

HOLLISTER RESOURCE AREA
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW SCOPING SHEET

PART (A) -

Project Name: Jade Mill Recreation Site Development

Project Lead: Brian White – CCMA Project Coordinator

Summary of Proposed Action & Associated RMP/Activity Plan Decisions:

- 1) Install two sealed vault toilets.
- 2) Install adequate fencing to contain denuded area size and prevent additional route proliferation in the area. This would consist of corridor and containment fencing in the area.
- 3) Cleanup remaining debris from mine/claim rehab.
- 4) Protect vegetation and soils via fencing, public info, and containment of recreational use.
- 5) Reduce motorized vehicle route proliferation via fencing, signing, and public education.
- 6) Post existing information kiosk with information about project as appropriate.
- 7) Rehabilitation of heavily traveled/denuded areas. These actions would include soil scarification, reseeding with locally collected native seed, and mulching of impacted areas to slow erosion on disturbed surfaces.
- 8) Design and install vehicle barricades/parking delineation within the upper camping area. Design and construction would be similar to barricades in place at Oak Flat CG.

Management Area: CCMA

Special Mgmt. Area (WSA, ACEC, etc.): SRMA/ACEC

Legal Land Description: T 18S R10E NE ¼ Section 15

Date NEPA process initiated: 08/03/04

Proposed deadline for decision: 11/1/04

PART (B) -

NEPA Documentation #: CA-190-2004-25

Public Notification Procedure: Existing CCMA mailing list, field contacts, and notice posted on-site.

Associated NEPA Documents:

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Hollister RMP | August 1984 |
| Clear Creek Proposed RMP Amendment and Final EIS | July 1995 |
| Clear Creek RMP Amendment and ROD | January 1999 |

Assessment Level: Major EA

PART (C) - EA SCOPING PROCEDURE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Individuals assigned to participate in this project are highlighted below. Each assigned team member should indicate if they need to assist in preparation of the EA or review only, and if they need to participate in a field exam. Deadline for Team Member input if you wish to assist in preparation is August 20, 2004

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW ASSIGNMENTS

| ASSIGNED TASKS | PREPARATION OR REVIEW ONLY | FIELD EXAM REQUIRED | | INITIALS | DATE |
|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|-----|----------|----------------------|
| | | NO | YES | | |
| Byrne | | x | | | |
| Cotterill | | x | | | |
| Delgado, JA | | | x | | Oct. 2004 |
| Hill | | x | x | | Oct. 2004 |
| Diridoni | | | | | |
| Moore | | x | | | |
| Schwarz | | | x | | Nov. 2004 |
| Slibsager | | x | | | |
| Wrobel | | | x | | Oct. 2004 |
| Zaborsky | | | x | | Oct. 2004 |

Environmental Coordinator (signature)

Date

EA, FONSI AND DR FORM
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT - HOLLISTER RESOURCE AREA

EA Number: CA-190-2004-025

EA NAME: Jade Mill Recreation Site Development

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: N/A

Proposed Action Title/Type: Protective fencing, and restroom installation.

Location of Proposed Action: Clear Creek Management Area

Applicant (if any): N/A

Conformance With Applicable Land Use Plan:

This proposed action is subject to the following land use plan (s):

| <u>Name of Plan</u> | <u>Date Approved</u> |
|--|----------------------|
| Hollister RMP | August 1984 |
| Clear Creek Management Plan and Decision Record | June 1986 |
| Clear Creek Proposed RMP Amendment and Final EIS | July 1995 |
| Biological Opinion for the Clear Creek Management Area | September 1997 |
| Clear Creek RMP Amendment and ROD | January 1999 |

These plans have been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms with the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

I. Need for Proposed Action:

The Record of Decision for the Clear Creek Resource Management Plan Amendment (1999) directed that the Clear Creek Management Area be managed so as to provide for off-highway vehicle recreation under a Limited Use designation, while protecting the natural resources.

Camping opportunities within the CCMA have been reduced over time, particularly within the heavily used Clear Creek Canyon area. This project would improve camping opportunities and experiences within CCMA.

Heavy camping use is occurring at the Jade Mill site which has led to illegal route proliferation, resource impacts from OHV use, and improper disposal of human waste. Some of this waste is deposited within 200 feet of Clear Creek. Furthermore, camping areas are poorly defined and the denuded area has increased dramatically with the removal of structures after a "quit claim" action occurred adjacent to the site. The nearest toilet facility is currently ½ mile from the Jade Mill site. Human waste is regularly found on the ground within the area. Installation of vault

toilets would reduce the improper disposal of human waste in the area. Toilets would be sited to maximize their visibility, accessibility, and use by the public.

BLM has identified the Jade Mill site as a potential future recreation site (BLM, 1984), although it is adjacent to the serpentine Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) which contains naturally occurring asbestos. BLM policy has since been modified to not encourage use within Jade Mill area due to the asbestos hazard (BLM, 1995). However, the Jade Mill site remains a favorite camping location and receives consistently heavy use. Heavy OHV and camping recreational use regularly occurs within serpentine ACEC. Six OHV staging areas within Clear Creek canyon have primitive facilities and are heavily used for camping and parking. Information is posted throughout the CCMA informing the public of the presence of asbestos.

There is a known prehistoric archaeological site within the Jade Mill vicinity; CA-SBn-64 is a small lithic scatter that was extensively impacted by indiscriminant recreational use as early as 1975. The site had probably been impacted much earlier in time, during the historic mining and logging interests of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Interim management of the site included monitoring and some protective fencing installed to control human-caused impacts to the vegetation (which indirectly benefited portions of the archaeological site). Until the remediation of Jade Mill, the area was not a likely candidate for the encouraged use of camping. Since the millsite was removed (FY2001), camping pressures have moved into the site area and created the need for more permanent fencing and better protection of the remnants of site CA-SBn-64.

Within the Jade Mill area there is one population of federally threatened San Benito Evening primrose (*Camissonia benitensis*). Although this population has been surrounded by protective fencing it is frequently impacted by visitor use in the area. Improvements to the entire area will provide facilities that will serve to protect this threatened plant habitat.

Fencing would contain vehicular use to currently impacted areas and reduce route proliferation and enlargement of the affected area. Vehicle barricades would direct vehicle traffic to less sensitive areas and delineate appropriate parking and camping areas.

Corridor fencing of R002 within the site and on the ridge line above would restrict vehicular travel to the designated route (R002) per the 1999 ROD for the CCMA.

Rehabilitation efforts as proposed would aid the recovery of native vegetation outside the newly fenced areas, returning them to a more natural state.

II. Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives:

Alternative I. No Action

The BLM would leave the Jade Mill site as is with no new facilities or changes in management. Human waste would continue to be improperly disposed of, and the area would continue to be adversely impacted by unregulated OHV use and camping.

Alternative II. Proposed Action

Two CXT sealed vault toilets would be installed at centralized locations in both the upper and lower camping areas (See Map 1 for locations). The toilets were purchased in 2003 for installation within CCMA. Approximately 10 yards of excavation would be required for the installation of each unit. Excavated soil would be used on site to reestablish the grade to the toilets and in the restoration work described below.

Corridor fencing would be installed along R002 as shown on Map 1, leaving adequate gaps for access to traditional camping areas. Perimeter fencing would be installed around the primary camping areas as shown in Map 1. Additional fencing on the ridge line above would eliminate vehicular access to the steep slopes above the site, and prevent users from being “trapped” by the fencing below after leaving the ridge (See Map 2). A maximum of 2 miles of 27” standard field fencing would be constructed.

The final phase of the project would involve installation of vehicle control barriers in the upper camping area similar to those found at Oak Flat. These barriers have proven effective at Oak Flat. Construction would involve auger work to install uprights, with cross members installed at 18” height. Surface disturbance would be limited to holes for upright posts. The primary camp loop would have both pull-through and back-in parking spaces for camping to accommodate vehicles of various sizes. The remainder of the area would be limited to non-motorized uses only.

The Unified Air Quality Control Board would be notified of the project prior to implementation, and any mitigation recommended would be incorporated into the construction project. Water trucks would be utilized when activities are generating visible dust during project work. Fencing would be installed as much as possible during non-peak recreational periods such as weekdays. Volunteer labor may be used to build portions of the fence, with appropriate BLM staff on hand for technical guidance.

Fencing would be built to the following specifications:

1. The fence would be a 27” field wire “closed area” barrier fence installed 10”-12” above the ground.
2. T-post spacing would be 16’ -0” center with line posts at each end.
3. Wood cross braces would be at a height of 46”.
4. Fence materials would be installed by hand.
5. An ASU (all season vehicle) equipped with 2.3 psi ground pressure rubber tread tractor may be used to dig post holes.
6. Vehicles used to transport materials and equipment to each project site would use existing roads.
8. Vegetation would only be removed as necessary after botanist review. Where the fence alignment would impact a plant it would be removed or partially removed. When possible only the portion of the plant that interferes with the fence line would be removed. An exception would be slight pruning of vegetation for wire clearance, foot traffic for access, and post hole digging and re-tamping there would be minimal disturbance associated with the fence construction.
9. The removed, cut or crushed material would be left on site to benefit wildlife by providing cover.

A site management plan will be developed to better manage recreational use at the site during FY 2005. The plan would include signing, visitor information, maintenance, site inspection protocol, and future recreation site development options. Monitoring effectiveness of the new fencing and signing would be ongoing.

Portions of fencing may be temporary pending completion of the recreation site management plan for the Jade Mill area. That future plan will be analyzed under a separate

environmental analysis.

The project also includes restoration of heavily impacted areas. Rehabilitation measures would consist of limited mechanized scarification, temporary erosion control structures, and reseeded with locally collected native plant seed. Excess soil from toilet excavation would be used as fill as needed. A small portion of the historical camping area would be regraded to eliminate muddy areas and enhance drainage.

Restoration and rehabilitation areas would undergo cultural and biological resources evaluation prior to the proposed activity, with appropriate measures taken to avoid adverse effects on these resources. Preliminary field surveys of areas targeted for restoration work have revealed no major resource concerns. However, if during ground disturbing activities any cultural materials are unearthed, work in the immediate area of the discovery shall cease and a qualified archaeologist shall be immediately notified to assess the resource and initiate mitigation (if necessary).

No disturbance to the San Benito Evening-primrose habitat is anticipated.

An additional dumpster may be located at the Jade Mill site if deemed necessary. Dumpsters are already provided at each staging area and Oak Flat Campground. The dumpster would be sited similarly to the others in Clear Creek Canyon (i.e. near the kiosk and toilets).

III. Affected Environment:

General description:

The Clear Creek Management Area contains the 30,000-acre Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), a serpentine soil environment with unique plant communities and naturally occurring asbestos in the soil. Federally threatened San Benito evening primrose (*Camissonia benitensis*) inhabits stabilized terraces throughout the ACEC, including areas adjacent to the staging areas. Several additional BLM plant and animal species of concern also occur within the project area. A more detailed discussion of the Clear Creek Management Area can be found in the Clear Creek Management Area Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement (1995).

Air Quality

Fence building and equipment operations generate dust, which would likely contain asbestos fibers in this area. Construction, if conducted during the dry season, would incorporate a water truck to moisten the soil surface during the project.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

The project area lies within the Serpentine ACEC. Soils within this area contain naturally occurring asbestos, a known human carcinogen.

Cultural Resources

The project area includes a previously identified archaeological site (CA-SBn-64), primarily consisting of a lithic scatter. Prior historic disturbances include the construction of the main road through the Canyon and related mining activities associated with the former Jade Mill site (above the prehistoric site). Uncontrolled recreational use has further impacted this resource,

possibly dissecting the site into portions that are separated by protective fencing for vegetation, roads and trails, and sporadic recreation (camping) areas.

Invasive Weeds

Yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*) has invaded the nonserpentine areas in the CCMA, including Clear Creek Canyon road which is the primary access to the project site. Scattered populations of yellow starthistle are found within the project area.

Recreation

The Clear Creek Management Area (CCMA) is the largest off-highway vehicle (OHV) area in the geographical region, and is very popular for this form of recreation. In addition to OHV use, rock hounders, hunters, mountain bikers, equestrian users, campers, and hikers also enjoy the CCMA. Visitor use averages between 40,000 to 50,000 visitor use days per year, with most of the use occurring in the wet winter months between November and April.

Developed sites are the Oak Flat Campground and six staging areas, which have limited facilities including dumpsters and pit toilets. Kiosks with regulatory and visitor information are maintained at these areas. OHV users frequently travel in groups and have demonstrated a desire for vehicle-supported group camping opportunities. The six staging areas, Oak Flat Campground, and Jade Mill help meet this recreation demand. Camping by individuals and small groups also occurs at numerous informal camping sites throughout the area.

Sensitive, Threatened and Endangered Species

Plants

There are 15 sensitive plant species that occur throughout the CCMA and are known to exist or are potential within the project site (Table 1). San Benito evening primrose (*Camissonia benitensis*) has historically inhabited the site and is surrounded by protective fencing. Ongoing, undesignated camping and vehicular use in the Jade Mill area could negatively impact these species.

Table 1. Native Plant Species of Management Concern in the Clear Creek Management Area

| Common Name <i>Scientific Name</i> Family | Life Form | Legal Status | Habitat | <u>Vegetation Community</u> |
|---|-------------|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Federally Listed Plant Species | | | | |
| San Benito Evening-primrose <i>Camissonia benitensis</i> Onagraceae | annual herb | FT BLM SS CNPS List 1B | Chaparral, cismontane woodland, serpentine terraces. Known only from San Benito and w. Fresno Counties | Serpentine barrens, foothill pine / chaparral – woodland riparian |
| BLM Special Status Plant Species | | | | |
| Rayless layi a <i>Layia discoidea</i> Asteraceae | annual herb | BLM SS FSC CNPS List 1B | Chaparral, cismontane woodland, lower montane coniferous forest, serpentine alluvium and serpentine talus. Known only from W. Fresno and San Benito Counties, primarily within the CCMA ultramafics. | Serpentine barrens, foothill pine / chaparral – woodland ultramafic Jeffrey pine forest, serpentine riparian |
| Mt Diablo Phacelia <i>Phacelia phacelioides</i> Hydrophyllaceae | annual herb | BLMSS CNPS List 1B | Chaparral, cismontane woodland, talus slopes, serpentine | Serpentine barrens, Non-serpentine |

| Common Name <i>Scientific Name</i> Family | Life Form | Legal Status | Habitat | <u>Vegetation Community</u> |
|---|--------------------|------------------------|---|--|
| San Benito Fritillary <i>Fritillaria viridea</i> Liliaceae | perennial herb | BLM SS CNPS List 1B | Chaparral, serpentine slopes. | Serpentine barrens, foothill pine / chaparral – woodland ultramafic Jeffrey pine forest |
| San Benito Spineflower <i>Chorizanthe biloba var immemora</i> Onagraceae | annual herb | BLM SS CNPS List 1B | Chaparral, cismontane woodland, sandy and gravelly soils. Known only from the East slope of the Diablo Range. | Foothill pine/chaparral - woodland |
| Slender pentachaeta <i>Pentachaeta exilis ssp. aeolica</i> Asteraceae | annual herb | BLM SS CNPS List 1B | Valley and foothill grassland. Known only from Monterey and San Benito Counties. | Non-serpentine |
| Talus Fritillary <i>Fritillaria falcata</i> Liliaceae | Perennial herb | BLM SS CNPS List 1B | Chaparral, cismontane woodland, shale granite or serpentine talus. | Serpentine barrens, foothill pine / chaparral – woodland ultramafic Jeffrey pine forest |
| Other Plant Species of Management Concern | | | | |
| Aspidotis Carlotta-halliae Carlotta Hall's Lace Fern Pteridaceae | fern | CNPS List 4 | Generally serpentine slopes, crevices, outcrops | Serpentine barrens, foothill pine – chaparral woodland ultramafic Jeffrey pine forest |
| Stink Bells <i>Fritillaria agrestis</i> Liliaceae | perennial herb | CNPS List 4 | Valley and foothill grassland, rocky-gravelly areas | Foothill pine/chaparral – woodland, grassland, non-serpentine |
| Heerman's Buckwheat <i>Eriogonum heermanni</i> Polygonaceae | perennial shrub | CNPS List 4 | Serpentine, sandy washes | Serpentine riparian (terraces) |
| Monardella antonina ssp. Benitensis Lamiaceae | perennial subshrub | CNPS List 4 | Chaparral, serpentine | Serpentine barrens, foothill pine – chaparral woodland ultramafic Jeffrey pine forest |
| Santa Clara thornmint <i>Acanthomintha lanceolata</i> Lamiaceae | annual herb | CNPS List 4 | Chaparral, often serpentine, cismontane woodland, coastal scrub, rocky. | Serpentine barrens, foothill pine – chaparral woodland ultramafic Jeffrey pine forest |
| San Benito Thornmint <i>Acanthomintha obovata ssp. obovata</i> Lamiaceae | annual herb | CNPS List 4 | Chaparral, often serpentine, cismontane woodland, coastal scrub, rocky. | Serpentine barrens, foothill pine – chaparral woodland ultramafic Jeffrey pine forest |
| South Coast Range Morning Glory <i>Calystegia collina ssp. venusta</i> Convolvulaceae | Perennial herb | CNPS List 4 | Chaparral, cismontane woodland, valley and foothill grassland, serpentinite | Serpentine barrens, foothill pine – chaparral woodland ultramafic Jeffrey pine forest |
| Hernandez Bluecurls <i>Trichostema rubisepalum</i> Lamiaceae | Annual herb | CNPS List 4 | Gravelly streambeds | Serpentine riparian, Serpentine vernal pools |

Animals

There are nine threatened, endangered, or sensitive animal species found in the Jade Mill project area of the CCMA (Table 2). In addition, the CCMA is currently being used as a flyover area by the endangered California condor.

Table 2. Federally Threatened or Endangered Species in the Jade Mill project Area, CCMA

| Species | Legal Status Federal Status/State Status |
|--|---|
| California Condor (<i>Gymnogyps californianus</i>) | FE/SE CA Fully Protected Species |

(FT) Federally Threatened, (FE) Federally Endangered, (ST) State Threatened, (SE) State Endangered

In addition to these endangered species, there are 8 other special status species that may occur in the jade mill project area, which may be affected by this action (Table 2).

Table 3. Other Species of Concern in the Jade Mill project Area, CCMA

| Species | Legal Status Federal Status/State Status |
|--|---|
| Coast Horned Lizard (<i>Phrynosoma coronatum frontale</i>) | BLMS, SC, SLC |
| Foothill yellow-legged frog (<i>Rana boylei</i>) | BLMS, SC, SLC |
| Two-striped garter snake (<i>Thamnophis hammondi</i>) | BLMS, SLC |
| Bald eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>) | BLMS, SC, SLC |
| Golden Eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>) | BLMS, SLC CA Fully Protected Species |
| Prairie Falcon (<i>Falco mexicanus</i>) | BLMS, SLC |
| Sharp-shinned hawk (<i>Accipiter striatus</i>) | SLC |
| Swainson's Hawk (<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>) | ST |

(ST) State Threatened, (SE) State Endangered, (BLMS) BLM Sensitive Species, (SC) US Fish and Wildlife Services Species of Concern, (SLC) California Department of Fish and Game Species of Special Concern

Vegetation

Vegetation at the Jade Mill site consists of blue oak woodland, chaparral, perennial and annual grasses and forbs. Significant shrub cover is found around the perimeter of the presently used camping/staging areas. A substantial portion of the native cover has been lost due to heavy recreational use in the area. Blue oak stands are primarily single aged with little regeneration occurring.

Wastes, Hazardous or Solid

Naturally occurring asbestos occurs within the site and the ACEC.

Water Quality, Drinking or Ground

The site is within the Clear Creek watershed, with the perennial stream within 200 feet of the project area.

Wetlands, Riparian Zone

Depressions within the project area support ephemeral standing water. It is uncertain if these features are natural or the result of human activities at the site.

Wildlife Habitat

The perimeter of the project area and the adjacent landscapes contains significant grass/forb, brush/shrub and oak woodland components, including the non-serpentine/serpentine soils edge and associated vegetation types. This imparts a high diversity of wildlife species that occur, or have the potential to occur in the project area. Within the Jade Mill project area however, OHV use has impacted the grass/forb layer, brush/shrub component, and blue oak woodlands. The grass/forb layer and brush/shrub component is nonexistent in the area that is used for camping and staging and a substantial portion has been lost to recreational use in the area. Limited regeneration of blue oak is occurring within the project area and many oaks are showing sign of

stress and damage due to the human caused disturbances and actions. Many wildlife species rely on these habitat types for forage, breeding, nesting, and cover and continued adverse impacts will further restrict population numbers and the ranges of these species.

No riparian areas occur within the Jade Mill project area, however OHV use within Clear Creek, adjacent to Jade Mill, has resulted in damage to this important habitat type. Efforts to protect riparian areas have had positive effects on this wildlife habitat type.

Resources unaffected by the proposed action

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Environmental justice | Farm lands (prime and unique) |
| Floodplain | Native American Religious Concerns |
| Wild and Scenic Rivers | Wilderness |

IV. Environmental Impacts

Air Quality

Alternative I: No action

Asbestos bearing dust would continue to be generated by unrestricted vehicle travel at the site.

Alternative II: Proposed action

Restriction of vehicle use and camping via fencing would limit the denuded area to its present size or smaller. This would likely reduce dust generation in the long term.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

Alternative I: No action

The Jade Mill project site would continue to be impacted by unrestricted recreational use at the site.

Alternative II: Proposed action

Impacts to the CCMA project site would be reduced in the longer term by restricting vehicle travel and camping activities to a smaller area. Vehicle travel would be limited to site access points and R002.

Cultural Resources

Alternative I: No action

The remaining portions of known archaeological site (CA-SBn-64) and the immediate area would continue to be impacted from uncontrolled recreational use.

Alternative II: Proposed action

The proposed action alternative will better protect the remaining intact portions of archaeological site CA-SBn-64. This alternative will also benefit the impacted parts of the site by stabilizing the affected areas with protective fencing, thereby limiting incidental heavier human-caused impacts. The positive long-term effect of installing fence into possible subsurface cultural constituents outweighs the on-going (and future) damaging impacts to the site. More specifically, the proposed location of the western toilet facility is on the edge of the reported site boundary and should not affect the site. The proposed location for the eastern toilet facility is within the recorded footprint of CA-SBn-64, but is in a location that approximates the area where excavation occurred for septic tank installation by the previous millsite claimant. Reportedly the excavation yielded a prehistoric projectile point, but that artifact is not available (refer to site record). The proposed upper fencing for Jade Mill is well away from the recorded site boundary for CA-SBn-64. Project wide: if cultural materials are unearthed during project

activities, all work will stop in the area of the discovery until a qualified archaeologist is called to assess the find and initiate mitigation (if necessary).

Invasive Weeds

Alternative I: No action

Yellow starthistle control would be difficult due to habitat disturbance caused by vehicle use in the infested area. Furthermore, starthistle seeds are distributed on vehicle tires and carriages and could potentially expand the range of the infestation.

Alternative II: Proposed action

The fencing project will help control the expansion of yellow starthistle in the proposed project area and throughout the CCMA.

Recreation

Alternative I: No action

Unrestricted vehicle use and camping would continue at the site. It is likely the area impacted by this use would continue to increase. Vehicular travel would continue to occur off the designated route (R002) and customary camping access points. Travel off route is contrary to the Limited Use designation under the 1999 ROD. Route proliferation and unauthorized trail construction would also likely continue in the area.

Alternative II: Proposed action

Fencing would restrict vehicular travel to R002 and customary camping access points. Areas heavily used for camping would remain open but fencing would prevent an increase in their size over time. Camping opportunities may be limited somewhat by fencing enclosures.

Visitor services and public safety would be improved by providing toilet facilities at the site. Camping and OHV activity would be limited to the main route through the area (R002) and the area within the newly constructed fencing and vehicle barriers. The project would validate camping at the Jade Mill site, leading to improved camping opportunities within the CCMA.

Sensitive, Threatened and Endangered Species

Alternative I: No action

Plants

Known populations and potential habitat of federally threatened San Benito evening primrose may be adversely impacted by continued unrestricted vehicular and recreational uses at the project site. Sensitive plant species and habitat would not be protected by fencing installation and improved visitor facilities under this alternative.

Further unrestricted vehicular and recreational use at this site would continue to contribute to habitat degradation, negatively impacting sensitive, threatened or endangered species forage, cover and nesting habitat. The sensitive species occurring in the riparian areas, foothill yellow-legged frog and the two-striped garter snake, can be impacted through the increased erosion expected to occur with the continual removal of vegetative cover in the area and the increased wildlife usage of the riparian areas.

Alternative II: Proposed action

Plants

Negative impacts to the San Benito evening primrose (*Camissonia benitensis*) population would lessen by providing enhanced visitor facilities under the proposed alternative. Sensitive plant species and habitat will gain protection as well. Staff botanist will conduct ongoing monitoring at known occurrences and potential habitat for all sensitive plant species in the project site.

Animals

With the containment of vehicular and recreational uses at the Jade Mill project site, negative impacts to sensitive species are not expected to occur. Positive impacts to the sensitive species occurring in the area include increased habitat for forage, nesting and cover after natural rehabilitation has occurred. No negative impacts are expected to occur to sensitive, threatened or endangered animal species inhabiting the riparian area.

Vegetation

Alternative I: No action

Vegetation at the site would continue to be adversely impacted by unrestricted vehicle and other recreational uses. It is likely the denuded area and unauthorized trail network would continue to increase in size.

Alternative II: Proposed action

The denuded area would be contained and restored by the proposed project. Additionally, fencing would prevent additional damage to vegetation by restricting vehicle use to customary access points and R002. The likelihood of blue oak regeneration would increase over the long term by the reduction in vehicle traffic. Reseeding/restorative treatments would hasten recovery of native plants in the areas protected by the new fencing.

Wastes, Hazardous or Solid

Alternative I: No action

Unrestricted vehicle use and recreation would continue at the site, resulting in asbestos bearing dust generation.

Alternative II: Proposed action

Residual materials from the structure razing (quit claim action) would be removed as part of the proposed action. Any equipment/construction activities within the Serpentine ACEC can generate asbestos-bearing dust if conducted during the dry season.

Water Quality, Drinking or Ground

Alternative I: No action

Sedimentation from the denuded camping sites and the extensive unauthorized route network would continue. Sedimentation into Clear Creek (approximately 200 feet downslope) continues to be a major management concern for BLM within the CCMA.

Alternative II: Proposed action

The denuded/impacted area would be limited in size. Vehicular travel would be limited to customary access points and R002, reducing the potential for sedimentation into Clear Creek. Closure and restoration of unauthorized routes would also reduce this potential for sedimentation.

The likelihood of surface water contamination from human waste would be reduced by the installation of the new toilet facilities.

Wetlands, Riparian Zone

Alternative I: No action

Impacts via erosion and sedimentation into Clear Creek would continue due to unrestricted vehicular and recreational use at the site.

Alternative II: Proposed action

Closure and restoration of the unauthorized route network would decrease the potential for erosion and sedimentation into Clear Creek. Natural revegetation and restorative work in areas protected by fencing may reduce sediment yield into Clear Creek.

Wildlife Habitat

Alternative I: No action

As use continues to expand within the project area, further impacts to the grass/forb layer, brush/shrub component, and blue oak woodlands is expected to occur if vehicle use and access is not limited. It is expected that these impacts will begin to expand beyond the project area as use increases and additional habitat becomes degraded due to uncontained use. This degradation can be expected to further impact wildlife species that depend on these wildlife habitat components for forage, nesting, and cover. Additionally, as vegetation within these habitat types is removed, impacts to the riparian zones can be expected. Wildlife use within riparian area would likely increase in response to a lose of habitat and increased runoff and erosion can be expected, further affecting this habitat type.

Alternative II: Proposed action

The proposed action will contain vehicular access in the project area. As use is restricted, contained and camping delineated, impacts are expected to decrease. Natural rehabilitation is expected to occur and human disturbance and impacts will be mitigated through the use of fencing and barriers designed to protect and minimize impacts wildlife habitat within the project area. The perimeter of the project area and the adjacent landscapes contains a significant grass/forb layer, brush/shrub and blue oak woodlands component. These habitat types are expected to contribute to the natural rehabilitation of the project area. Through fencing and the natural rehabilitation, habitat degradation will be minimized, reversed, and the impacts to wildlife species that depend on these habitats will be minimized. No further impacts are expected to adjacent riparian areas under this alternative as protective measures are currently in place.

Cumulative Impacts

The undertaking will have positive environmental impacts through restricting vehicular and recreational access. Managing the Jade Mill site consistent with other staging/camping areas within the CCMA will increase public compliance and bring the site under similar management conditions.

Persons/Agencies Consulted:

G. Hill, HOFO SRMS
T. Moore, HOFO Geologist
D. Slibsager, HOFO IT Lead
J. Wrobel, HOFO CET
E. Zaborsky, HOFO Archaeologist
EPA , USFWS, CDPR, RWQCB, and UAB

Preparer(s):

Brian White, Clear Creek Project Coordinator.
Julie Anne Delgado, Hollister Field Office Botanist.
Erik Zaborsky, Hollister Field Office Archaeologist
Gary Diridoni, Hollister Field Office Wildlife Biologist.

Environmental Coordinator

Date

References:

1984 Hollister Resource Area Management Plan. BLM.
1986 Clear Creek Management Plan and Decision Record. BLM.
1995 Clear Creek Management Area Plan. BLM
1996 Biological Opinion. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
1999 Record of Decision. BLM

Maps

1 – Proposed fencing

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/DECISION RECORD

I have reviewed this environmental assessment (NEPA # CA-190-2004-025) including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined that **Alternative II** with the appropriate measures described in this document will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required. I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the approved land use plan. It is my decision to implement the project as described in this document.

Authorized Official: _____

Date: _____