United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Folsom Field Office
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Folsom, CA 95630
www.blm.gov/ca/folsom

EA Number: CA-180-07-58

Proposed Action: Parker Abandoned Mine Lands Hazard Mitigation

Location: SE¼ of Section 14, T.7 N., R.12 E., MDM, Amador County

1.0 Purpose of and Need for Action

1.1 Need for Action

In 2003, a hazardous shaft on public lands was discovered by BLM personnel about a mile and a half north-northeast of the town of Volcano. Located near the abandoned Parker Mine, the shaft was probably a prospect associated with the Mason & Olmstead quartz claim established in the 1880s. As shown in Figure 1, it is located a short distance from Rams Horn Grade, a paved county road. Local residents have been entering the shaft by climbing down a hog wire fence secured to the mine portal. The shaft has been identified as a significant hazard to the general public. This project would abate this hazard.

1.2 Conformance with Applicable Land Use Plans

The proposed action complies with the 1988 Sierra Planning Area Management Framework Plan (MFP) Amendment. Refer to General Policy, page 6.

2.0 Proposed Action and Alternatives

2.1 Proposed Action

The proposed action is to backfill the shaft. It has an opening of 10 feet by 15 feet and a depth of 50 to 60 feet. A backhoe/front-end loader would be used to backfill the shaft with waste rock and surface materials available on site. The backhoe would access the site using existing routes and the work will take one day to complete. The area of disturbance would be less than a quarter of an acre.

Because local residents have been dumping household trash on the access road to this shaft, the cleanup of public lands in the vicinity of this AML site has been added to this project. Trash would be collected by hand and by backhoe clamshell and placed into the shaft before it is backfilled. Upon completion of this AML project, a deep trench (tank trap) will be cut across the mine access road where it intersects Rams Horn Grade to prevent further dumping on the public lands.

2.2 Project Design Features

To minimize the risk of wildfires, all earth-moving equipment used on this project would be equipped with spark arresters. Other vehicles taken to the site would not be parked where vegetation may come in contact with exhaust systems and catalytic converters.

Areas cleared of vegetation would be water-barred as needed to control post-project erosion. The project area would be periodically monitored to ensure rehabilitation of impacted sites.

The proposed action would involve use of a backhoe in an area infested with French broom. Upon completion of the project and before leaving the work site, the backhoe would be swept clean to prevent the spread of this invasive/nonnative weed.

2.3 No Action

Under the no action alternative, the shaft would be left open and no abatement of the physical safety hazard would be provided.

2.4 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Other options for mitigating this safety hazard were considered. These include using polyurethane foam to plug the shaft and constructing a fence enclosure around the shaft. Although less surface area would be disturbed, using the foam would cost substantially more than backfilling with a front-end loader. Fencing would require monitoring and maintenance and would not prevent entry into the shaft by those persistent enough to climb over it. Fencing of shafts does not reduce BLM's liability associated with this type of safety hazard.

3.0 Environmental Effects

The following critical elements have been considered for this environmental assessment, and unless specifically mentioned later in this chapter, have been determined to be unaffected by the proposal: air quality, areas of critical environmental concern, prime/unique farmlands, floodplains, water quality, threatened or endangered species, hazardous waste, cultural resources, Native American concerns, wetlands and riparian zones, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness, invasive/nonnative weeds, and environmental justice.

3.1 Impacts from the No Action Alternative

The environmental consequence of choosing the no action alternative would be the continued threat to the health and safety of users of the public lands in the vicinity of this AML site.

3.2 Impacts from the Proposed Action

The project area is located on a live oak/chaparral covered ridge. Some vegetation would be removed adjacent to the shaft and some tree branches along the access road may be trimmed. Oaks located near the shaft may be adversely impacted by backhoe operations. The loader and backhoe buckets may cut tree roots and some branches hanging over excavation sites may become damaged. However, no loss of trees is anticipated. Less than 400 cubic yards of material would be excavated from waste rock piles and from lands adjacent to the shaft. Natural re-vegetation of the disturbed surface would occur within a few growing seasons. Because this site is located on a gentle slope with little potential for erosion, no increase in sediment load in nearby streams would result from the proposed action.

In 2007 the project area was surveyed in the field by wildlife biologist Peggy Cranston and botanist Al Franklin. No T&E species or their habitat was observed. No impacts to threatened or endangered plants or animals would result from the proposed action.

Observed in the shaft were a nesting barn swallow and another (empty) nest. To minimize impacts to nesting birds, no backfilling operations at the AML site would commence until after the nesting and fledgling season which ends June 15th.

A mine shaft, roads, and waste rock deposits have been identified in the project area by archaeologist James Barnes in his May 10, 2007 cultural resource inventory report prepared for this project. These features appear to be associated with the Mason & Olmstead quartz claim, established in the 1880s. They will be damaged during project implementation. However, the features were evaluated and determined to be not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

3.3 Cumulative Impacts

No site specific impacts to any of the critical environmental elements identified in section 3.0 would be expected from the proposed action. Minor, short term impacts such as the removal of vegetation, disturbance/compaction of soil and generation of fugitive dust particles would not result in cumulative impacts to soil productivity, vegetative diversity or air quality at the larger, watershed scale.

4.0 Agencies and Persons Consulted

4.1 BLM Interdisciplinary Team

- Tim Carroll, Geologist and EA Writer
- James Barnes, Cultural Resources
- Al Franklin and Peggy Cranston, Biological Resources
- Dan Lusby, Equipment Operator
- Sandra McGinnes, Planning and Environmental Coordinator

4.2 Availability of Document and Comment Procedures

This EA, posted on Folsom Field Office's website (www.blm.gov/ca/folsom) under Information and NEPA (or available upon request), will be available for a 15-day public review period. Comments should be sent to the BLM at 63 Natoma Street, Folsom, CA 95630 or emailed to us at ca180@ca.blm.gov. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name and address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

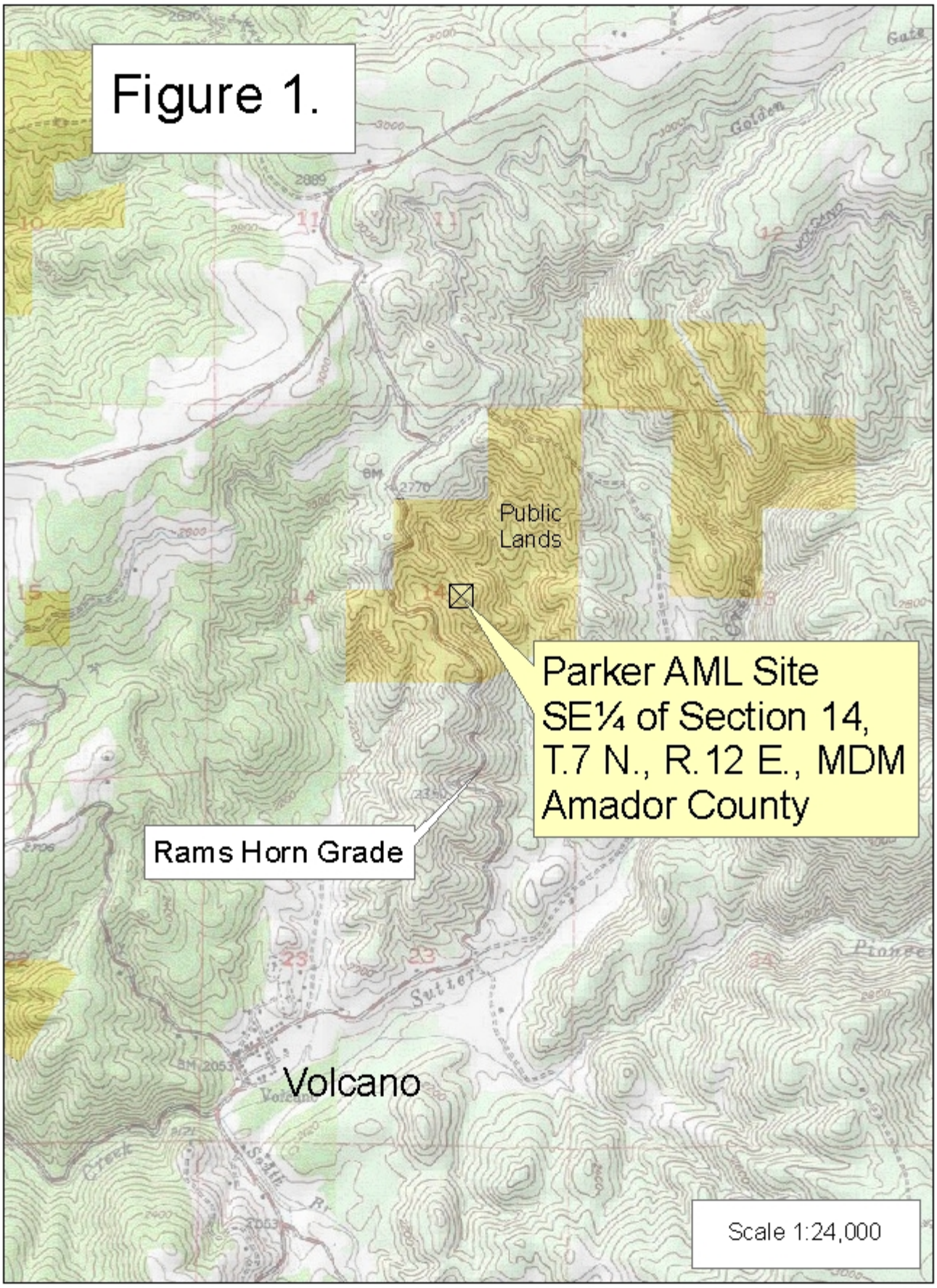
Figure 1.
Public Lands
Parker AML Site
SE¼ of Section 14,
T.7 N., R.12 E., MDM
Amador County
Rams Horn Grade
Volcano
Scale 1:24,000