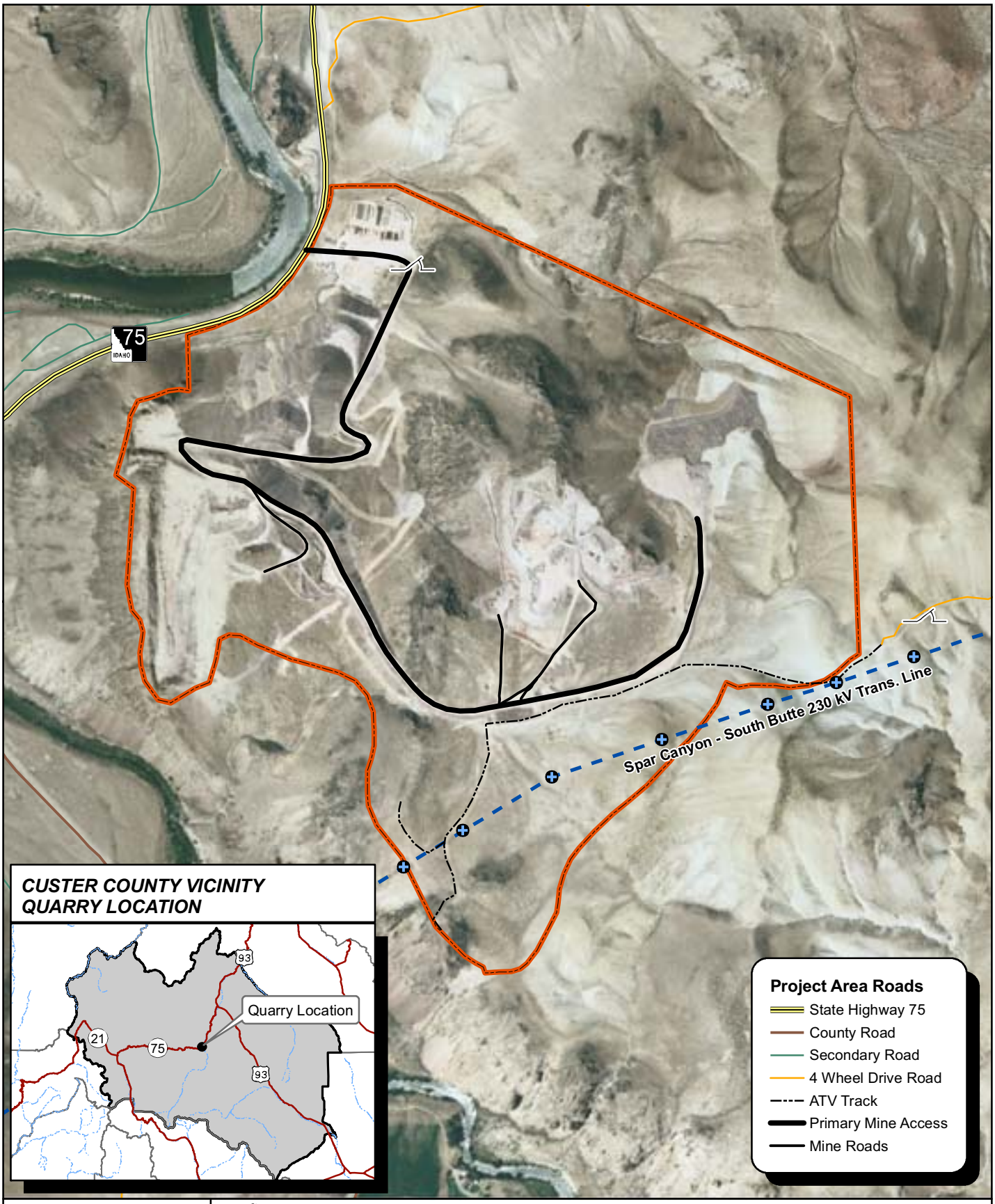

Legend

- Project Area
- Locked Gate
- Power Poles
- Transmission Line

N W E S

Figure 3.3-13. Transportation Map

0 250 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 Feet

1:10,000

Three Rivers Stone Quarry
L & W Stone

The 230 kV "Spar Canyon-South Butte" section of electric transmission line (Figure 3.3-13) was constructed during 1981 to 1982 in a 100-foot wide right-of-way near the Proposed Project Area by the Salmon River Electric Cooperative, Inc (BLM serial number IDI-15966). The right-of-way agreement specifies that all activities directly or indirectly associated with the construction and maintenance of the power line must be conducted within the limits of the right-of-way. However, the right-of-way agreement also specifies that existing roads be used wherever possible. Consequently, only 3.5 miles of new roads were constructed for the entire right-of-way (Moore to Squaw Creek and Challis, approximately 80 miles). A natural-surface road generally parallels the right-of-way, but in many places is outside the right-of-way. It is inferred that nearly all of the power-line access road existed prior to the power line construction. The portions of such road outside the right-of-way are not recorded with the BLM, but are generally considered to be public roads.

A section of the power-line access road extends from Highway 75 through the project site (Figure 3.3-13), and ultimately connects with the Spar Canyon area. The approximately first 0.25 mile of the power-line access road from Highway 75 utilizes an existing road (built prior to 1981 for access to the Pit 1 area). The road surface is compacted soil, but the road has been enlarged and covered by crushed rock where it is used for mine operations.

The region between the project site and the Spar Canyon area is remote and rarely used by the public. For example, the power-line access road typically is used 5 to 10 times each year by the public, primarily by hunters who access the road from Highway 75, or less commonly may access the road from the Spar Canyon area and exit onto Highway 75. The road also is used by a mining claimant, other than L&W Stone, to access mining claims.

Gates restricting public access through the quarry have been authorized and installed to ensure safety to both the public and quarry employees. L&W Stone initiated a policy in July 2003 that all visitors must: 1) check in with L&W Stone personnel at the administration area upon arrival to the site, 2) indicate the purpose of the visit and area of the quarry that will be visited, and 3) be accompanied by a quarry employee at all times while at the quarry site. L&W Stone employees generally are not present from 6:00 pm to 7:00 am, and the gate at the entrance to the project site is locked in the absence of quarry personnel. However, reasonable accommodation to the quarry site by the public is made by the quarry employees.

Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) maintains an Automatic Traffic Recorder on SH-75 located just north of the bridge over the East Fork Salmon River at Milepost 227. This traffic recorder (#82) counts all vehicles passing it on a daily bases. Information from this traffic recorder is summarized and made available in a variety of formats by ITD. Traffic on SH-75 varies seasonally, with peak use occurring during the summer. Average daily traffic for 2006

passing Automatic Traffic Recorder 82, summarized by month, ranged from a low of 369 vehicles per day in January to a high of 1,254 per day in July. The 2006 annual average for this traffic recorder was 718 vehicles per day (ITD 2007).

The majority of vehicles leaving the quarry (trucks and personal vehicles) travel north on SH-75 and therefore are not counted by Automatic Traffic Recorder 82. Most of the employees of the quarry commute on SH-75 at an approximate rate of two passengers per vehicle. Existing quarry-generated traffic traveling north on SH-75 is estimated at approximately 37 personal vehicles (75 round trip) per day and two to three trucks (four to six round trip). Adding these numbers to the ITD 2006 annual daily average for Automatic Traffic Counter 82 increases the estimated annual daily average vehicle use on SH-75, between the bridge over the East Fork Salmon River and US-93, to approximately 799 vehicles or an 11 percent increase.

3.3.6 Land Uses and Private Property

Both the surface and mineral estates of the Proposed Project Area are owned by the Federal government and administered by the BLM. A number of active mining claims (including mill site claims) are located on and in the vicinity of the Proposed Project Area.

The BLM has issued one right-of-way to Salmon River Electric Cooperative, Inc. for construction and maintenance of a 230 kV suspended power line in the Proposed Project Area. The current Challis Land Use Plan does not identify the Proposed Project Area as one for disposal or exchange. There are no land exchanges currently proposed by BLM for the quarry site. The Three Rivers Stone Quarry is located in the Split Hoof Grazing Allotment. A grazing permit has been issued for this allotment, although livestock generally do not utilize forage within the quarry boundaries.

Existing and potential land uses within and proximal to the Three Rivers Stone Quarry include mineral exploration and development, electric power-line rights-of-way, State Highway rights-of-way, cattle grazing, recreation, and residential living. Based on the site topography and remoteness, it is not anticipated that the site would ever be developed for anything other than mining, grazing, and easements for roads and public utilities.

Private lands are found 1 mile to the south of the Proposed Project Area along the East Fork Salmon River as well as 1.5 miles to the north along the Salmon River. These lands are being used for livestock grazing and home sites as well as under agricultural production.

3.3.7 Recreation

The area in and immediately surrounding the quarry site provides minimal recreation opportunities on public land. Public access to the site is limited by locked gates and topography (i.e. the cliffs to the south), and activities on-site are managed consistent with Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) safety requirements, which provides the public very limited access or freedom of activity. Public lands beyond the immediate vicinity of the quarry to the east and south, provide somewhat primitive (with the exception of the intensively managed East Fork Campground) recreation opportunities, with minimal evidence of management intervention. Visitors to the public lands can reasonably expect to recreate without encountering large numbers of other people.

While recreational use of the Proposed Project Area itself is not possible due to the current mining activities, there are a variety of uses that occur in the vicinity of the Proposed Project Area. The major recreation uses of the public lands in the vicinity of the quarry include floating (e.g., inner tubing, kayaking, rafting, canoeing), boating, fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, nature study, photography, picnicking, wildlife viewing, backpacking, rockhounding, mountain biking, cross country skiing, and off highway vehicle use. The most frequent of these uses are camping at the BLM East Fork Campground, wildlife viewing along East Fork road, and floating the Salmon River. The East Fork campground is at the confluence of Highway 75, the East Fork Salmon River, and the Salmon River, approximately 0.30 mile west of the western boundary of the quarry. The campground has 14 campsites and potable water but provides no boat access to the rivers. The Three Rivers Stone Quarry is not visible from the campground. Under certain atmospheric conditions, mining activities from the quarry are audible at the campground. Noises sometimes heard include those from heavy equipment use (diesel engines and back-up alarms), the scraping of metal on rocks, trucks entering and leaving the site, and “thumps” during blasting. However, some of the noise from the mining activities is masked by the sound of the East Fork Salmon River, the noise of vehicles on the highway, and the prevailing winds in the area.

The Proposed Project Area is located within the Upper Salmon River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) (Figure 3.3-14). This SRMA contains 108,279 acres and was created to protect its unique recreation values, including the outstanding opportunities for river recreation, ease of access, international name recognition, and proximity of the area to other prominent recreation centers. The Upper Salmon River SRMA includes the entire reach of both the East Fork Salmon River and the Salmon River that are managed by the Challis Field Office. The Challis RMP enlarged the SRMA from a corridor 0.25 mile wide on each side of the Salmon River (USDI-BLM 1998, Map 3-2) to its present configuration (USDI-

BLM 1999, Map 40). The Challis RMP states that saleable mineral activity will be considered within the SRMA if impacts to other resource values are minimized.

Recreational use of the project site is minimal with the exception of rockhounding, hunting, and OHV use. The site remains somewhat important visually to the recreational experience of people using the Salmon River. There have been some past modifications to the visual quality of some recreational experiences in site-specific areas due to the mining activities that have occurred at the site (see Section 3.3.4, Visual Resources).

Mining claims have been located at the Proposed Project Area since at least the 1960s. Due to the increased mining activity in this area since then, the road density has also increased. SH-75 was constructed in the 1950s and runs adjacent to the quarry site. Access to the quarry site has diminished despite the increased road density due to the increased restrictions to visitor activities. The remoteness of the site has decreased since the 1960s with the increase in mining activity, and the naturalness of the site has decreased with the increase in modifications to the landscape from mining activities and the associated increase in visibility of human activity.

The Upper Salmon was an extremely popular salmon sport fishing stream in the 1950s and 1960s. Recreation use (fishing) was incredibly high but there were no facilities available to accommodate the fishermen. After several severe threats to human health (because of the lack of sanitation), the first recreation developments were put in along the river, with the BLM, State of Idaho, and county governments all cooperating. Unfortunately, the salmon fishery faltered in the late 1960's and by 1978 the IDFG ended all salmon sport fishing on the Salmon River.

The return of the steelhead runs in the 1980s brought the Salmon River back into the limelight, where it gained in visibility and reputation. People again saw the Salmon River as a quality anadromous fishery. The construction of two salmon hatcheries in the Salmon River drainage could also mean the eventual return of a salmon sport fishery. Add this to a good-to-excellent trout fishery and the result is an important recreation resource. Recreation use on the Salmon River has grown at a rate much faster than "normal" recreation trends. Based on the attraction of the Salmon River corridor to recreationists, recreation along the river corridor is expected to increase.