



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Mother Lode Field Office

5152 Hillside Circle

El Dorado Hills, CA 95762

www.blm.gov/ca/motherlode

South Fork American River recreation facilities improvements FY 2012

(CA-180-12-56)

Finding of No Significant Impact

October 2012

It is my determination that this decision will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment. Anticipated impacts are within the range of impacts addressed in the Sierra Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement. The proposed action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared. This conclusion is based on my consideration of CEQ's following criteria for significance (40 CFR §1508.27), regarding the context and intensity of the impacts described in the EA, and based on my understanding of the project:

- 1) *Impacts can be both beneficial and adverse and a significant effect may exist regardless of the perceived balance of effects.* None of these impacts would be significant at the local level or cumulatively because of the extremely small scale of the project. Impacts to special status species and significant cultural resources would be avoided.
- 2) *The degree of the impact on public health or safety.* No aspects of the proposed action have been identified as having the potential to significantly and adversely impact public health or safety.
- 3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area.* The project area is located, in part, within the proposed South Fork American Wild and Scenic River corridor with unique characteristics. Two of the unique characteristics of this area are cultural resources and whitewater recreation. Both have been identified as outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) that help make the South Fork American River eligible to become a national Wild and Scenic River. The proposed action would benefit the ORVs. A very small portion of the project area is located within the Pine Hill Preserve ACEC which has unique characteristics. These characteristics are rare gabbro soils formation and association rare plant community with endemic species. The ACEC unique characteristics would not be negatively impacted; the proposed connector trail would be routed on an existing road within the ACEC. This section of the road is very short and would not damage or degrade special status plants or rare soils.

- 4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial effects.* No anticipated effects have been identified that are scientifically controversial. As a factor for determining within the meaning of 40 C.F.R. § 1508.27(b)(4) whether or not to prepare a detailed environmental impact statement, “controversy” is not equated with “the existence of opposition to a use.” *Northwest Environmental Defense Center v. Bonneville Power Administration*, 117 F.3d 1520, 1536 (9th Cir. 1997). “The term ‘highly controversial’ refers to instances in which ‘a substantial dispute exists as to the size, nature, or effect of the major federal action rather than the mere existence of opposition to a use.’” *Hells Canyon Preservation Council v. Jacoby*, 9 F.Supp.2d 1216, 1242 (D. Or. 1998).
- 5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.* The analysis does not show that the proposed action would involve any unique or unknown risks.
- 6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.* These types of recreational facilities improvements (trail construction, trail realignment, and vault toilet installation) on BLM-administered land is not precedent setting.
- 7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.* No significant cumulative impacts have been identified.
- 8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect National Historic Register listed or eligible to be listed sites or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.* The proposed action would not adversely affect cultural resources listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
- 9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat.* Elderberry shrubs were found within the project area at Acorn Creek. Elderberry shrubs are potential habitat for the federally listed Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle. The BLM has proposed routing the connector trail to avoid impacts to the elderberry shrubs. The BLM has also proposed using hand tools only around the shrubs and implementing the project during the time of year when impacts to the beetle are the least. The BLM is informally consulting with the US Fish and Wildlife Service pursuant to Section 7 of the ESA to ensure that the proposed action would not jeopardize the beetle.
- 10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of environmental protection law or requirements.*
There is no indication that this decision will result in actions that will threaten such a violation.

William S. Haigh
Field Manager, Mother Lode Field Office

Date



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EA Number: CA-180-12-56

Proposed Action: South Fork American River recreation facilities improvements FY 2012

Location:

El Dorado County, CA

(please refer to the project area maps attached)

New connector trail and trailhead/parking area, Acorn Creek: MDM, T 11 N, R 9 E, Section 30 and T 11 N, R 8 E, Section 25 (Salmon Falls parcel and private land)

Vault toilets, Cronan Ranch: MDM, T 11 N, R 9 E, Sections 9 and 16

Realignment of existing trail, Hastings Creek: MDM, T 11 N, R 9 E, Section 10 (Greenwood Creek parcel)

1 Purpose and Need for Action

1.1 Need for Action

The BLM manages thousands of acres of public lands along the South Fork American River, between Salmon Falls and Chili Bar, in El Dorado County. Some of these lands are original public domain lands; other lands have been acquired by the BLM through donation within the last 20 years as a result of the work of various partners, with an overarching vision to preserve the river corridor's outstanding environmental values and recreational potential. Since 2008, the South Fork lands have been managed by the BLM as part of the South Fork American River Special Recreation Area (SRMA). The management goals for this area are to provide for high-quality recreation opportunities (including hiking, horseback riding, and river boating and swimming access) while preserving the natural scenery, cultural resources, and the other terrific environmental values of this area. The BLM has already built trails, trailhead/parking areas, and other recreation facilities to accommodate low-impact recreational use of these lands, especially the Greenwood Creek, Cronan Ranch, Norton Ravine, and Salmon Falls (Pine Hill Preserve ACEC) parcels. Additional recreation facilities and improvements are now needed to enhance visitor experience and protect sensitive environmental resources. The proposed actions (building a new connector trail and trailhead/parking lot from Acorn Creek into the Salmon Falls parcel, installing vault toilets in the Cronan Ranch and Greenwood Creek parcels, and realigning a small segment of existing trail in the Greenwood Creek parcel) respond to these needs.

1.2 Conformance with Applicable Land Use Plans

The proposed action is consistent with the Sierra Resource Management Plan, approved in February 2008. Under this plan (page 26 of the Record of Decision), the goal of the recreation program is to ensure the continued availability of outdoor recreational opportunities while protecting other resources and uses. Specific management actions for the South Fork American River SRMA (pages 28 and 19 of the Record of Decision) include managing this SRMA in accordance with the 2004 South Fork American River Management Plan and its amendments including the 2007 Cronan Ranch Plan; expand the trail network; increase public access; and develop facilities for interpretation and sanitation.

The proposed action is consistent with the South Fork American River Management Plan and Decision Record. Under this plan (page 29), the BLM decided to give management priority to protecting the natural and cultural values of the entire Greenwood Creek parcel while providing opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation. Cultural sites are to be protected under this plan. The plan (page 31) also directs the BLM to construct multiple use trails within the Greenwood Creek parcel as appropriate to connect the Highway 49 parking area with the rest of the parcel. For the Salmon Falls parcel (which is also a unit of the Pine Hill Preserve), the plan (page 38) directs the BLM to plan and construct a trails system for hiking and the use of mountain bikes.

The proposed action is consistent with the 2008 Pine Hill Preserve Management Plan. Page 38 of this plan indicates that proposals for use of trails for equestrian or mountain bike use will be considered by the BLM in areas where impacts to listed plant populations can be avoided. Such proposals would need to include strategies and demonstrate the ability of users to address potential problems resulting from trail use, such as trail maintenance and weed control.

The proposed action is also consistent with the 2007 Cronan Ranch Management Plan and Decision Record. On page 7 of this plan, the BLM is directed to provide permanent restroom facilities at the parking lot, and on the beach.

2 Proposed Action and Alternatives

2.1 Proposed Action

The proposed action involves three separate recreation projects for BLM-administered public lands (and some private lands) along the lower South Fork American River, between Greenwood Creek and Salmon Falls. These projects are designed to enhance the public's enjoyment of these lands, while preserving the river corridor's outstanding environmental values. The proposed projects include building a new trail and trailhead/parking area connecting Acorn Creek to an existing trail in the Salmon Falls area; installing three vault toilets at Cronan Ranch; installing one vault toilet at Magnolia Ranch Trailhead (Greenwood Parcel); and realigning a small segment of existing trail in the Greenwood Creek/Hastings Creek area. Each action is described in detail in the following.

New connector trail and trailhead/parking area at Acorn Creek, Salmon Falls area

In 2009 the BLM, with the help of partners, planned and built the South Fork American River Trail, from the State Parks trailhead/parking area at Salmon Falls to BLM-administered land at Cronan Ranch. Just east of the State Parks trailhead, the trail traverses a ridgeline within the Salmon Falls parcel/unit of the BLM's South Fork American River Special Recreation Management Area and Pine Hill Preserve. The trail continues east through BLM-administered lands in the Norton Ravine area to Cronan Ranch. From here, the trail connects to a network of trails within the Cronan Ranch and Greenwood Creek parcels, both administered by the BLM. This trail network eventually terminates near

the Greenwood Creek confluence to the east. The network was developed by the BLM from 2004 to 2006. In 2011, the nonprofit American River Conservancy (ARC) acquired a 152-acre parcel on Acorn Creek off of Salmon Falls Road. The BLM and ARC are now proposing to build a trail and trailhead/parking lot that connects the 152-acre parcel to the existing South Fork American River Trail on BLM-administered land within the Salmon Falls parcel. The new facilities would help accommodate equestrian, mountain bicycling, hiking, and other non-motorized public use. The trailhead/parking area and much of the new connector trail would be located on ARC-owned private land along Acorn Creek and Peacock Ravine. The ARC may eventually donate the land to the BLM. The trail would have a minimum width of 4 feet and would be approximately 4664 feet in length. The BLM would build the trail using a SWECO trail-building machine. Construction of the connector trail would impact a segment of less than 200 feet long and 4 feet wide (mostly on an existing abandoned roadbed) within the Pine Hill Preserve. The parking area would be 25,380 square feet, or approximately 0.55 acres, with a driveway (approximately 639 feet long and probably single lane) connecting to Salmon Falls Road at approximately the existing gate. The parking area/driveway may or may not be paved. A future non-motorized trail of approximately 810 feet may connect the future parking area with non-motorized trails (not yet developed) to the west of Salmon Falls Road. As you will notice in the project area maps attached, the BLM and ARC are considering slightly different trail alignments, east of the proposed parking area, to avoid a group of elderberry shrubs which is potential habitat for the federally listed valley elderberry longhorn beetle.

Vault toilet installation at Cronan Ranch

The BLM would install three CXT vault toilets at three separate sites at BLM-administered Cronan Ranch. These toilets would replace eight portable toilets currently in this area. All three sites would be excavated with a backhoe to 4 feet deep by 10 feet wide by 18 feet long. A crane would then be used to place the vault toilet structure into the excavated area. Some minor road work on existing access roads within the parcel may be needed to get the backhoe and crane to the three installation sites. The road work may include grading, tree trimming, and installing drainage culverts and water bars. Once the vault toilets are installed, short trails would be constructed to direct users to the toilets. The trails would be no more than 3 feet wide and up to 50 feet long. Site 1 would be at the primary existing trailhead/parking lot off of Pedro Hill Road. Site 2 would be in the middle of the commercial whitewater boating zone not far from the South Fork American River. Site 3 would be three fourths of a mile to the west of Site 2, also in the commercial zone. The vault toilets would substantially reduce the costs of toilet maintenance within the parcel.

Vault toilet installation at Magnolia Ranch Trailhead (Greenwood Parcel)

The BLM would install one CXT vault toilet at the BLM-administered Magnolia Ranch Trailhead Parking Lot. The toilet would replace two portable toilets currently in this area. The site would be excavated with a backhoe to 4 feet deep by 10 feet wide by 18 feet long. A crane would then be used to place the vault toilet structure into the excavated area. Once the vault toilet is installed, a short trail would be constructed to direct users to the toilets. The trail would be no more than 3 feet wide and up to 20 feet long. The vault toilet would substantially reduce the costs of toilet maintenance within the Greenwood Creek parcel.

Realignment of existing trail in the Hastings Creek area (Greenwood Creek parcel)

A short segment of existing non-motorized trail, near Hastings Creek (in the BLM-administered Greenwood Creek parcel), would be put to bed using hand tools/methods. It would be replaced by a new non-motorized trail segment that reduces grade steepness and erosion, thus enhancing the trail user's experience. The new trail segment would also increase the amount of shade along the trail and provide scenic views of Hastings Creek. The BLM would build the trail using a SWECO trail-building machine. The trail segment to be built would be approximately 929 feet long. It would have the same width (4 feet) and compacted dirt surfacing as existing trails in the Greenwood Creek parcel and elsewhere on BLM-administered land. A portion of the new trail would be built on an old ranch track. The segment to be put to bed would be approximately 408 feet long.

2.2 Project Design Features

Air, water, and soils – During construction and grading, trail-building equipment will stay at least 30 feet away from Acorn Creek/Peacock Ravine to prevent siltation and damage to riparian vegetation and aquatic life. Fill material will not be placed in this creek or Hastings Creek and its tributaries. The South Fork American River will not be affected. The connector trail would be built on an existing road. The drainage crossings on this road are adequate and will be maintained.

Vegetation/Invasive Weeds – A major issue, regarding constructing the proposed connector trail at Acorn Creek (and the subsequent public use of this trail over the long-term) is the potential introduction, reintroduction, and spread of noxious invasive weeds, such as yellow star thistle, into Pine Hill Preserve ACEC and other lands that still have ecological integrity. All equipment and tools used to build the connector trail will be cleaned of adhering soil or plant material prior to arrival within the project area for the connector trail. For the long-term, a plan for controlling the spread of weeds will be developed by the BLM, with input from BLM partners. Interpretive signs will be placed at the new trailhead at Acorn Creek to inform members of the public of the weed issue, and what they can do to prevent weed spread.

No project design features are included to avoid weed spread within the Greenwood Creek and Cronan Ranch parcels because several weed species are so well distributed across these parcels, and make up such a large part of the vegetative cover, that such efforts would not be effective. Weed mapping of the entire parcel in 2010 showed the extent of this problem.

ACEC values – No federally listed plants are present in the area along the proposed segment of the connector trail. As stated under Vegetation/Invasive Weeds, all trail-building equipment and tools used within the Pine Hill Preserve ACEC (and vehicles entering this area) will be cleaned of adhering soils and plant material prior to arrival, and extra precautions will be taken, to prevent the introduction and spread of non-native plants. At the conclusion of trail construction, annual monitoring along the trail to detect and eradicate weed infestations will be established and implemented by the BLM's Pine Hill Preserve ACEC staff and volunteers.

Wildlife – In the Acorn Creek area, where the connector trail and parking area/trailhead are proposed, there is a population of elderberry, which is potential habitat for the federally listed Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle. The proposed trail alignment will be routed to avoid elderberry bushes and clumps of bushes in this area by 20 feet. Only hand construction will occur in this area.

Cultural Resources – If any cultural resources are found during implementation of the proposed action, work will cease until a qualified professional archaeologist examines the discovery and makes management recommendations. Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act may continue at this point. If the cultural resources are significant, the proposed action will not proceed until appropriate measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential adverse effects are taken.

Fuels/Fire Management – To minimize the risk of wildfire ignition, earth-moving equipment used to implement the proposed action will be equipped with spark arresters. Other motorized vehicles used will not be parked where vegetation may come in contact with exhaust systems and catalytic converters.

General – An “Adopt-A-Trail” program, along with a citizen trail patrol, will be established to monitor trail use and facilitate regular maintenance. Weed control will be part of trail maintenance. These citizen groups meet regularly to foster community acceptance of this project, and inform BLM of public use, trail problems, parking issues, etc.

2.3 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

The BLM did not consider any other alternatives in detailed analysis.

3 Affected Environment

The areas affected by the proposed action are located within west-central Sierra Nevada foothills. Specifically, the project areas are located within the BLM-administered Greenwood Creek, Cronan Ranch, and Salmon Falls parcels as well as private land owned by the American River Conservancy on Acorn Creek. A detailed description of the BLM-administered parcels (including what are now the project areas) can be found in the notebook (BLM 2000) produced by the BLM for public meetings regarding the 2004 South Fork American River Management Plan, as well as the 2007 Cronan Ranch Management Plan.

The lands are located along the South Fork of the American River – the dominant feature of the area – and the river’s tributaries including intermittent Hastings Creek and Acorn Creek. The vegetation of the project areas and the immediate surroundings has been inventoried by BLM botanists, most recently in June 2012. A mosaic of vegetation types are found within these areas.

The Greenwood Creek parcel consists of approximately 732 acres. The parcel is bisected by the South Fork American River. The northern portion of the parcel includes segments of Greenwood and Hastings creeks. South-facing hill slopes are dominated by interior live oak woodland with black oak, California buckeye, toyon, buckbrush, white leaf manzanita, keckiella, California coffeeberry, poison oak, and pipe vine. A broad riparian habitat along the river includes sand bar willow, arroyo willow, shining willow, valley oak, Oregon ash, white alder, Fremont cottonwood, button willow, coyote bush, mock orange, California wild grape, deer grass, and scotch broom. Hastings Creek includes Douglas fir and incense cedar, as well as riparian species such as Oregon ash. Blue oak savannah grasslands composed largely of non-native annual species dominate the relatively flat portions of the parcel, between the two creeks, along Highway 49.

The 1400-acre Cronan Ranch parcel contains vegetation includes blue oak savannah, foothill woodland, and riparian areas. There is a significant population of noxious weeds, especially yellow-star thistle and medusa head.

Gabbro substrate in the Salmon Falls unit of the Pine Hill Preserve ACEC supports chamise and gray pine chaparral plant community with two endemic plant species and one nearly endemic plant species. The area along Acorn Creek, to the north, contains interior live oak, black oak, gray pine, walnut, buckeye, toyon, coffeeberry, hollyleaf redberry, white leaf manzanita, and poison oak. Riparian areas along the creek include white alder, Himalayan blackberry, and California wild grape.

Several wildlife species use these habitats, and are typical of the west-central Sierra Nevada foothills. Mammals include mule deer, coyote, grey fox, bobcat, striped skunk, black-tailed jackrabbit, grey squirrel, deer mice and woodrat. Bird species include turkey vulture, red-tailed hawk, California brown towhee, spotted towhee, California quail, wild turkey, acorn woodpecker, northern flicker, Anna's hummingbird, Bewick's wren, plain titmouse, common bushtit, ash-throated flycatcher, house finch, lesser goldfinch, and several sparrow species. Amphibian and reptiles species include Pacific treefrog, western fence lizard, Gilbert's skink, western whiptail, and gopher snake. This list is not intended to be comprehensive, but is a list of species that are commonly seen and/or evidence of these species is commonly encountered.

Recreational use of BLM-administered land in the Greenwood Creek and Cronan Ranch parcels is extremely high. This is among the most popular recreational areas managed by the BLM. The BLM and its partners have built trails, trailheads/parking lots, and other visitor facilities to facilitate low-impact non-motorized recreational use (hiking, nature viewing, horseback riding, mountain biking, whitewater rafting) within these parcels. Within the Cronan Ranch parcel there are approximately 12 miles of trails. Beaches along the river are used by boaters as a lunch spots. The parcel has been the location for Hollywood movie productions. Since the BLM and its partners built the South Fork American River Trail in 2009 connecting the State Parks parking lot/trailhead at Salmon Falls and the network of trails within the Cronan Ranch/Greenwood Creek parcels, recreational use within the Salmon Falls parcel has also increased markedly.

Portions of the project area fall within areas with a special designation. Much of the project area is located within a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). The Salmon Falls parcel/unit is located within the Pine Hill Preserve Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Also, the BLM has recommended that the South Fork American River corridor, from Chili Bar to Salmon Falls, be incorporated into the national Wild and Scenic River system due, in part, to its outstandingly remarkable whitewater recreation and cultural resource values. The segment's classification is Recreational.

The BLM manages the BLM portions of the project areas in accordance with class II visual resource management (VRM) standards. (Of note, there is a small area of BLM-administered land nearby within the Greenwood Creek-Clark Mountain parcel managed under class I standards.) The BLM's objective for class II is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

4 Environmental Effects

The following critical elements have been considered in this EA, and unless specifically mentioned later in this EA, have been determined to be unaffected by the proposed action: areas of critical environmental concern, prime/unique farmlands, floodplains, wetlands, wilderness, and environmental justice.

4.1 Impacts of the Proposed Action

Air, water, and soils – The proposed action would not negatively affect air, water, or soil resources. Construction and use of the new recreational facilities, as proposed in this EA, might create some temporary dust but not enough to seriously affect air resources. Long-term use of these facilities would not affect air resources. The impact to air resources would be negligible to none. Likewise, the impact to water resources would be negligible to none. Rainwater runoff is causing erosion of sediment, but not enough to seriously affect water quality in Hastings Creek or the South Fork. Trail realignment and construction would neither benefit nor degrade water resources. During construction and grading, trail-building equipment would stay 30 feet away from Acorn Creek/Peacock Ravine to prevent siltation and damage to riparian vegetation and aquatic life. Fill material would not be placed in this creek or Hastings Creek. The South Fork American River would not be affected. Drainage crossings on existing roads are adequate and would be maintained (please refer to the project design features in section 2.4). A unique soil formation—the Pine Hill gabbro formation—exists in a very small portion of the project area near Acorn Creek. The proposed connector trail would tie into the existing South Fork American River Trail within the Salmon Falls unit of the Pine Hill Preserve ACEC. This ACEC was designated to help preserve this soil formation and associated rare plant communities. The proposed connector trail would be routed on an existing road, and therefore soil disturbance within the gabbro formation would be negligible. The other affected soils of the project area are not unique or geologically significant.

Vegetation/invasive weeds – The BLM botanist and Pine Hill Preserve manager analyzed the impacts of the proposed action on vegetation, particularly special status plants. The analysis is designed to help the BLM meet its obligations under the Endangered Species Act and meet other BLM policies with respect to special status species. The analysis included a background records search through the California National Diversity Database and other records, as well as rare plant surveys and inventory in June 2012. The BLM botanist and Pine Hill Preserve staff determined that the proposed action would not directly negatively impact special status plants. Also, a potential issue is the introduction, reintroduction, and spread of noxious invasive weeds (which could be an indirect impact caused by the proposed action). The proposed action would be implemented in a way that avoids the introduction, reintroduction, and spread of weeds (please refer to the project design features in section 2.4).

Wildlife – The BLM wildlife biologist analyzed the impacts of the proposed action on wildlife, particularly on special status wildlife. Her analysis is designed to help the BLM meet its obligations under the Endangered Species Act and meet other BLM policies with respect to special status species. In the Acorn Creek area, where the connector trail and parking area/trailhead are proposed, there is a population of elderberry, which is potential habitat for the federally listed Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle. The proposed trail alignment would be routed to avoid elderberry bushes and clumps of bushes in this area by 20 feet. The alternative alignment for the connector trail to avoid the elderberry is shown in the attached project area maps. Only hand construction would occur in this area. If the proposed action is implemented in the ways outlined above and in the project design features in section 2.4, it would have no effect on the federally listed Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle or other special status wildlife.

Cultural resources/Native American issues – The BLM archaeologist is in the process of analyzing the impacts of the proposed action to determine whether significant cultural resources could be affected. The BLM archaeologist is conducting field inventories, background cultural resource data searches, tribal consultations, and other reasonable-and-good-faith efforts to identify significant or potentially cultural resources that might be affected by the proposed action, as required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and other authorities. The BLM archaeologist has already found numerous cultural resources within and near the project area. Our goal is to avoid adverse effects to significant cultural resources.

Recreation – Without question, the proposed action would be beneficial to the recreating public. The proposed action would enhance recreation within this Special Recreation Management Area over the long run. The proposed connector trail at Acorn Creek would provide an additional access for equestrian and other users. The proposed vault toilets within the Cronan Ranch and Greenwood Creek parcels would replace existing portable toilets, substantially reducing maintenance costs in the long run and improving the recreating public's experience. The new trail alignment near Hastings Creek should be acceptable to all trail users due to the decrease in grade steepness, increase in shade, and scenic views of Hastings Creek and a tributary.

Visual resources – The proposed action would not negatively impact visual resources. BLM manages the area in accordance with VRM class II standards, and the proposed action is in line with the management objective for this class, which is to retain the existing character of the landscape.

Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) values – A very small portion of the proposed connector trail near Acorn Creek would be routed into the Salmon Falls unit of the Pine Hill Preserve ACEC where it would connect to the existing South Fork American River Trail. Similar to the other portions of the Preserve, the ACEC values here are rare soils and special status plants. To minimize impacts to these values, the proposed trail would follow an existing 8-foot wide dirt road. The proposed trail would be less than 200 feet long within the ACEC. Construction of the proposed connector trail would not negatively impact the ACEC values. Because the special status plants at the Pine Hill Preserve may benefit from some type of disturbance, such as removal of shrubs, there is a possibility that some of the plants may colonize open spaces that were not available before the construction activities. However, a major issue is the introduction, reintroduction, and spread of noxious invasive weeds. As outlined the project design features in section 2.4, all trail-building equipment and tools used within the Pine Hill Preserve ACEC (and vehicles entering the ACEC) would be cleaned prior to arrival in the project area, and extra precautions would be taken, to prevent the introduction and spread of non-native plants. At the conclusion of trail construction, annual monitoring along the trail to detect and eradicate weed infestations would be established and implemented by the BLM's Pine Hill Preserve ACEC staff and volunteers. If the proposed action is implemented in this way and in accordance with the project design features in section 2.4 of this EA, it would not negatively affect the ACEC values.

Wild and Scenic River outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) – The two alternatives would not negatively impact any of the ORVs identified by the BLM for the proposed South Fork American Wild and Scenic River. In fact, the proposed action would help to enhance whitewater recreation and cultural resources which are considered ORVs. The proposed action would not affect the river's classification as Recreational.

4.2 Impacts of No Action

Air, water, and soils – The no action alternative would not impact air, water, or soil resources.

Vegetation/invasive weeds – The no action alternative would not impact vegetation resources.

Wildlife – The no action alternative would not impact wildlife.

Cultural resources/Native American issues – The no action alternative would not impact cultural resources or Native American issues.

Recreation – Recreation would be negatively impacted if the proposed action is not implemented. The BLM would miss opportunities to follow the recreation management goals and objectives of its land-use plans; the BLM would miss opportunities to expand the trail network; increase public access; and develop facilities for interpretation and sanitation (where impacts to listed plant populations, significant cultural resources, and other important environmental resources can be avoided). For example, page 7 of the 2007 Cronan Ranch Management Plan and Decision Record directs the BLM to provide permanent restroom facilities at the parking lot, and on the beach.

Visual resources – The no action alternative would not impact visual resources.

Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) values – The no action alternative would not impact ACEC values.

Wild and Scenic River outstandingly remarkable values – The no action alternative would not impact wild and scenic ORVs or the river's classification as Recreational.

4.3 Cumulative Impacts

Negative cumulative impacts are not anticipated. The proposed action would not negatively impact air, water, soil, biological, cultural, visual, wild and scenic, or ACEC values. The proposed action is, however, expected to have long-term beneficial cumulative impacts on recreation along the lower South Fork.

5 Agencies and Persons Consulted

The BLM is informally consulting with the US Fish and Wildlife Service pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. We are recommending to the US Fish and Wildlife Service that, due to the project design features we have put in place, the proposed action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the federally listed Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle.

5.1 Authors

James Barnes, BLM NEPA coordinator/Archaeologist

Jeff Horn, BLM Outdoor recreation planner

5.2 BLM Interdisciplinary Team/Reviewers:

NEPA coordinator/Archaeologist	Date
Outdoor recreation planner/VRM specialist	Date
Botanist	Date
Pine Hill Preserve Manager	Date
Wildlife biologist	Date

5.3 Availability of Document and Comment Procedures

This EA, posted on Mother Lode Field Office's website (www.blm.gov/ca/motherlode) under Information, NEPA (or available upon request), will be available for a 15-day public review period. Comments should be sent to the Mother Lode Field Office, 5152 Hillside Circle, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762 or emailed to jjbarnes@blm.gov.

5.4 References Cited

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

2000 South Fork of the American River Community-Based Planning Project Notebook. Bureau of Land Management-Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. On file, at the BLM Mother Lode Field Office, El Dorado Hills, CA.

US Fish and Wildlife Service

1999 *Conservation guidelines for the valley elderberry longhorn beetle*. Available online at www.fws.gov/sacramento/es/...Guidelines/.../velb_conservation.pdf