Spanish Creek Campground
Mineral Withdrawal
Draft Environmental Assessment

Mt. Hough Ranger District, Plumas National Forest, Plumas County, California
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Mt. Hough Ranger District, Plumas National Forest

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*Description: Spanish Creek looking north from Spanish Creek Campground (photo by L.Edlund)

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Introduction

The action proposed by the Forest Service is to withdraw 82.5 acres of National Forest System lands from mineral entry, location and patent. The parcel encompasses the Spanish Creek Campground. This action is proposed to be implemented on the Mt. Hough Ranger District of the Plumas National Forest.

We prepared this environmental assessment (EA) to determine whether implementation of an administrative mineral withdrawal may significantly affect the quality of the human environment and thereby require the preparation of an environmental impact statement. By preparing this EA, we are fulfilling agency policy and direction to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). For more details of the proposed action, see the Proposed Action and Alternatives section of this document.

Proposed Project Location

The project is located entirely in Plumas County, California. The project area is located 6 miles west of the town of Quincy, California at the Spanish Creek Campground. The campground lies along a quiet stretch of Spanish Creek just south of the confluence of Spanish Creek and Indian Creek. The campground is open to the public for camping in the summer months and is also used extensively for day use by swimmers, fishermen and other recreationists. The proposed mineral withdrawal is 82.5 acres in size and forms an extended rectangle around the campground. The vegetation in the area is mixed conifer, oak and brush woodland.

The legal location of the proposed withdrawal area is follows:

T 25 North, Range 9 East, Portions of Section 15, Mount Diablo Meridian:

- W ½, NE ¼, SW ¼, 20 acres
- NE ¼, SW ¼, SW ¼, 10 acres
- NW ¼, SE ¼, SW ¼, 10 acres
- W ½, NE ¼, SE ¼, SW ¼, 5 acres
- E ½, NW ¼, SW ¼, 20 acres
- W ½, E ½, NE ¼, SW ¼, 10 acres
- S ½, SE ¼, SW ¼, NW ¼, 5 acres
- SE ¼, SW ¼, SW ¼, NW ¼, 2.5 acres
Figure 1. Proposed Minerals Withdrawal Location Map
Background
In February of 1986, flood waters demolished Forest Service campgrounds within the Feather River Canyon. Both the James Lee campground and the Belden campground suffered significant damage and recreation opportunities at these sites were lost. The Quincy District Ranger (now Mt. Hough District) decided it would be prudent to relocate the campgrounds. A new site was chosen along Spanish Creek at the site of an old Boy Scout camp, Camp Wally Alexander. Camp Wally Alexander was closed in 1976 and the remains were bulldozed.

Plans for a new $625,000 campground began in 1987. The proposal included a 39 unit campground, group camp, day use area and amphitheater. Campsites were designed with fire rings, picnic tables, grills and paved parking spurs. A paved road was proposed for access, along with four flush toilets in two restroom buildings, an amphitheater with seats and stage, and a well and water system. A day use facility was also planned including picnic tables, paved parking, vault toilets and faucets. The campground was finished in 1990 and has since that time been managed as a developed recreation site.

At the same time that plans for the campground began, the District began the process of a mineral withdrawal. Lands were initially segregated on September 28th, 1987 for a two year period, while the application for withdrawal was processed. When this occurred, existing claims were either relinquished or declared null and void for failure to do timely assessment work. An Environmental Assessment was completed for the withdrawal, along with a Mineral Potential Report. Application was made to the Bureau of Land Management for the withdrawal and on January 15th, 1991 the withdrawal was put into effect by authority of Section 204 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The withdrawal was published in the Federal Register as Public Land Order 6827.

Public Land Order 6827 expired January 14, 2011. A new withdrawal would be required in order to continue protection of the Spanish Creek Campground infrastructure and recreational values.

Purpose and Need for the Proposal
The need for this proposal was created by the expiration of Public Land Order 6827 and the desire of the agency to continue to protect recreational infrastructure and values. The purpose of this environmental analysis is to determine any resource or public concerns associated with a mineral withdrawal of 82.5 acres surrounding the Spanish Creek Campground. The mineral withdrawal would serve to deny mining within the site and therefore protect the investment of the agency from potential earth disturbing activities associated with mining as well as maintain a recreation focus at the site. Although mining is not an exclusive use of the land under the 1955 Multiple-Use Mining Act, and in fact often does co-exist with recreation uses, other laws including the 1872 Mining Law give claimants a statutory right to mine and a possessory interest in the land. Potential conflicts include significant earth disturbing activities and activities where noise may impact recreational visitors. According to the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision (2004), “providing recreation opportunities is one of the Forest Service’s major missions in California.” The intent of the withdrawal is to create an atmosphere where recreation is paramount.
The mineral withdrawal would be for a period of 20 years, the maximum allowable. Language from 43 USC 1714 (d) (2 ) states that under “a withdrawal aggregating less than five thousand acres,” land may be withdrawn “for a period of not more than twenty years for… administrative sites, location of facilities, and other proprietary purposes.”

**Existing Condition**

Since the construction of the campground in 1991, it has become a popular place for camping, fishing, and swimming. Improvements are ongoing and include the addition of eight new campsites, four of them handicapped accessible. The road through the site was re-paved in 2012. Bear boxes and lantern hangers have been installed and eight wood picnic tables have been replaced with eight concrete tables within the last year. Additional tables were replaced in 2015 and a new group site is proposed to be added to the campground in 2016. In 2013, the California Department of Transportation completed an upgrade to the Spanish Creek Bridge, which lies directly adjacent to the campground. At this time, an interpretive site was added at the campground entrance which includes: benches, safety fencing, interpretive panels, a time capsule, stone marker and native vegetation. There has been a significant amount of time and money invested by the Forest Service to maintain this recreation site in excellent condition for the recreating public.

**Figure 2. Interpretive Site**
Decision Framework

Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976

Section 204 of The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1714) (FLPMA) gives the Secretary of the Interior general authority to make, modify, extend, or revoke most withdrawals on public or reserved Federal lands. The Forest Service must apply to the Secretary of the Interior for withdrawal actions on National Forest lands.

An environmental assessment, an environmental impact statement or any other documents as are needed to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(C)) must be prepared. The applicant shall designate the Bureau of Land Management as a cooperating agency and shall comply with the requirements of the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality. The Bureau of Land Management shall, at a minimum, independently evaluate and review the final product.

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)

The Secretary of Interior has delegated administration and processing responsibilities for withdrawals to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (43 CFR § 2310.1). The applicant (i.e. U.S. Forest Service) is responsible for providing the BLM with an environmental assessment, an environmental impact statement or any other documents as are needed to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, along with any additional information, studies, analyses and reports in order for the BLM to independently evaluate and review the application (43 CFR §2310.3-2). The Environmental Assessment integrates all information and analysis required pursuant to the BLM regulations for development and processing of the case file for submission to the Secretary of Interior. The BLM Director would then make the final recommendation and prepare a public land order for the Secretary of Interior’s decision to approve the withdrawal, in whole or in part (43 CFR § 2310.3-2(f); 43 CFR § 2310.3-3(a)). Thus, the Forest Service recommendation is not appealable (36 CFR § 215.12(h)). The recommending Forest Service official in this action is the Region 5 Regional Forester (Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2761.04).

Forest Service Manual (FSM)

The procedural steps for withdrawal proposals on Forest Service managed lands from mineral entry was followed in the application and is described in detail in Section 2761 of FSM 2700 - Special Uses Management. The manual describes the objective of a withdrawal as a management tool for withholding an area of National Forest System land from settlement, sale, location, or entry under some or all of the general land laws, including the mining and mineral leasing law, for the purposes of limiting activities under those laws in order to maintain other public values in the area, or reserving the area for a particular public purpose or program. These programs and purposes may include quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air, water resource, archaeological values, or other special purposes.

Further, it is Forest Service policy to consider withdrawals for National Forest System lands that are occupied by capital improvements in which relocation or replacement would be impractical. These areas would include sites containing major improvements such as offices, work center complexes, and developed recreation areas (FSM 2761.03 (2)). Therefore, the application pending for the
Spanish Creek Campground Withdrawal meets the intent of manual direction because of the extensive and ongoing development of the campground infrastructure and the associated recreation uses.

Land Management Direction and Principal Environmental Laws

Applicable Forest-Wide Standards and Guidelines

This EA tiers to the Plumas National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (PNF LRMP) (USDA 1988), as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA) Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) (USDA 2004a, 2004b).

The Plumas LRMP outlines developed recreation site prescriptions. The purpose is to provide convenient recreation facilities for the public and to preserve or improve the surrounding Forest. The standards and guidelines under the Developed Recreation Site Prescription (Rx-6), recommends withdrawal of all developed sites from mineral entry. Although the LRMP pre-dates the construction of the Spanish Creek Campground, the campground is identified within the document as a need to meet recreational demands, and construction is outlined in the Plan. It is implied that management direction would apply to all developed sites.

The Forest Wide Standards and Guidelines for Minerals and Materials provides for encouraging mineral and materials development that reasonably protects surface resources, and provides for land reclamation. Further requirements for inspections, monitoring, reclamation, and guidelines for road use and vegetation management are outlined in the 2004 SNFPA FEIS ROD (pages 58-59) for use when mining operations are active. There are additional standards and guidelines for protection and maintenance of Forest soils, watersheds, water quality, and water supply. These standards and guidelines are applied as Best Management Practices (BMPs), Streamside Management Zones (SMZs) (per guidelines in Appendix M of the PNF LRMP) and Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs).

However, the Standards and Guidelines also recommend withdrawal from mineral entry areas valued for other purposes. The standards and guidelines more specifically request withdrawal of Developed Recreation Sites, along with scenic roadside corridors along Hwy 70.

These Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines are applicable in light of the proposed action and provide the Forest Service recommending official with adequate authority to submit applications for mineral withdrawals.

The Mining Law of 1872

The Mining Law of 1872, as amended, governs the prospecting for and appropriation of metallic and nonmetallic minerals on federally owned lands. Under the Forest Service, Organic Administrative Act of June 4, 1897, 30 Stat. 35, as amended, the law specifically did not reserve the Forests from the mining laws:

“Nor shall anything herein prohibit any person from entering upon such Forest Reservations for all proper and lawful purposes, including that of prospecting, locating, and developing the mineral resources thereof.”
Since the mineral estate in National Forest System lands is not “reserved” within the meaning of the 1897 Organic Act, the Secretary of the Interior maintains jurisdiction, acting through the Bureau of Land Management, to provide for the management of mineral resources. The mining laws are comprised of two parts: (1) the statutes themselves, which are general in nature; and (2) the decisions of the courts and of the Department of the Interior, which interpret and apply the statutes to specific cases (FSM, Title 2800 – Minerals and Geology, subsection 2819).

**The Multiple Use Mining Act of 1955**

The Multiple Use Mining Act of 1955 authorized multiple uses of surface resources on mining claims, resulting in the Locatable Minerals Surface Management Regulations (36 CFR 228 Subpart A). Although regulations do not constitute a permit to explore or mine, as that is already a statutory right, they do provide that such activities be conducted to protect non-mineral values of National Forest System lands against unnecessary or unreasonable damage (36 CFR 228, Subpart A – Locatable Minerals).

As directed under 36 CFR 228.8, Requirements for Environmental Protection:

“All Plans of Operation shall contain appropriate Terms and Conditions for the protection of the environment, including but not limited to stipulations covering air quality, water quality, solid wastes, scenic values, fishery habitat, roads and surface reclamation and rehabilitation.”

**Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970**

In the subsequent Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970, Congress declared that it is the continuing policy of the Federal Government, in the national interest, to foster and encourage private enterprise in the development of economically sound and stable industries, and in the orderly and economic development of domestic mineral resources to help assure satisfaction of industrial, security, and environmental needs. In the case United States v. Weiss, 642 F.2d 296, 299 (1981), the Ninth Circuit declared there is nothing in the 36 Code of Federal Regulations which authorizes the Forest Service to prohibit the claimant’s right to the possession and enjoyment of their claims, or to encroach impermissibly upon those rights, by circumscribing their use in a manner that amounts to a prohibition.

**The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that federal agencies rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives and briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1502.14).

The Spanish Creek Campground Mineral Withdrawal EA meets the CEQ regulations requiring public scoping and a thorough analysis of issues, alternatives and effects.

**The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976**

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 (which amended The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974) requires the maintenance and protection of the productivity of the land and, where appropriate, the improvement of the quality of soil and water.
resources. The Act specifies that substantial and permanent impairment of productivity must be avoided.

**Endangered Species Act**

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 USC 1531 et seq.) requires that any action authorized by a federal agency not be likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a threatened or endangered species (TES), or result in the destruction or adverse modification of habitat of such species that is determined to be critical. Section 7 of the ESA, as amended, requires the responsible federal agency to consult with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service concerning TES under their jurisdiction. It is Forest Service policy to analyze impacts to TES to ensure management activities are not be likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a TES, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of habitat of such species that is determined to be critical. This assessment is documented in a Biological Evaluation for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife (USDA 2015) and a Biological Evaluation of Botanical Resources (USDA 2015). It was determined that no effect to federally listed species would occur from implementation of the project, therefore no consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, is required.

**Clean Water Act**

Section 208 of the Clean Water Act required the States to prepare non-point source pollution plans, which were to be certified by the State and approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In response to this law and in coordination with the State of California Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and EPA, Region 5 began developing Best Management Practices (BMPs) for water quality management planning on National Forest System lands within the State of California in 1975.

State of California Water Resources Control Board Resolution #68-16 (CRWQCB 1968) directs that high quality water or water of higher quality than required by regulation be maintained at that higher quality. Similarly anti-degradation EPA policy 40 C.F.R. Section 131.12 states that existing water quality, even when it exceeds required levels for stated beneficial uses will be maintained. Potential effects of the proposed action, either through surface runoff of sediment and chemicals or chemicals entering water bodies through groundwater sources do not constitute a significant degradation of quality or impair existing beneficial uses.

**National Historic Preservation Act**

Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the federal government to preserve important historic, cultural and natural aspects of our natural heritage. To accomplish this, federal agencies utilize the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). This process has been codified in 36 CFR 800 Subpart B. The coordination or linkage between the Section 106 process of the NHPA and the mandate to preserve our national heritage under NEPA is well understood and is formally established in 36 CFR 800.3b and 800.8. Locally, the Plumas National Forest uses a programmatic agreement (PA) between Region 5 of the US Forest Service, the California State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to implement the Section 106 process (USDA 20013).
Consultation with Federally recognized tribes and local Native American communities and/or interested parties was initiated in accordance with the Programmatic Agreement Among the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5), California State Historic Preservation Officer, Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding the Process for Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for Management of Historic Properties by the National Forests of the Pacific Southwest Region (USDA 2013), National Historic Preservation Act, and other laws and regulations. The PA requires that the Forest take into account the potential effects of projects and activities on cultural resources, prior to initiating any actions that could affect those properties (USDA 2013).

Public Involvement and Tribal Consultation

The Forest Service consulted the following individuals, Federal, State, tribal, and local agencies during the development of this EA:

- Maidu Summit Consortium
- Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria
- Concow Maidu Tribe of Mooretown Rancheria
- Tyme Maidu Tribe of Berry Rancheria
- Estom Yumeka Tribe of Enterprise Rancheria
- Susanville Indian Rancheria
- Advanced Geologic Exploration, Inc.
- Mr. Graham Williams
- Mr. Dan Stanton
- Mr. Michael Brooks
- Greta Burles – Geologist and Minerals Examiner
- Jim DeMaagd - Geologist and Minerals Examiner
- Rich Texiera – Reviewing Minerals Examiner
- Donna Duncan- Forest Minerals Administrator
- Kelby Gardiner – Hydrologist
- Elizabeth Sousa – Assistant Resource Officer
- Erika Brenzovich – Public Service Staff
- Colin Dillingham – Wildlife Biologist
- Cristina Weinberg – Archeologist
- James Belsher-Howe – Botanist
- Shiretta Millender - Realty Specialist, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region
- Zarreen Ali, Realty Specialist, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region

The project was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) from December 2014 to the present.
Proposed Action and Alternatives

The proposed action and following alternatives were considered:

Alternative A - Proposed Action
The Forest Service proposes to withdraw from mineral entry 82.5 acres that encompass the Spanish Creek Campground. The mineral withdrawal would remove the parcel from location, entry and patent for a period of 20 years.

The mineral withdrawal would be implemented by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) upon review and acceptance of the Forest Service application for withdrawal. The withdrawal would be recorded on Bureau of Land Management Records and indicated on Master Title Plat maps through the Bureau of Land Management General Land Office. There are currently no active claims in the proposed withdrawal area (BLM LR2000, October 26, 2015).

Alternative B - No Action
The No Action alternative would allow mineral entry, location and patent within the 82.5 acre parcel surrounding the Spanish Creek campground. Claims could be filed within the 82.5 acre block and mining activities would be permitted based on existing mining regulations under 36 CFR 228. A range of mining activities could then be allowed.

Reasonably Foreseeable Future Activities
Reasonably foreseeable future actions could include gold panning, sluicing, highbanking, sniping, dredging, metal detecting, extraction of minerals with heavy equipment, processing with a trommel or similar wash plant, use of conveyors, grizzlies and concentrating equipment, core drilling, construction of underground adits or shafts, or other methods of mining. These types of activities are representative of those submitted to the District for authorization over the past ten years. The amount of disturbance is dependent upon the processing method. Panning and sluicing have minimal impacts and do not require special authorization from the District. Highbanking and metal detecting may be more impactful and require a Notice of Intent or a Plan of Operations. Mining with heavy equipment and the use of water in a mining operation is the most impactful due to pumping of water from streams, water discharge and use and storage of fuel. These types of operations require a Plan of Operations and environmental analysis of the proposed Plan.

Typically, the Mt. Hough Ranger District administers Notices of Intent and Plans of Operation for small scale mining operations which typically do not exceeding 1000 cubic yards of disturbance. Most mining takes place between April and October due to weather. It is possible that concurrent operations could take place within the 82.5 acres currently proposed for withdrawal.

The Forest Service would be responsible for administering surface uses and balancing them with recreational interests.
Figure 3. Gold Claimer trommel and settling pond

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

Public comment requested that the Forest Service consider redrawing the boundary lines on the withdrawal parcel to exclude portions of the creek closest to the Spanish Creek Bridge. The commenter did not include a map. This alternative was not considered because it was unclear as to the boundaries of the proposal and also because the area underneath the Spanish Creek Bridge is within the California Department of Transportation right-of-way and not subject to Forest Service or BLM administrative action.

Bureau of Land Management records show a right of way as all land lying within 33 feet of the center line of Hwy 70 in the N1/2, SW1/4 of Section 15. The lands within the right of way were closed to the location and entry of mining claims on the date the right-of-way was granted, November 13, 1978, and remain closed. In addition Public Land Order (PLO) 2971 withdrew certain lands from the mining laws of the United States for use by the U.S. Forest Service. Included in the withdrawal was one for the preservation of recreation and aesthetic values and as an aid to highway safety. This set aside all land lying within 200 feet of the centerline of U.S. Hwy 70 (then Hwy 40-A), in the SE1/4, SW1/4 of Section 15, among other lands. These lands were withdrawn from the mining laws on the date the PLO was signed by the Secretary of the Interior, March 18, 1963, and remain closed.
Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

This section summarizes the potential direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the Proposed Action and alternatives to surface natural resources. The following analysis is based on the project-specific reports, assessments and input prepared by Forest Service specialists, and incorporated by reference: Spanish Creek Campground Mineral Withdrawal Wildlife Biological Evaluation (USDA 2015), Spanish Creek Campground Mineral Withdrawal Biological Evaluation of Botanical Resources (USDA 2015), Spanish Creek Campground Mineral Withdrawal Hydrology and Soils Evaluation (USDA 2015), Spanish Creek Campground Mineral Withdrawal Heritage Review (USDA 2015), Spanish Creek Campground Mineral Withdrawal Recreation Analysis (USDA 2015), Mineral Potential Report for the Continuation of the Existing Spanish Creek Campground Withdrawal (USDA 2011).

Minerals and Mining

Affected Environment

Three main terrace gravels are perched on the slope, from Highway 70 down to Spanish Creek, along the west-facing slope on the east side of Spanish Creek. The phyllite bedrock outcrops in road cuts and hillsides along west and north facing slopes on the east side of Spanish Creek and along the east facing slope on the west side of Spanish Creek. There is a two to four foot thick cobble/boulder mudflow layer above the phyllite in a road cut along the west facing slope. As described and sampled in the 1988 report and again in 2011, there are two to six inch wide and up to two feet long quartz vein stringers in the phyllite road cut.

Environmental Consequences


In 2011, a mineral potential report was completed by Greta Burles, Forest Service Geologist and Minerals Examiner and Jim DeMaagd, Forest Service Geologist and Minerals Examiner. A previous report had been completed in 1988, when the area was first proposed for mineral withdrawal. The results of the Mineral Potential Report showed low to moderate potential for locatable minerals in the proposed withdrawal area. There is low potential for leasable or salable minerals in the proposed withdrawal area and no strategic or critical minerals were found. The report findings are summarized below.

1 Locatable minerals include metallic minerals (gold, silver, lead, copper, zinc, nickel, etc.), nonmetallic minerals (fluorspar, mica, certain limestones and gypsum, tantalum, heavy minerals in placer form, and gemstones) and certain uncommon variety minerals.

2 Minerals that are subject to lease include oil and gas, oil shale, geothermal resources, potash, sodium, native asphalt, solid and semisolid bitumen, bituminous rock, phosphate, and coal.
The mineral potential for occurrence and the level of certainty is based on the classification nomenclature in the BLM 3031 Manual as shown below.

### Table 1. Mineral Potential Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Potential</th>
<th>Level of Certainty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O - No indicated potential</td>
<td>A - Insufficient available data for direct or indirect evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L - Low potential</td>
<td>B - Indirect evidence from available data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M - Moderate potential</td>
<td>C - Direct evidence from available data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H - High Potential</td>
<td>D - Abundant direct and indirect evidence from available data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Locatable Minerals

According to the 1988 Mineral Potential Report, the current and past presence of placer claims within and immediately adjacent to the subject lands permits the presumption that placer gold may exist within the subject lands. The present mining adjacent to the subject parcel is predominately seasonal intermittent suction dredging and intermittent small-scale placer mining of bench gravels deposits (Duncan and Edlund, 2010). The Plumas National Forest does not have any proposed or active Plans of Operations near the area (Duncan and Edlund, 2010). In addition, there were no mineral occurrences, prospects, active or abandoned mines found within or adjacent to the subject lands (California Department of Conservation, 2010b, U.S. Geological Survey, 1997 and 2005).

Field review of the subject lands, confirmed the observations and conclusions in the 1988 Mineral Report. It is the opinion of the 2011 Mineral Potential Report that the subject lands have a moderate potential based on direct evidence for occurrence of placer gold (M/C) and a low potential based on direct evidence for lode gold and other locatable minerals (L/C). Although there is a moderate potential for occurrence of placer gold, there is no evidence to suggest that the area has development potential. No development has occurred from past prospecting, which indicates that the placer gold within the boundaries of the subject lands is not present in a quantity that is to likely be mineable at a profit.

#### Leasable

Based on field and literature review and the findings in the 1988 Mineral Potential Report there are no leasable minerals within or adjacent to the subject lands (BLM, 2010a and 1985; California Department of Conservation, 2010a; and Majmundar, 1984). The lands are not classified as prospectively valuable for any leasable resources (BLM, 1985) and the geologic environment is not conducive to the occurrence of any leasable mineral resources (Lydon, Gay and Jennings, 1960). Although there are two thermal springs 3 miles northwest of the subject lands, no thermal wells or hot springs were observed within the subject lands. The subject lands have a low potential (L/C) for the occurrence of leasable mineral resources.

#### Salable

Based on field and literature review and the findings in the 1988 Mineral Potential Report the subject lands do not contain any salable mineral commodities of economic significance. The

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3 No proposed or active Plans of Operation exist in or near the area in 2015.
metamorphic phyllite bedrock and limited volumes of gravels within the subject lands are common rock types found throughout Plumas County. Existing quarries or new quarries developed closer to the markets would likely be more economical. The limestone occurrence 1 mile northeast of the subject lands is reported to be ½ mile long and up to 50 feet thick, however it has never been developed and no further analysis was available (Logan, 1947). No limestone deposits were seen within the subject lands. This parcel is considered to have a low potential (L/C) for the occurrence of salable mineral resources of more than nominal value.

**Critical and Strategic**
There are no critical or strategic minerals as defined in the most recent Stockpile Report to Congress 2009 (Department of Defense, 2009).

**Botany**

**Affected Environment**
No threatened, endangered, or sensitive (TES) plants are known in the project area. The project area was surveyed for the reconstruction of the Spanish Creek Bridge by California Department of Transportation biologists. Invasive plant sites have been documented in the project area before and after the reconstruction of the bridge.

**Environmental Consequences**

Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts from withdrawing 82.5 acres from mineral entry.

The proposed action would not have any direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on any Region 5 Sensitive species or any Threatened, Endangered, or Candidate species because none are known in or near the project area.

Invasive plants may continue to be introduced due to campers and other recreational users visiting the area. On-going eradication and control efforts would continue to limit the negative impact and spread of invasive species.

**Alternative B (No Action): Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts**
The No Action alternative would not have any direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on any Region 5 Sensitive species or any Threatened, Endangered, or Candidate species because none are known in or near the project area.

Mining activities would likely increase the suitable habitat for invasive plants. On-going treatment activities may or may not continue.
Hydrology & Soils

Affected Environment

Watershed elevation ranges from 6,772 feet at the top of Indian Falls Ridge to 3,020 feet along Spanish Creek. Alder and big-leaf maple make up most of the riparian vegetation; black cottonwood and willow are also present at lower elevations, whereas aspen are documented in the upper portions of Clear Creek. Upland vegetation is predominantly classified by Sierra mixed conifer and montane hardwood forest types. Scattered rock outcrops and mine tailings classified as barren land also are also present within the project watershed.

The soil analysis area is confined to the proposed mineral withdrawal area (82.5 acres). Soils of the surrounding area are derived from weathered greenstone, fractured shales, and schists – which typically result in soil textures ranging from sandy loam to silty clay loam (USDA, 1988b). Soil cover (fine organic matter and coarse woody debris) is variable within the soil analysis area; cover is especially scarce within the campground due to existing road segments, pavement, and frequent wood gathering for campfires. Large woody debris concentrations are also below recommended levels, likely due to past land disturbances and campfire wood collection. Soil and water management standards and guidelines are not applied to administrative sites or dedicated use areas (such as roads or recreation sites) (USDA, 2010a).

Environmental Consequences

Alternative A, Proposed Action (Proposed Action): Direct and Indirect Effects
Stream banks and the associated flood plain would continue to be shaped primarily by stream flow, especially during flood events. Existing riparian vegetation would likely remain intact, with the establishment of new vegetation occurring over time. Sediment and woody debris would continue to move through this reach of Spanish Creek unimpeded and without any mineral extractions.

During the recent Spanish Creek Bridge construction, with ground-breaking activities beginning in 2010, a new gravel bar accumulated in the southeastern portion of the project area. This gravel bar is expected to slowly migrate downstream through the project area, contributing to streambed and bank composition.

Upland soil conditions would benefit from the proposed mineral withdrawal, with soil cover slowly improving over time. Soil compaction would remain unchanged and soil structure would continue to develop outside of the campground-affected area.

Cumulative Effects of Mineral Withdrawal
The current Equivalent Roaded Acre (ERA) value for the Clear Creek watershed was calculated to be 7.4 percent, which is roughly two thirds of the Threshold of Concern (TOC). The proposed mineral withdrawal would improve the likelihood of ERA value recovery.

Alternative B – No-action Alternative: Direct and Indirect Effects
The no-action alternative is presented in accordance with The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the Council of Environmental Quality Regulation 1502.14. Claims could be filed within
the 82.5 acre block and mining activities would be permitted based on existing mining regulations under 36 CFR 228. A range of mining activities could then be allowed. These include gold panning, sluicing, highbanking, sniping, dredging, metal detecting, extraction of minerals with heavy equipment, processing with a trommel or similar wash plant, use of conveyors, grizzlies and concentrating equipment, core drilling, construction of underground adits or shafts, or other methods of mining.

Soil cover would be reduced as a result of some of the potential mining activities that may be proposed in the absence of a mineral withdrawal. Localized soil compaction and displacement would likely occur as a result of heavy equipment related mining operations.

**Figure 4. Watershed Analysis Map**

Stream bank stability could be compromised through the removal of vegetation, highbanking, or other stream channel alterations related to mining activities. Mitigation measures would be prescribed on a case-by-case basis in an attempt to protect water quality and soil productivity.

**Cumulative Effects of No Action**

Minor increases in the Clear Creek watershed ERA value are likely under the no-action alternative. Gold panning, sniping, metal detecting, and other low-impact mining activities would not necessarily increase the ERA value as much as actions involving heavy equipment with the potential for widespread soil disturbance.

**Effects Analysis Methodology**

Cumulative Watershed Effects analysis methods and assumptions
There are numerous methods for assessing the effects of land use activities on the landscape (USDA, 1988; Berg, 1996; Reid, 1998). For the purpose of this Cumulative Watershed Effects (CWE) analysis, the effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions were assessed using the Region Five Cumulative Off-site Watershed Effects Analysis (USDA, 1988) under the Mt. Hough – South Park Trail Project. The Spanish Creek Campground Mineral Withdrawal analysis watershed (Clear Creek), one of 12 watersheds assessed during the Mt. Hough – South Park Trail Project, contains all actions proposed under this Mineral Withdrawal Project.

Under this approach, the effects of land management activities were evaluated on the basis of Equivalent Roaded Acres (ERA). These ERA values serve as a “common currency” to describe effects from a wide range of management activities. The wide use of this model in Region 5 allows for comparisons among projects across both space and time.

Within the Mineral Withdrawal watershed analysis area, past management activities were analyzed to account for the cumulative amount of land disturbance that has occurred. The area of land manipulated by each past management activity was converted to a theoretical area of road surface, resulting in a measure of ERA. Numeric disturbance coefficients were used to convert these management effects to ERA effects in terms of the pattern and timing of surface runoff. Dividing the total ERA by the size of the watershed yields the percent of the watershed in a hypothetically roaded condition. ERA model values are used to track general changes to hydrologic function of watersheds in terms of alteration of surface runoff patterns and timing. In this way, ERA values can serve as an index to assess effects on downstream water quality. An increase in ERA for a watershed could result in detrimental changes to sedimentation rates and stream channel condition and subsequently have effects on downstream water quality and beneficial uses.

Watershed sensitivity analyses for the HFQLG Pilot Project watersheds were reported in Appendix N the HFQLG Forest Recovery Act Final Environmental Impact Statement (USDA, 1999). The HFQLG Pilot Project watershed applicable to this project received a moderate sensitivity rating. Examples given in the R5 Soil and Water Conservation Handbook estimate the Threshold of Concern (TOC) for watersheds of moderate sensitivity to be 12 to 14 percent (Table 2). For this project, the TOC is conservatively estimated to be 12 percent of the watershed area.

**Heritage**

**Affected Environment**
The full area of the proposed mineral withdrawal was used for purposes of the heritage analysis. The proposed mineral withdrawal is 82.5 acres in size and forms an extended rectangle around the campground.

**Environmental Consequences**

There are 3 cultural resource sites located within the proposed Spanish Creek CG Mineral withdrawal area:
1) Boy Scout Camp Wally Alexander was established in 1929 by the Piedmont Scout Council under a FS Special Use Permit. The camp was closed in 1975 at which time the structures were sold as salvage and the remaining foundations were bulldozed. Subsequent campground improvements resulted in removal or alterations of many of these features. Camp Wally Alexander was determined NOT National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligible.

2) Maxwell Water Conveyance Ditch: Ditch construction commenced 1872 by the Maxwell Ditch & Mining Company (corporate headquarters in San Francisco). It was constructed and/or repaired in part by local Chinese labor under a labor contract with Gee Shoon, a local labor broker who resided in the Silver Creek Chinese community, Meadow Valley, CA. This water conveyance ditch drew water from Spanish Creek & transported it an estimated 4-5 miles to the Maxwell Hydraulic Mine located above Paxton. This site is eligible for listing on the NRHP.

3) Utah Construction (UC) Road: This road was constructed for access and material support to construction of the Western Pacific RR (1905-1906). This site has been determined NRHP eligible. A section of the UC Road on the west side of Highway 70/89 was obliterated during construction of the new Spanish Creek Bridge.

Under the Proposed Action Alternative (Alternative A), no adverse direct, indirect or cumulative effects are expected. The project falls under Regional Programmatic Agreement (2013) Class B Screened Undertaking 2.3(a): Land use planning activities that do not authorize specific undertakings (e.g. Wilderness Plans, Wild and Scenic River Plans). There would be no effect to historic properties; therefore this project can proceed as planned.

Alternative A (Action Alternative) would be beneficial for protection of cultural resources in that the area would be protected from mining activities.

Alternative B (No Action): Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts
Under the No Action (Alternative B), no adverse direct, indirect or cumulative effects are expected. Alternative B (No Action Alternative) would not authorize specific undertakings. Specific undertakings would be authorized under individual Mining Plans of Operation and Notices of Intent, which are subject to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). In summary, there is the potential for mining activity under this Alternative, but ground disturbing mining activities require authorization through Plans of Operation and Notices of Intent. There are 3 cultural resource sites located within the Spanish Creek CG Mineral W/D area:

Wildlife

Affected Environment
The full area of the proposed mineral withdrawal was used for purposes of the wildlife analysis. Habitats can be extensive and don’t fit neatly into the mineral withdrawal boundary. These habitat areas are noted below. The proposed mineral withdrawal is 82.5 acres in size and forms an extended rectangle around the campground.
Environmental Consequences


Effects of Proposed Action on Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, Candidate and Sensitive species, Management Indicator Species and Migratory Birds
The proposed action (withdrawal of the project area from mineral entry) would maintain the status quo in the project area; therefore the proposed action would not result in any loss of current habitat or increased negative impact to wildlife currently in the project area.

Sierra Nevada Yellow-legged Frog: The project area is not within suitable habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs because the site is below the lower 3500 foot elevation limit for the species. The project area is not within proposed critical habitat for the Sierra Nevada Yellow-legged frog. Determination: The proposed action would not affect the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs or proposed critical habitat for the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog.

Alternative B (No Action): Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts
Alternative B (No Action) could result in a wide range of new mining activities, which could have negative impacts on wildlife, depending on the type and intensity of the new mining activity. The following discussion refers to Alternative B (No Action) which would allow the area to be open to new mining exploration and mining activities.

Effects of No Action on Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, Candidate and Sensitive species, Management Indicator Species and Migratory Birds
Sierra Nevada Yellow-legged Frog: The project area is not within suitable habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs because the site is below the lower 3500 foot elevation limit for the species. The project area is not within proposed critical habitat for the Sierra Nevada Yellow-legged frog. The no action alternative would not affect the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog or proposed critical habitat for the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog.

Foothill Yellow-legged Frog: Suitable habitat for foothill yellow-legged frogs exists in the project area. Future mining activities, such as highbanking or other activities that would occur in the stream or affect water quality, could negatively impact foothill yellow-legged frogs, sensitive fish, reptiles, and other aquatic species in the area. New mining activities would need to be specifically evaluated under a future plan of operations if proposed.

Spotted Owl: No known spotted owl nests occur within the project area; however a Protected Activity Center (PAC) overlaps the project area by approximately 15 acres. Increased mining activity, especially if it involves the use of heavy equipment or removal of overstory trees, could reduce the amount or quality of habitat within the PAC. This type of activity would need to be specifically evaluated under a future plan of operations if proposed.

Bald Eagle: A bald eagle has been documented in the project area, however there are no known nest structures within or adjacent to the project area. Minor mining activities such as panning or high banking would be unlikely to impact bald eagle habitat or foraging opportunities. Major mining
activities that remove overstory old forest habitat could remove potential roost or future nest trees. This type of activity would need to be specifically evaluated under a future plan of operations if proposed.

Northern Goshawk: There are no known goshawks in the project area. The nearest documented goshawk nest is 0.75 miles from the project area. If a goshawk nest is found in or adjacent to the project area, further biological evaluation would be required.

Forest Carnivore habitat exists in the project area. Surveys were completed in 2013 as part of the Butterfly Project area and no species of concern were detected. Most minor mining activities would have no effect to forest carnivores. A major mine that removed overstory trees may affect habitat in the future, and this would need to be specifically evaluated under a future plan of operations if proposed.

Hardhead Minnow habitat exists in the project area. Gold panning activities would be unlikely to affect the hardhead. Activities such as dredging or high banking that create sediment in the water column would be likely to have adverse effects to this species. This type of activity would need to be specifically evaluated under a future plan of operations if proposed.

Northwestern Pond Turtle habitat exists in the project area and the species is known to be present in Spanish Creek. Gold panning activities would be unlikely to affect the hardhead. Activities such as dredging or high banking that create sediment in the water column could have adverse effects to this species. Nesting habitat for this species includes sandy banks and forest openings. Activities that affect these habitat types would need to be specifically evaluated under a future plan of operations if proposed.

Refer to Table 2 for individual species determinations.

**Management Indicator Species**

Spotted Owl: See spotted owl section in the Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species section above.

Aquatic Macroinvertebrates: Future mining activities, such as highbanking or other activities that occur in the stream or affect water quality, could negatively impact aquatic macroinvertebrates and other aquatic species in the area. New mining activities would need to be specifically evaluated under a future plan of operations if proposed.

For all other Management indicator species, there is unlikely to be any increase in impact or loss of habitat under Alternative B (no action). Refer to Table 2 for individual species determinations.

**Migratory Birds**

Peregrine Falcon: There are no documented occurrences of peregrine falcons and there is no suitable breeding habitat in or near the project area.

Bald Eagle: See Bald Eagle section in the Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species section above.
Spotted Owl: See spotted owl section in the Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species section above.

There is unlikely to be any increase in impact or loss of habitat for all other Migratory Bird species under either the Proposed Action or Alternative B (no action). See Table 3 for individual species determinations.
Table 2. Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, Candidate and Sensitive Animal Species that potentially occur on the Plumas National Forest and determinations for the Spanish Creek Campground Mineral Withdrawal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invertebrates</th>
<th>Species Status</th>
<th>Habitat or Ecosystem Component</th>
<th>Category for Project Analysis**</th>
<th>Determinations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valley elderberry longhorn beetle (Desmocerus californicus dimorphus)</td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>Elderberry trees (Sambucus spp.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardhead minnow (Mylopharodon conocephalus)</td>
<td>USFS : S</td>
<td>Riverine and Lacustrine</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California red-legged frog (Rana aurora draytonii)</td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>Riverine and Lacustrine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foothill yellow-legged frog (Rana boylii)</td>
<td>USFS : S, DFG : SSC</td>
<td>Riverine and Lacustrine</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra (Mountain) yellow-legged frog (Rana sierrae)</td>
<td>FE, USFS : S, CDFW : SSC</td>
<td>Riverine and Lacustrine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern leopard frog (Rana pipiens)</td>
<td>USFS : S, DFG : SSC</td>
<td>Riverine and Lacustrine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reptiles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern pond turtle (Clemmys marmorata marmorata)</td>
<td>USFS : S, DFG : SSC</td>
<td>Riverine and Lacustrine</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus)</td>
<td>USFS : S, SE, USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>Large trees adjacent to riverine and lacustrine</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California spotted owl (Strix occidentalis occidentalis)</td>
<td>USFS : S, USFS : MIS, DFG : SSC, USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>Late Seral Closed Canopy Coniferous Forest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater sandhill crane (Grus canadensis tabida)</td>
<td>USFS : S, ST</td>
<td>Prefers open habitats (grasslands and croplands) with shallow lakes and fresh emergent wetlands</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great gray owl (Strix nebulosa)</td>
<td>USFS : S, SE</td>
<td>Late Seral Closed Canopy Coniferous Forest adjacent to wet meadows</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern goshawk (Accipiter gentilis)</td>
<td>USFS : S, DFG : SSC</td>
<td>Late Seral Closed Canopy Coniferous Forest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species (Scientific Name)</td>
<td>Species Status*</td>
<td>Habitat or Ecosystem Component</td>
<td>Category for Project Analysis**</td>
<td>Determinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swainson's hawk (<em>Buteo swainsoni</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : S, DFG : SSC</td>
<td>Open desert, grassland or cropland containing scattered, large trees or small groves</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow flycatcher (<em>Empidonax traillii brewsteri</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : S, SE, USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>Riparian with dense willows</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mammals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species Name (Scientific Name)</th>
<th>Species Status</th>
<th>Habitat or Ecosystem Component</th>
<th>Category for Project Analysis</th>
<th>Determinations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American marten (<em>Martes americana</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : S</td>
<td>Late Seral Closed Canopy Coniferous Forest</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California wolverine (<em>Gulo gulo luteus</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : S, ST</td>
<td>Late Seral Closed Canopy Coniferous Forest</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific fisher (<em>Martes pennanti pacifica</em>)</td>
<td>FC, USFS : S, DFG : SSC</td>
<td>Late Seral Closed Canopy Coniferous Forest</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Nevada red fox (<em>Vulpes vulpes nectator</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : S, ST</td>
<td>Late Seral Closed Canopy Coniferous Forest</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray Wolf</td>
<td></td>
<td>General Forest and unforested conditions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pallid bat (<em>Antrozous pallidus</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : S, DFG : SSC</td>
<td>Most common in open, dry habitats with rocky areas (rocky outcrops, cliffs and crevices)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townsend’s big-eared bat (<em>Corynorhinus townsendii</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : S, DFG : SSC</td>
<td>Mesic Habitats</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western red bat (<em>Lasiurus choloscevillii</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : S, DFG : SSC</td>
<td>Strongly associated with riparian habitats, particularly mature stands of cottonwood/sycamore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>WNA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Category 1**: Species whose habitat is not in or adjacent to the wildlife analysis area and would not be affected by the project.

**Category 2**: Species whose habitat is in or adjacent to the wildlife analysis area, but would not be either directly or indirectly affected by the project.

**Category 3**: Species whose habitat would be either directly or indirectly affected by the project.

*Determinations: T, E & P Species: WNA = Will Not Affect, MAINLA = May Affect but Is Not Likely to Adversely Affect Individuals or their designated critical habitat, MAILAA = May Affect and Is Likely to Adversely Affect Individuals or their designated critical habitat.

FS Sensitive Species: WNA = Will Not Affect, MAI = May Affect Individuals, but is not likely to result in a trend toward Federal listing or loss of viability, MAILRTFL = May Affect Individuals, and is Likely to Result in a Trend toward Federal Listing or loss of viability.
Table 3. Analysis of Management Indicator Species that Potentially Occur in the Project Area. Species that have habitat that may be affected by the alternatives are discussed further in the narrative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habitat or Ecosystem Component</th>
<th>CWHR Type(s) defining the habitat or ecosystem component*</th>
<th>Sierra Nevada Forests Management Indicator Species (Scientific Name)</th>
<th>Species Status **</th>
<th>Category for Project Analysis ***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Seral Coniferous Forest</td>
<td>Douglas-fir (DFR), Eastside Pine (EPN), Jeffrey Pine (JPN), Lodgepole Pine (LPN), Ponderosa Pine (PPN), Red Fir (RFR), Sierran Mixed Conifer (SMC), Subalpine Conifer (SCN), White Fir (WFR), tree sizes 1, 2, &amp; 3, all canopy closures</td>
<td>Mountain quail (<em>Oreortyx pictus</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : MIS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Seral Coniferous Forest</td>
<td>Douglas-fir (DFR), Eastside Pine (EPN), Jeffrey Pine (JPN), Lodgepole Pine (LPN), Ponderosa Pine (PPN), Red Fir (RFR), Sierran Mixed Conifer (SMC), Subalpine Conifer (SCN), White Fir (WFR), tree size 4, all canopy closures</td>
<td>Mountain quail (<em>Oreortyx pictus</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : MIS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Seral Open Canopy Coniferous Forest</td>
<td>Douglas-fir (DFR), Eastside Pine (EPN), Jeffrey Pine (JPN), Lodgepole Pine (LPN), Ponderosa Pine (PPN), Red Fir (RFR), Sierran Mixed Conifer (SMC), Subalpine Conifer (SCN), White Fir (WFR), tree size 5, canopy closures S and P</td>
<td>Sooty grouse (<em>Dendragapus obscurus</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : MIS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Seral Closed Canopy Coniferous Forest</td>
<td>Douglas-fir (DFR), Eastside Pine (EPN), Jeffrey Pine (JPN), Lodgepole Pine (LPN), Ponderosa Pine (PPN), Red Fir (RFR), Sierran Mixed Conifer (SMC), Subalpine Conifer (SCN), White Fir (WFR), tree size 5 canopy closures M and D, and tree size 6.</td>
<td>California spotted owl (<em>Strix occidentalis occidentalis</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : S, USFS : MIS, DFG : SSC, USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak-associated Hardwood &amp; Hardwood/conifer</td>
<td>Montane Hardwood (MHW), Montane Hardwood-Conifer (MHC)</td>
<td>Mule deer (<em>Odocoileus hemionus</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : MIS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riparian</td>
<td>Montane Riparian (MRI), Valley Foothill Riparian (VRI)</td>
<td>Yellow warbler (<em>Dendroica petechia</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : MIS, DFG : SSC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverine &amp; Lacustrine</td>
<td>Riverine (RIV), Lacustrine (LAC)</td>
<td>Aquatic macroinvertebrates</td>
<td>USFS : MIS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrubland (west-slope chaparral types)</td>
<td>Montane Chaparral (MCP), Mixed Chaparral (MCH), Chamise-Redshank Chaparral (CRC)</td>
<td>Fox sparrow (<em>Passerella iliaca</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : MIS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snags in Burned Forest</td>
<td>Medium and large snags in burned forest (stand-replacing fire)</td>
<td>Black-backed woodpecker (<em>Picoides arcticus</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : MIS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snags in Green Forest</td>
<td>Medium and large snags in green forest</td>
<td>Hairy woodpecker (<em>Picoides villosus</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : MIS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet Meadow</td>
<td>Wet Meadow (WTM), Freshwater Emergent Wetland (FEW)</td>
<td>Pacific chorus frog (<em>Pseudacris regilla</em>)</td>
<td>USFS : MIS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All CWHR size classes and canopy closures are included unless otherwise specified; dbh = diameter at breast height; 1 = Seedling Tree <1” dbh, 2 = Sapling Tree 1 - 6” dbh, 3 = Pole Tree 6 - 11” dbh, 4 = Small Tree 11 - 24”dbh, 5 = Medium/Large Tree >24”dbh, 6 = Multi-layered Tree. D = Dense Canopy Cover (> 60%), M = Moderate Canopy Cover (40 - 59%), P = Open Canopy Cover (25 – 39%), S = Sparse Canopy Cover (10 – 24%) (Mayer and Laudenslayer 1988).

**Species Status: FE = Federal Endangered, FT = Federal Threatened, FP = Federal Proposed, FC = Federal Candidate,
**USFS : S** = U.S. Forest Service - Sensitive, **USFS : MIS** = U.S. Forest Service – Management Indicator Species, **SE** = State Endangered, **ST** = State Threatened, **DFG : FP** = State Fully Protected, **DFG : SSC** = State Species of Special Concern, **USFWS : BCC** = U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern, **SOI** = Species of Interest.

***Category 1***: Species whose habitat is not in or adjacent to the Wildlife Analysis Area and would not be affected by the project.

***Category 2***: Species whose habitat is in or adjacent to the Wildlife Analysis Area, but would not be either directly or indirectly affected by the project.

***Category 3***: Species whose habitat would be either directly or indirectly affected by the project.

Table 4. Analysis of Migratory Birds that Potentially Occur in the Project Area.

Species that have habitat that may be affected by the alternatives are discussed further in the narrative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birds of Conservation Concern (Sierra Nevada - BCR 15) Species (Scientific Name)</th>
<th>Species Status*</th>
<th>Forest Service Sensitive Species (S) or Management Indicator Species (MIS)</th>
<th>Critical Habitat component or threat as defined by Sierra Nevada Bird Conservation Plan (PIF)</th>
<th>Category for Project Analysis**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American peregrine falcon (Falco peregrinus anatum)</td>
<td>SE, USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>No representative Sensitive or MIS species</td>
<td>Bodies of water in open areas with protected cliffs, canyons and ledges for cover and nesting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus)</td>
<td>USFS : S, SE, USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>Bald Eagle (S)</td>
<td>Designated as a non-land bird by DeSante</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black swift (Cypseloides niger)</td>
<td>USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>No representative Sensitive or MIS species</td>
<td>Wet cliff, waterfalls</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California spotted owl (Strix occidentalis occidentalis)</td>
<td>USFWS : S, USFS : MIS, DFG : SSC, USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>California Spotted Owl (S)</td>
<td>Depends critically on old growth</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calliope Hummingbird (Stellula calliope)</td>
<td>USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>Sooty (Blue) Grouse (MIS) Yellow Warbler (MIS) Willow Flycatcher (S)</td>
<td>Open Forested habitats, and moist habitats on the East Slope</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassin’s Finch (Carpodacus cassinii)</td>
<td>USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>California Spotted Owl (S)</td>
<td>Depends critically on old growth</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flammulated Owl (Otis flammeolus)</td>
<td>USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>Mule Deer (MIS) Hairy Woodpecker (MIS)</td>
<td>Depends critically on oaks or oak woodlands, Loss of snags</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis’ woodpecker (Melanerpes lewis)</td>
<td>USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>Hairy Woodpecker (MIS)</td>
<td>Loss of snags</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olive-sided flycatcher (Contopus cooperi)</td>
<td>DFG : SSC, USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>California Spotted Owl (S) Hairy Woodpecker (MIS)</td>
<td>Utilize late successional/old growth forest, but does not depend on it critically, Loss of snags</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamson’s sapsucker (Spyrarpicus thyroideus)</td>
<td>USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>Hairy Woodpecker (MIS)</td>
<td>Loss of snags</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow flycatcher (Empidonax traillii brewsteri)</td>
<td>USFWS : S, SE, USFWS : BCC</td>
<td>Willow Flycatcher (S)</td>
<td>Depends critically on montane meadow habitat</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Species Status: **FE** = Federal Endangered, **FT** = Federal Threatened, **USFS : S** = U. S. Forest Service - Sensitive, **USFS : MIS** = U.S. Forest Service – Management Indicator Species, **SE** = State Endangered, **ST** = State Threatened, **DFG : FP** = State Fully Protected, **DFG : SSC** = State Species of Special Concern, **USFWS : BCC** = U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern, **SOI** = Species of Interest.

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Recreation

Affected Environment
The developed campground and associated day use area is the same area of potential effect as the proposed Spanish Creek Withdrawal. The proposed mineral withdrawal is 82.5 acres in size and forms an extended rectangle around the campground.

The cool waters of Spanish Creek, the clean and well-kept facilities, and the scenic forest and creek draw multitudes of recreationists to this campground each summer. The campground is close to the town of Quincy, so oftentimes it gets visitor use when large events are held in town such as the High Sierra Music Festival in July. Recreation at the site consists of camping, fishing (the Plumas Children’s Fishing Derby has been held here in the past), swimming, wading, picnicking, nature study, sightseeing and photography.

The campground is hosted by a concessionaire and fees are charged for overnight occupancy. There are currently 21 sites and fees are $25.00 per night.

Recreation use typically occurs between May and October which is the same time period that mining use on other parts of the forest peaks. Direct user conflicts that could occur between recreationists and miners would generally be limited to this period.

Within the past 5 years the Spanish Creek Campground has received several upgrades and improvements. The road through the site was re-paved in 2012. Bear boxes and lantern hangers have been installed and eight wood picnic tables have been replaced with eight concrete tables within the last year. A new group site will be added to the campground in 2016. In 2013, after the completion of the Spanish Creek Bridge, an interpretive site was added at the campground entrance which includes: benches, safety fencing, interpretive panels, a time capsule, stone marker and native vegetation. There has been a significant amount of time and money invested by the Forest Service to maintain and improve this recreation site.
Environmental Consequences

Alternative A, Proposed Action: Direct and Indirect Effects
Through implementation of a mineral withdrawal, there would be a continued recreational focus at the Spanish Creek Campground. Current uses would continue, and more recreation activities may occur in the future. Campers, swimmers, fishermen and other recreationists would continue to use the site exclusively. This is a direct effect.

The proposed group campsite would fall within the mineral withdrawal area and would bring more people to the area to enjoy the outdoor experience. Added tourism in the area is an indirect effect that may occur with the implementation of this specific withdrawal. Additionally, campground infrastructure would be protected from heavy equipment use and effects of large scale mining should those activities be proposed and approved.

Alternative B, No Action: Direct and Indirect Effects
There could be a significant direct effect to recreational resources if the no action alternative was selected. Primary activities in this area are camping, swimming and wading, fishing, picnicking, and sightseeing. From mid-May through Labor Day, use increases dramatically. Day users prefer recreating adjacent to the creek; enjoying the natural river views and the clear waters of Spanish Creek.
In the absence of a mineral withdrawal, mining claims may be located within the campground. Although mining and recreation can and do co-exist all across the forest, there are occasionally conflicts in regards to surface use. Mining by its nature requires at least some disturbance of the land to extract the minerals. This land can be reclaimed, but there is a period of time during the operation where the land would be disturbed. Campers typically are seeking a different forest experience; they are visitors who seek a more natural, undisturbed setting.

This is not to say that these two user groups (campers and miners) are exclusively different. Mining claimants seek to enjoy the outdoors and through environmentally sound mining practices and reclamation, can be responsible stewards of the land. The justification for the withdrawal therefore, lies in the financial and tangible commitment by the Forest Service to define this area as a campground and continue to support and expand the infrastructure.

If the area remains open to mineral entry, claim markers could be posted within and adjacent to the campground. Gold panning and sluicing may occur within the creek without any further authorization from the Forest Service. Many mining operations are small scale, intermittent actions which would not likely have tremendous impact to other forest visitors; however larger scale operations may be proposed and approved, including highbanking or trommel operations using heavy equipment. New roads may be created and mining activities could occur on lands that were previously undeveloped if the No Action Alternative were selected. Noise levels at the site would increases during times of heavy equipment use. These proposals would be evaluated individually for impacts, but the potential exists for these projects to be approved under the 1872 Mining Law. These types of activities could have a significant impact on an area which currently caters to people seeking a serene and picturesque forest experience.

Indirect effects on recreation users of Spanish Creek under Alternative B would include minor long-term changes to the recreation setting and experience. Although reclamation is required following mining projects, there are still alterations to the landscape that cannot completely be mitigated. There could be continuing changes to the visual character of the area. The impacts to recreation could be adverse as a result of the mining activities’ potential to alter the existing recreation setting and opportunity.

**Cumulative Effects**
If Alternative B were selected, there may be cumulative effects on recreation resources over time. Although the mineral potential report does not indicate a likelihood of finding a large mineral deposit within the proposed withdrawal area, exploration projects could lead to production operations, impacting campground facilities. Site conditions would change due to excavations and ongoing work. Mining claimants could camp on their claim upstream and downstream of the campground, therefore leading to conflict with paying users and campground hosts. With increased dispersed camping and day use along the creek there is a concern for sanitation issues. This change in site conditions may lead to decreased visitor use. Decreased visitor use could lead to a decrease in revenue.
References


USDA 2004b. Record of Decision Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment. USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region, Vallejo, CA.

USDA 2013. Programmatic Agreement Among the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5), California State Historic Preservation Officer, Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding the Process for Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for Management of Historic Properties by the National Forests of the Pacific Southwest Region.


