



# United States Department of the Interior



## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Folsom Field Office  
63 Natoma Street  
Folsom, CA 95630  
[www.blm.gov/ca/folsom](http://www.blm.gov/ca/folsom)

**EA Number:** CA-180-07-59

**Proposed Action:** Sampson Abandoned Mine Lands Hazard Mitigation

**Location:** SE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> of Section 21, T.1 S., R.16 E., MDM, Tuolumne County

## 1.0 Purpose of and Need for Action

### 1.1 Need for Action

In 1990 a notice of mining claim operations was filed with BLM which proposed activities at the Sampson Mine located at the outskirts of Groveland on a public land parcel surrounded by private lands. A pre-existing shaft within the claim was subsequently identified as a significant hazard to the general public. Operations did not commence as proposed and the claim was abandoned in 1999. As shown in Figure 1, the shaft is located on the east edge of town just northeast of State Highway 120. Tenaya Elementary School is just across the highway (southwest) of the abandoned shaft. 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 about 20 feet in diameter and is 30 to 50 feet deep. A D-5H Caterpillar bulldozer will be used to backfill the shaft with waste rock and surface materials available on site. The site is easily accessible by existing paved and dirt roads. The work will take one day to complete and the area of disturbance would be less than 0.25 acres.

Another potentially hazardous feature at this site is an adit located just east of the shaft. In 2006, the owner of private land north of and adjacent to this public land parcel located a mining claim, CAMC 285170, over this AML site and has been conducting recreational prospecting in the adit. The claimant is aware of BLM's plan to backfill the shaft and has no objection. The claimant will be responsible for keeping the adit portal secure with a gate or door that will keep curious adventurers from entering.

## **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.

## **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 dozer. 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 in a pine-oak forest. Some vegetation would be removed adjacent to the shaft. Trees located near the shaft may be adversely impacted by dozer operations. The dozer blade may cut tree roots and some branches hanging over excavation sites may become damaged. However, no loss of trees having a diameter of greater than four inches is anticipated. Less than 600 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.

No invasive/nonnative weeds were observed during Al Franklin's field survey. The proposed action is not expected to contribute to the spread of these weeds.

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 15<sup>th</sup>.

Mine workings, roads, and waste rock deposits have been identified within the project area by archaeologist James Barnes in his May 4, 2007 cultural resource inventory report prepared for this project. These features appear to be associated with the Sampson Mine, dating to the early 1900s. They will be damaged during project implementation. However, the Sampson Mine has been 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 and Adjacent Land Owner**

- Tim Carroll, Geologist and EA Writer
- James Barnes, Cultural Resources
- Al Franklin and Peggy Cranston, Biological Resources
- Dan Lusby, Equipment Operator
- Sandra McGinnis, Planning and Environmental Coordinator
- Gary Annis, Mining Claimant and Adjacent Land Owner

### **4.2 Availability of Document and Comment Procedures**

This EA, posted on Folsom Field Office's website ([www.blm.gov/ca/folsom](http://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](mailto: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.

