

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COVER SHEET

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Environmental Assessment for the South Fork American River Management Plan

Assessment Title:

Environmental Assessment for the South Fork American River Management Plan

Legal Description:

See EA and Draft Plan for legal descriptions and Maps in Appendix G

County:

El Dorado County

Planning Unit and Management Area:

Sierra Planning Area Management Framework Plan Amendment (MFP)

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

SOUTH FORK AMERICAN RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background And Need For This Planning Process

Over the last eight years, the BLM has acquired approximately 1,633 acres of land through purchase or land exchanges along the South Fork American River (see Appendix G, Map 1). These newly-acquired lands contain special natural and social resources important to the public. The acquisition of these parcels brought the total of BLM managed land in the South Fork American River Planning Area to approximately 4,164 acres. These additional lands now provide access to resources not previously available to the public, and have created new management situations not addressed in the Management Framework Plan as amended in 1988. Acquisition of these lands has dramatically changed BLM's management position along the South Fork American River. This has created a need to re-evaluate the planning needs for this area, and to update land use decisions at a more detailed level through a community based planning effort.

In 1996, El Dorado County initiated a planning process to update their 1984 South Fork American River Management Plan. This effort was hampered by the complexity of the plan, diverse public interests, lawsuits, public intervention and other setbacks. The BLM had made a decision to delay planning for the public lands within this watershed until El Dorado County completed their plan. The idea was for the BLM to complete a plan which would compliment El Dorado County's River Management Plan, minimize conflicting management decisions, and provide a more unified management direction for the river canyon.

In the meantime, other resource issues came up which required the BLM to begin a community-based planning process prior to the completion of the ongoing El Dorado County's final River Management Plan.

The public has been waiting patiently for several years for the BLM to begin their planning process for public lands along the South Fork. Numerous user groups would like to use the public lands for various activities, many of which require permits or some other type of authorization. The BLM did not want to issue any new permits for activities on the acquired lands until it had a plan in place. In order to implement the Goals and Objectives spelled out in the Sierra Planning Area Management Framework Plan, as Amended, and Environmental Assessment (1988), the BLM is required to develop an Activity Level Implementation Plan for the South Fork American River.

The planning effort addressed approximately 4,164 acres of BLM-managed lands along twenty-one miles of the South Fork American River between Chili Bar Reservoir and the Salmon Falls bridge. For management purposes, the South Fork American Planning Area was divided into the

following planning sub-units: Miner's Cabin (MC), Ponderosa (PP), Parcel "C" (PC), Dave Moore (DM), Greenwood Creek (GC), Norton Ravine (NR), and the Pine Hill Preserve (PHP). The scope and scale of this EA has been broadened beyond what would be normally analyzed because of the extent of public involvement and the number of planning decision or actions involved in this plan and in the two alternatives addressed in this EA. There is a total of 54 potential actions analyzed in this EA and they are summarized in Appendix F of this document. This EA discuss's both the public and BLM's proposed actions in greater detail for the public's better understanding of potential impacts from these actions.

B. Conformance With Land Use Plan

The proposed action is subject to the Sierra Planning Area Management Framework Plan (MFP) as amended on July 15, 1988. The MFP was reviewed, and it was determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the MFP as required by 43 CFR 1610.5 and 43 CFR 2300. The objective of the 1988 plan amendment was to augment land tenure decisions of the original 1983 MFP. The Amendment called for improving public land ownership patterns by allowing land tenure adjustments (land disposal and acquisitions), which are compatible with management goals such as acquiring land within river corridors.

The proposed action has been found to be consistent with the current management plans, and with the Bureau's policy to protect and manage exceptional environmental and recreational values.

C. Relationship To Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans

Statutory authority for land withdrawals is found in Sec. 204 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1714), and the implementing regulations are found in 43 CFR 2300. The proposed action will implement decisions made in the Sierra Planning Area Management Framework Plan, as Amended (1988).

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Community Based Plan (CBP) Alternative (Proposed Action)

The proposed action is to adopt planning recommendations developed through a community based planning effort, and develop them into a management plan for publicly-owned lands along the South Fork of the American River (South Fork).

The planning recommendations consist of actions needed to manage BLM-administered lands along the South Fork in El Dorado County. The recent acquisition of additional public lands in the river corridor has dramatically changed public access potential to the South Fork. These new parcels also contain special resource values which need increased levels of protection not presently authorized or supported by BLM's outdated land use plan.

This alternative reflects management decisions, resource allocations, and planning designations developed in the Community-Based Activity Planning Project for the South Fork American

River. These planning decisions address emerging issues associated with the newly-acquired lands as well as give management guidance for existing public domain lands. The Proposed Action is described in detail in the Draft South Fork American River Management Plan. The planning decisions from this plan are summarized in Appendix F.

B. No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the BLM-administered lands in the South Fork planning area, would continue to be managed under the 1988 Sierra Planning Area Management Framework Plan as Amended, which provides little or no specific activity level guidance, and does not take into consideration the newly acquired lands. Present levels of management would continue, no new developments would be provided or allowed, and access would remain at current levels and condition.

C. Modified Proposed Action Alternative

This alternative will analyze a number of planning items, decisions, issues, concerns, and changes in resource conditions that have not been addressed in the Proposed Action or No Action Alternative. This assemblage of items will include:

- Planning items not addressed by the Community-Based Planning group because of time restraints.
- Planning elements discussed by the public in some depth, but not adopted by consensus.
- Modified Proposed Actions, altered to meet special management needs, land use planning goals, BLM policy, laws and/or regulations, or altered to compliment planning by another agency.
- Additional planning elements that will assist in providing a “range of management options or management alternatives” as outlined in the National Environmental Protection Act of 1969.
- Planning decisions needed to address issues which have arisen since the planning meetings.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

From a historical perspective, the South Fork American River is easily the most significant river in California. Gold was discovered in the river at Coloma by James Marshall in January, 1848, an event which triggered the Great California Gold Rush of 1849. Land use along the river has evolved over the years. The site of a crude sawmill became a major mining center practically overnight. After most of the gold was removed from the river gravels, agriculture became important, with farms and orchards along the river. Today, the 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 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. 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.

A. 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 and other year-round streams.

For planning purposes the South Fork planning area was divided into 5 planning units. These units are composed of the following locations.

1. Miners Cabin Planning Unit

This unit is located just downstream of the Chili Bar Dam. The South Fork winds its way through a 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, totaling 651 acres, were acquired by the BLM to support significant botanical and wildlife diversity, as well as educational 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. (See Appendix G, Map 2)

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

By far, the dominant recreation use in this area is white water boating. Other types of recreation, activities such as fishing, swimming, gold panning and dredging, and hiking take place on a very small scale. Access by any means other than boat is difficult, giving the area a primitive back country feel. Presently, there are no major use conflicts. All acquired lands are withdrawn from the Mining Law of 1872, and there are no existing mining claims on the remaining public

domain. Over the last three years, three parcels have been acquired through purchase, exchange and donation. These acquisitions have more than doubled the size of this planning unit, and, for the first time, provide public access from State Highway 49. Until recently, the only legal public access to this area was by boat from the South Fork.

Commercial raft companies, organized groups, and private individuals use the BLM-administered land at the Miner's Cabin site for lunch and rest stops. In 1995, the 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 non-boating access opportunities.

2. Parcel/Dave Moore Nature Area Combined Planning Units Parcel C/Ponderosa

For ease of evaluation, these small units were combined during the public planning process.

Parcel C is ten-acres in size, and used by several commercial rafting companies as part of their operations. Legal access is by river only, and because of this, the parcel gets very little public use.

The ten-acre **Ponderosa Parcel** is located just 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 commercially 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. Since then, it has been used for target shooting. Over the years, the parcel has become a problem area, subject to trash dumping, vandalism, and occupancy trespass.

The **Dave Moore Planning Unit** is composed of the Dave Moore Nature Area and three small parcels located on the north side of Highway 49. The Dave Moore Nature Area covers 126 acres of public domain land between Highway 49 and the South Fork American River. The terrain is fairly flat, with old dredge and gravel piles scattered throughout the parcel. A riparian forest of white alder, black cottonwood, willow, and bigleaf maple is found along the shores of the South Fork. Away from the river and its benches is an interior live oak woodland with blue, black, and valley oaks along with foothill pine, ponderosa pine and madrone. Patches of chaparral are interspersed in the oak woodland.

Access to the parcel from Highway 49 is a gravel road that leads to the parking area. There is a restroom facility at the trailhead. A trail designed for people with physical disabilities runs from the parking lot nearly to the river. The flood of January, 1997 destroyed portions of the trail next to the river. The majority of this planning unit is under a mining claim. The Dave Moore Nature Area is a popular spot for school groups, joggers, nature walkers and families, especially in the spring when wild flowers are at their peak.

Also part of this unit are two 10-acre parcels and a 15-acre strip of public land separated from Dave Moore by Highway 49. These three parcels are the only planning areas currently under grazing lease. (See Appendix G, Map 4)

3. Greenwood Creek Planning Unit

The Greenwood Creek Planning Unit consists of both public domain and acquired lands with a total of approximately 732 acres. This planning unit is bisected by the river. The northern portion, recently acquired land, borders on both Highway 49 and the river. The southern portion has no legal access other than the river. The northern piece encompasses segments of perennial Greenwood and Hastings Creeks, including their confluences with the South Fork. Historically, both creeks were gold-bearing streams, heavily mined in the very early days of the Gold Rush. This planning unit contains significant biological and cultural resources. Acquisition of this parcel provided convenient legal public access to the river from Highway 49 for white water boating downstream for the first time. (See Appendix G, Map 5)

The Greenwood Creek Planning Unit is located downstream from Lotus-Henningsen Park. This parcel receives more use than any other BLM parcel located on the river. Because of its location with large sandy beaches, shade, and a composting toilet, numerous private, commercial, and organized boating groups have chosen this site for lunch and rest stops. This area has excellent access to and from the river for boaters, hikers, campers and other recreationists. There are two small creeks in this unit, which, along with the riverfront, provide a large amount of the riparian vegetation common to the local area.

4. Norton Ravine Planning Unit

The Norton Ravine Unit consists of approximately 939 acres of public land, much of which was acquired through BLM's land acquisition program. A Gold Rush era mining camp, Rock Bridge, was located at the confluence of Norton Ravine and the South Fork. (See Appendix G, Map 6)

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, a public restroom was constructed in 1999. Whitewater recreation is the dominant use in this area. This is the start of the "Gorge", a popular class III section of the lower South Fork. The geology changes here as the river cuts through fault zones of amphibolite and chert. This area lacks legal public access, other than by boat.

The Norton Ravine area is an exceptionally rich and scenic mix of habitats that include riparian, mixed chaparral, grassland, blue oak woodland and montane hardwood. The perennial streams in this area have been identified by California Department of Fish and Game as potential habitat for the foothill yellow legged frog. This area also contains sensitive plant species on rare gabbro soils.

5. Pine Hill Preserve Unit

The lands of the Pine Hill Planning Unit total 1,284 acres, all of it public domain. This Planning Unit is administratively different from the other planning units within the South Fork 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, which 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.

The purpose of the Preserve is to protect eight rare plant species found in the El Dorado County Gabbro soil formation, and is managed under an interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed five plants that are wholly or largely restricted to this geologic formation as endangered or threatened in 1996. The five listed plant species found in the Preserve are Stebbins' morning glory (*Calystegia stebbinsii*), Roderick's ceanothus (*Ceanothus roderickii*), Layne's butterweed (*Senecio layneae*), and El Dorado bedstraw, (*Galium californicum sierrae*) and Pine Hill flannelbush (*Fremontodendron decumbens*).

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. Its geology and flora has 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 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. The Pine Hill gabbro formation is visited regularly by classes from local schools, universities, and various interest groups.

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 American River Management Plan as non-binding public input. They may adopt, reject, or modify the recommendations of the participants in the planning process

The portion of the planning unit near the confluence of Weber Creek and the South Fork American River receives a variety of recreational uses, including boating, off-road vehicle (ORV) use, and fishing. Commercial 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 accelerated erosion of roadways and riparian damage to botanical resources. 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.

B. Affected Environment Soils/Vegetation

The plant communities in the vicinity of the South Fork American have been classified as part of the Foothill Pine Belt, which encompasses a wide variety of plant habitats (i.e., montane hardwood-conifer, blue oak-foothill pine, mixed chaparral, riverine, and valley foothill riparian). The South Fork American River corridor consists of open grassland, oak savannah, and mixed conifer forest. On the north facing slopes, conifers may be present. The area's natural vegetation has been greatly altered since the time of the Gold Rush. Presently, these plant communities are being rapidly encroached upon as part of the expansion of the Sacramento region bedroom communities of El Dorado Hills, Cameron Park, and Placerville. Invasive species have begun to invade some of the parcels.

Soils - General

Most of the parent materials for the residual soils on the parcels along the South Fork American, are either common granitic or metasedimentary or metavolcanic rock types, common in the Sierra Nevada foothills. In the canyon bottoms, and riparian areas especially, are sediments of mixed origin. In this area there are few rare species associated with these common substrates. An exception is Brandegee's clarkia (*Clarkia biloba brandegeae*), which does occur on these substrates in this area. It was recently added to the BLM sensitive species list (after the field season in 2001) with the addition of the species to the California Native Plant Society List 1B (Rare in California and Elsewhere), so surveys for this species have not yet occurred.

The rare species that do occur along the stretch of the South Fork American River between Chili Bar and Salmon Falls are concentrated in the area around Salmon Falls where gabbro and serpentine substrates are found. There is a whole set of species that occur in this area, adapted to these rock types with their unusual chemistry. The Pine Hill Preserve Unit supports four federally listed species (*Calystegia stebbinsii*, *Ceanothus roderickii*, *Galium californicum sierrae*, and *Senecio layneae*) and two other BLM sensitive species, (*Wyethia reticulata*, *Chlorogalum grandiflorum*). This unit will not be discussed further here; a separate interagency planning effort will create a management plan for this area.

Some of the above-mentioned species associated with the Pine Hill Preserve occur on the adjacent Norton Ravine Unit. A small occurrence of Layne's butterweed, (*Senecio layneae*), occurs in a band of serpentine that reaches the South Fork American southwest of the head of Norton Ravine. It occurs in the vicinity of the road that parallels the river, on an east-facing slope, in an area that supports ponderosa pine.

In the westernmost portion of the Norton Ravine Unit close to the river, there is about 60 acres with gabbro substrate that support Northern gabbroic mixed chaparral, the plant community most characteristic of the Pine Hill formation of western El Dorado County. Not surprisingly in this area some of the rare species of the Pine Hill Preserve have been found. A partial survey found large colonies of El Dorado mules ears and Red Hills soaproot amidst the chaparral. None of the federally listed species were found, but without a comprehensive survey, their presence cannot be ruled out. Surveys further north in the Norton Ravine Unit, an area that is also mapped as having gabbro substrate, did not discover any rare species. The plant communities in this area differ from those usually associated with the rare species.

Vegetation Type By Planning Unit

1. Miners Cabin Planning Unit

The vegetation of the Miner's Cabin parcel includes canyon live oak forest on north facing slopes; non-native annual grassland, chaparrals and interior live oak woodland on south facing slopes; and riparian forest in the canyon bottom.

North facing slopes, south of the river especially, are dominated by oaks. Canyon live oak and black oak are dominant on steeper wetter sites, with interior live oak and blue oak dominating drier locations. There are pockets of conifers, mostly Douglas fir. Other woody species include California buckeye, flowering ash, deer brush, birch-leaf mountain mahogany, coyote brush, California coffeeberry, whiteleaf manzanita, buck brush, holly leaf redberry, and scotch broom.

Chaparral, live oak woodland and grassland occur on south facing slopes in the river canyon, sometimes forming a mosaic. There are patches of grassland on some of the driest sites; steep rocky south and southwest facing canyon walls. Chamise chaparral, mixed chaparral, and interior live oak woodland occur on less severe sites. There are patches of blue oak savannah. The western portion of the area, west of the river, is mostly chaparral, but again there is grassland on the steepest slopes.

The riparian area of the South Fork American River downstream of Kelsey Canyon, is dominated by white alder and arroyo willow. Sand bar willow, button willow, Oregon ash, Fremont cottonwood, black locust, big leaf maple, western sycamore, coyote brush, datisca, California wild grape, scotch broom, Himalayan blackberry, mugwort, cat tail and torrent sedge are all prominent.

The spread of scotch broom and rush skeleton weed, especially in the riparian zone, are management concerns. In the reach below Kelsey Canyon, both species are now confined to patches and control measures are possible.

2. Parcel C/ Ponderosa Parcel/ Dave Moore Nature Area/Combined Planning Units

Parcel C is a ten-acre parcel located on the north bank of the South Fork American River directly across the river from Henningsen-Lotus County Park. Approximately three and a half acres of this parcel are being managed by the county as part of the park under a Recreation and Public Purposes Act lease. This parcel is bordered on the west, north and east sides by commercial river-related recreation businesses. Generally, the parcel is composed of the riverbank, grading into riparian vegetation, then into vegetated spoil piles from past mining and dredging activities.

The **Ponderosa Parcel** is approximately ten acres in size and is split by the Marshall Grade Road near its intersection with Highway 49. The area west of the road was developed for sand and gravel resources. A contoured gravel pit remains with a few willows, canyon live oak, deer brush, foothill pine, ceanothus and other plant species re-inhabiting the area after a closure of the

area to mineral removal and off road vehicle use. The area is now fenced off from the roadway, and closed to public use. Access to this area is from Marshall Grade Road.

The area east of the road is developed as part of a private campground. The area includes part of the roadway right-of-way. The parcel is bordered on the south by a saloon, on the east by private homes and a highly developed private campground, the west is Marshall Grade road, and to the north a narrow strip of private land separates the parcel from the South Fork.

Vegetation varies and is dependent on location. The highway level area is covered by canyon live oak, deer brush, foothill pine, *Ceanothus*, chamise, grasses and other plant species. The lower river level area was a riparian forest prior to the 1997 flood, which washed away most of the willows and cottonwoods. These plants have been re-establishing themselves in the area and are once more starting to provide plant cover. This flood event also deposited several feet of river sand on the public lands.

At **Dave Moore**, the terrain is fairly flat, with piles of gravel and cobbles (tailings from historic ground-sluicing) scattered throughout the parcel. Throughout much of the Planning Area, vegetation is recovering from past disturbances.

The vegetation at the Dave Moore Nature Area is predominantly interior live oak woodland, with riparian forest along the South Fork American River. Severe disturbance caused by placer mining has mostly revegetated. There have been more recent disturbances resulting from a sand and gravel operation that also led to an associated timber harvest. Portions of this area that did not recover naturally were planted to locally adapted native species.

White alder, black cottonwood, willow and bigleaf maple are found along the shores of the river. The natural restoration of the riparian forest appears to be facilitated by the accretion of sediments along the riverbanks, creating more hospitable conditions for plant growth than previously possible when the area was reduced to bare rock and gravel as a result of placer mining. Rockiness of the site adjacent to the river has produced a narrow, more open strip of riparian forest consisting of deciduous species and intermixed with trees and shrubs more characteristic of drier upland habitats. On cool north-facing slopes along the river canyon, madrone, ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and incense cedar are also found.

Away from the immediate course of the river and its benches, the site is mostly covered in interior live oak woodland with a diverse complement of woody species. Interior live, blue, black and valley oak, foothill and ponderosa pine are the primary tree species. Interspersed in the oak woodland are patches of chaparral with chamise, white leaf manzanita, toyon, coyote brush, buck brush, and silver lupine. Invasive Scotch and French broom are also extremely common and are widely dispersed throughout the site. Yellow star thistle is dominant in some disturbed openings, especially near the parking area.

3. Greenwood Creek Planning Unit

This unit is split in two by the South Fork American River. The northern half has a southern exposure, and is composed of oak woodlands with four species of oaks along with a few foothill

and ponderosa pines. The southern half of this unit is consists of the northeast facing slopes of Clark Mountain. Clark Mountain is heavily forested with ponderosa pine with a few oaks and foothill pines.

The vegetation of the Greenwood Creek parcel can be divided into four main regions and plant communities. On the uplands there are forest stands on the north and northeast facing slopes of both Clark Mountain and the hill west of Hastings Creek. On the south facing slopes of the hills north of the South Fork American River there is oak woodland and chaparral. Grasslands dominate the relatively flat portions of the parcel south of highway 49. And along Greenwood Creek, Hastings Creek and the South Fork American River there are well developed riparian areas.

South facing hill slopes north of the American River are dominated by interior live oak, with black oak, California buckeye, toyon, buckbrush, white leaf manzanita, keckiella, California coffeeberry, poison oak and pipe vine.

The north-facing slope of Clark Mountain supports a forest stand dominated by ponderosa pine and black oak. Foothill pine and incense cedar become prominent on the lower slopes. Douglas fir is a minor component. Similar vegetation is found on north facing slopes west of Hastings Creek

The riparian area along the South Fork American River is broad and diverse. Among the prominent species are sand bar willow, arroyo willow, shining willow, valley oak, Oregon ash, white alder, Fremont cottonwood, button willow, coyote brush, mock orange, California wild grape, deer grass and scotch broom. A similar species mix is found along Hastings Creek with more forest elements creekside further upstream.

Grasslands are composed largely of non-native annual species. Especially in the grassland area, noxious weeds are becoming dominant in patches that are increasing in size, displacing both native species, and other less objectionable non-native species. The grassland associated species of the most concern are yellow star thistle, Medusahead (an annual grass) and rush skeleton weed (a perennial with green stems and few leaves). Scotch broom, which occurs more in the woodland, forest and riparian communities, is also a threat to the ecosystem. Rush skeletonweed has only become common in this region in the last few years. Nonetheless this fall there are patches on the Greenwood Creek Parcel that, seen from a distance, appear green because of the density of rush skeletonweed growing there. The rapid increase of this species is of particular concern.

4. Norton Ravine Planning Unit

This unit is composed of east-facing slopes with oak woodlands, grasslands, and patches of chaparral. The area has been subject to grazing in the recent past.

One Federally listed species, Layne's butterweed, found on the adjacent Pine Hill Preserve, is known to occur within this planning unit. Other sensitive plant species, El Dorado mule ears and Red Hills soaproot, which also occur within the Pine Hill Preserve, have been found in the

southwest corner of this planning unit. Presently, there is no legal public access, other than by boat from the South Fork.

The Norton Ravine area has three important geologic substrates that help to determine vegetation distribution; gabbro, serpentine, and common rock types. Because two of these rock types are rare, and each supports distinctive vegetation, portions of this area, or the entire area, may deserve special management attention for biological resources.

The southwest portion of the area, north of the South Fork American River is underlain by gabbro. A recent preliminary plant survey has identified the presence of two sensitive plant species present on this portion of the Norton Ravine Planning Unit. This segment is contiguous to boundaries of the Pine Hills Preserve in Sections 29 and 32 (see Map 6). The soils of this parcel are made up primarily of Rescue Soil Series derived from gabbro bedrock, except in the canyon bottom where there are alluvial and terrace deposits of the South Fork American River.

The two sensitive plant species discovered are the El Dorado mule ears (*Wyethia reticulata*) and Red Hills soaproot (*Chlorogalum grandiflorum*). The former is an endemic to the gabbro formation of western El Dorado County, and it is included in the “Recovery Plan for the Gabbro Soil Plants of the Central Sierra Nevada Foothills”. The residual soils at these parcels, the two sensitive species, and the entire plant community (northern gabbroic mixed chaparral) are all representative of an ecosystem based on the unusual gabbro substrate below. These characteristics make this parcel a logical addition to the Pine Hill Preserve (see Action 54). These characteristics also indicate some potential for other sensitive or listed plant species to occur, although none were found in the course of a preliminary survey of a portion of the parcel.

The largest serpentine exposure in the area runs in a wide east-west band through the middle of the area north of the river. Another serpentine outcrop occurs in the southern portion of the L-shaped parcel south of the river. The serpentine is mostly covered by dense chamise chaparral. Like other chamise chaparral, this area is species poor. Associated shrubs include toyon, whiteleaf manzanita, buckbrush, interior live oak, bush monkey flower and pitcher sage, with Sonoma sage in the understory in openings, and occasional gray pines above. At the northeast edge of the serpentine formation north of the river is a small occurrence of the federally listed species, Layne’s butterweed, indicating the distinctiveness of this substrate. This rare plant occurrence will have protection under the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973.

South of the river, and in the band between the gabbro and serpentine north of the river, are considerable areas of blue oak/interior live oak woodland/savannah. Gray pine, California buckeye, toyon, California coffeeberry, mountain mahogany, poison oak, silver lupine, and pipe vine are found in this community.

On north and northeast facing slopes north of the river and north of the serpentine band, there are woodland/forest stands with canyon live oak, ponderosa pine, black oak, interior live oak, white leaf manzanita, toyon, storax, and Scotch broom.

There is well developed riparian vegetation along the South Fork American River and Norton Ravine. Near the confluence of the two streams prominent species include white alder, valley

oak, Oregon ash, sand bar willow, dusky willow, Himalayan blackberry, California wild grape, mugwort and poison hemlock. Small drainages through the serpentine body north of the river also support some riparian vegetation.

5. Pine Hill Preserve Planning Unit

The geology of the unit is not entirely gabbro. Especially at its edges, the unit includes serpentine and more common substrates and plant communities. The chamise chaparral, grassland, interior live oak woodland, blue oak savannah, and riparian forest that occur outside the gabbro formation, are similar to those communities found on the other parcels.

The Pine Hill Preserve area supports vegetation that has developed on gabbro substrate. Because of the unusual characteristics of this geologic material, the plant communities here are very distinctive and include two endemic species (species that grow nowhere except this area of western El Dorado County) and another species that is nearly endemic. Three other rare plant species occur here also. Beyond the rare species, the more common species also associate in an unusual pattern to create a plant community unlike those found on common soils. Major plant communities on the gabbro formation include chaparrals (with different species compositions), interior live oak woodland, black oak woodland, grassland and riparian forest. The truly distinctive communities are the chaparrals and oak woodlands.

Common dominant chaparral species that are found here, as well as on more common substrates, include white leaf manzanita, chamise and toyon. Distinctive chaparral species include leather oak, Lemmon's ceanothus, Sonoma sage, pitcher sage, and gray pine. Although most of these species (except leather oak) are found both on and off gabbro and serpentine, they become much more prominent on these rock types. Seven of the eight rare species of the gabbro formation are associated with chaparral, often chaparral with an important white leaf manzanita component. The rare chaparral species are often associated with sparse vegetation, little competition and high sunlight. These factors exist after disturbance (e.g. fire) in young chaparral stands, in old decadent stands where the overstory shrubs are dying, and on very poor sites (rocky and shallow soils for instance) that can support little vegetative cover. Among the species that are conspicuous in their relative absence on the gabbro here are blue oak and buck brush.

The oak woodlands of the Pine Hill Preserve area are mostly associated with north facing slopes and valleys and riparian borders. Some areas, especially the black oak communities, also have ponderosa pine. Four of the eight rare plant species are often found in the midst of oak trees. (Three species are found both in oak woodland and chaparral communities.)

C. Timber and Woodlands

Forest and woodlands of the planning area are primarily dominated by oak woodlands with foothill pines and riparian trees cover, such as willows and cottonwoods, located along creeks and the South Fork American River.

Mixed conifers are sparsely found on the southern slopes of the Miner's Cabin Planning Unit and a few pines are found scattered within the Dave Moore Planning Unit. The South Slope of Clark

Mountain contains the largest stands of conifers and is located in the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit.

The South Fork American Planning Area has been inventoried and classified as either “Withdrawn Forest Land “ or “Non Commercial Timber Land”, in the Sierra Planning Area Management Framework Plan, and therefore falls within the a Woodlands management classification. None of these areas fall within identified planning commercial Timber Base. These areas are not subject to commercial green tree timber sales. Individual trees may be sold in cases where hazard trees exist, where trees would be removed to accommodate projects such as fuel reduction, highway widening, trail or road construction, planned parking areas, etc. Any cutting of vegetation in this area is subject to BLM authorization. Public woodlands, within the planning area, have not been utilized for commercial green tree logging, but rather managed with an emphasis on maintaining and improving high value visual, wildlife and recreational resources.

D. Wildlife

Wildlife within the river corridor is typical of wildlife throughout the lower foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Because of the mix of habitat types, the area supports significantly diverse wildlife populations. Over 200 species of birds may occur seasonally, or as residents, including wintering bald eagles. At least 94 species of mammals are residents, including mountain lions, bobcats, foxes, coyotes, deer, and ring-tail cats. The river itself supports rainbow and brown trout, and a variety of native fishes. The planning area contains numerous habitats including riparian, riverine, blue oak-foothill pine, mixed chaparral/chamise, montane hardwood-conifer, montane hardwood-oak, and annual grasslands. Several sensitive species are also found in or may pass through the planning area. Listed are some of the more noteworthy species.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service *Species of Concern*: Western Pond Turtle, Northern Goshawk,
Calif. Spotted Owl

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service *Threatened*: Bald Eagle

BLM *Sensitive Species*: Western Mastiff Bat, Townsend’s Big Eared Bat, Calif. Spotted Owl, and
Foothill Yellow Legged Frog

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service *Species of Concern*: Foothill Yellow Legged Frog

Calif. Dept. of Fish and Game *Endangered*: Willow Flycatcher, Peregrine Falcon

Calif. Dept. of Fish and Game *Species of Special Concern*: Foothill Yellow Legged Frog

E. Minerals

Much of the planning area was intensively ground-sluiced beginning in 1848, and continuing through the 1850's. Evidence of this mining activity includes piles of cobbles and gravels, water ditches and prospect pits. Much of the South Fork American Planning Area is within the historic Coloma Mining District. Coloma is famous as the site of Sutter’s Mill. By 1864, the rich surface and river placers became largely exhausted. Gold was also produced from this district in the 1930's and '40s when the South Fork American River channel was extensively dredged. There has been no significant gold development activity on or in the vicinity of the subject lands in the last 50 years, only minor suction dredging operations.

According to the mineral reports prepared for past management actions in the planning area, the subject lands have a moderate to high potential for the occurrence of lode and placer gold deposits and construction aggregate materials but they have no to low mineral development potential. Detailed information on the mineral resources are contained in the *Mineral Potential Assessment of Public Lands Selected for Withdrawal along the South Fork of the American River*.

F. Cultural Resources

A comprehensive cultural survey, completed in 2001, identified numerous historic and prehistoric sites within the South Fork American Planning Area. The majority of the historic and pre-historic sites are located adjacent to the South Fork, and relate to the Gold Rush era and to American Indian occupation and food processing sites. The original Gold Rush era activity wiped out many of the aboriginal sites within the river corridor, and post-Gold Rush era mining, ranching, and farming, along with periodic natural floods greatly impacted the historic Gold Rush sites of the 1840's, 50's, and 60's. While several of these sites have lost their integrity, others may still meet National Register of Historic Places criteria. Cultural resources are an important factor to consider in evaluating potential planning impacts.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. *Cultural Resource Reconnaissance Of Bureau Of Land Management Lands Along The South Fork Of The American River, El Dorado County, California*, James J. Barnes

G. Water Quality

The South Fork American River is a major waterway in El Dorado County, flowing from the crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains down the western slope where it joins the North Fork of the American River in Folsom Lake. The lower American River then travels down to the Sacramento Valley and into the Sacramento River in the city of Sacramento. The Sacramento River then flows into the San Francisco Bay. Rainfall within the planning area differs greatly. At Folsom Dam, average rainfall ranges from 32.5 inches per year, while at Placerville, only 14 miles away, average rainfall ranges around 53.6 inches per year.

The importance of water quality is evident in the American River Watershed. El Dorado County relies on the water for agricultural and municipal purposes, as does the metropolitan area of Sacramento. The South Fork American River is the most popular river for commercial white water rafting in the Western United States. Annually, approximately 100 to 140 thousand visitors float the river on either privately owned boats, or through the services of commercial outfitters. The main water source in the project area is the South Fork American, which has been greatly altered since the 1850's, and has not had a natural unimpaired flow since before the Gold Rush. Water impoundments managed by PG&E, SMUD, and EID all effect the natural flow of the river. Water quality in the project area appears to be influenced by a wide variety of factors relating to man's influence on the environment. (See *El Dorado County River Management Plan* Sec.3.3 for details.) A major source of water quality degradation is related to the coliform (fecal) group of bacteria. This may relate to animal waste, defective septic tank leach fields, and other

undocumented sources. The primary sources of contamination appear to be located upstream of the planning area, according to the County River Management Plan.

H. Recreation

Similar to most outdoor areas, the South Fork American and adjacent lands have provided opportunities for a wide variety of outdoor activities over the years through the present. 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 Unit, in the vicinity of Weber Creek, are used by off-road vehicle enthusiasts.

Prospecting – the recreational search for gold – has a special significance along the South Fork American because of the river’s role in the Great California Gold Rush of 1849. 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 experiences, dependent on water releases and flow patterns. This range of opportunities is only limited by the knowledge and flexibility of river users, and by public access.

I. Fire and Fuels

The planning area contains terrain heavily laden with built-up fuels. In response to long-standing public concern, wildfires have been vigorously suppressed for decades for public safety, protection of property, and to reduce catastrophic fire effects on the environment. Exclusion of fire over the years has resulted in increased fuel loading to levels that could potentially enable a wildfire to burn with such intensity that large areas could be severely impacted, and make fire control extremely difficult. Several BLM-managed parcels are stereotypic example of the urban-wildlands interface, with homes and businesses built up against public land boundaries and some

private inholdings within BLM wildlands. These “rural sprawl” areas are a possible ignition source of fires burning onto the planning area.

J. Special Status Plants

The Pine Hill Preserve Unit supports four federally listed species (*Calystegia stebbinsii*, *Ceanothus roderickii*, *Galium californicum sierrae*, and *Senecio layneae*) and two other BLM sensitive species, (*Wyethia reticulata*, and *Chlorogalum grandiflorum*).

Some of the above mentioned species associated with the Pine Hill Preserve also occur on the adjacent Norton Ravine Unit. A small occurrence of Layne’s butterweed, (*Senecio layneae*), occurs in a band of serpentine that reaches the South Fork American southwest of the head of Norton Ravine.

In this area there are few rare species associated with these common substrates. An exception is Brandegee’s clarkia (*Clarkia biloba brandegeae*), which does occur on these substrates in this area.

Brandegee’s clarkia (*Clarkia biloba brandegeae*), has recently added to the BLM sensitive species list and also is an addition to the California Native Plant Society List 1B (Rare in California and Elsewhere) list. Surveys for this species have not yet occurred, but the riparian and canyon bottoms sediments of the planning area may provide habitat for this species.

IV ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

PROPOSED ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The proposed action would be to adopt and implement planning decisions summarized in **Appendix F** (Actions 1 to 38) and discussed in the *Draft South Fork American Management Plan*.

As stated in the draft management plan, planning decisions for the Pine Hill Preserve Unit are only public recommendations that will be passed on to a Preserve planning team. The Preserve planning team will be completing a management plan for the entire Preserve system in the near future. Since these are not implementable decisions, and since a separate environmental evaluation will be undertaken for the Preserve plan when it is written, no environmental evaluation for these recommendations will be made in this document. Recommendations for the Pine Hill Preserve Unit are included in this document only for reference purposes.

The impacts of the proposed action are addressed below. Potential impacts will be addressed by planning units except for five planning decisions, which are common to all planning units.

Planning Decisions Common To All Planning Units

Action 1) Decision was made to designate lands within the South Fork American Planning Area as a “Special Management Area”.

SOUTH FORK AMERICAN RIVER SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREA

BLM managed areas that contain special resource values, elevated resource conflicts, or which require heightened management attention can be designated as a special area. The planning area contains both historic and pre-historic resources, which are important to California's early history. This area also receives some of the highest recreational use in BLM, plays an important part in the local economy, and interfaces with several local communities and rural residences.

Impacts: The designation of the planning area as a "Special Management Area" identifies this area as necessitating enhanced management attention, gives it somewhat of a priority rating for funding, and enables BLM to conduct more regulated management activities.

Within Special Management Areas BLM can implement fee programs for certain uses, also enables BLM to more easily implement individual recreational use permit programs, and allows BLM to apply for specific funds and grants to implement management actions and facility development. This designation can also provide for specific recreation activities and experience opportunities that may require a high level of recreation funding or manpower investment. The designation will in itself have little or no affect on public use and could have a minor impact on BLM management. Implementation of future associated actions, within the designation area, are discussed within the following Action items 2 through 54.

Action 2) No new grazing leases will be issued.

Grazing would continue on three small parcels, which are part of the Dave Moore Planning Unit. Two of these parcels are 10 acres in size, and completely surrounded by private lands. The other parcel (approximately 20 acres) borders private land on the north and Highway 49 to the south. Prior grazing rights will be respected and continued into the future. No new (additional) leases would be issued for BLM managed lands within the planning area. Grazing would take place on these lands only as a management tool to control invasive weeds, or to assist in a fuel management program.

Impacts

-Socioeconomic-

This planning decision affects lands that are not now being grazed under a grazing permit or lease. None of the parcels are large enough to support an independent stock raising operation. Grazing requests would most likely come from adjacent landowners, who would use these public lands to supplement grazing operations on their privately held lands. The public lands are not entirely fenced, nor are sensitive resources such as rare plant habitat, cultural sites and riparian areas. In order to issue new leases, protective developments would have to be installed and maintained, and studies would have to be conducted. The cost of installing the needed fencing, enclosures, and water tanks; conducting the needed studies; and administration would far outweigh any funding generated from grazing fees. Grazing fees for 2002 are \$1.43 a month to have a cow and calf forage on public lands. This amounts to \$17.16 per year for a cow with calf. The socioeconomic impacts of not leasing these areas will have no direct effect on the public, since they are not presently being grazed. Opportunities to create a new livestock operation do

not exist without the purchase or lease of privately held lands. The cost to administer such small areas would never be recovered through grazing fees.

-Natural Resources-

Almost half the planning area acreage has been recently acquired by BLM through donations, exchanges, or purchase. While in private hands, much of this land was used for livestock grazing. In some cases, this accelerated the invasion of noxious weeds, and impacted sensitive riparian and riparian habitat. Exclusion of grazing would allow previously impacted areas to evolve under a more natural environment that would benefit native species and sensitive habitats. With the number of native grazers such as deer or elk diminished, and with the control of wildfires, some natural processes may not be able to normally develop. The Proposed Action provides for the use of livestock grazing to assist in maintaining natural processes, controlling invasive weeds and in the management of fuel build up.

Action 3) Rights of Ways will continue to be issued in the planning area on a case by case basis, provided they are consistent with management objectives/prescription, management goals and Visual Resource Management (VRM) class guidelines of each planning unit.

Impacts: The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) Title 5, provides provisions for the issuance of Rights-of-ways (ROW). The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 43 Part 2800 provides policy on issuing ROW's, which includes "preventing unnecessary or undue environmental damage to lands and resources" and "Protect the natural resources associated with public lands and adjacent private lands". These provisions already provide protective measures mirrored somewhat in the above planning decision.

Presently the majority of existing ROW's are located adjacent to the Highway 49 corridor. These include State Highway 49 itself, power and utility lines, and underground pipelines. In the reasonable future the most likely request for additional ROW's would occur along Highway 49. These would most likely relate to requests to widen or alter Highway 49, and the upgrade or new installation of additional utility lines. These activities would most likely take place within the highway ROW (which is already developed) and maintained to reduce bush and vegetation for highway visibility.

The small number of anticipated future ROW's is unlikely to present any major impacts to the goal of maintaining the planning area's *Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II* integrity. The VRM Class II pertains to "Changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color and texture) caused by management activity should not be evident in the characteristic landscape. Contrasts are seen, but must not attract attention". Project mitigation measures such as painting, project location/placement, redesign, and vegetative screening can all be used to lessen impacts. It is not anticipated that, in the foreseeable future, any projects would be proposed that would conflict with this management decision.

Action 4) A decision was made to implement a management goal/objective of maintaining and restoring all lands within the planning area (except Clark Mt. - VRM I) to a VRM Class II rating. The VRM Class II pertains to "Changes in any of the basic elements (form, line,

color and texture) caused by management activity should not be evident in the characteristic landscape. Contrast are seen, but must not attract attention”.

The Folsom Field Office has not completed a field office-wide Visual Resource Inventory. Therefore, no VRM classes have been assigned other than those relating to special area policy management (Class I for Wild & Scenic Rivers, WSA’s). These classes are normally assigned during the land use planning process. The VRM goals and objectives contained in this plan will be reviewed once VRM management classes are assigned to the field office during the upcoming land use plan revision. A brief review of these parcels for VRM classification found that they all could be classified as VRM Class II or had the potential to be brought up to this class with the exception of the Ponderosa Parcel.

A brief VRM Inventory/Evaluation was completed for the Ponderosa Parcel as part of this evaluation with the following results. The VRM management class determination is developed by giving a numeric rating to each of four different criteria. These evaluation criteria are, Scenic Quality Rating, Sensitivity Level Rating, Distance Zone Determination, and Special Area Designation. The numeric values assigned to these different criteria are displayed in the following chart.

Scenic Quality Rating

“Scenic Quality”, (existing scenic quality) rated out with a score of 9 (0-11 points = Class C rating) placing it in the Class “C” Scenic Quality category. Adjacent scenery, the on site trailer park and gravel pit all greatly influenced this category.

Sensitivity Level Rating

This parcel could be rated as an area of “Medium Sensitivity Levels”, due to high level of travel on Marshall Grade Road.

Distance Zone Determination

“Distance Zones” relate to the proximity of the observer to the landscape. Observers from the South Fork and Marshall Grade Road would view this area as “Foreground” (FG) landscape.

Special Area Designation

This area has no special management designations.

Management Class Determination

Based on the previous VRM evaluation elements the area would typically be rated as a VRM Class IV Area, where man’s impacts dominate the landscape.

VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CLASS ASSIGNMENT

Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Med.	Med.	Med.	Low
Special Areas	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Scenic Quality “A”	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Scenic Quality “B”	2	3	3	3	4	4	4

Scenic Quality “C”	3	4	4	④	4	4	4
Distance Zones	FG MG	BG	SS	FG MG	BG	SS	SS

(FG-Foreground, MG-Middle ground, BG-Background, SS-Seldom seen)

As shown in the above matrix this area would be rated as a VRM Class 4 Area.

Impacts: The Ponderosa Parcel does not meet the criteria to be managed as a VRM Class II Area or even a Class III Area. But it is the wish of the planning group to improve the scenic quality of this unit. Therefore, this evaluation assumes that the BLM will take future management actions to retain and improve the scenic quality of this area, regardless of its VRM class rating.

The objective of managing the planning area to maintain or restore a VRM Class II rating involves several potential actions. Restoration could involve cleaning up illegal dump sites, picking up roadside trash, putting superfluous roads and vehicle trails to bed, repairing off-road vehicle damage, removing abandoned fences, painting existing structures to better blend in with the environment, and planting native vegetation to screen visual impacts on adjacent private lands. These are just a few examples of what could be done to improve the existing landscape character. Based on several years experience of completing similar visual improvement projects, only short-term minor impacts from these restoration activities are anticipated.

With public lands surrounded by private lands in the planning area, adjacent cultural modifications have heavily impacted entire viewsheds, especially along primary travel routes. Since many distance zone landscape characteristics have been impacted by predominant features such as roads, and rural homes. VRM management will concentrate on visually sensitive areas. Future projects such as trail heads, parking lots, toilet facilities, and trails will all be designed with the goal of maintaining or improving the VRM Class II rating. Proposed projects would receive a detailed visual analysis when site specific EA’s are completed for each proposal. These projects will utilize mitigation measures and design criteria similar to those discussed on the previous page. Since the goals of VRM are to limit impacts from a visual standpoint, it is not anticipated that this decision will produce any major environmental impacts. Implementing this decision may produce some minor economic impacts when projects need to be relocated or redesigned to meet VRM Class II objectives.

Action 5) The decision was made to withdraw all public domain lands from mineral entry under the General Mining Law of 1872 as amended for a period of 50 years.

The *General Mining Law of 1872* provides for mining claims to be staked, minerals extracted, and public lands patented by claim holders; a patent being a document that conveys fee title to the mineral estate as well as the surface estate. This decision does not have any effect or impact on valid existing mining claims, or their operation. Lands under existing mining claims will be automatically withdrawn should they become abandoned, and not be subject to future claim location for the specified length of the withdrawal.

The withdrawal provides for long-term protection and preservation of the planning area’s special features and ensures the public’s financial investment in these resources is not compromised. It

will close these lands to commercial mining activities and potential disposal through the mining law.

Impacts: The Mining Law of 1872 allows claimants the opportunity to perfect their mining claims, and purchase the claimed lands. Patenting of public lands through the General Mining Law can be completed for a token payment of \$5.00 per acre for lode claims and mill sites, and \$2.50 per acre for placer claims. The average cost of acquired lands in the planning area is \$4,700 per acre. Exposing these high resource values and expensive acquired lands to disposal for a return to the public of \$2.50 to \$5.00 an acre would not be in the public's best interest. Lands within the planning area have moderate to high potential for the occurrences of lode and placer gold deposits and construction aggregate materials, but have generally low mineral development potential. Major mining efforts took place in the mid 1800's and 1930-40's, when the river areas were extensively ground-sluciced and later dredged. Mineral extraction over the last few decades has been limited exclusively to small scale dredging activities in the river and its tributaries.

The potential for the commercial development of mineral deposits becoming an important local economic component are remote. Presently, a private sand and gravel quarry is in operation near Coloma, another rock and aggregate quarry is located on Lotus Road and a slate/aggregate quarry is located near Chili Bar. Also a very small number of suction dredgers seasonally work the river. Dredging for gold in the South Fork American River has become much more of a hobby activity rather than a commercial enterprise. Withdrawing the South Fork from future mining claims and commercial mineral development will have no to an extremely minor effect on the local economy. This withdraw will actually provide additional lands available for recreational gold hunting. The increase in recreational gold panning, sluicing, and dredging opportunities may have a very minor effect on increased future tourism.

Therefore, the proposed action is unlikely to have any major impact on mineral development opportunities. Also, prior, valid existing claims on the public domain lands would not be affected. The proposal would have no impact on leaseable minerals or salable minerals, such as sand and gravel, since this withdrawal would not prevent development of these minerals under the Mineral Leasing Act or the Materials Sales Act. This withdrawal will provide for surface protection from mineral exploration activities over which the BLM presently has little discretion without a withdrawal.

Action 6) The decision was made to close all planning units to target shooting.

This decision will not have any effect on hunting activities. The decision was based on several factors. The public felt that target shooting was unsafe because of the close vicinity of roads, highways, private homes, boater traffic on the river, and other recreationists. Target shooting was also felt to aggravate vandalism and littering, as well as increase the possibility of a wildfire. BLM experience in other areas has been that an unacceptable number of target shooters do not practice good firearms safety, thus endangering other people who may be nearby.

Impacts: Target shooting is a casual use activity, usually by local residents. The closure of the South Fork Planning Area still leaves numerous other close-by BLM parcels open for this type of

activity. This use can easily be displaced to other locations, and no impacts to users are anticipated. The closure will benefit homeowners who live close to areas where target shooting is taking place, benefits the safety of recreational visitors, and will reduce wildfire concerns. Vandalism and litter buildup may drop in the closed area, but may be displaced to other public and private lands.

Planning Decisions Common to Two or More Planning Units

Action 7) Hunting Closures. (DM, PC, PP Units)

A decision was made to close the Dave Moore, Parcel “C”, and the Ponderosa Planning Units to all forms of hunting. The closure will benefit home and business owners who live close to areas where hunting was taking place and creating safety concerns. The BLM parcels involved are located next to population centers, and areas used by between 100 to 150 thousand recreationists each year. This closure would assist in providing a safer environment for public land visitors, adjacent businesses and homeowners.

Impacts: Parcel “C” and the Ponderosa Unit can almost be considered urban areas, due to the proximity of houses, businesses, restaurants, highways/paved roads and the high level of human interaction and vehicle traffic. Little to no hunting use of these areas occurs now, so no impacts are anticipated from the closure of these areas. The Dave Moore Unit may receive some upland game hunting use. This small tract has homes and businesses located along three of its boundaries and Highway 49 on the remainder. The planning unit receives use from local walkers and joggers almost everyday of the year on the area’s many trails. The area is not of adequate size to safely support hunting opportunities. Closing this area will have no appreciable impact on hunting opportunities, but would greatly enhance public safety.

Action 8) Decision was to limit Off Road Vehicle (ORV) and other vehicle use to designated roads, trails, access points, parking lots and trailheads. These planning units would not be open to cross country motorized travel. (DM, PP, GC NR and MC Units)

ORV/OHV - BACKGROUND-

For the purposes of this plan, the terms “Off Road Vehicle” and “Off Highway Vehicle” will be interchangeable. The BLM’s regulations (43 CFR 8340) establish management areas as either “open,” “limited,” or “closed” to off-road vehicle use. Proper ORV management provides for the public’s recreational needs, protects resources, ensures the safety of the public, and minimizes conflicts among the various public land users. The BLM’s ORV designations are:

Open: *The BLM designates areas as “open” for intensive ORV use where there are no compelling resource protection needs, user conflicts, or public safety issues to warrant limiting cross-country travel.*

Limited: *The agency designates areas as “limited” where it must restrict ORV use in order to meet specific resource management objectives. These limitations may include:*

restricting the number or types of vehicles; limiting the time or season of use; permitted or licensed use only; limiting use to existing roads and trails; and limiting use to designated roads and trails. The BLM may place other limitations, as necessary, to protect resources, particularly in areas that motorized ORV enthusiasts use intensely or where they participate in competitive events.

Closed: *The BLM designates areas as “closed” if closure to all vehicular use is necessary to protect resources, ensure visitor safety, or reduce use conflicts.*

This decision would limit motorized vehicle use to designated roads and trails. Trucks, jeeps, quad runners, motorcycles and regular street vehicles would not be able to operate in a cross-country capacity, use foot trails, or leave roads designated for vehicle use. The official designation would be an ORV Limited Area; meaning vehicle travel would be limited to designated roads and trails only. This decision was made because the planning group felt that vehicle use off of designated roadways could impact the visual quality of the areas, damage vegetation and stream/river banks, damage cultural resources, add to the fire risk, increase erosion and potentially damage other sensitive resources.

Impacts: The Miner’s Cabin Panning Unit lacks vehicle access points except for the old ditch road at Red Shack and the Stewart Mine Road. The locked gate at Red Shack limits vehicle use of the unit south of the river. The Stewart Mine Road provides access to the north side of the river, which, in turn, induces off-road cross-county use by motorbikes. This access crosses private lands and has no legal or authorized right-of-way. This use is causing environmental damage through damage to ground cover vegetation, and accelerated erosion. The Miners Cabin site lacks any vehicle access and off-road use does not occur there.

Presently, only small portions of the Ponderosa Parcel and Dave Moore have vehicle access. The Ponderosa Parcel was used as a gravel pit and a *de facto* shooting range. The area received some off-road traffic, which inhibited natural vegetative recovery of the old gravel operation. The area has recently been fenced off from vehicle entry. Dave Moore has vehicle access to the parking lot, but no real off-road activity has taken place on this parcel. Norton Ravine lacks legal public access for vehicles, but some vehicles, driven by BLM permit holders and some adjacent private landowners, do use Equestrian Way for access to Norton Ravine. The Greenwood Creek unit lacks public vehicle access and is not used by ORVs. Mining claim holders and BLM permittees occasionally use existing roads and trails for access. This decision will have no real effect on present ORV use, but will assist in law enforcement, and the future protection of sensitive resources from indiscriminate vehicle use.

Action 9) Permit system for authorizing casual use overnight camping. Camping use in these areas will be regulated by permits. (MC, DM, and NR Units)

This decision would close these planning units to casual-use camping. Overnight camping would be authorized through a camping permit system, or by means of a Special Recreation Permit. Presently, Miner’s Cabin receives very little overnight use, primarily from boaters who put-in ½ mile upstream from this unit’s boundary. Norton Ravine also receives very little overnight use, it too is exclusively used by boaters since the river provides the only legal public

access to this planning unit. Dave Moore has already been closed to casual-use camping, and has been under a camping-by-permit system for several years. The planning group felt that restrictions on camping are needed because of wildfire potential, needed allocation of camping spots between different recreation users, visual impacts from campers, and for sanitary and health concerns.

Impacts: Since this decision has already been in effect on the Dave Moore Planning Unit, it will have no real effect on the way overnight camping is managed there.

The Miner's Cabin Unit would be closed to casual camping, with camping-by-permit restricted to six specified sites. Campers also must provide self-contained sanitary equipment and conceal campsites from river user's visual zones. With the introduction of recreational dredging to this planning unit, future camping use may increase slightly. With camping under a permit system, impacts caused by camping are likely to diminish. Requirements of concealing or masking campsites from river users will improve visual resource values, and the requirement for users to provide their own sanitary equipment could improve water quality, and reduce public health concerns. See Appendix G, Map 2 for potential camping locations.

The Norton Ravine Unit camping permit will also contain special campfire use stipulations. Camping use is so slight in this area that the requirement for a permit should not alter use numbers, or have any impacts different from those now taking place with casual-use camping. The added campfire stipulations may reduce the potential for wildfire ignitions caused by campers.

Action 10) Recreation use of the Ponderosa Planning Area will be limited to day use only and recreational use on the Miners Cabin, Greenwood Creek, Dave Moore, and Norton Ravine Planning Units will be "emphasized" for day use activities.

The decision would limit use of the Ponderosa Planning Unit's east half (old quarry site) to day use only, with no overnight use (camping). This day use would in itself be limited until the impacts from the past quarrying, and damage from target shooting is repaired. Miner's Cabin, Dave Moore, Greenwood Creek, and Norton Ravine Planning Units would be managed with an emphasis on providing day use recreational activities.

Impacts: The Ponderosa Unit is presently fenced, and the plan calls for restoration of the site with native vegetation, and erosion control measures. The closure of the area to camping will have no impact since this use is not now taking place. The limiting of use to "day use only", and the restoration efforts will assist in restoring this area to a more natural state that will provide for more diverse future uses of the parcel. The restoration of this small area may generate some very short term visual impacts which will become unnoticeable within one or two growing seasons.

The Norton Ravine Planning Unit presently lacks legal public access, other than by rafting down the river. This factor already limits use of this area primarily to boaters. The impact of this decision would not accelerate overnight or nighttime use. The BLM would not construct campgrounds, or install other facilities or services, which would entice or generate additional overnight use.

A decision to require camping and other types of use permits for Miner's Cabin, Dave Moore, and Norton Ravine will also provide for overnight use limits and a measure of administrative direction over overnight users. This action would likely not generate any actions that would have the potential to create any new impacts. Emphasizing day use at Miner's Cabin, Dave Moore, and Greenwood Creek would reduce potential impacts to the area's naturalness, and avoid having parking areas open at night, which could generate law enforcement and disturbance problems to adjacent private landowners. Management control on overnight use would involve requiring camping permits, and the patrol of parking areas and trailheads for nighttime revelers. The Dave Moore Parking area will continue to be closed from dusk to dawn.

Action 11) Area closures to campfire use without an authorization permit. (DM and NR Units)

The decision closes these areas to casual campfire use, and requires special permits in addition to the standard California Campfire Permit. At Dave Moore, the special permit will be needed only if the fire is built outside of any of the supplied fire rings or barbeque units in the designated picnic sites, or the use of fire takes place after sundown.

In the Norton Ravine Unit, all campfires, warming fires and cooking fires would require a permit since there are no developed sites for such use.

For fires associated with camping, the required camping permit will act as a special fire permit. Special Recreation Permits may also be an instrument for providing the needed authorization to construct fires.

Impacts: This decision will require the public to first acquire a special fire permit or camping permit before camping or building fires on public lands in these planning units. This will take some of the spontaneity out of recreating on the public lands. The requirement of acquiring a fire permit would create impacts similar to those addressed previously addressed in item 3) under camping permits. Additionally, tighter control of campfires may reduce the threat of wildfire ignitions. With the use of permits, reported sightings of smoke or fire may be identified as permitted uses and not have to be investigated.

Action 12) Day-use dredging with three inch or less size dredges. Use requires registering at a BLM permit registration point. Use would be subject to standards developed by a recreational mining planning committee. (MC, NR and PHP Units)

The use of motorized devices for the recreational collection of minerals will be authorized at permit registration points within these two planning units. The number of dredge users and the locations available for dredging will be self-regulating, with a minimum of 200 foot spacing between dredgers, unless shorter distances are agreed upon among dredgers at the dredging site. Dredge engines will be four-stroke engines only. The use of two stroke engines will not be allowed. All dredges must have appropriate spark arresting mufflers. Dredging will only be allowed from 7 am to 5 pm, starting the last weekend in May through October 15. All dredgers must have an original California Fish and Game Dredging Permit in their possession when they

are dredging on the river. The BLM will use Adaptive Management to address conflicts, and to manage this program to minimize potential impacts.

Day-use dredgers (3" and smaller) may not dredge in locations allotted to large dredges (larger than 3") through a BLM permit, or areas assigned to other dredgers who have a BLM dredging permit. Permit holders would have a preference over day-use dredgers. Day-use dredgers may not dredge in the Maya Rapid area. Day-use dredgers will be subject to standard dredging use conditions, adopted from dredging regulations already developed by the BLM for the South Fork Yuba River, and any additional conditions needed to manage this activity and carry out planning decisions.

-Miner's Cabin Planning Unit-

Impacts: The BLM Folsom Field Office has been issuing recreational dredging permits for several years, and is familiar with potential impacts this use may generate. In order to determine potential impacts, the amount of dredging use must first be estimated. Several items may affect the amount of dredging use in the Miner's Cabin:

1. Lack of access. To get into the area, one must hike one mile downhill to the river, or float ½ mile downriver from Chili Bar, dredge, and then boat out three miles, or hike one mile uphill to Highway 49. The river along this section requires a moderate amount of boating experience and quality boating equipment.
2. Preferred sites allocated to larger dredges through a permit system. During the dredging season, the larger, long term dredgers will be given preference for dredging locations and camp spots over day-use dredgers. Preferred dredging sites may not always be available to day-use users.
3. Overnight dredging-related camping limited to three sites in the planning unit. Because of the difficulty in boating in, or backpacking a dredge to the river, many dredgers will want to stay a few days to safeguard their dredge and other equipment, and to make the effort worthwhile. This will require a camping permit, with use restricted to only three of the five or six camping spots at any one time. Dredgers may be competing with backpackers, boaters, and long term dredgers for these few camp sites.
4. Four Stroke Engines Only. Dredge use on this segment of the river would be limited to dredges with four stroke engines. The requirement to have a spark-arresting muffler will limit use to owners of dredges with these items and four stroke engines. Recreational prospector who have two-stroke engines on their dredges would not be able to use their equipment in this location.

Because of these factors, it is highly unlikely that large groups or clubs would be utilizing this planning area. (Large group dredging use would require a BLM authorization) The likely scenario may be to find a few single dredges and/or a small group of two or three dredges that would backpack their dredges down the ditch maintenance road from Highway 49. This would likely result in small dredge use concentrated in the general area where the trail provides access

to the river. Dredgers who boat in would have more flexibility to dredge anywhere in the planning area. For impact analysis, it is assumed that on a weekend during the dredging season, there would be two single dredges, and one group of three dredges operating in this planning unit for a maximum of five day-use dredgers. This was thought to be the probable maximum use on an average weekend, and will be used for baseline analysis.

Noise: Analysis assumes that the dredges used have four stroke engines, and have the required spark-arresting muffler. Noise impacts depend on the location of the dredges, other users, and private homes in the area. It is highly likely that the larger dredges would also be running at the same time. One of the areas likely to be dredged would be at the trail access at the end of the ditch maintenance road. Dredging noise here could impact other users accessing the area by trail, and hiking along the ditch. Private land owners have stated that they can clearly hear the dredges working the river from their homes. Dredges working close to the BLM/private land boundaries could impact the solitude sought by adjacent rural homeowners. Dredging noise will also impact some boaters as they float downriver. Limitations and restrictions placed on the dredgers such as mufflers and the time of day they are authorized to work, will lessen potential noise impacts, but the noise level will still effect some users and home owners seeking a higher level of solitude.

Riparian/Riverine Impacts: Small scale dredging usually produces only short term impacts to the river bed. Winter flooding usually erases all signs of impacts to the riverbed. Smaller scale dredgers usually do not remove large rocks or wench boulders away from the dredging area. Because most small scale dredging will only take place over a single day at one location, impacts to riverside vegetation are anticipated to be very minor. Dredging restrictions will not allow for the dredging of stream banks, removing material from tree roots, or undermining trees in and along the watercourse. Conditions of use will require that dredged material, stacked rocks, boulders, logs and other river materials not be placed in positions that might deflect high flows in a manner that may cause bank erosion. Dredgers will be encouraged to back fill dredging pockets. Anchor cables placed on trees will be padded in a fashion that prevents damage to trees and other vegetation.

Water Quality: The small scale of these dredges limits the amount of material they can move, and the depth at which they can be worked. Dredgers will be required to properly dispose of non-native materials dredged from the river. This includes material dredged up such as bullets, fishing weights, mercury, and bottles and cans left by other river users. Dredge use restrictions will not allow for engine repairs or oil changes to be conducted while dredges are in the water. Dredgers will be encouraged to keep their engines clean and take appropriate actions to keep oil and fuels from spilling into waterways. If dredge operators follow all stipulations in their permits, it is not anticipated that this activity will have any appreciable impact on water quality.

Manageability: CFR 43 9268.3(c)(v) “Prohibits the use of motorized mechanical devices or explosives for digging, scraping, or trenching for purposes of collecting.” The use of dredges in collecting (not mining) placer gold falls under this rule of conduct. Some type of authorization or open order is needed for the public to conduct this type of activity. This decision calls for the BLM to install registration stations where the public can sign in before dredging. This system lacks a mechanism to insure that the public understands dredging restrictions and special

conditions of use. Also signing in at a registration point is not the same as signing a permit with special conditions of use. A registration system does not provide a mechanism where users are made aware of all conditions of use and agree in writing to abide by special rules and regulations. This system lacks enforcement powers. It would require the BLM to ensure that the stations were maintained, had all the needed forms, writing instruments, and were collected on an regular basis. There would be no mechanism to know when to conduct compliance checks. In order to ensure enforcement of special stipulations, the river would have to be patrolled continually during the dredging season. With a lack of knowledge of who is dredging, when, and where, it would not be possible to hold people responsible for any resource damage that might occur, or disturbances caused by individuals. This program also does not provide BLM any management ability to disperse use, reduce potential conflicts between users, or come in contact with users to inform them of potential hazards and fire restrictions that may exist at any one time.

Other: Dredgers will not be allowed to place cables or anchor lines across the river, or use them in a manner that could endanger other river users. Restrictions will require that dredgers do not stack up rock, or create any type of barrier or obstacles to boats or other river users.

-Norton Ravine Planning Unit-

Impacts: The Norton Ravine Planning Unit borders approximately two and one half miles of the South Fork. The public land boundary only runs to the centerline of the river, with the other half of the river being in private ownership. There is one exception where 660 feet of river way is in total public ownership. Access to this area is more restricted than Miner's Cabin. Legal access would be by boat, putting in at Greenwood Creek and floating a minimum of four miles to the planning unit boundary. To take out, one would have to float approximately five miles further downstream. The distance from the put-in and take-out is approximately nine miles. Public foot access is from the Salmon Falls take-out parking lot, with a four mile hike along the riverbank to the unit boundary. The option of flying in a two or three inch dredges by helicopter for day-use is highly unlikely and will not be analyzed.

Because of the remoteness and lack of legal access, analysis for this unit will address use by only two day-use dredgers taking place at any one time. The most likely form of access would be some form of private access with permission from private inholders on the north side of the river, or from private landowners on the south side of the river.

Access: Very limited legal access may create potential trespass situations on Equestrian Way, or across other private land holdings. This lack of legal access will also limit the numbers of causal users.

Dredging Locations: With limited legal access, easily assessable locations may be filled with dredges larger than 3" who have paid for a BLM dredging permit. These permit holders have a preference over day-use users. This could create conflicts between users who have hiked in to a location only to find it occupied by another dredger. Preferred dredging sites may not always be available to day-use users.

Adjacent Lands Under Private Ownership: With property boundaries aligned with the centerline of a river, dredgers with BLM permits could easily intentionally or non-intentionally remove placer deposits located on private lands. The BLM action of issuing dredging permits could create a situation that invites potential mineral trespass upon private lands. This would conflict with the plan's vision statement, which states, "public lands will be managed in a way that respects private property rights".

Camping Relating to Day-use Dredging: Because of the difficulty of boating in, or backpacking a dredge to the river, many dredgers will want to stay a few days and make the effort worthwhile and to safeguard their dredge and other equipment. This would require obtaining a camping permit prior to dredging, affecting the spontaneity of day-use. There also may be some competition between users for campsites along the river. Day-use dredgers may be competing with backpackers, boaters, and long-term permitted dredgers for campsites adjacent to the river.

Noise: Analysis assumes that the dredges used are four-stroke and have the required spark arresting mufflers. Noise impacts depend on the location of the dredges, other users, and private homes in the area. Like the Miner's Cabin Unit, there are several homes adjacent to the BLM lands who could be affected by noise originating from the river. These homes are almost all located on the south side of the river off Jurgens and Luneman Roads, and Monty Mine Trail. While the use of two small dredges may not heavily impact the area's solitude, the small dredges operating at the same time as the larger dredges under BLM permit, and adjacent dredges working on BLM mining claims and private lands, could, taken together, create an impact on the area's solitude and on other river users.

Dredges working close to the BLM/private land boundaries could impact the solitude sought for by adjacent rural homeowners. Dredging noise may also impact some boaters as they float down river. Limitations and restrictions placed on the dredgers, such as mufflers with spark arresters, and the time of day they are authorized to work, will lessen potential noise impacts, but the noise level will still effect some users and home owners seeking a higher level of solitude.

Riparian/Riverine & Water Quality Impacts: These impacts are anticipated to be similar to those in Miner's Cabin.

Manageability: Similar to Miner's Cabin, but this area is more remote, and the program would be more costly to maintain. This planning unit would require the posting of mining claim locations and private property boundaries. It would also require additional law enforcement to ensure that dredgers were not dredging placer deposits from private property. Economically, that program would be very costly to manage for the few users who would benefit from it.

-Pine Hill Preserve Planning Unit-

The miner's Planning Group recommended that the Pine Hill Preserve be available for day use dredging. This use would be regulated and managed similar to dredging use within the Miner's Cabin Planning Unit. Dredging opportunities are limited to areas of section 30 not inundated by Folsom Lake. Section 32 has several mining claims, and is not available for recreational dredging. Due to the remoteness and lack of access to this area it is not anticipated that day use

dredging would take place to any degree. The recommendation will be forwarded to the planning group, and will be analyzed in the development of the Pine Hill Management Plan.

Action 13) Manage Fuels Buildup. Decision was for BLM to actively manage the buildup of fuels with the intent of protecting private homes and property and natural resources. (MC, PC, DM, GC, and NR Units)

The public discussion of this topic was summarized in the decision to manage fuels buildup and develop Fuel Management Plans. This was a simple way of expressing a very complex issue. What the public wants is a more comprehensive approach that not only protects natural resources from catastrophic wildfire, but also protects private property from wildfires starting on public lands, and works toward a more fire safe community. They felt that public users at the bottom of the South Fork canyon could start wildfires that would race up the canyon slopes and envelop private homes at the top of the ridges. Listed below are fire related topics brought up at several of the meetings.

1. Aggressive control of fuel buildup on public lands.
2. Assisting private landowners clearing fire safe areas where private homes are adjacent to public lands.
3. Controlling public use of campfires on public lands.
4. Improving access roads for emergency and patrol vehicles.
5. Fuel break construction and maintenance.
6. Maintaining community fire escape routes.
7. Increased local fire patrol and fire control agencies coordination.
8. Signing and public awareness of wildfire potential.

Impacts: In order to implement this decision, a Fuels Management Plan will first need to be completed. This plan would incorporate all of the needed actions and prioritize projects. It would also be supported by an environmental analysis specific to the actions of that plan. The decision to write a plan does not necessarily create any environmental impacts in itself, and need not be addressed in any further detail. In the meantime, specific projects relating to this decision, such as placement of signs, and working with individual property owners to clear fire safe areas involving public lands, may take place on a case-by-case basis as needed. These actions would all be subject to project specific analysis as needed.

Several fire related decisions associated with shooting and hunting closures, camping restrictions, and the control of campfires are addressed elsewhere in this document.

Action 14) Implement noxious weed management efforts. (MC, DM, GC, NR Units)

The control of noxious weeds was identified as a management concern and priority for these planning units. Some of the more common weeds found in the planning units include:

Klamathweed
Medusahead

Yellow Star Thistle
Puncture vine

Tree-of-Heaven
Himalayan Blackberry

French Broom
Bull Thistle

Scotch Broom
Barbed Goatgrass

Rush Skeleton weed

Impacts: Presently, weed abatement programs within these areas have been completed in a number of ways. Primarily, weed control has been by mechanical means, such as mowing, hand pulling, weed wrenching, and the use of “weed eater” type string cutters. Other options could include the use of prescribed fire, grazing, and the introduction of biological vectors (insects).

Impacts relating to the control of noxious weeds have resulted in some minor surface disturbance from uprooting plants and some barren appearing areas.

Requirements that management projects use weed-free dirt fill, or sand and gravels may add to the cost of some projects. Requiring that construction equipment be cleaned before entering these areas to thwart the spread of weeds from work project to work project, may also add minor cost to project work. BLM policy now requires that weed-free straw be used on all construction projects.

Future developments and increased access to newly acquired lands may accelerate the spread of noxious weeds. These unwanted species are spread by vehicle use, and tend to invade newly disturbed areas, such as roads, dirt parking areas, trails, and areas impacted by wildfires.

The introduction of equestrian use may also increase the spread of some non-native species. Requiring the use of weed-free feed on public lands may assist, somewhat, in reducing the spread of weeds from equestrian use.

Action 15) Decisions relating to the management of commercial uses on public lands. (MC, PP, PC, GC, and NR Units)

This decision addresses commercial uses on these five planning units. The decision for the Ponderosa Unit would continue the present commercial use lease of the campground. Two years before the lease expires, a community meeting will be held to discuss future uses of the area. The decision would also require commercial Special Recreation Permits (SRP’s) to be consistent with this planning unit’s Vision Statement, management goals, and VRM class guidelines.

Parcel C decisions would continue the existing SRP system (which is commercial in nature) and work with interested parties who are requesting to construct commercial tent sites.

Norton Ravine decisions state that commercial and organized group use shall be allowed by permit only.

Impacts:

There would be no real new impacts since such activities are already subject to BLM permit requirements.

-Miner’s Cabin Planning Unit-

The decision for the Miners Cabin Planning Unit states that all commercial activities must be authorized by BLM permits. The decision also addressed organized group use, which also must be authorized by permit. The decisions are not seen to generate any new resource impact in themselves due to the fact that BLM policy already requires these permits to be issued. Any permit issued in the future will take into consideration the goals of this planning unit and the Vision Statement for the planning area. All future permits will be subject to environmental analysis, but are not anticipated to create any significant environmental impacts.

-Ponderosa Planning Unit-

The current lease has already been analyzed in an EA. In the past, the area covered by the lease had been subject to trash dumping, the stripping and dumping of stolen vehicles, occupation by homeless people, and use as a hangout for drunken derelicts. After the 1997 flood, the area was cleaned up and re-vegetated by the leaseholder. Present management by the leaseholder has curtailed these illegal activities. Future public use of this area would have some limitations. The parcel does not provide access to the river. The public land boundaries are at least 50 feet short of the river. The area is subject to flooding – it was covered by several feet of water in the 1997 flood. The proximity to homes, businesses, a bar, a restaurant, and campground/trailer parks could also affect future uses. The issuance of SUP's always takes into consideration management goals, and compatibility to management plans as a matter of policy. Neither of these decisions would produce any changes from the present management condition. Future use of the area would be addressed in specific EA's relating to projects, permits or future leasing.

-Parcel C Planning Unit-

The decision to continue issuing SRP's creates no new impacts; it is part of BLM policy, and relates to everyday business. A decision for the BLM to work with interested parties in the evaluation of commercial tent sites was also made. These decisions create no immediate, direct impacts, but could lead to future impacts. As part of each project's analysis, a specific EA will be completed to address potential impacts associated with the proposals and their implementation.

-Norton Ravine Planning Unit-

The decision to require commercial and organized groups to obtain BLM permits (SRP, leases, Special Use Permits) is already BLM policy and will not have any effect on the management of this area. The issuance of permits generally requires specific EA's, which will address potential impacts.

Action 16) Decisions relating to acquiring additional public access to the Miner's Cabin and Norton Ravine Planning Units. (MC and NR Units)

Analysis of these decisions will address the impacts resulting from the provided access, and not the actions required to obtain the access. Obtaining the access may involve acquiring private lands, obtaining easements; and building roads, trails, and parking areas. The type of access, or

how it will be obtained is not yet known. These activities will be environmentally evaluated at the time they are acquired.

Decisions for the Miner's Cabin Unit involve investigating the possibility of constructing trails along both sides of the river from privately owned lands at Chili Bar downstream to the public lands. It also decided the BLM would investigate the possibility of constructing a ridge top trail from Stewart Mine Road or Highway 193. All of these access routes would be dependent on acquiring easements or title from willing private landowners.

Norton Ravine access decisions involve the following: "BLM shall investigate the possibility of a trail, to the planning unit, from the vicinity of the Salmon Falls Bridge." "The BLM shall be receptive to opportunities to acquire land for access and habitat protection." Future public vehicle access is also one of the management goals for this unit.

Impacts:

Amount of increased use would be dependent on types and location of proposed new access. Impacts would also be dependent on these factors. Increased access could result in increases in littering and minor impacts to natural resources. Without additional information it is difficult to quantify these potential impacts.

-Miner's Cabin Planning Unit-

Trail access from Chili Bar along the north side of the South Fork would provide legal foot access to large tracts of public lands in the north half of this planning unit. There is a Gold Rush era trail of sorts which starts in the Chili Bar area and traverses along the north edge of the river, but fades out in the vicinity of the BLM boundary. The public uses this trail to reach the public lands, but trespasses on private lands to do so. Once public access is gained, this inadvertent trespass would be resolved. Public access and a foot trail would enable public users to visit approximately a mile of riverfront before steep slopes would hamper further access. This trail would probably increase the number of fisherman, hikers, gold panners, small-scale dredgers and other users. Because the trail would be less than a mile and a half long, it would not attract much mountain bike or equestrian use. With an increase in recreational use of this area, the potential for wildfire ignition, and the spread of noxious weeds may also increase. It is not anticipated that this increase would be of any consequence.

Another decision is to construct a ridge trail. This would require gaining easements over private property to the Stewart Mine Road to access the public lands. A foot trail could follow an old road alignment out to the end of an un-named ridge with an overlook of the South Fork River Canyon. It may also be feasible to extend this trail, switchbacking it down the nose of this ridge to gain access to the north side of the river in the vicinity of the BLM composting toilet. This type of trail may appeal to more experienced hikers and fisherman. Because of the difficult trailhead access and steep climb out of the canyon, this trail is unlikely to attract a large number of users. Impacts from this new form of access are not thought to be of any consequence. A trail from Highway 193 may not be feasible. Trailhead parking would most likely be the roadside on top of the ridge. This trail would drop into a very steep canyon, then go back up the other side of the canyon, or down to the river. This route would require numerous switchbacks, and would

not get much use unless it provided the only access to this side of the river. A trail of this type would not attract many people, and the BLM is very unlikely to fund a project with little public benefit or use.

A trail system on the south side of the river from Chili Bar could tie into the existing ditch maintenance road, and then up to the planned Wilkinson Trailhead on Highway 49. A trail proposal to extend up and downstream from this ditch road is also planned. Taken together, this could amount to a trail system of reasonable grade that extends over two miles. This trail is likely to attract more users than the other (north side of the river) trail proposal. Impacts would be similar to those already discussed, but use may be greater on the south side of the river thus increasing potential impacts slightly. A trail system on the south side of the river could attract some minor equestrian and mountain bike traffic, but because of the very limited extent of the trail and its steepness, this type of use is not anticipated to be great.

-Norton Ravine Planning Unit-

The construction of a river edge trail from the Salmon Falls take-out to the far boundary of the planning unit would entail locating segments of the trail on non-BLM Government lands, and acquiring easements to cross small parcels of private land. Below is a listing of how the trails would cross differently managed government controlled lands and privately-owned lands along the river. Refer to Norton Ravine and Pine Hill Preserve planning maps for location of parcels discussed below.

NORTHSIDE TRAIL

New trail from Salmon Falls take-out parking lot following on river's edge to northern end of BLM public lands.

3/8 Mile	Bureau of Reclamation
1 1/16 Miles	Bureau of Land Management (Pine Hill Preserve Planning Unit)
3/8 Mile	Bureau of Reclamation
1/16 Mile	Private Lands
5/16 Mile	California Dept. Fish and Game
1/2 Mile	Bureau of Land Management (Pine Hill Preserve Planning Unit)
1/4 Mile	Private Lands
1 7/8 Miles	Bureau of Land Management to end of public land boundaries

This would result in 5 13/16 Miles of potential trail or a 11 5/8 mile loop trail. This route would require agreements with BOR and CA F&G, and trail easements from three willing private landowners. If additional easements across 1 3/4 miles privately held lands was obtained than access to the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit and Highway 49 could be secured.

1 3/4 Miles	Private Lands
2 1/8 Miles	Public BLM lands to Highway 49 via Greenwood Creek.

This would provide a one-way trip of approximately 9 3/4 miles from either Salmon Falls or Greenwood Creek.

SOUTH SIDE TRAIL

New trail from Salmon Falls take out parking lot, on BOR lands, following on rivers edge across the bridge and up river to the Northern end (Norton Ravine area) of BLM public lands on the southern side of the river.

3/8	Mile	Bureau of Reclamation
1/16	Miles	Bureau of Land Management (Pine Hill Preserve Planning Unit)
3/8	Mile	Bureau of Reclamation
1/16	Mile	Private Lands
5/16	Mile	California Dept. Fish and Game
½	Mile	Bureau of Land Management (Pine Hill Preserve Planning Unit)
15/16	Mile	Private Lands
1/8	Mile	Bureau of Land Management

Total of 4 3/8 miles of potential trail or a 8 3/4 mile loop trail. This would require agreements with BOR and CA F&G, and trail easements from several private landowners. This trail could possibly be extended to the Greenwood Creek Planning unit. This extension would involve trail construction the following parcels.

3/8	Miles	Private Lands (9 parcels)
1 3/8	Miles	Public - BLM managed lands
2/3	Mile	Private lands to confluence of the South Fork American and Greenwood Creek. (4 private parcels)

This would provide a one-way trip of approximately 9 3/4 miles from Salmon Falls take-out to the confluence of the South Fork American and Greenwood Creek. It is assumed that this trail would terminate here rather than crossing the South Fork American where one could exit the trail via Highway 49.

If cooperative agreements with the other government agencies could be obtained, and easements procured from willing private landowners, either or both of these trails could provide non-motorized access to the entire north half or southern half of this planning unit including segments of the Pine Hill Preserve.

This Salmon Falls take-out trailhead is only eight air miles from Sacramento's metropolitan area, and once the trail and access point became known to the public, trail use could increase dramatically. The trail access from Salmon Falls would be useful to fishermen, day hikers, and recreational prospectors. Trails may even be long enough to be used by equestrians and mountain bike riders. Trailhead parking and proximity to metropolitan areas may make this area attractive to school groups. This new form of access will increase visitor use of the area, and increase the potential for wildfire ignition, vandalism, and littering. Trail segments running through the Preserve may lead to trampling of sensitive plant species. Trail easements across private lands could lead to off-trail use, which could constitute trespass. Toilet facilities at the trailhead and at the far end of the trail on the north side should be adequate for these trail users. If a trail is built on the south side of the river, a toilet at the trailhead is already available. Additional toilets on the SOUTH SIDE Trail may be needed if visitor use increases.

Completing a trail on the south of the river would present many more challenges than a trail on the north side. A trail on the south side would require trail easements from several more property owners than on the north side. The south side has 2 1/4 more miles of private lands to traverse as well as residences adjacent to potential railways. This trail would also provide no real destination, since legal access would be provided only from the Salmon Falls put-in and the logical termination point at Highway 49, near Greenwood Creek blocked by the American River, hikers would be stranded on the south side of the river on private residential land. This would not be a through trail; hikers would have to backtrack the entire track back to Salmon Falls. Use on this type of a trail would not warrant the effort or cost made in acquiring the needed easements, cost of trail construction or maintenance. A shorter trail, on the south side, between Salmon Falls and “Weber Creek” Road would probably get more use and only require one easement crossing 1/16 of a mile of private property. In order to exit the trailway one would have to cross over private land or cross the South Fork American. The potential for any of these access-related impacts is not thought to create any major impacts, either individually or cumulatively.

Action 17) Decision to retain in public ownership all planning parcels except the two ten acre parcels north of Highway 49 in the Dave Moore Planning Unit.

Impacts: The retainment of federal lands in public ownership will produce no new impacts, and will perpetuate the present management situation. The disposal of the two ten-acre parcels would pose a change from present management, and could produce potential impacts. Presently, these two parcels are isolated from neighboring public lands and are surrounded by privately owned property, with no legal public access. The parcels serve no real public purpose other than generating approximately \$2.32 each year in grazing fees, which is divided between the federal and state treasuries. Disposal of these lands could produce revenue that could be used to obtain other available lands with special values important to the American public. The two ten-acre parcels contain no special resource values. Disposal of these two parcels would put 20 acres of property onto the county tax rolls. The sale of this property would have little impact the grazing allotted, since it makes up such a small segment of the total grazing pasture. It is not anticipated that the implementation of this action will produce any significant environmental or cultural impacts.

Decisions Specific to a Single Planning Unit

Action 18) Decision to classify the southern half of the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit, known as Clark Mountain as a Visual Resource Management Class I Area.

The objective of this decision is to retain the scenic quality of the Clark Mountain parcel to standards of Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class I. VRM Class I areas are generally managed with few ecological changes and rather limited management activity. Usually, this classification is applied to special areas such as Wilderness Areas and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

This decision sidestepped the inventory and evaluation process for assigning VRM Classes. A brief inventory/evaluation was completed as part of this environmental evaluation with the

following results. The VRM management class determination is developed by giving a numeric rating to each of four different criteria. These evaluation criteria are, Scenic Quality Rating, Sensitivity Level Rating, Distance Zone Determination and Special Area Designation. The numeric values assigned to these different criteria are displayed in the following chart.

VISUAL RESOURCE RATING SYSTEM

-Scenic Quality Rating

“Scenic Quality”, (existing scenic quality) rated out with a score of 21 (19-33 points = Class A rating) placing it in the Class “A” Scenic Quality category. This was determined by using the BLM. VRM Rating Matrix, which gives numeric scores to seven different VRM rating elements.

-Sensitivity Level Rating

This parcel could be rated as an area of “High Sensitivity Levels”, due to high level of recreational use of the river.

-Distance Zone Determination

“Distance Zones” relate to the proximity of the observer to the landscape. Observers from Highway 49 would see this area as a “Middle ground” landscape, while observers on the river would see the area as a “Foreground” landscape. Since the Foreground rating is more restrictive, this area would receive this designation, which is the more protective of the two.

-Special Area Designation

This area currently has no special management designations.

-Management Class Determination

Based on the above VRM evaluation elements the area would typically be rated as a VRM Class II Area, of high scenic value.

VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CLASS ASSIGNMENT

Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Med.	Med.	Med.	Low
Special Areas	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Scenic Quality “A”	②	2	2	2	2	2	2
Scenic Quality “B”	2	3	3	3	4	4	4
Scenic Quality “C”	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
Distance Zones	FG MG	BG	SS	FG MG	BG	SS	SS

(FG-Foreground, MG-Middle ground, BG-Background, SS-Seldom seen)

As shown in the above matrix, this area would be rated as a VRM Management Class II Area. We first determined the “Scenic Quality” rating by using the VRM matrix. This gave the area a Quality “A” rating. We then reviewed the area’s “Visual Sensitivity” and gave it a “High” rating. We found that most visitors viewed the area from a “Distance Zone” of Foreground or Middle ground, meaning that they viewed the area from observation points close to the resource. Using the above chart, we first found the Visual Sensitivity – High in this case - limited our selection to the first three columns. We next found the Quality “A” rating in third row, and lastly, we found the Distance Zone column.

While exact numbers are not available, this section of the South Fork is thought to be used by well over 100,000 boaters, floaters, fisherman, hikers, gold panders and other recreationists each year. The Greenwood Creek Planning Unit is the first river area that boaters and floaters pass that is not developed with commercial recreation camps or private homes. The undeveloped area downstream from Greenwood Creek by Clark Mountain provides a dramatic change in scenery, and alters the atmosphere for river users and other recreationists such as hikers, picnickers and anglers. The BLM managed lands provide an area of a more natural environment, changing the tone of boating from a urbanized environmental setting to one more natural and wild. The remainder of the river to the take-out at Salmon Falls is far less developed, and provides for a more primitive experience. From a scenic quality standpoint, this area is of high importance and warrants special management attention..

Impacts: Regardless if this area is managed as a VRM Class I or Class II, the impacts would be similar. The three BLM.-managed parcels located in this part of the planning area receive more visitors than the other hundreds of parcels managed by the Folsom Field Office. Maintaining the scenic attributes of this area will receive top management priority. With a management objective of maintaining, and where possible, improving scenic quality, the following impacts could be anticipated: Increased River Ranger patrols, and maintenance patrols; installation of trash cans at a planned parking area to reduce litter in the Greenwood Creek area and the beach area near the toilet.

Patrols will monitor use levels to ensure overuse of sites does not generate litter, or impact scenic elements of the environment. Actions will be taken to control overuse, and protect the scenic quality of this area.

A visual impact analysis will be completed to determine actions that could be taken to mitigate existing intrusions and overuse, and to soften impacts located on adjacent private lands.

Presently, there are no future plans for any type of development on the south side of the river. Future management actions and planning decisions may require some signs to be located on this side of the river. The dredging program would require identification of mining claim boundaries. This can be accomplished in a number of ways that would have no to a very minor impact on scenery quality. The identification of BLM/private property boundaries to control inadvertent trespass would have some level of visual intrusion along the parcel’s edge. This would involve signs that are easily visible, and possibly fences. The design and installation of signs and fences

will take into consideration the high scenic values of this area, and will incorporate design features to soften potential impacts.

It is anticipated that implementation of this decision will create no impacts of any consequence to the natural landscape. Some minor aesthetic quality impacts may result from the installation of signs placed to provide for public health and safety and/or for the protection of private property rights and values.

*Action 19) Recreational Dredging Permit Program. (MC, GC, NR, and PHP Units)
Recreational Dredging Decisions. Several decisions were made addressing implementing recreational dredging opportunities. The planning units involved are Miners Cabin, Greenwood Creek, and Norton Ravine recommendations were also made for the Pine Hill Preserve.*

The use of motorized devices for the recreational collection of minerals will be authorized within these units through a formal BLM dredging permit. There will be a minimum of 200 feet between dredgers, unless agreed upon by adjacent dredgers. Dredge engines will be four-stroke engines only. Two-stroke engines will not be allowed. All dredges must have appropriate spark arresting mufflers. Dredging will only be allowed from 7 am to 5 pm starting the last weekend in May through October 15 (with one exception). The exception involves a small area in the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit; see discussion for this unit for additional details. All dredgers must have an original California Fish and Game dredging permit with them on the river when they are dredging. BLM will use Adaptive Management to address conflicts and to manage this program to minimize potential environmental impacts.

Summary of Dredging Standards Common to Applicable Units

- Dredge engines will be four-stroke engines only.
- All dredges must have spark-arresting mufflers.
- Noise levels associated with dredging will be monitored using standards adapted from El Dorado County planning regulations.
- Dredging will only be allowed from 7 am to 5 pm.
- BLM will use Adaptive Management to address conflicts, and to manage this program to minimize potential impacts.
- The length of dredging permits will not exceed 28 days.
- No gas container larger than 2½ gallons will be used near the river.
- Dredging only allowed from the last weekend in May through October 15.
- Dredgers will not place cables or anchor lines across river, or use them in a manner that could endanger other river users.
- Dredgers will not stack up rocks, or create any type of barrier or obstacle to boats or other river users.
- Portable toilets will be required in areas not adjacent to BLM provided toilet facilities.

-Miners Cabin Planning Unit-

(Refer to Appendix G, Map 2 for locations of the these three dredging areas)

Gold Dredge Use:

1. A maximum of three dredges with intake nozzles of more than 3" will be allowed at any one time. A dredging permit must be obtained from the BLM.
2. 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 compliance with stipulations by the BLM. Eight-inch dredges will be restricted to areas where water is at least 10 feet deep.
3. 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 compliance.
4. Only four-stroke engines will be used on dredges. Two-stroke engines are not allowed.
5. Spark arresting mufflers will be required on dredges to reduce noise. Noise will be monitored to determine disruptive noise levels.
6. Active dredging will occur only between the hours of 7 am to 5 pm from the last weekend in May through October 15.
7. Gold dredges with an intake nozzle three inches in diameter or less may be used on a day-use basis if the operator signs in at a BLM established registration point.
8. Dredge operators who do not comply with time periods or actions needed to reduce noise will have their permits terminated.
9. The BLM will use Adaptive Management to address conflicts between different users and private landowners.

Impacts: (See also Action 12 for impacts). The Miners Cabin area lacks simple access. Access for dredgers would require backpacked dredges be carried one mile downhill to the river and floated upstream or downstream to a desired location. Once the dredge is carried down the hill it must be carried back up the hill or floated out either upstream or downstream. Access by floating or boating a dredge into the area, ½ to 3 miles down river from Chili Bar, provides the most suitable access for larger dredges. To float out of the area is about a two to three mile float to Marshall Gold Discovery State Park. The river along this section requires a moderate amount of boating experience and quality boating equipment. Because of the difficult access to this area it is anticipated that dredging demand for this area may start out at a high level but diminish within two to three years. Action 12 discusses dredging impacts for this area.

For additional potential dredge use impact analysis refer to the following Greenwood Creek and Norton Ravine discussions.

-Greenwood Creek Planning Unit-

(Refer to Appendix G B, Map 5 for locations of these three dredging areas)

Dredge Area No. 1 Allow one dredge to operate below Greenwood Creek to the water gage, from September 15 through October 15. Dredge size would be limited to 6" or smaller on this 1900 foot stretch of river. (Assuming that the dredge would work the area between houses not directly across from them)

Dredge Area No. 2 Issue a maximum of three, 6" dredges, below the rapid near the water gage. This area is a 700-foot stretch of river, located in Section 11, immediately upstream from the Section 10 boundary.

Dredge Area No. 3 Allow up to three dredges to operate at any one time in the center of Section 10 on the unclaimed segment of the river. Dredge size would be limited to 6" or smaller on this 1400 foot stretch of river.

Impacts: Mining claims are held on over half the of the American River in the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit, and are subject to mineral development (dredging). This stretch of the river has been subject to differing levels of gold extraction since 1848. The level of gold exploration and mining in the river has fluctuated greatly over time. Dredging activities on these claims can differ greatly, dependent on the price of gold, water flows and temperature, weather, and several other factors which affect the mining claim holder. Currently, one mining claimant owns all three claims on the river and spends approximately five weeks a year actively dredging on the three claims. This exploration and development usually centers on the month of August. This five-week period of dredging is ordinarily done with the same dredge being used on all the claims. The recreational dredging proposal will add to the total number of dredging activities within this planning unit. The total number of dredges can only be estimated. There may be as many as six dredges running at one time compared to the one presently being used on the mining claims.

The BLM Folsom Field Office has been issuing recreational dredging permits for several years, and is familiar with potential impacts this use may generate. In order to determine potential impacts, the amount of dredging use must first be estimated. Several factors may affect the amount of dredging use in the Greenwood Creek area:

1. Lack of Access. To gain public access to the area one must hike in 2,300 feet to dredge area No. 1, 3600 feet from to area No. 2, and 6200 feet to area No. 3. This would be from the proposed Greenwood Creek parking area, or dredge users could park on Highway 49 and hike 3000 feet cross country to the river. Public access by boat is provided at Henningsen-Lotus County Park, located five miles upstream from areas 1 and 2, and six miles from area 3. Private boating access may be obtained closer to the dredging areas. The river along this section requires a moderate amount of boating experience and quality boating equipment.
2. Engine Use of Four-Stroke Only. Dredge use on this segment of the river would be limited to dredgers with four-stroke engines. The requirement to have four-stroke engines

will place limitations on dredgers who own the smaller dredges which commonly have two-stroke engines.

3. Dredge Engines Required to Have Spark Arresting Mufflers and Meet Noise Standards.

The requirement to have a spark-arresting muffler will limit use to owners of dredges with these items and four-stroke engines. Recreational prospectors who have dredges without these devices, or which do not meet the noise standards will not be able to use their equipment in these locations.

Planning decisions support a maximum of six dredges running at a time, and seven during the September 15 to October 15 time period. The above factors may affect the number of dredges using this planning unit. For analysis, it will be assumed that the maximum number of dredges operating at any one time would not be the maximum allowed, but rather would be in a range similar to other recreational dredging areas, more likely be around four dredges, one 6" and the other three 4" or smaller. It is presumed that dredges would be spread out in all three dredging areas. This assumption is based on recreational dredging use taking place on the Merced and South Yuba Rivers.

NOISE

At the public planning meetings, dredge noise was the most commonly discussed issue associated with this activity. For this reason, the topic received a heightened level of review.

Noise levels associated with dredging will be monitored using standards adapted from El Dorado County planning regulations. Acceptable noise levels could range from 55 decibels ("As determined for a typical worst-case hour during periods of use". EDC plan doc.) at a point 100 feet from the noise source, with maximum sound levels not exceeding 75 decibels. Dredge engines not being able to meet these standards will not be permitted within the planning area. Generally, most dredges with mufflers do not approach the county standards for noise.

Analysis assumes that the dredges used are four stroke and have the required spark arresting muffler. The level of noise depends on the location of the dredges in relationship to recreational users, proximity of dredging areas to private homes and adjacent private property, background noise sources, and size and types of dredges.

River Corridor Users: The three dredging locations will primarily be located on the northern edge of the river. Two of the areas only run to the center of the river, with the other half of the river's minerals being privately owned. Future plans are to further develop the existing trail on the north side of the river to join the primary access route into the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit. This would funnel most pedestrian and equestrian traffic past all three dredging locations. The trail segment near dredging area No. 1 sets back from the river and rarely comes within a hundred feet of the river's edge. Hikers, fishermen, and horseback riders will hear the working dredge when passing this area but will not be able to see it. Dredge sounds will be somewhat masked by river noises, boater activities, and the distance between the trail and the rivers edge. Campers in the immediate area of all three dredge areas may also be affected by early morning use of dredges.

At Dredge Area No. 2, the river trail follows the river's edge much more closely than in area No. 1. Noise of the three dredges working at this location will be quite noticeable to trail users. River noises and rapids above and below this dredge area will somewhat mask the dredge sounds to approaching and departing trail users. Trail users may also hear dredging noise from mining activities on the adjacent mining claims. There are two sites at this dredging location used by the public for camping. Dredging activity at this site will have a major affect on camp ambiance, and solitude. Dredgers working on the western edge of this area will be within 450 feet of the riverside toilet and lunch stop used by commercial and private boaters. Dependent on river flows, background noises, and sound generated by the dredges, the impact of the dredge noise levels on trail and nearby facility users is anticipated to range from minor to major, dependant on a number of factors.

At Dredging Area No. 3 the river trail is once again located close to the river's edge. Trail users are likely to travel within 100 feet of working dredges, and be exposed to sound levels potentially higher than the noise standards. If all three dredges, plus a dredge on the mining claim were to be operating in this area at the same time, noise levels would have an impact not masked by the river and other background noises. At these levels, the noise impacts to trail users, fishermen, campers, and toilet and upstream beach users could affect the quality of their recreation experience, but still be within county noise standards. Dredging activity at this site could produce cumulative noise levels that would impact other river users, dependant on size, number, location of the dredges, and the proximity of other recreational users. These impacts are difficult to quantify because of the number of variables involved.

Boaters using the river will pass close by the dredges. Noise levels will be moderate to high for a short duration, influencing boaters in differing degrees. River noise will somewhat mask the dredge noise for approaching and departing boaters. Historically, most rafters have not been greatly affected by dredging noises. In fact, the county has established a "Quiet Zone" along the river to lessen the noise disruption caused by boaters to local riverside homeowners. Generally, this disruptive noise level was associated with the commercial rafting on the river. Other river users, such as kayakers and some rafters, are seeking a more tranquil setting and recreation experience, and would have more of a unfavorable sensitivity to the noise produced by dredges or other noisy river users.

Adjacent Property Owners: At the public planning meetings, several private homeowners along the river voiced concern over potential noise generated from recreational dredges. The Greenwood Creek Planning Unit's proposed dredging areas present some special concerns because the area's boundaries only run half way across the river, and three homes are located in close proximity to dredging areas 1 and 2. Area No. 1 has two homes located across the river from its centerline boundary. Locating recreational dredges opposite one of these homes would likely precipitate potential issues with private landowners. If this is the case, adaptive management changes will be implemented to mitigate or eliminate prominent issues associated with this use. This issue could be mitigated, somewhat, if the dredge location was located in the center of the dredging area. This would place a 400-foot buffer between the dredge and the two residences. River noises would assist in masking dredge noise, somewhat, if the dredge is not located opposite one of the homes, but located away from the homes in the center of the area. If

the dredge area is not restricted to the center of this area it is likely that the operation of a dredge, even for only a 30 day period, would generate conflicts with the adjacent land owner's. Even with the restriction of the dredge area, mufflers, time restrictions, and a 30-day dredging season, this proposal may still generate noise issues to adjacent homeowners. Dredge Area No. 1 is also adjacent to the river's Quiet Zone. Dredging use on the northern boundary would not only be heard from the home on the opposite bank of the river but also from the home located upstream on the north bank, and from boaters within the Quiet Zone. Dredging noise may be masked somewhat from Highway 49 traffic, and a river rapid 500 feet upstream of the boundary.

Dredging Area No. 2 is also located across the river and 750 feet downstream of a private residence. Dependent on a dredge's location in this area, it could generate noise levels audible from the nearby residence. Noises from a dredge working in this area, is likely to be greatly masked by the river rapids located between the home and the dredging area. If three dredges were working in this area, the combined noise levels will be more pronounced, which would be more noticeable to adjacent home owners, river users and land based recreationists. The other home further up stream is unlikely to hear dredge noises at any applicable level because of a bend in the river, and river and traffic noise that will mask the dredge noises. The closest part of Dredge Area No. 3 is 3000 feet downstream from the nearest residence. Dredging noises should not be appreciably heard from this home because of the distance, and river noises masking sounds made by the dredge. The use of three dredges would likely place one of them closer to the upstream residence and could increase the likelihood of potential noise impacts on the property owner.

Noise Summary: Dredges working close to the BLM/private land boundaries could impact local solitude sought by adjacent rural homeowners. Dredging noise may also impact some boaters as they float down river. Limitations and restrictions placed on the dredgers such as mufflers, and the time of day they are authorized to work will lessen potential use impacts, but the noise level will still effect some users and home owners seeking a higher level of solitude. If all dredging permits were issued, and the dredge was being operated on the area's mining claims, the total number of dredges running could be eight. From a cumulative standpoint, the operation of this many dredges spread out on the river, will likely detract from the area's natural setting, and lessen the experience of other non-dredging public land users within this planning area.

Riparian/Riverine Impacts: Dredge permits carry numerous conditions of use that are designed to protect and minimize potential effects to the river, riverbanks and riparian areas. These conditions address such items as sanitary conditions, camping conditions, fire use, high banking, river edge and bank protection, fuel restrictions, engine fluid contamination, tree and riparian vegetation protection, and in-stream alteration. The South Fork American River has been subject to dredging for decades. Small scale dredging usually only produces short-term impacts to the riverbed and no long term adverse effects to the river or the river channel.

Dredges authorized in this area are limited to those six inches or less in diameter. Dredge permits are for only two weeks, so it is unlikely that large boulder winching and moving will be completed by these short term users. Dredging restrictions will not allow for the dredging of stream banks, bank undercutting, removing material from tree roots or undermining trees in and along the watercourse. Conditions of use will require that dredged material, stacked rocks,

boulders, logs and other river materials not be placed in positions that might deflect flows in a manner that may cause bank erosion. Dredgers will be encouraged to back fill dredging pockets, and keep from building cobble or trailing piles that protrude from the river, or which might effect river navigation or river flows. Anchor cables placed on trees will be padded in a fashion the prevents damage to trees and other vegetation. With all of these management actions in effect, and careful monitoring, it is anticipated that this use will not have any appreciable effects on the river's riparian environment, channel morphology, turbidity levels, water temperature, and sediment loading within the South Fork American River.

The suction dredging of several yards of riverbed substrate is likely to have secondary impacts to aquatic insects used as a food source by different species of fish, which would be temporary in nature. Pools or pockets, resulting from dredging, will temporarily improve river channel diversity, a condition beneficial to many fish species and aquatic organisms.

Water clarity, turbidity, and suspended sediments will be locally evident at the dredge; the degree of which is a function of the type of streambed material being run through the dredge. Usually, clarity returns to almost normal levels within a few yards of the end of the riffle box. Winter flooding will usually erases all signs of impacts to the riverbed, and restore the riverbed.

Water Quality: The size of these dredges limits the amount of material and the depth at which they can be worked. Dredgers will be required to properly dispose of non-native materials dredged from the river. This includes material dredged up such as bullets, fishing weights, mercury, and bottles and cans left by other river users. Dredge use restrictions will not allow for engine repairs or oil changes to be conducted while dredges are in the water. Dredgers will be encouraged to keep their engines clean and take appropriate actions to keep oil and fuels from spilling into waterways. Fuels and oils will be required to be stored well away from the river. There is a slight risk that a refueling spill or other type of accident does deposit some type of chemical contaminate into the river, but this risk is considered very minor. With all stipulations and dredging conditions followed, and careful monitoring, it is not anticipated that this activity will have any appreciable impact on water quality.

Manageability: Recreational dredging will be authorized by a BLM-issued Special Recreation Use Permit (SRUP). This permit requires certain conditions of use that the permittee must agree to in order to get permission to operate a recreational dredge on public lands. Stipulations and conditions of use will be based on existing dredging permits issued for the South Yuba River, and modified to meet special conditions and planning needs of the South Fork American. The program will be monitored and actions taken to reduce potential conflicts between users, avoid environmental impacts, and provide for a quality recreation experience on the South Fork.

Management issues associated with dredging in this area will likely involve avoiding noise level conflicts with other public land users and adjacent homeowners, as well as administering permit use to ensure that permit requirements are being met and that dredgers are operating within dredge area boundaries. Boundary identification will be difficult since Dredge Areas No. 1 and 2 are bounded by an imaginary line running down the center of the river. Secondary issues may involve avoiding conflicts between dredge cables and mooring lines use and boating activity, conflicts/competition over limited camping locations, and potential boating obstacles created by

dredging activities. None of these potential issues are seen as having any long-term appreciable impacts because BLM adaptive management measures will be implemented to reduce conflicts and impacts from the dredging program as they evolve. Experience gained from BLM's South Yuba and Merced River dredging programs has shown that impacts and conflicts can be minimized or eliminated by adapting different management actions in response to changing resource conditions.

Other: Presently only one dredge is operating at a time within the planning unit. This dredge is operated by the same operator on one of three mining claims. The proposed action will increase the number of dredges being used in the planning area to a maximum of eight. This will produce some cumulative impacts, which would mostly relate to noise levels, solitude and other public land users recreational experience. The proposed use will take place within the confines of the river channel, and is not anticipated to have any impacts on other natural or cultural resources to any measurable effect.

-Norton Ravine Planning Unit-

(Refer to Map 6 for locations of the these three dredging areas)

Recreational prospecting, including dredging with certain restrictions, is a legitimate activity in the Norton Ravine Planning Area. A maximum of three dredges will be allowed at any one time. A permit must be obtained from BLM.

Impacts: The Norton Ravine Planning Unit borders approximately two and one half miles of the South Fork. The public land boundary only runs to the centerline of the river with the other half being in private ownership. There is one exception where 660 feet of river way is in total public ownership. Access to this area is more restricted than Miner's Cabin. Access would be by boat, putting in at Greenwood Creek and floating a minimum of four miles to the planning unit boundary. To take out, one would boat approximately five miles further downstream. The distance from the put-in and take-out is approximately nine miles. Public foot access would a four-mile hike from the Salmon Falls take-out parking lot to the unit boundary. The option of flying in a two or three inch dredge by helicopter for day-use is highly unlikely, and will not be analyzed.

Because of it's remoteness and lack of legal access, analysis for this unit will address use by only two day-use dredgers taking place at any one time. The most likely form of access would be some form of private access with permission from private inholders on the north side of the river, or from private landowners on the south side of the river.

Access: Very limited legal access may create potential trespass situations on Equestrian Way, or across private land holdings. This lack of legal access will also limit the numbers of causal users.

Dredging Locations: With limited legal access, easily accessible locations may be filled with dredges larger than three inches in diameter who paid for a BLM dredging permit. These permit holders have a preference over day-use dredgers. This could create conflicts between users who

have hiked in only to find good sites occupied by other dredgers. Preferred dredging sites may not always be available to day-use users.

Adjacent Lands Under Private Ownership: With land boundaries aligned with the centerline of the river, dredgers with BLM permits could easily intentionally or non-intentionally remove placer deposits located on private lands. The BLM action of issuing dredging permits could create a situation that invites potential mineral trespass upon private lands. This would conflict with the plan's vision statement that states "public lands will be managed in a way that respects private property rights."

Camping Relating to Day-use Use Dredging: Because of the difficulty of boating in, or backpacking a dredge to the river, many dredgers would want to stay a few days and make the effort worthwhile. Dredgers will want to spend the night on the river to safe guard their dredge and other equipment. This would require obtaining a camping permit prior to dredging. This would affect the spontaneity of day-use. There may also be some competition between users for campsites along the river. Day-use dredgers may be competing with backpackers, boaters, and long-term permitted dredgers for campsites adjacent to the river.

Noise: It is assumed that the dredges used have four-stroke engines and the required spark-arresting muffler. Noise impacts depend on the location of the dredges, other users, and private homes in the area. Like the Miner's Cabin Unit, there are several homes adjacent to the BLM lands that could be affected by noise originating from the river. These homes are almost all located on the south side of the river off Jurgens and Luneman Roads, and Monty Mine Trail. While the use of two small dredges may not heavily impact the area's solitude, small dredges operating at the same time as the larger dredges under BLM permit, and adjacent dredges working on BLM mining claims and private lands, could, taken together, create an unacceptable impact on the area's solitude and on other river users.

Dredges working close to the BLM/private land boundaries could impact local solitude sought for by adjacent rural homeowners. Dredging noise will also impact some boaters as they float down river. Limitations and restrictions placed on the dredgers, such as spark-arresting mufflers, and the time of day they are authorized to work, will lessen potential noise impacts, but the noise level will still effect some users and home owners seeking a higher level of solitude.

Riparian/Riverine & Water Quality Impacts: These impacts are anticipated to be similar to those in Miner's Cabin and Greenwood Creek Planning Units.

Suction dredging would not exacerbate the detrimental effects of elevated temperatures on fish. Stress induced by elevated water temperature would not be increased by entrainment dislocation, habitat modification, elevated turbidity, or elevated contamination.

Manageability: Similar to Miner's Cabin, but this area is more remote, and the program would be more costly to maintain. This planning unit would require the posting of mining claim locations and private property boundaries, and additional enforcement to ensure that dredgers were not dredging placer deposits from private property. Economically, that program would be very costly to manage in relationship to the few users who would benefit from it.

Water Quality-
Visual Resources-
Noise-
Impacts to Other Users-
Related Camping and Occupation Impacts-
Health and Safety-
Potential Private Mineral Trespass-
Wildfire Ignition-

-Pine Hill Preserve-

The miner's Planning Group recommendations to the Pine Hill Preserve planning team are to allow up to two dredges in this planning unit, regulated and managed similar to dredging use within the Miner's Cabin Planning Unit. Dredging opportunities are limited to areas of section 30 not inundated by Folsom Lake. Section 32 has several mining claims, and is not available for recreational dredging. The recommendation will be forwarded to the planning group, and will be analyzed in the development of the Pine Hill Management Plan.

Future Facility Developments (MC, PC, DM, GC, and NR Units)

The proposed action also contains several decisions/actions relating to the future construction of visitor facilities to support visitor use and to protect public resources. These decisions will be addressed by planning unit. This evaluation will address potential impacts of each decision. Specific evaluation of impacts will be addressed in site-specific project environmental evaluations.

-Parcel C Planning Unit-

Action 20) The decision is for the BLM to work with an interested party on the evaluation of commercial tent site construction for commercial use.

The adjacent landowner wishes to construct a small number of tent pads close to his commercial campground boundary. These sites would be occasionally used as part of the commercial campground to provide alternative tent sites to those available on private property during peak visitor periods.

Impacts: The tent sites would be located a short distance from the river. Construction is unlikely to impact any sensitive cultural values because the project area is located in a flood plain that was heavily mined first during the Gold Rush, and several times in later years. Dependent on the location and use of these sites, they could present some visual impacts. The project area is directly across the river from a county park – bright colored tents could impact visual quality as seen from the park and by passing boaters. The establishment of the tent sites may displace casual users from camping on the public parcel. The commercial users of the sites will be paying the commercial operator for use of his facilities. Toilets and trash disposal facilities are located on the private parcel, and will be used by these campers. It is not anticipated that this use

will create any major health or water quality problems, but increased use of the site could increase litter and other impacts such as trail proliferation and vegetation damage. Constructing these pads to meet safety standards would require major modification of the existing environment. Awarding this use to a single commercial interest may place other adjacent commercial campground owners at somewhat of a business disadvantage. Conflicts between casual campers who want to use these sites, and paying guests of the campground may also arise. As part of the project consideration, a specific EA will be completed to address potential impacts associated with construction of the pads.

-Miner's Cabin Planning Unit-

Action 21) Maintain Wilkinson Road (ditch maintenance road, Coloma Ditch Road) as an emergency access road and public access trail.

This would provide an administrative access road that would be used by different agencies for law enforcement, fire suppression, and for search and rescue access. If the Lotus Ditch is ever restored, this road would also provide access for its maintenance.

Impacts: The existing road would be maintained for vehicle use. It is presently overgrown, and not passable by vehicles. Surface disturbances would be limited to existing roadbed for the most part. Opening this road would provide access for emergency and law enforcement vehicles to provide speedier response to emergency situations along this segment of the river, thus improving visitor safety. Since use of the road would be limited to administrative vehicles, it is unlikely to have any measurable impacts from vehicle use. Maintenance of the road will create some minor visual impacts. The new trail, with the associated trailhead, is likely to increase public day use of this area over time. The trail will provide a legal means for the public to access the river for fishing, hunting, hiking, gold panning and dredging, and it will provide easier access for education groups that use this area. With this increased use, it is anticipated that there would be potential for slight increases in littering, and possibly vandalism. The improved access and increased visitor use is not anticipated to create any major impacts in the foreseeable future.

Action 22) If feasible, the BLM shall build a hiking trail on the Coloma/Lotus Ditch.

A trail is not now feasible because of private property rights to the ditch. In the future, if rights to the ditch are abandoned or public rights to construct the trail are granted by the ditch owners, a feasibility study would be completed in more detail.

Impacts: Converting or building a trail over the present alignment of the ditch will present some formidable engineering challenges and public safety concerns. A trail running east and west of the ditch road would greatly improve public access to the south side of this planning unit. It could, in the future, tie in with trail proposals from Chili Bar. This would have the potential to increase public use and the impacts associated with increased use. A more in-depth evaluation will be completed if this proposal is deemed feasible.

Action 23) BLM will designate six camping sites along the river.

Camping in the Miner's Cabin Planning Unit will be restricted to six campsites located along the river. Camping would be by permit only. The thought was to have these sites located in fire-safe areas close enough to the river so that they could be used by the general public and recreational dredgers.

Impacts: The BLM is to designate six camping sites along the river that would provide quality camping experiences. They will be located to minimize wildfire hazards from campfires, and to minimize visual impacts from other river users. The campsites will be close enough to the river to be used by dredgers. Sites would contain the necessary signs, be cleared of vegetation, and, if needed, to create a fire safe site. Other improvements will be installed as needed to minimize visual impacts and provide for public health and safety. Sites are to be of a rustic nature, developed only enough to meet the objectives of this planning unit. Camping use in the Miner's Cabin Unit is currently minimal. Infrequent camping takes place from occasional boaters. The construction, or designation of these sites is not anticipated, in itself, to increase camping use of this area. Future construction of trails and the issuance of dredging permits would likely increase camping use. Since camping is by permit only, use numbers and associated impacts can easily be monitored and adjusted to control impacts.

Action 24) BLM will provide trailhead parking at Chili Bar (if possible), and in the Red Shack area where Wilkinson Road terminates at Highway 49.

This trailhead would support trail users if legal public access is acquired from Chili Bar to Miner's Cabin Planning Unit.

Impacts: After legal access is acquired, and trails are constructed, a trailhead would be developed to support trail use. The design of the trailhead would be dependent on the amount and type of use. Legal public access from Chili Bar to the planning unit is anticipated to increase seasonal use of the planning unit slightly. A trailhead would initially be needed to provide only a few parking spaces with informational signs.

If a trailhead is built on Highway 193 at the South Fork Bridge (Chili Bar Bridge), it may impact private businesses at Chili Bar. Presently, the private land owner on the north side of the river runs a recreation business providing needed services to the public using this part of the river, primarily to boaters. If the BLM were to construct public facilities at this location, it would directly affect current use on private lands. If the BLM trailhead was a non-fee area, it would be overwhelmed by boaters who now are charged a fee to park on the private lands. This would, of course, take customers away from the private businesses.

Since future trail use is anticipated to be minor, it could be absorbed by the existing private facilities through some sort of agreement, if needed. With existing private facilities being used, there would be no "business" competition, and this use may even benefit private enterprise at Chili Bar. Information signing would then be installed at the start of the trail instead of at a trailhead parking area.

Action 25) 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. Sanitary facilities will also be placed in the Red Shack area, the Old Ditch Trail, and the Maya Rapids area.

This decision calls for sanitary facilities (toilets) to be installed to support public use at the following locations in the planning unit:

1. Highway 49 and the beginning of the ditch maintenance road (Red Shack area).
2. At the end of the ditch maintenance road and the river.
3. Maya Rapids, on the north side of the river.
4. At overnight sites (six campsites). Campers will supply their own self-contained toilets.

This could result in as many as three new toilets. There is an existing composting toilet located on the north side of the river.

Impacts: Direct impacts would be dependent on the number, type and location of the toilets. Usually, visitor studies and project placement field studies are completed prior to making a commitment to install and maintain facilities such as toilets. Information concerning use numbers and visitor activity is needed before impacts can be readily addressed. The exact location of the proposed toilets is also needed for analysis. Outdoor toilets always have the potential for some form of visual impact, and would have to be placed at locations that would mitigate this type of impact. Also, design features could soften visual impacts. It is assumed that potential impacts associated with a toilet would be addressed in detail in a project planning phase. Consideration of potential impacts to water quality would be taken into consideration in deciding which type of toilet to install and at what location.

Project Need: This area is generally going to be managed as a primitive or semi-primitive area, which usually means a minimum of facilities and managerial manipulation of the natural setting. Before facilities such as toilets are installed, there must first be a clear, documented need for it. If such a need is identified, it must then compete with other similar needs for funding. Generally speaking, the present level of use and environmental impacts generated from this use do not warrant toilet installation in this area as a high priority.

(1) Highway 49 and the beginning of the ditch maintenance road: User numbers at this site probably do not support the installation and maintenance of a toilet. With future development of a trailhead, and an off-highway parking area, future use may increase to a point where a toilet may become economically feasible and necessary. This is the only legal access point into the planning unit, and almost all foot traffic into the area comes from this location. The trailhead would likely increase use and public knowledge of the area. A trailhead with bus parking could increase educational field trips. A toilet is almost always needed to support this type of use. Since managing this area for educational purposes is a major goal for this unit, a toilet at the trailhead will likely be necessary in the future.

(2) At the end of the ditch maintenance road and the river: This location is at the end of the only public legal foot access trail into the planning unit. This site will probably be visited by all users accessing the river from Highway 49 and the proposed trailhead. Most school groups are very unlikely to reach this point, and are more likely to be visiting the Wilkinson Forest area near the top of the canyon. Presently, use at this site does not warrant the installation or maintenance of a toilet. Future construction of a trailhead, improvement of the ditch road/trail, and the issuance of dredging permits is likely to increase use. It is difficult, without studies, to determine if future developments will generate the higher use levels that would require a toilet.

(3) Maya Rapids --on the north side of the river: Use figures and studies are not available to support installation of a toilet on the north side of the river in the vicinity of Maya Rapids. Future improvements, such as a trailhead and improved trail, would have no impact (increase) to river use at this location. Topography of the area does not present any locations for a permanent toilet located out of the flood zone. At best, a portable self-contained toilet could be flown in seasonally and maintained by raft if any future use would ever warrant installation.

(4) Facilities for overnight users: Currently, there is very little camping activity within the planning unit. Closing the area to camping without a permit, which requires a fee and preplanning, will likely reduce use, rather than lead to an increase in camping. Permits for dredging will be issued in the future, which will increase overnight use, but this still will not generate enough use to justify remote toilet facilities. The six designated camping sites will be spread out to avoid user conflicts, and minimize site impacts. A single toilet would not serve campsites that are great distances apart. Installing and maintaining toilets at each primitive campsite would not be a prudent expenditure of limited funding, or use of maintenance personnel. Campers will be required to supply their own self-contained toilets to be used in the designated campsites.

Existing use numbers, in this planning unit, do not support development of all these facilities, or the expenditure of funds and personnel for needed maintenance.

Action 26) The BLM shall construct a trail from Highway 49 in the vicinity of the Red Shack, down the Old Ditch Road to the river.

Essentially, this would mean maintaining an abandoned roadbed as a foot trail. The roadbed is presently being used by hikers in its present condition. This route provides the only legal public foot access to this planning unit.

Impacts

The roadway would be restored for the passage of emergency and patrol vehicles. This action, in itself, would sustain the roadway as a viable trail. Improving the trail would not lead to any direct impacts such as increased use. It will provide a safer trail, and allow for ease of access for groups such as school classes. Since the roadway would be improved for administrative vehicle access, no additional cost or environmental impacts would be associated directly with using the roadway for a trail.

Action 27) BLM will construct information signing and day dredging use permit registration points.

Informational signs would identify planning unit boundaries, trails, toilets, special rules, maps, and provide area interpretation. A self-regulating recreational dredging program will require permit registration points.

Impacts: Signs will be placed, where needed, to identify BLM/private land boundaries to avoid inadvertent public trespass on private lands. Signs will also identify toilet locations, known hazards, trails, and provide area interpretation. Signs will be designed to minimize impacts, but will still generate some minor visual affects. Signs will assist in providing for the health and welfare of the public, interpretation, and the protection of sensitive resources. Some minor cost will be associated with the installation and maintenance of signs. Signs are anticipated to enhance visitor experiences, and aid school groups and the general public in better understanding some of the special features of the Wilkinson Forest.

Dredging program “registration points” will be needed for dredgers to sign-in before beginning their activity. A minimum of five registration stations will be needed, possibly more. These would be located somewhere near both the upstream and downstream planning unit boundaries, near the base of the ditch maintenance road, and one somewhere in the middle of Section 27. All of these would have to be located on both sides of the river where they could be accessed by boat or foot. These registration points would create some minor visual impacts since they will need to be made highly visible to the public who are either hiking or floating down the river. Based on experience from maintaining other sign-in trailheads or boating registration points, these will need a high level of maintenance due to use, vandalism, and weather-related damage. It is anticipated that information from these sites will be collected on a regular basis, and the forms and writing implements be checked and restocked at least once a week during the dredging season. This would require one person to spend one day hiking in to all sites, or two people boating for half a day, to all sites once a week. Some minor cost would be incurred with installing the registration sites, and major cost incurred will be in maintaining and monitoring these sites.

-Dave Moore Planning Unit-

Action 28) 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. Also, BLM will make the facilities at Dave Moore available to the public on a year-around basis.

Note: All areas within the Dave Moore Planning Unit, identified for potential development, are currently subject to mining claims. Agreements and understandings with the claimants must be completed before construction is started to ensure the claimants mining rights are not affected, and that the improvements will not be impacted by future mining activities.

The completion of the Dave Moore Trail loop had already been planned, and construction efforts begun, but experienced major setbacks from the 1997 and 1998 ruinous flood events. The

developed trail currently runs from the Dave Moore Nature Area parking area approximately 2,100 feet to a washed out beach area located on private property. From this point, an unmaintained footpath follows old trails and washed-out roads back to the Dave Moore amphitheater, then to the parking lot to form a loop of approximately 5,000 feet. This existing loop path does not meet any trail standards, and cannot be traversed by wheelchairs. It lacks clearance of poison oak, and is not really safe for use by school groups. Trail use at Dave Moore is limited. Motorized and non-motorized vehicles (except wheelchairs, handicapped scooters, etc.), horses, and bicycles are not allowed on the trails.

Making the area available to the public on a year around basis will require hardening of the entrance road, parking lot, trail system, and picnic and public areas as needed. Surface hardening projects will take into consideration that this is a nature area where developments must blend into the surrounding environment as much as possible.

Impacts: Presently, some users are able to complete the loop by following washed out trails and old mining roads. These trails afford access only to those who are stout of heart and firm of limp. The present trail provides minimum universal access to a point close to the river, but does not provide river access for fishing, sight seeing, or water play. A hardened boardwalk, ramp, or trail would allow people to get closer to the river and a longer, more scenic trip through the nature area. Completion of a universal barrier-free loop trail would involve about 3,200 feet of new trail construction, and an upgrade of about 400 feet of the existing trail. This would bring the entire trail length of the Dave Moore Trail to about a mile. Since the area where the trail would be built was subjected to extensive mining activity in the past, trail construction is not anticipated to produce any long-term environmental impacts or disturb any cultural resources. This new trail would require several pull out rest areas along grades where trail users could rest, take in scenic vistas, and view natural history interpretation signs and displays. This trail would also present opportunities to acquaint the public of the area's rich Gold Rush and mining history.

A completed trail loop could increase use. A new trail loop of a mile may, with added interpretation and better beach access, appeal more to school and education groups, and handicapped users. This use is not anticipated to be of an extent that would create any major impacts to the natural environment. Fiscal impacts relate to the construction and maintenance of the trail. In the past, much of the trail work was completed and maintained by volunteers and county convict work crews at a minimum cost. This larger project would need to be funded, at least in part, through BLM's normal budget process or through a grant of some kind. This development is not seen as competing or negatively impacting, in any way, adjacent commercial recreation oriented businesses.

Action 29) BLM shall study the feasibility of providing a toilet and portable boardwalk at the beach area for the use by disabled visitors.

The site proposed for these two projects is in private ownership. In order for these two projects to be constructed, the property would need to be acquired from a willing landowner, or rights secured through some type of lease, easement, or other agreement.

Impacts:

Toilet This decision calls for a new toilet to be located in the beach area 2,000 feet down trail from the Dave Moore parking area toilet. This toilet would need to be located above the flood plain, and would be required to meet *American with Disabilities Act (ADA)* standards. This site lacks vehicle access, which means a composting toilet would be the most practical design for this site. These toilets require a working area under the toilet unit to maintain the composting unit. The vault would need to be occasionally emptied. This would require the toilet being located on elevated ground, or on a platform, with all components located above the high water line. Taking this into consideration, the toilet cannot be located close to the beach area, but rather back up the trail toward the parking area. A structure of this type would present a major visual intrusion in a natural part of the Dave Moore Nature Area. Impacts could be reduced by painting the structure, and employing a design that blends in with the surroundings. Vegetation can be used to screen the structure as long as it does not shade the standpipe ventilation system or solar cells needed for the circulation fans. Construction cost of composting toilets having recently been running at about \$40,000, plus or minus, per unit. They are also of a design with requires more cleaning and operational maintenance than standard vault toilets. The other vault toilet at Dave Moore, located at the parking area, only receives light use and needs to be pumped at a rate of once every two to three years. At present use levels, an additional composting toilet is not warranted.

If, in the future, access rights are obtained from adjacent landowners, and an administrative road built to the beach area, an inexpensive, portable type toilet with surface tanks could be placed closer to the beach. The lower cost of one of these units, and the lower maintenance needs, may make this type of unit more practical to support special need visitors such as school and scouting groups, as well as visitors in wheelchairs.

Portable Boardwalk:

This decision involves the seasonal installation of some sort of “boardwalk” to provide access to the beach area for wheel chairs. The area identified is located on privately held property and a easement would need to be acquired before any facilities are installed. Dave Moore N.A. may have other areas where this boardwalk or access ramp could be located upstream from the identified beach area.

A ramp or boardwalk to the river could present some minor visual impacts as seen from the trail or by passing boaters. These and other impacts from this small structure are not anticipated to create any impacts of any consequence. A site specific EA would be completed before the project is constructed.

EA Note: BLM has already contemplated both of these management actions and may look at other possible locations for these facilities at Dave Moore. In the interim, the BLM will pursue other opportunities to construct these types of facilities at Dave Moore. Completion of the Dave Moore loop trail will present some other locations and additional possibilities for these types of proposed facilities.

Action 30) BLM shall harden the Dave Moore Trail surface for better year-round accessibility. Since the vision statement for this area include year-around use, a decision was

made to harden the parking area, it will be assumed that the entrance road will also be upgraded to all weather use.

The hardening of the Dave Moore Trail surface has already been planned, but was hampered by a lack of funding, major floods, and a wish to complete the entire loop trail before finishing the trail surface. Work would likely be completed by using some type of hardening agent rather than surfacing the trail with asphalt or concrete. Some of the materials that could be used include the following trade names: "Road Oyl" (pine resin modified emulsion - stabilizer), "Klingstone 40" (hybrid polyurethane stabilizer - solidifies), "Stabilizer" (ground seed hull, soil additive powder), "Base Seal", Top Shield", Descobond 500", "B. C. Stabilizer" and many others. The choice of hardening agent will depend on how environmentally friendly the material is, and how well it works on decomposed granite.

The parking area and entrance road can easily be upgraded by the application of gravels, suitable for wheelchair use.

Impacts: Potential impacts would relate to the type of trail surfacing material used, and the impact trail surfacing/hardening has on users. Ideally, the surface hardening material will reflect the special needs of trail users. This trail is used by school groups doing nature studies in a nature area, so the visual impact of the surface is important. Also, the trail is designed to be used by a wide range of public users including those who may be physically challenged. If fine aggregates or soil hardeners are used, there should be, at the most, very minor visual impacts. If asphalt, concrete, or other such materials are used, then more moderate short term, as well as long term impacts, would be anticipated. Generally, these visual impacts will become muted over time as surface materials are weathered. The hardening of the trail surface is anticipated to increase use slightly, and will likely create some short-term visual impacts. Because the use of environmentally friendly hardeners are planned, little or no environmental impacts are anticipated. Hardened trail surfaces will also cut down on erosion, and reduce loose material on the trail surface which could produce a slippery condition.

The success and longevity of these products differs from location to location. These products may not hold up over long periods of time, and re-treatment or repairs may be time consuming and costly. Other options such as the use of these special products in combination with pigmented and textured concrete may be more efficient over the long run.

Applying gravel of a suitable grade for wheelchair travel on the existing entrance road and parking lot is not anticipated to have any appreciable environmental impacts. Hardening this surface will assist those in wheelchairs to traverse the area and utilize the area year-around.

Action 31) The amphitheater, used by educational groups, will be relocated and rebuilt in a new location.

The amphitheater at the Dave Moore Nature Area was used as a staging area and outdoor classroom by schools, scouts, and other groups. It was located east of the parking lot where it had little privacy from other Dave Moore users, and was close to Highway 49 road noise. The

old amphitheater was dismantled due to its condition, and potential for fires to escape from the fire ring located in the center of the amphitheater.

Impacts: Impacts are associated with reconstructing and possibly moving the location of the old amphitheater. The new facility should be large enough, at a minimum, to accommodate a large school class with teachers, aides, and parents. The site should be oriented north so those seated are not facing into the sun. The area will be cleared of cover for snakes and spiders, and seating will be elevated so as not present hiding places for rattlesnakes. It will have a demonstration table, and a bulletin board for displays. Grasses and vegetation will be maintained to provide a safety zone around the site. The safety zone will be fire safe, devoid of poison oak, and without cover for snakes.

Renovation, or new construction, of the amphitheater will present some short-term visual and surface impacts, which will be softened by vegetative regrowth in one or two years. The old, and possible new location will be on areas mined in the recent past. Surface disturbance would likely include minor leveling, and minor brush and grass clearing. This impact would be dependent upon the site's location. Facility improvements would be designed and placed to minimize visual impacts to the rest of the Dave Moore Nature Area. Rebuilding a more functional amphitheater would benefit groups that use the site, and may even increase use slightly. Since use is so slight now, and the fact that most educational use takes place on the trails, increased use is not anticipated to lead to any measurable increase in impacts to the natural environment.

-Greenwood Creek-

Action 32) It is a high priority to provide an access road, parking lots, a trailhead parking area, and toilet facility on public land near Greenwood Creek, consistent with the protection of natural and cultural values. Use of these facilities would be subject to fees.

The above actions are all part of one project and will be addressed as such. This area is very popular among river users because of its location, several river run options, and public access. The present limited parking situation on the highway is unsafe during peak river use periods. The Proposed Action would involve the construction of a 42-vehicle parking area in the vicinity of Greenwood Creek, and an 100-vehicle parking area off of Highway 49 in the center of Section 10, across from the vineyard. Both parking areas would be fee areas, with the Greenwood Creek parking area being limited to day use only. This parking area will be gated, and only open during daylight hours. Some rough fieldwork has been completed to determine the feasibility of the project. Potential impacts from this proposed project are based on this field review.

Impacts: The entire project will be composed of two major phases. Phase one would be construction of a 550-foot access road to a 42-unit parking lot and construction of a larger parking area adjacent to Highway 49 across from the vineyards. The larger parking area will accommodate approximately 80 to 100 vehicles with spaces for horse trailers and other large vehicles (with trailers). Large vehicles or vehicles with trailers would not be allowed in the smaller Greenwood Creek parking area. Phase two would involve the construction of two unisex toilet units, one within the smaller parking lot with an identical unit constructed in the larger parking area near the vineyard. Ideally, funding would be available to complete both parts at the

same time. In addition to the major improvements; vehicle barriers, fences, signs, a short foot trail between parking areas, and trash cans will be installed.

Construction of the parking areas with informational and directional signs will increase seasonal boating and summer recreational activity use of this area from its present use level. Some kayak put-in use from the nearby county park is anticipated to shift to public lands at Greenwood Creek. There will also be an increase of day use walkers, joggers, and hikers. Some of this use may be from local citizens now using Dave Moore for the same purposes. Because of vehicle owner isolation from the parking areas, there is a greater potential for parked vehicles being the subject of break-ins and vandalism.

Increased use will generate some additional noise and traffic impacts to adjacent landowners and public land users. Noise generated at the parking area will be somewhat masked by Highway 49 traffic noise, and water sounds from the river. Increased noise levels at the confluence beach area will likely increase. Since the Greenwood Creek parking facilities will be designated day use only, elevated noise levels should be limited to daylight hours. Dangerous congestion caused by parked vehicles on Highway 49 will be eliminated with no highway shoulder parking, and the availability of 42 parking spots in the new parking area.

The new entrance area, road, and parking area will produce minor to moderate impacts on the area's scenic quality as seen from Highway 49. Native species vegetative screens will be planted around the perimeter of the parking area and roadway to soften visual impacts and noise levels.

Increases in general noise and litter normally associated with an increase in public use is anticipated. The placement of trashcans in the parking area, and at the confluence of the South Fork and Greenwood Creek is likely to reduce present levels of litter at the river beach areas and along the highway. Summer use numbers now occur at levels that would make a toilet at this location practical. Anticipated higher use levels would require a public toilet, convenient to the parking area and river access point, to protect public health and safety.

With parking curtailed on the Highway 49, and 42 parking sites available at the Greenwood Creek parking area and the larger vineyard parking area, the current highway hazard would be greatly reduced.

From the Greenwood Creek parking area, a trail will be constructed to the beach area of the South Fork. From there, it will proceed downriver and then head north cross country to the vineyard parking area, thus creating a loop type trail. Future trails may also be developed to expand access, and hiking and riding opportunities.

The Greenwood Creek Trail will be fenced in order to channel visitors directly to the river. Visitors are now taking several routes to the river, impacting riparian areas along Greenwood Creek, causing incidental impacts to sensitive cultural resources, and occasionally trespassing on adjacent private property. Fencing a direct route to the river will reduce visitor access impacts now taking place, and assist in managing anticipated increases in future use.

Action 33) An educational kiosk, with an emphasis on boater safety, will be installed.

This action would involve the construction and maintenance of an information kiosk near the put-in at Greenwood Creek and the South Fork, or the Greenwood Creek parking area. Information would be geared toward boater safety, but would also have information on trails and other public land opportunities. The structure would be designed to fit in with the local surroundings. This structure is not anticipated to create any impacts of consequence except for minor visual impacts which would relate to the location where the structure would be placed.

Action 34) Multiple use trails will be constructed as appropriate.

The public requested that a trail system be completed to provide for ease of movement, and to protect sensitive resource values. Planning meeting discussions included an access trail from the parking area to the river, then downstream parallel with the river to the BLM riverside toilet and camping area. It would then head north to Highway 49 (near Hastings Creek), and, at some point, return to the parking area by an inland route. The end result would be a loop trail of approximately 2½ miles with one terminus at the proposed Greenwood Creek parking lot and the other at the proposed parking area across from the vineyard. Presently, there are some rough trails leading from Highway 49 to the river and downstream. Limited hiking use is also made of the old road across from the vineyard, which leads, to Hastings Creek and then to the South Fork. There was also some planning group discussion on continuing the trail downstream to other public lands in the future, once public access was obtained. These trails are to be utilized by non-motorized modes of travel only. (With motorized wheelchair/scooter exceptions)

Impacts: Site-specific trail construction impacts would be addressed under a project EA.

Generally, development of a trail system, or loop trail, as in this case, would probably lead to an increase in use, especially in areas where no trails now exist. A trail system would aid in dispersing river users, and increase use of the BLM toilet located downstream of Greenwood Creek. Most non-boaters visiting this unit will want to access the river. A developed trail system could direct hikers away from sensitive resources, such as cultural sites and riverine/riparian areas, which are now being impacted by visitors trying to get to the river. A trail along the river would provide easier access for fisherman, gold panners, dredgers, and other river users. Based on the amount of hiking, jogging, running and nature study taking place on the nearby Dave Moore trail, it is likely that a longer trail system with more river access would also be very popular with the local community. A trail along the river will provide access to areas previously used by mostly by boaters and anglers, which could create local crowding at beaches and possibly displacement of present users. This new trail may even displace some use now taking place at Dave Moore.

Dispersed use, coupled with an increase in use of developed trails, could lead to an increase in trailside litter. The trail would add an additional 2 ½ miles to the trail maintenance program. A loop trail could aid in patrolling and in providing maintenance at the downstream toilet and camping area.

A portion of the proposed trail along the river would be located in an area, which is under a mining claim. Agreements and understandings with the claimant must be completed before trail

construction is begun to ensure the claimant's mining rights are not affected, and that future mining would not impact the trail.

Planning Decisions Relating to Standard Operating Procedures, Bureau Policy & Law

Four planning decisions address actions relating to activities which are already addressed by law or BLM policy.

Action 35) Cultural sites will be protected. (MC, GC, and NR Units)

BLM is required by law to protect cultural and historic resources found on the public lands. This decision is already being implemented, and will not generate new actions or changes in resource conditions or generate any impacts to the natural or social environment. Other actions relating to this plan may affect cultural resources. These potential impacts will be addressed under site-specific Environmental Assessments normally conducted for such projects as building trails, or when other surface disturbing activities are planned.

Action 36) Allow recreational mining activities (gold panning, sluicing) to continue. (MC, PC, GC and NR Units)

This decision essentially allows for an activity considered by BLM policy as unregulated "causal use" to continue. Recreational gold panning and sluicing are generally low-impact activities and are only regulated in special situations. Allowing this use to continue would generate no new impacts. The lands would continue to be managed in the same manner as it is now. No additional improvements, trails, or facilities would be constructed for this use, unless needed to directly protect the health and safety of the public. The Planning Group recommended that sluice boxes not exceed six feet in length. Specifying the length of sluice boxes to this standard length would limit users wanting to use larger, longer sluice boxes. It is not anticipated that this decision would generate any environmental impacts or place any undue restriction on the recreating public,

Action 37) To place no restriction or conditions on camping use. (PC and GC Units)

This decision also allows for an activity considered by BLM policy as unregulated "causal use" to continue. Camping is generally considered a non-impacting activity, and is regulated only in special situations. Camping use is now taking place in the river's flood plain and on sand bars with minimum impacts. Allowing this use to continue would generate no new anticipated environmental impacts in these two units. When vehicle access becomes available to the Greenwood Creek Unit, this activity will be monitored to determine if it results in increasing use and new impacts.

Action 38) Non-restricted use of camping, warming, and cooking fires. (Parcel "C")

Camp type fires are commonly associated with backcountry camping on BLM-managed lands. This activity is considered by BLM policy as regulated "causal use," meaning that the use, like camping, is casual in nature but is regulated somewhat. Regulations require users to obtain a

California Campfire Permit, and to obey all fire regulations, including seasonal Fire Stage alerts. Camping, with fires, has been taking place on Parcel "C" safely for decades. This decision will not alter this use, generate any new impacts, or change any use presently taking place. No impacts are anticipated.

IV ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS CONT.

No Action Alternative

Under this alternative the BLM lands in the South Fork Planning Area, would continue to be managed under the Sierra Planning Area Management Framework Plan (MFP), as Amended in 1988. This plan provides little to no specific activity level guidance, and does not take into consideration the newly acquired lands, or provide guidance for managing the Pine Hill Preserve.

Present levels of management would continue, no new developments would be provided or allowed, and access would remain at current levels and conditions. Authorized uses (permits, leases, rights-of-ways, etc.) would continue at present levels. Bureau programs such as noxious weed control, river recreation patrols, law enforcement, and general land management activities would continue. Public domain lands would remain open to mining claim location and patenting under the mining laws. Site-specific actions would be limited to maintaining the area's natural condition, providing for minimum public health and safety, and protecting sensitive resources. Present uses would continue at the same level and degree as now taking place. Potential impacts associated with this alternative will be discussed separately by planning unit.

-Miners Cabin Planning Unit-

Under this alternative, these lands would continue to be managed in the same manner as now. No additional improvements, trails, or facilities would be constructed, unless needed to directly protect the health and safety of the public. No new programs, such as recreational dredging, would be introduced.

Parking along Highway 49, associated with access to the planning unit from the Red Shack area, is anticipated to continue to increase as public knowledge of this newly acquired public parcel increases. Highway shoulder parking may present future safety concerns if numbers increase considerably. The off-highway parking lot is not anticipated to be constructed. Target shooting would continue.

No additional trail access would be pursued into this planning unit, leaving only access by boat, and the one point where the Wilkinson parcel borders the Highway 49, near Red Shack.

The two public domain segments of this unit, would not be withdrawn from mineral entry. This would leave the area open to mining claim location, and, theoretically, patenting under the mining laws.

The entire planning unit would remain open to leasing for livestock grazing and its associated impacts.

Over time, the lack of facilities and improvements may lead to impacts from public use. A lack of off-highway parking, toilet facilities and trash removal could lead to an accumulation of human waste, trash, and other impacts which could effect water quality, public health and safety, natural and cultural features, and generate visual impacts as well.

-Parcel C/ Ponderosa Parcel/ Dave Moore Nature Area-

The entire planning unit would remain open to leasing for livestock grazing. Most of this planning unit is composed of small, heavily used public parcels, where livestock grazing would conflict with public use now taking place. Presently, three small segments are being leased, and would continue to be leased under all planning alternatives.

All five public domain segment of this unit would not be withdrawn from mineral entry. This would leave the area open to additional mining claim location, and theoretically, patenting under the mining laws.

Four of the five parcels would remain open to target shooting. The Ponderosa Parcel would be left open to target shooting.

Parcel C

This intensely -used area across the river from a county park would not be closed to hunting and target shooting. The use of firearms could present a danger to adjacent homeowners, park users, and public land visitors.

BLM would not review the construction proposal of tent sites on this parcel by adjacent land owner.

Ponderosa Parcel

This area would be left open to target shooting. The area would remained fenced with no vehicle access for health and safety reasons, to allow the area to recover from past uses. Other plans for restoration and future opening for public use would not take place under this alternative.

Dave Moore Nature Area

Mineral entry and grazing have previously been discussed.

Since Dave Moore has already been subject to planning ,certain activities would continue as provided for. These include continuation of the trail into a loop system; rebuilding the amphitheater, trail hardening, noxious weed control, acquisition of easements in the beach area, and facility maintenance.

This intensely used area would not be closed to hunting and target shooting. The use of firearms could present a danger to adjacent homeowners as well as public land visitors. Under this alternative, the entrance road and parking lot would not be upgraded to an all-weather surface,

which would allow vehicle access during the winter. A toilet and portable boardwalk would not be installed at the beach area. Handicapped wheelchair access would not be provided to the beach area.

-Greenwood Creek Planning Unit-

Under this alternative, these lands would continue to be managed in the same manner as now. No additional improvements, trails, or facilities would be constructed, unless needed to directly protect the health and safety of the public. No new programs, such as recreational dredging, cultural interpretation, or educational support programs would be introduced.

Since the Highway 49 shoulder parking is currently presenting safety problems, it would in all likelihood need to be resolved in some manner, either through closing the highway shoulder to parking, or by building a minimal off-highway parking area. This would address the problem in a minimal manner, providing only a short term solution.

The developed parking area, trails, restroom, and other facilities identified in the Proposed Action would not be constructed. The rapid growth in use of this area will produce impacts, over time, that could be, but not mitigated with delineated trails, restroom facilities, trash cans, and signs, all of which would be constructed under the Proposed Action. Under this alternative, impacts to cultural and natural resources will continue to increase without management measures taken to address increasing use of the area.

The two public domain segments of this unit would not be withdrawn from mineral entry. This would leave the area open to mining claim location, and, theoretically, patenting under the mining laws.

The entire planning unit would remain open to leasing for livestock grazing and associated impacts.

-Norton Ravine Planning Unit-

Under this alternative, lands within the Norton Ravine Planning Unit would continue to be managed in the same manner as they are now. No additional improvements, trails, or facilities would be constructed, unless needed to directly protect the health and safety of the public. No new programs, such as recreational dredging, would be introduced. There would be no effort to seek addition public access to this parcel. Public access would remain limited to boaters and adjacent landowners.

The two public domain segments of this unit would not be withdrawn from mineral entry. This would leave the area open to mining claim location, and, theoretically, patenting under the mining laws.

The entire planning unit would remain to be open to leasing for livestock grazing and associated impacts.

-Pine Hill Preserve-

Under this alternative management of the Preserve would continue as it is now being managed. Planning issues and concerns identified by the public, and their management recommendations, would not be forwarded to the Preserve planning committee. An interagency Pine Hill Preserve Management Plan is being developed by that committee.

Specific impacts to listed and sensitive plants would still be addressed and managed for as required by law. Actions relating to additional access (legal public access), road improvement, camping areas, shooting closures, mineral withdrawals, etc., would not take place.

The only actions that would take place in this area would be BLM standard management actions, actions taken to protect listed and sensitive plant species, management to provide for health and safety of visitors, and administration of legally held rights of mining claimants, permit and lease holders.

Modified Proposed Action Alternative

This alternative presents a range of actions, including planning elements discussed by the public in some depth, but not adopted by consensus; planning items not addressed by the CBP group because of time restraints; and planning items which assist in providing a “range of management options or management alternatives” as outlined in the National Environmental Protection Act of 1969.

Actions or Decisions affecting All Planning Units

Action 39) Restrict vehicle traffic to designated roads and trails in the entire planning area. The planning area would not be open to unregulated Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) use. This would result in a ORV “Limited Use” designation for the entire planning area. Under this action vehicle use would be restricted to designated roads and trails.

Presently, ORV use decisions have been made for all planning units except Parcel C. This decision would enforce the same ORV management restrictions on all of the planning area’s planning units, therefore modifying Action 7 in the Proposed Action Alternative. (See Action 7 for information on ORV designations)

Changing outdoor recreation interests, the popularity of four wheel drive Sport Utility Vehicles (SUV’s), and litigation over ORV management and use, have all added to the complexity of managing ORV’s. While this is a legitimate activity on public lands, it may not be a compatible use, and often conflicts with other management objectives. Protection of natural and cultural values, wildfire concerns, private property rights and a wish for a natural recreation setting are all factors considered in developing ORV designation. This decision would implement the follow designated routes of vehicle travel.

-Miners Cabin Area-

Vehicle use would be restricted to the roadway into future parking area/trailhead that would be located off of Highway 49, near the Red Shack Area. Future public access easements may allow for vehicle parking areas along Highway 193 in the vicinity of Chili Bar Bridge, and the use of Stewart Mine Road to access a river overlook/ trailhead parking area located in the NE1/4 of Section 27 on the north side of the river.

-Dave Moore Nature Area/Ponderosa Parcel/Parcel C-

- Dave Moore - Vehicle use here would be limited to the entrance access road and parking lot.
- Ponderosa Parcel - Vehicle use would be limited to parking on the road shoulder for the area west of Marshall Grade Road. Once the area is reclaimed, a parking lot off the highway will be evaluated. The area east of the road is subject to a lease, and vehicle use is limited to existing roads by the leaseholder and their clients only, as set forth in terms of the lease.

Parcel C - This area contains no roads, trails, or parking areas designated open for vehicle use, therefore this areas is essentially closed to all motorized modes of travel.

-Greenwood Creek Area-

Vehicle use would be limited to access roads to the future Greenwood Creek parking area, and a future trailhead parking area off of Highway 49 in the center of Section 10.

-Norton Ravine-

Presently, there is no legal public vehicle access available to this planning unit. BLM permit holders and adjacent land owners have vehicle access via Equestrian Way, which is not open to the general public. A need for public vehicle access to this unit has been identified, and will be evaluated once access easements or additional land parcels are acquired.

-Pine Hill Preserve-

Vehicle access to this unit will be discussed in the Pine Hill Preserve planning process.

Impacts: Generally, the implementation of this decision will produce only minor impacts, which already exist from these activities. ORV designations have already been discussed for the Miner's Cabin, Ponderosa Parcel, and Dave Moore planning units under Action 7. Not discussed is how this decision would potentially impact the Norton Ravine, Greenwood Creek, and Parcel C Units. Norton Ravine presently lacks legal public vehicle access. This proposal would provide for vehicle access on designated roads, if future public easements or future land acquisitions provide public vehicle access opportunities. This access is highly likely to increase recreational use of these areas, especially hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, and, to a lesser extent, recreational mining, boating, and back county auto touring. This use will generate additional litter, may heighten the likelihood of wildfire ignition, and may concentrate impacts to natural features where vehicles can get to special features such as overlooks, and river access points. It is likely that no new major access roads would be built. Some spur roads may have to be built to avoid private property trespass. These would be very limited, and most likely built to

direct visitors to the river and the existing BLM toilet. Taken collectively, these activities relating to vehicle access are not likely to present any major environmental impacts. Use would be heavily monitored to ensure that no harm to natural or cultural features would be taking place.

Potential impacts associated with this action would relate to public vehicle access to lands previously closed to the public while under private ownership. Opening these lands would lead to an increase in vehicle traffic and public use of the lands. This could lead to slight increases in erosion runoff from roadways, increases in roadside litter, direct use impacts to riverside destination spots, and increased trail and facility use. Individually and cumulatively, these effects are not anticipated to present any major environmental or cultural impacts. Monitoring of adaptive management actions will address and mitigate potential concern as they develop. Action 30 discusses impacts of new vehicle access to Greenwood Creek.

Action 40) All future acquired land which becomes part of the South Fork American River Planning Area will be withdrawn from mineral entry for a period of 50 years.

These actions will carryover Proposed Action Alternative Action 4 to future acquired lands which become part of the South Fork American Special Management Area. This action will provide a universal management standard to lands within the management area. Action 4 provides a discussion of impacts for this action and a rationale for its implementation.

*Action 41) Acquired future lands administration: 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 to the most nearest /or most similar special area parcel of public land which ever is most appropriate. Lands acquired for inclusion into the Pine Hill Preserve, within the South Fork general planning area, will become part of that Preserve and subject to more specialized management guidance provided for in the final Pine Hill Preserve Management Plan. Lands within the Preserve are not subject to management decisions make in the South Fork plan.*

Future acquired lands in the general planning area, which contain attributes important to this plan's management objectives, will, in part or wholly, become part of this special management area upon acquisition. For the most part, these lands will have values associated with the South Fork American River. They will be withdrawn from mineral entry, and managed similar to the closest or most logical special area parcel until a time when the South Fork Plan undergoes it's annual public review/update. In some cases, though, newly acquired lands may be subject to interim management actions which may conflict with long term management planning unit goals. There may be prior rights leased out while the property was in private hands, which will need to be respected until the lease terminates. There also may be cases where grazing was taking place prior to BLM acquiring the land. Rather than build miles of fence to curtail inadvertent grazing trespass, the BLM may authorizes this use until it becomes practical to fence in these new acquisitions.

Impacts: Impacts associated with these future parcels would be similar to actions already addressed for other action items in the Proposed Action Alternative. Since the parcels are not yet acquired, it is difficult to be specific in analyzing impacts. Generally, future acquisition will

place more land containing special river and wildland values into public ownership. Public lands along the river will not be commercially developed, and will stay in a natural state, which would be beneficial for one of the county's major recreational industries. These lands would open up new opportunities for public river access. These lands would support a recreation/wildland complex along the river. This corridor would be made up of privately-owned recreational based businesses, a state park, a county park, BLM managed public lands, a multi-agency plant preserve, a state biological area, and Bureau of Reclamation managed public lands. While the acquired lands may have a very minor economic effect by removing a small segment of property from the county tax roles, it will have a major future effect on continuing to provide the wildlands which support important and popular river related recreational resources, will preserve the scenic integrity and solitude/rural aspects of the area, and increase property values of neighboring private property.

Action 42) All lands within the planning area will be retained in public ownership, including the two ten acre parcels in the Dave Moore Planning Unit.

Impacts: This action relate to Action 16. Retaining the two ten-acre parcels would provide potential management opportunities that may somehow benefit the public. Future benefits cannot be readily identified and conceivably are lacking. These isolated lands contain no special values, lack public access and are expensive to manage. The fees collected from grazing, \$2.32 do not approach the funding required to manage the lease. Retaining these lands is not a sound economic decision; the public would benefit more from the sale of these lands and the funds used to acquire lands with special values and public access.

Action 43) Allow for commercial uses which are consistent with vision statement, goals and decisions of each planning unit and planning area as a whole. Now only 5 of 6 units address commercial use of planning units, the Dave Moore Planning Unit lacks a decision concerning commercial use. This action would make this decision apply planning area wide instead of only to 5 units.

Impacts: Allowing commercial uses of the Dave Moore Planning Unit which are compatible with, or promote the goals of the planning unit is not perceived to create any anticipated environmental impacts. Commercial use of this unit has occurred in the past without effect on the area's resources. All permits issued in the future will take into consideration the goals of this planning unit, and the vision statement for the planning area. All future permits will be subject to environmental analysis, and are not anticipated to create any significant environmental impacts. See action number 15 for additional information.

Action 44) This action would modify and clarify Action 12 ,concerning day-use dredging of three inch or less size dredges. This decision would require these "day-use" dredgers to be under the same use conditions, restrictions, and requirement as dredgers working under a permit, except for a fee waiver. (MC and NR Units)

This decision would require "day-use" dredgers to meet and operate under the same standards as permitted dredgers. This includes such things as not dredging or damaging stream banks, not blocking waterways, noise requirements, protection of riparian areas, etc. Day-use 3" and

smaller dredges would require the issuance of a permit which must be signed by all dredge users. Signature and deposit of the permit into a registration center on the river will signify that each person operating under day-use rules, has read, understood, and agreed to operate their dredge under the conditions specified on the permit. Any dredge use without this permit or a permit issued through the Folsom BLM office will be in violation of special rules created for the South Fork American Special Recreation Management Area and **CFR 8365- Rules of Conduct**, 8365.1-5,(3).

Impacts: Would be similar to impacts under Action items 12 and 19. Utilizing a conditional permit to authorize “day-use” dredging provides an opportunity to inform operators of conditions of use, and provide a vehicle to educate the public on potential impacts of dredging and how to avoid them. It is anticipated that requiring a written signature on these permits will ensure better compliance, reduce potential impacts to natural resources, and conflicts between recreational users.

Action 45) Both day-use and permitted dredging will not be allowed within 300 feet upstream and 300 feet downstream of private/BLM boundaries. This decision will not apply in areas where the BLM/private property boundaries meet in the center of the river. A 300 foot dredge activity buffer also applies to, BLM toilet locations, commercial raft put-ins, lunch sites, or within 300' of dwellings located on private property. This decision is proposed to reduce potential dredge noise impacts to other public land users and adjacent home and property owners.

Impacts: This decision would implement a good neighbor policy, and assist in mitigating noise impacts and potential mining (dredging) trespass situations. This action would reduce the size of potential recreational dredging areas, producing a minor effect on this activity. This conservative spacing requirement creates a starting point for monitoring and adjusting future use to optimize opportunities and minimize potential impacts. These requirements could be altered through agreements with private property owners.

Action 46) Greenwood Creek Planning Unit - Camping: Confine camping to designated camping zones within the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit to mitigate potential conflicts between recreation users, adjacent home owners, control overnight use to reduce potential resource impacts, wildfire ignition, ease in the collection of use fees, and aid in the registration of campers and dredge users. This action alters Action 37, of the Proposed Action.

Camping would be accommodated in three areas identified for camping and other recreational uses. These areas will not be specific camping sites, but rather “zones” where campers can pick out their own locations and set up a camp. Map 5 depicts these areas with a combined length of approximately 2800 feet of riverfront camping. Camping along the river would be restricted to an area within 250 feet of the river’s edge, to areas that minimize environmental impacts, and to areas where campfire use would be restricted to fire safe areas or facilities. A camping fee will provide funds to the BLM to maintain and manage this use. The fee system will be by self-registration at one of three registration/information sites.

Impacts: At the public planning meetings, wildfire ignition by public land campers was an universal concern. Presently, camping and campfires are allowed anywhere within this planning area. By limiting campfires to fire safe sites or facilities, the potential for wild fire starts from campfires would be greatly reduced. A camping permit would also provide a means to inform the public of current fire restrictions, and the proper preparation and extinguishing of campfires. A camping permit system will assist in reducing conflicts between users such as dredgers and campers. Dredging permit holders would have preference over casual campers. Providing designated camping zones will also avoid camping-related noise impacts to the three homes located adjacent to this planning unit, concentrate potential environmental impacts to specific areas where use can be monitored, and facilitate mitigation of impacts. Focusing use into specific areas will also assist in maintenance and litter cleanup efforts. Instituting camping fees will provide funds back to this area to assist in maintaining the area, i.e., toilet pumping, trash removal, trail maintenance, law enforcement, etc.

Action 47) Greenwood Creek Planning Unit - Dredging: Within dredge Area No. 2, institute the use of one dredge, up to 6" in size, initially and evaluate use, impacts and potential conflicts before expanding use, in this small area, to two or three dredges. Before issuing a dredging permit for Area 2, dredging use in Area 3 must first be fully utilized. Greenwood Creek and Norton Ravine Planning Units: - Dredge use in this planning area, where public land boundaries only extend to a mid point in the river, will be limited to mooring/or placement of the dredge no further than 25 feet from the public land side of the rivers edge.

Because Dredge Area No. 2 in the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit is close to a private residence, is small in size (only runs to mid point in river), and is located at a river bend rapid with narrow boating routes, an alternative to the Proposed Action has been developed. Also addressed is a dredge location requirement in areas where the public mineral estate only runs to the center of the river, and inadvertent mineral trespass could be an issue.

Impacts: Dredging Area No. 2 probably has the highest potential to create noise conflicts with neighbors, and navigation issues with river runners. The close proximity of this site to an adjacent residence is 650 feet. Implementing a dredging program at this location with the maximum number of dredges may create conflicts from the onset, and defeat efforts to build community support for this blossoming program. This dredging site is also located at a bend in the river where the river reunites after splitting above the bend. Boating traffic can only use an inside course to navigate this part of the river, which takes them near the shoreline of the dredge area. Since dredgers can only dredge to the centerline of the river at this location, the potential for boater-dredger navigation conflicts arise at the western boundary. Placing three dredges in this small area would force one of them to crowd the area at the bend, and create potential river use conflicts, endangering both boaters and dredgers.

Action 48) This action would require the use of fire pans by individuals building camp fires within the Parcel C Planning Unit. This action alters Action 38 of the Proposed Action Alternative.

Impacts: Parcel C is surrounded by adjacent commercial river camps on three sides and by a county park on the other side of the river. If a wildfire were to start on this parcel, it would immediately spread to adjacent private, high occupancy, recreational camps. Requiring the use of fire pans to prevent wildfire ignition will greatly reduce the potential of wildfires starting from the use of campfires in this planning unit.

Action 49) This action would close both Hastings and Greenwood Creeks in the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit to all forms of recreational mining, such as panning and the use of sluice boxes. This action would have no effect on prior existing mining claims rights to conduct mining related activities.

This action would modify Action No. 36.

Impacts: This action would close these two creeks to recreational gold hunting activities. Both creeks have been subjected to heavy mining impacts in the past. Greenwood Creek is just starting to be revegetated with riparian vegetation. Past impacts from mining, cattle grazing, road building, agricultural use, and the 1997 flood have taken a toll on the riparian area of this creek. Erosion from foot trails and an old roadbed are affecting the creek and banks. Four native species of fish were observed in this creek during a 2000 survey. The private - public land boundary runs along both sides of the creek, as well as crossing the creek, making it difficult to mark the public land boundary, and for the public to know when they are on public or private lands. Only minerals located on public lands are subject to removal by recreational mining. Closing this creek to gold hounding would allow the riparian area to continue to revegetate, protect fish habitat, slow down erosion, and avoid both mineral and property trespass by the public onto private lands. This would also avoid conflicts with adjacent landowners.

Hastings Creek is a seasonal creek which has a more developed riparian canopy. Five species of native fish were found in this creek in a 2000 fish survey. The upper segment of this creek is under a mining claim, and is still being worked to recover gold from creek bed gravels. Closing this area to recreational mining would help protect the riparian area and creek from mining impacts, trampling, and erosion. Recreational mining opportunities are available within a few feet of both of these creeks in the South Fork American River. These closures are not anticipated to produce any adverse impacts to the environment, or to recreational mining opportunities.

Action 50) Under this action, casual campers (those outside campgrounds or designated campsites) would be required to obtain a camping permit for Parcel C and Greenwood Creek Planning Units. It would also require the use of self-provided, portable toilets when camping more than a 1/4 miles from BLM provided toilet facility. This action would make the camping permit and fee requirements universal to all planning units within the South Fork American River Planning Area and assist with management consistency.

This action would modify Action No. 37.

This decision is needed for management consistency, better manageability opportunities, and cooperation with adjacent County Park and rafting interests. These permits would be subject to user fees, and could assist in managing potential user conflicts, the number and dispersion of campers, and potential impacts within these planning units.

Impacts: This action would change a traditional free use to that which would require fees, permits, and self-registration. This will produce a certain level of inconvenience for people camping on these public land parcels. This system would be self-regulating for the most part, with the public issuing themselves permits from camping registration points within the planning units. Added cost and manpower needs would be required to maintain the registration points, and to complete compliance checks on campers. Fees would be charged for public use of public lands. Charging fees at some areas, which were traditionally free, has altered use patterns through reduction in the number of user and length of stay, and impacts such as a reduction of littering and vandalism. Fees collected would be used, in a large part, to maintain facilities in the immediate vicinity from which they were collected. This action will produce a certain level of inconvenience for the public, but is not anticipated to produce any significant environmental impacts or financial hardships on users.

Action 51) Confine camping to an area near the confluence area of South Fork American River and Norton Ravine. Camping would be restricted to areas within a 1/4-mile of the BLM toilet Facilities.

Impacts: This action would provide for a higher level of management control over camping and its potential impacts. These impacts are associated with human waste issues, wild fire ignition, riparian area protection, and maintenance actions. With camping confined to the general area of the BLM toilet, BLM maintenance actions would concentrate on a small area rather than 2 ½ miles of riverfront. Human waste generated from dispersed riverside camping would not be an issue, and water quality contamination from improper waste disposal would be greatly diminished. If future facilities were needed to safeguard resources affected by camping, they could be placed in an area where their use would be assured, rather than spread over 2 ½ miles of riverfront. Some dispersed camping opportunities would be lost to the public if this action was adopted.

Action 52) Campfires within the Norton Ravine Planning Unit must be constructed in some sort of fire pan or in a BLM-supplied fire ring. Campfire permits are already required for this area as discussed in Action 11.

Impacts: Would require public to provide their own fire pans. The requirement of providing a fire pan will, hopefully, increase public awareness of the importance of proper campfire management, and the potential for wildfire ignition from the improper handling of fires in the backcountry. The use of fire pans and the proper disposal of ashes will leave cleaner campsites, and beaches free of charcoal, ashes, and burnt wood. This requirement will be somewhat of an inconvenience to camper who does not have a fire pan, or who has to add one to their backpack. The objective of this action is to reduce the potential of wildfire, and to have cleaner campsites and beaches.

If fire pan compliance is poor, or if fires are still being built in unsafe areas, the BLM may construct fire rings in fire safe areas, and restrict use to these designated sites and units. If problems still persist, this planning unit would be closed to all open fires.

Action 53) The Greenwood Creek Planning Unit would be closed to campfire use. This would include all open fires, including warming and cooking fires.

This action would modify Action No. 37.

Impacts: This action could impact the current limited use of warming or camping fires by commercial rafting companies. This use is very limited, and is not anticipated to affect commercial operations in any significant manner. Camping without campfires could affect visitor experiences to some extent. It is anticipated that future public use of this area will greatly increase with additional parking and access trails. This increase in use will generate greater management needs and concerns. One of the major concerns is the ignition of wildfires in an area adjacent to several homes and communities. In order to reduce this risk, this planning unit will be closed to the use of open fires unless authorized under special circumstances.

Action 54) Is to incorporate a small segment, 61.11 acres, of the Norton Ravine Planning Unit into the Pine Hill Preserve for more specialized management and protection of the Gabbro soils habitat and the associated sensitive plant species found within it. Recommendations already made for this planning segment would be forwarded to the Pine Hill Planning Team for consideration.

This 66.11 acre tract is an acquired parcel known as the Leder-Adams Parcel.

Background

A recent preliminary plant survey has identified the presence of two sensitive plant species present on a segment of the Norton Ravine Planning Unit. This segment is contiguous to boundaries of the Pine Hills Preserve in Sections 29 and 32 (see Appendix G B, Map 6). The soils of this parcel are made up primarily of Rescue soil series derived from gabbro bedrock, except in the canyon bottom where there are alluvial and terrace deposits of the South Fork American River.

The two sensitive plant species discovered are the El Dorado mules ears (*Wyethia reticulata*) and Red Hills soaproot (*Chlorogalum grandiflorum*). The former is an endemic to the gabbro formation of western El Dorado County, and it is included in the “Recovery Plan for the Gabbro Soil Plants of the Central Sierra Nevada Foothills”. The residual soils at these parcels, the two sensitive species, and the entire plant community (northern gabbroic mixed chaparral) are all representative of an ecosystem based on the unusual gabbro substrate below. These characteristics make this parcel a logical addition to the Pine Hill Preserve. These characteristics also indicate some potential for other sensitive or listed plant species to occur, although none were found in the course of a preliminary survey of a portion of the parcel.

There is no road access to the interior of this parcel and the vegetation is mostly dense chaparral. For these reasons most of the parcel is relatively pristine and constitutes a very good representation of northern gabbroic mixed chaparral.

Inclusion of this segment in the Preserve will not necessarily preclude multiple use, such as providing recreation opportunities or commercial uses in areas not located on gabbro soils or which do not conflict with management goals of the Preserve. Because of the terrain and vegetation of this parcel, the only portion of this parcel that now receives regular public use is the immediate environs of the river, mostly for river based recreation. Because none of the listed or sensitive species are riparian, use along the river will not conflict with the purposes of the Preserve. Even if a trail is routed along the north side of the river, if it stays along the top of the canyon it would be likely to bypass this parcel to the north and west. On the other hand, because listed species are absent from much if not all the parcel, if it was decided that a trail that passes through the parcel was advantageous, a trail route could be selected that would not impact listed species.

Since this small segment of the Norton Ravine Unit contains unique gabbro soils, sensitive plant species, and the highly localized plant community, and northern gabbroic mixed chaparral, this parcel should be afforded a greater degree of management consideration and included into the boundaries of the Pine Hill Preserve.

Impacts:

Planning decisions made for the Norton Ravine Planning Unit and pertinent to this parcel would be forwarded to the Pine Hill Planning Team for consideration.

Including this segment into the Pine Hill Preserve would place additional management constraints on proposed activities that could impact the special gabbro soils habitat or sensitive plant species. Activities taking place along the river in areas lacking gabbro soils and sensitive species would be subject to less constraining management applications.

V. CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT, NOT AFFECTED, OR NOT IMPACTED

The following critical elements have been analyzed as per the BLM Manual Handbook H-1790-1 and are either not present or not affected: Air Quality, Environmental Justice, Farm Lands, Flood Plain, Native American Religious Concerns, Invasive/Nonnative Species, Wastes -- Hazardous or Solid, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Wilderness.

VI. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

No cumulative impacts are expected from the proposed action or alternative 1. Under either of the alternative public use would increase but management action proposed would place control and restriction on this use which would limit potential impacts. Alternative 2 (No Action) could have cumulative impacts in that increased mineral development, unregulated and non-supported

recreation use could have the potential, over a long period or time, to potentially impact the human environment.

VII. MITIGATION MEASURES

Planning actions have been designed to reduce potential impacts and have incorporated mitigation measure into the actions. This plus standard BLM operating procedures will reduce the need for mitigation measures. Future actions associated with this plan will have specific environmental reviews completed for ground disturbing actions. Mitigation measures will be built into these assessments. Also the principle of adaptive management incorporated into this plan will enable BLM to make changes or adjust future use to mitigate unforeseen resource conflicts, resource damage or user conflicts as they develop.

IV. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Participating Staff:

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Tim Carroll	BLM Geologist
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Agencies or Organizations Contacted or Consulted:

El Dorado County Parks and Recreation
American River Conservancy
Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park

Environmental Assessment for the South Fork American River Management Plan

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