitheater, used by educational groups, will be relocated and rebuilt in the new location.
5. The BLM will acquire the parcel next to ETC from a willing seller.
6. The BLM shall dispose of the two isolated 10-acre parcels.
7. The area will be closed to incompatible activities including ORV use, mountain biking, horse riding, hunting, and general firearms use.
8. Manage as VRM class II.
11. Special Recreation Use Permits shall be issued on a case-by-case basis.

Access – Roads

1. A hard surface will be provided for parking.
2. The parking lot shall have no more than 65 spaces.

Access – Trails

1. The BLM shall complete the Dave Moore Trail into an accessible, barrier-free loop.

2. Use of the Dave Moore Trail shall be limited to foot and wheelchair traffic. Mountain bikes and equestrian use will not be authorized.
3. The BLM shall harden the Dave Moore Trail surface for better year-round accessibility.
4. The BLM shall work with interested adjacent property owners on proposals to link trail systems.

Camping

1. Overnight use will be by education groups only through a special recreation use permit.

Vegetation Management

1. Grazing will be allowed only in the portion of the Dave Moore Nature Area north of Highway 49.
2. In the rest of the Dave Moore Nature Area, south of Highway 49, grazing will be allowed only for specific purposes, such as noxious weed control or fuel reduction. No additional grazing permits will be issued.
2. Fuels will be managed to reduce the wildfire hazard while maintaining wildlife habitat.

Facilities

1. The BLM shall study the feasibility of providing a toilet and portable boardwalk at the beach area for use by disabled visitors.

Gold Seeking and Dredger Use

1. Maintain the current mineral withdrawal.
2. Gold seekers must have the mining claimant's permission before prospecting.

Greenwood Creek Planning Unit

Description of the Area

The Greenwood Creek Planning Unit consists of both public domain and acquired lands with a total of approximately 732 acres. The Planning Unit is bisected by the South Fork American River. The northern portion, mostly acquired lands known as the Straza parcel, borders on

Highway 49, and the river. The southern portion has no legal access other than the river. The Straza parcel encompasses segments of perennial Greenwood and Hastings creeks. Both creeks are gold-bearing streams, heavily mined in the early days of the Gold Rush. The Planning Unit contains significant biological and cultural resources.



*Whitewater rafters preparing to launch from the beach area near the restroom,
Greenwood Creek Planning Area
Photo by BLM*

Present Management Situation

The Greenwood Creek Planning Unit is located downstream from Henningsen-Lotus Park. This parcel receives more use than any other BLM parcel located on the river. Because of its location, large sandy beaches with shade and a composting toilet, numerous private, commercial, and organized boating groups, choose this site for lunch stops and rest stops.

The Greenwood Creek area is also popular for non-boating activities such as hiking, swimming, fishing, picnicking, and overnight camping. There are several mining claims, but they do not cover the entire planning area.

Goals Statement

Management priority in the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit will be to protect the natural and cultural values of the entire planning unit while providing opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation. Cultural sites will be protected, and, where possible and desirable, interpreted to the public. Areas where high visitor use occurs will be managed to protect the physical, social, and environmental resources, as well as provide for public safety. Care will be taken to protect riparian areas and aquatic habitat. It is a high priority to provide an access road, parking lot, and toilet facility on public land near Greenwood Creek, consistent with the protection of natural and cultural values. Uses that require a permit, including suction dredging, will be regulated to

enhance the overall recreation experience. Multiple use recreation developments may be provided as appropriate, consistent with the goal of protection of natural and cultural values, and with the overall Vision Statement. The Planning Unit will be withdrawn from mineral entry. The portion of the planning unit south of the river (Clark Mountain) shall remain undeveloped until such time as a clear need for facilities is demonstrated, however, nothing shall preclude the BLM from taking advantage of an opportunity, should it arise.

Management Actions

General

1. Public land south of the river (Clark Mountain) will be classified as VRM Class I.
2. Public land west of Hastings Creek will be classified as VRM Class II.
4. Hunting will continue on the public lands unless at some future date there is a reason to curtail it.
5. Applications for rights-of-way will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and will be approved only if it is consistent with the vision statement and goals statement.

Access – Roads

1. The Greenwood Creek access will include a parking area on and adjacent to the old Highway 49 road. It will have approximately 40 parking spaces for passenger vehicles only, with a barrier to prevent ORV use. There will be provisions for restroom facilities, trash receptacles, and an informational kiosk. CalTrans will be encouraged to post “No Parking” signs along Highway 49.
2. An access route and parking area to accommodate 100 vehicles will be developed directly off of Highway 49 near the center of the parcel. The parking area will be enclosed by a barrier in order to prevent ORV use. Trail systems will be built to accommodate multiple use activities. Restroom facilities, trash receptacles, a kiosk, trailer parking, water troughs, and a turn around area will be necessary at this site.

Access – Trails

1. A trail will connect the Greenwood Creek parking lot and the South Fork. Barriers along the trail will be constructed to keep visitors on the trail to protect riparian habitat along Greenwood Creek, nearby cultural sites, and private property. Day use activities will be encouraged downstream of put-in/take-out site. Users will be informed about the trail to the beach areas, and encourage activities at the beach sites.
2. Multiple use trails will be constructed as appropriate to connect the Highway 49 parking area with the rest of the planning unit..

3. The BLM shall investigate the possibility of a trail to the Planning Unit from the vicinity of Salmon Falls Bridge.

4. Trail use in the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit will be limited to non-motorized modes of travel.

Camping

1. There will be no developed campground on the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit. The current system of commercial camping permits will be continued.

Vegetation Management

1. Grazing will be considered only as a tool for secondary management purposes, such as fuels management or noxious weed abatement.

Facilities

1. An educational kiosk, with an emphasis on boater safety, will be installed.

2. The BLM will harden the put-in/take-out site at the confluence of Greenwood Creek and the South Fork. River bank areas damaged by river users and fluctuating flows will be restored. Signs to inform users of the sensitive nature of this site will be placed. The put-in and take-out site will be limited to casual (non-permitted) recreationists.

Gold Seeking and Dredger Use

1. The public domain lands within the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit will be withdrawn from mineral entry.

2. There will be one permit allowed for up to a six-inch dredge within Dredging Area One for use between September 15 and October 15.

3. Allow three permits for a six inch dredge within Dredging Area Two. Dredging Area Three must be full before a permit for Dredging Area Two may be issued.

4. Allow up to three permits for up to six-inch dredges within Dredging Area Three.

5. In Dredging Areas One and Two, floating dredges must be within 25 feet of the public land shoreline.

Norton Ravine Planning Unit

Description of the Area

The Norton Ravine Planning Unit consists of approximately 939 acres of public land, much of which was acquired through BLM's land acquisition program. These lands were acquired for wildlife habitat preservation, restoration, wildlife-oriented education and research, and for compatible public uses, all as may be consistent with the wildlife habitat preservation goals of the State of California and the BLM. Another objective was to connect existing public lands to enhance recreation opportunities and limit conflicts with private land owners. A Gold Rush-era mining camp, Rock Bridge, was located at the confluence of Norton Ravine and the South Fork.

The Norton Ravine Planning Unit is an exceptionally rich and scenic mix of habitats that include riparian, mixed chaparral, grassland, blue oak woodland and montane hardwood. Several listed plant species may be present. The perennial streams in this area have been identified by California Fish and Game as potential habitat for the Foothill Yellow Legged Frog. The potential for watershed enhancements that would improve the biotic integrity and sustainability of the aquatic habitats in this area is great.



*Rafters on the beach near the restroom on the Norton Ravine Planning Unit.
Photo by BLM*

Present Management Situation

Whitewater recreation is the dominant use in this area. This is the start of the “gorge”, the popular class III section of the lower South Fork, the geology changes here as the river cuts through fault zones of amphibolite and chert.

In 1998 the county of El Dorado approached the BLM with a proposal for the construction of a

restroom facility on the lower river. With the help of a grant from the State of California Department of Boating and Waterways, a public restroom facility was constructed during 1999 in section 29.

The 200-acre Snyder/DeRosa parcel, acquired by the BLM from the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), was the subject of a Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and the WCB in which both organizations agreed the land would be cooperatively managed to protect significant biological resources and connect existing public land fronting one of the most popular recreation areas in the Western United States.

Goals Statement

The Norton Ravine Planning Unit will be managed to provide recreational opportunities consistent with protection of physical, social, and environmental resources. The only means of legal public access shall be by river or by trail, until such time BLM shall acquire public road access. Low-impact recreational activities in a day use setting will be emphasized. Commercial uses and other organized group uses shall be allowed only with a BLM permit. The public lands shall be managed in a way that respects and protects private property rights. The BLM shall be receptive to opportunities to acquire land for access and habitat protection. The Norton Ravine Planning Unit will be managed as VRM Class II.

Management Actions

General

1. BLM boundaries will be identified to protect private properties.
2. The Norton Ravine Planning Unit will be managed as VRM Class II,

Access – Trails

1. The BLM shall investigate the possibility of a trail to the Planning Unit from the vicinity of Salmon Falls bridge.
2. Where appropriate, the BLM shall construct multiple use trails, designed for hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians. The trails will be limited to non-motorized use only.

Camping

1. Overnight camping shall be by BLM permit only. The permit shall contain stipulations for campfires.

Vegetation Management

1. Grazing will be considered only as a tool for secondary management purposes, such as fuels management or noxious weed abatement.

Facilities

1. Recreation facilities, such as kiosks, trails, restrooms, picnic sites, or campsites, shall be constructed as needed, following standard BLM management practices.

Gold Seeking and Dredger Use

- 1.. Public domain lands within the Norton Ravine Planning Unit will be withdrawn from the Mining Law of 1872.
2. A maximum of three dredges will be allowed at any one time. A permit must be obtained from the BLM.
3. One of the dredges may have an intake nozzle up to eight inches in diameter. The length of stay for the eight inch dredge will be 28 days, which may be extended for an additional 28 days if there is no demand for the site, and if the site has been inspected for permit compliance by the BLM. Eight inch dredges will be restricted to areas where water is at least 10 feet deep.
4. The other two dredges will have intake nozzles less than eight inches in diameter. The length of stay will be fourteen days, with a possible extension of an additional fourteen days if there is no demand for the site, and if the site has been inspected for permit compliance.
5. Dredging will be allowed from the last weekend in May through October 15. There will be no daily time restrictions.
6. Gold dredges with an intake nozzle three inches in diameter or less may be used on a casual basis if the operator signs in at a BLM-established check-in point.
7. One dredge permit will be issued for the area bounded by the Lorang toilet and Norton Ravine.

Pine Hill Planning Unit

Description of the Area

The lands of the Pine Hill Planning Unit total 1,284 acres of land, all of it public domain.

Geologically and botanically, this area is unique. Soils derived from the weathering of gabbro bedrock are different from the surrounding area, and support plant communities that could not exist without them. The Pine Hill gabbro formation has been featured in several scientific publications. One of these, "Rare Plants and Natural Plant Communities: A strategy for the future," was a component of Fish and Wildlife 2000, published by the BLM to identify significant natural resources nationwide. It's geology and flora have been the subject of a dozen academic research projects over the last 20 years. Besides containing one of the largest

concentrations of rare plant species in the state, and a large number of serpentine and/or gabbro endemic species, the Pine Hill gabbro formation is also important with respect to overall plant species diversity. In the Salmon Falls area, the gabbro soils contain populations of four federally-listed plant species, three of which are known to occur on public land. Three species that occur on the Pine Hill gabbro formation have never been found growing elsewhere in the wild. The Pine Hill gabbro formation is visited regularly by classes from local schools, universities, and various interest groups.



*Stebbins Morning Glory (Calystegia stebbinsii) is found only on gabbro soils in California's Mother Lode Region, and is listed by the Federal Government as Endangered.
Photo by BLM*

Administration

This Planning Unit is administratively different from the other planning units within the South Fork of the American River Planning Area because the public lands of the Pine Hill Planning Unit fall within the Salmon Falls Management Unit of the newly-created Pine Hill Preserve. It is managed by a partnership of Federal, state, and local agencies under a cooperative management agreement with the common goal of conservation and recovery of the listed species. In the near future, the Pine Hill Preserve partnership will be formulating a management plan for the entire Pine Hill Preserve, including the public lands of the Pine Hill Planning Unit. They will consider this portion of the South Fork of the American River Management Plan as non-binding

public input. They may adopt, reject, or modify the following recommendations of the participants in the planning process

Present Management Situation

The Weber Creek portion of the planning unit receives a variety of recreational uses, including boating, ORV use, and fishing activities. Commercial boating use is fairly light. Approximately 600 to a thousand commercial visitors use this site on an annual basis. Based on site observations by river patrols, the Pine Hill Planning Unit does not receive a lot of use, compared to other stretches of the river, however there is some by private boaters and organized groups. There are several mining claims, mostly near Weber Creek.

Recently, ORV use in the Weber Creek area has increased, causing noticeable erosion and sediment loading into streams. Soil loss has impacted plant communities in general, and on sensitive species in particular. The confluence of the South Fork American River and Weber Creek has become a weekend party spot. ORV use at the river has been associated with severe erosion, destruction of riparian vegetation, and litter. Residents of an adjoining subdivision are concerned with the possibility of a wildfire being ignited.

Recommended Goals Statement

A management priority of the Pine Hill Planning Unit is the preservation in perpetuity of the rare plant species and plant communities of the western El Dorado County gabbro formation. The BLM will make it a priority to acquire and secure permanent public motorized vehicle access to the South Fork American River. An active program of vegetation management, including noxious weed control and rehabilitation of damaged areas, shall be implemented. A fuel and fire management plan, consistent with rare plant preservation, shall be implemented by the BLM and other Preserve partners. The current mineral withdrawal shall be continued. The public lands shall be managed in a way that respects and protects private property rights, and balances competing uses. The planning unit shall be managed as VRM Class II. Prior existing rights, such as mining claims or rights-of-way, shall be respected. Reasonable access to the river and the public lands will accommodate a wide range of recreation uses, including, but not limited to boating, hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, bicycling, recreational gold-panning and suction dredging, consistent with resource protection.

Recommended Management Actions

General

1. Day use at the Pine Hill Planning Unit shall be unrestricted.
2. The Pine Hill Planning Unit will be managed as VRM Class II.
3. The BLM shall support access to the public lands from the river.
4. The Pine Hill Planning Unit shall be closed to target shooting until a responsible group makes a proposal to regulate it.

6. Hunting shall continue to be allowed within the planning unit.
7. Commercial whitewater users will not be authorized to put-in or take-out in the Pine Hills Planning Unit.
8. The BLM shall use its discretion in the issuance of special use permits on the Pine Hills Planning Unit.
9. The BLM shall seek funding for the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department, through a memorandum of understanding, to patrol the Pine Hill Planning Unit.
10. The BLM will allow for Stage 2 or higher fire restrictions to be in effect all year round.

Access – Roads

1. The BLM shall maintain the Boulder Mine Road, and the existing road to the confluence of Weber Creek and the South Fork American River. This road shall be subject to seasonal closures, generally from December 1 until April 1, but variable depending on conditions.
2. The BLM shall develop a comprehensive road maintenance plan for the planning unit.
3. The BLM shall develop an adopt-a-trail/adopt-a-route program while developing a year-around monitoring plan with the local community.
4. The BLM shall allow people to bring in their own boats by road.

Access – Trails

1. The BLM shall plan and construct a trails system for hiking and the use of mountain bikes.
2. The BLM shall evaluate the equestrian use of the trails system. Parking areas for horse trailers will not be constructed in the Pine Hill Planning Unit, however, the BLM shall make an effort to tie trails into the existing equestrian trails system administered by the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area as an extension of that system.

Camping

1. Casual camping shall be allowed, but campers will not be allowed fires of any type.

Facilities

1. The BLM shall evaluate the Planning Unit to determine if sanitary facilities are needed, and, if so, where they will be located.

Gold Seeking and Dredger Use

1. The public domain lands of the Pine Hill Planning Unit will continue to be withdrawn from mineral entry.
2. A maximum of two dredges with intake nozzles three inches in diameter or larger on a two-week permit will be allowed at any one time. A dredging permit must be obtained from the BLM.
3. One of the dredges may have an intake nozzle up to eight inches in diameter. The length of stay for the eight inch dredge will be 28 days, which may be extended for an additional 28 days if there is no demand for the site, and if the site has been inspected for permit compliance by the BLM. Eight inch dredges will be restricted to areas where water is at least 10 feet deep.
4. The other dredges will have an intake nozzle less than eight inches in diameter. The length of stay will be fourteen days, with a possible extension of an additional fourteen days if there is no demand for the site, and if the site has been inspected for permit compliance.
5. Backpack Gold dredges with an intake nozzle three inches in diameter or less may be used on a casual, day-use basis if the operator signs a permit in at a BLM-established check-in point.