

United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Environmental Assessment CA-180-11-40

Finding of No Significant Impact

**Blue Moon #04127 (Gann), Middle Mokelumne North #04133 (Hertlein),
Marshes Flat-Stone Corral #04136 (Hope), La Paloma-Number Nine
#04159 (Ortiz), and Bagby #04188 (McDow) Grazing Authorizations**

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Mother Lode Field Office
5152 Hillside Circle
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762
Phone: (916) 941-3102
FAX: (916) 941-3199

June 2011

Finding of No Significant Impact Mother Lode Field Office

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT DETERMINATION:

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I find that the proposed action is not a major federal action, and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects described in the Sierra RMP. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described:

Context: The project is a site-specific action cumulatively (all 5 allotments), directly involving approximately 4,615 acres of BLM administered land that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

Intensity: The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into BLM's Critical Elements of the Human Environment list (H-1790-1), and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations and Executive Orders. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.** The proposed action would impact resources as described in the EA. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA and associated appendices are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the Sierra RMP FEIS.
2. **The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.** No health and safety issues are associated with the proposed action.
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** The historic and cultural resources of the area have been inventoried and no adverse impacts were identified. A portion of the Merced River Wilderness Study Area and a portion of the Bagby Serpentine Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) occur in the Bagby allotment. No adverse impacts to wilderness or ACEC values were identified. The following Critical Elements of the Human Environment and Other Resource Issues are not affected because they are not present in the project area: essential fish habitat; prime or unique farmlands; floodplains; Native American cultural values; wild and scenic river; wild horse and burro herds; solid or hazardous wastes; or environmental justice.
4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** There is no scientific controversy over the nature of the impacts.
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The project is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas. The environmental effects to the human environment are fully analyzed in the EA. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve 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.** The actions considered in the selected alternative were considered by the interdisciplinary team within the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. A complete analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the selected alternative and all other alternatives is described in Chapter 3 of the EA.
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts – which include connected actions regardless of land ownership.** The interdisciplinary team evaluated the possible actions in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Because no site specific adverse impacts are expected for any resources, cumulative impacts at the larger, watershed scale are not anticipated.
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The project will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. A cultural inventory has been completed for the proposed action in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). A finding of “no effect” on cultural resources completes BLM’s obligations under Section 106 of the NHPA, pursuant to the statewide Protocol Agreement (2007) between BLM California and the State Historic Preservation Officer. These reports are on file with BLM.
9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, or the degree to which the action may adversely affect: 1) a proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species or its habitat, or 2) a species on BLM’s sensitive species list.** Although, an elderberry bush, potential host plant for the valley elderberry longhorn beetle, a species listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act, occurs on the Marshes Flat-Stone Corral allotment, there is no evidence that this bush is being grazed. Therefore, the proposed action is not anticipated to affect endangered or threatened species or their habitat. *Clarkia rostrata*, a BLM sensitive species, occurs on the Blue Moon allotment. While grazing affects the species, the long term effects appear to be either (1) mildly detrimental but not negative enough to affect population viability, (2) neutral, or (3) positive.
10. **Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, or local, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non-federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements.** The project does not violate any known federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. State, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. Furthermore, letters were sent to appropriate Native American tribes concerning consulting party status, and there was no response from any of the tribes. In addition, the project is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.

William S. Haigh, Mother Lode Field Manager

Date

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
LIVESTOCK GRAZING AUTHORIZATION

EA # CA-180-11-40

Blue Moon #04127 (Gann)
Middle Mokelumne North #4133 (Hertlein)
Marshes Flat-Stone Corral #04136 (Hope)
La Paloma-Number Nine #4159 (Ortiz)
Bagby #04188 (McDow)

Mother Lode Field Office
June 2011

INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is prepared to disclose and analyze the environmental consequences of re-authorizing a livestock grazing lease as proposed in Alternative 1 on the Blue Moon #04127 (previously Gann), Middle Mokelumne North #4133 (previously Hertlein), Marshes Flat-Stone Corral #04136 (previously Hope), La Paloma-Number Nine #4159 (previously Ortiz), and Bagby #04188 (previously Guisto). The EA is a site-specific analysis of potential impacts that could result with the implementation of one of the alternatives. The EA assists the BLM in project planning and ensuring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and in compliance with other laws and policies affecting the alternatives. If the decision maker determines that the proposed action has “significant” impacts following the analysis in the EA, then an EIS would be prepared for the project. If not, a grazing decision will be issued along with a FONSI statement, documenting the reasons why implementation of the selected alternative would not result in “significant” environmental impacts.

Background

Table 1

Name	Legal Description/ County	Acres	Type and # of Livestock	AUMs	Season of Use	Current Exp. Date
Blue Moon 04127	T4S R16E Sec. 19 and 30, all BLM lands in these sections, except separate 3.31 acre parcel. Mariposa County. See Maps 1 and 2.	Current – 80 acres Proposed – 80 acres with BLM (80 acres) making up approx- imately 20%, and the private base (350 acres) equaling approx- imately 80%.	Current 10 Cows Proposed – 48 cows	Current - 39 Proposed – Same	Current 1/1 – 4/30 Proposed – Same	02/28/ 14
Middle Mokelumne North 04133	T6N R13E Sec. 8, north of the river and Section 9: SE ¼ SE ¼ north of the river. See Maps 1 and 3.	Current – 301 acres Proposed - same	Current – 18 cows Proposed - same	Current – 26 Proposed – same	Current - 4/1 – 5/15 Proposed - same	02/28/ 12
Marshes Flat -Stone Corral 04136	T2S, R15E, Section 7: public land east of Don Pedro Reservoir 8: all public lands	Current – 483 Proposed – 775	Current-	Current-	Current-	2/28/ 11

Brunette Pasture	17: W ½, NW ¼ SE ¼		18 Cows	108	11/1-5/31	
Hope Pasture	18: public land east of Don Pedro Reservoir. Tuolumne County		18 Cows	108	11/1-5/31	
Brunette Pasture	See Map 1 and 4.		Proposed- 20 Cows	Proposed 110	Proposed – 11/1-4/15	
Hope Pasture			20 Cows	110	11/1-4/15	
La Paloma-Number Nine 04159	T 5S, R 16E, Section 10: S ½, NW ¼, NW ¼ (Excl. MS's 5306, 5904); S ½, NE ¼, (Excl. MS's 5306, 5904) Section 15: Lots 3, 4, Leon Quartz Mine T 5S, R 15E, 25: E ½, SE ¼ See Map 1 and 5.	Current – 125 Proposed – 125 with BLM comprising 10% of the Camp 9 pasture	Current – Camp 9 – 2 cows La Paloma – 5 cows Proposed Camp 9 – 30 cows 45 cows La Paloma – 8 cows	Current – 23 20 <hr/> Total 43 Proposed 18 27 24 <hr/> Total 69	Current – 3/1 – 2/28 2/1 – 5/31 Proposed – 5/15 – 11/15 11/16 – 5/14 1/15 – 4/15	11/1/ 10
Bagby 04188	T 3S, R 17E Portions of Sections 19, 29, 30, 31, and 32 T 4S, R 17E Portions of Sections 5, 6, & 8 See Maps 1 and 6	Current – 3334 Proposed – 3334	Current – 60 cows Proposed 60 cows	Current – 418 Proposed 330	Current – 11/1 – 5/31 Proposed – 11/1 – 4/15	2/28/ 13

Purpose and Need for the Action

The purpose of the action is to consider whether to authorize grazing on the Blue Moon allotment #04127 (previously Gann), Middle Mokelumne North allotment #04133 (previously Hertlein), Marshes Flat-Stone Corral allotment #04136 (previously Hope), La Paloma-Number Nine allotment #04159 (previously Ortiz), and Bagby allotment #04188 (previously Giusto). If authorized, grazing would be in accordance with 43 CFR 4100 and consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, and Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The purpose of the action is also to ensure that all authorizations implement provisions of, and is in conformance with, the Sierra Resource Management Plan (February

2008), and is in conformance with the Central California Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health.

The action is needed to respond to expired leases, leases that will expire within the next couple years, and leases issued under the appropriation act.

Scoping and Issues

The proposed action underwent internal, interdisciplinary scoping. Possible special status plant issues were raised for the Blue Moon and Bagby allotments. Possible issues with riparian habitat were raised regarding the Marshes Flat-Stone Corral and La Paloma-Number Nine allotments.

Prevention of Unnecessary or Undue Degradation

In addition to the management prescriptions discussed in this EA, including all terms and conditions, BLM may use its authority to close an area of any of the allotments to grazing use or take other measures to protect resources at any time, if needed. Therefore, issuance of a grazing lease with appropriate terms and conditions is consistent with BLM's responsibility to manage the public's use, occupancy, and development of the public lands and prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the lands. (43 USC 1732(b)).

Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, and Plans

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) requires federal agencies to complete formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for any action that "may affect" federally listed species or critical habitat. The ESA also requires federal agencies to use their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species.

In August 2004, the State Director, California Bureau of Land Management and the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) addressed the issue of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 compliance procedures for processing grazing permit lease renewals for livestock as defined in 43 CFR 4100.0-5. The State Director and the SHPO amended the 2004 State Protocol Agreement between California Bureau of Land Management and The California State Historic Preservation Officer with the 2004 Grazing Amendment, Supplemental Procedures for Livestock Grazing Permit/Lease Renewal. This amendment allows for the renewal of existing grazing permits prior to completing all NHPA compliance needs as long as the 2004 State Protocol direction, the BLM 8100 Series Manual Guidelines, and specific amendment direction for planning, inventory methodology, tribal and interested party consultation, evaluation, effect, treatment, and monitoring stipulations are followed. The 2004 Grazing Amendment remains in effect as a part of the 2007 State Protocol Agreement. The Mother Lode Field Office did not need to invoke the amendment to complete its Section 106 obligations to renew the grazing leases under the proposed alternative.

Plan Conformance

Determination:

The proposed action is in conformance with the Sierra Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved in February, 2008, including the Central California Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health.

Rationale:

The proposed action would occur in areas identified as available for livestock grazing in the Sierra Resource Management Plan (RMP). The proposed action is consistent with the land use decisions and resource management goals and objectives of the plan, as described in the RMP on pages 23-24. The key decisions, goals, and objectives include: manage livestock to achieve the four fundamentals of rangeland health; change authorized grazing preference and/or season of use to meet or make progress toward meeting standards established by the Central California Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health approved in July 2000.

Rangeland Health

The Central California Standards for Rangeland Health are as follows:

Soils: Soils exhibit functional biological and physical characteristics that are appropriate to soil type, climate, and land form.

Species: Viable, healthy, productive, and diverse populations of native species, including special status species (Federal T&E, Federal proposed, Federal candidates, BLM sensitive, or California State T&E) are maintained or enhanced where appropriate.

Riparian/Wetland: Riparian/wetland vegetation, structure and diversity, and stream channels and floodplains are functioning properly, and meeting regional and local management objectives.

Water Quality: Surface and groundwater quality complies with objectives of the Clean Water Act and other applicable water quality requirements, including meeting the California State standards.

The standards are determined to be as represented in the table below:

Rangeland Health Standard	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Livestock are the causal factor for not meeting Yes or No	Remarks (locations, etc.)
Soil	Yes for all			

Species	Yes for 04127, 04133, and 04159	04136, 04188	Yes	<p>Weedy species are dominating some riparian zones on the allotment.</p> <p>Upland areas on the Marshes Flat-Stone Corral allotment also has tocalote.</p> <p>Italian Thistle is present in patches at all range allotments.</p> <p>On allotment 4133, there are >10 locations of Oblong Spurge. The weed is widespread in Calavas county.</p>
Riparian	Yes for 04127, 04133, and 04159	04136 and 4188	Yes	<p>Cattle are trampling and/or heavily browsing the woody riparian vegetation in Marshes Flat-Stone Corral riparian zone. Weeds are contributing to the degradation of the riparian area.</p> <p>On the Bagby allotment, a fairly extensive Italian thistle infestation is degrading the riparian system in two areas, Flyaway Gulch and David Gulch.</p>
Water quality	Yes for all			

Table 2

Allotment Name and Number	Date of Assessment	Date of Determination
Blue Moon 04127	March 19, 2004 and May 20, 2011	July 1, 2011
Middle Mokelumne North 04133	June 20, 2001 and May 25, 2011	June 30, 2011
Marshes Flat-Stone Corral 04136	June 12 and June 30, 2009 and June 15, 2011	June 30, 2011
La Paloma-Number Nine 04159	January 31, 2002, April 28 and June 2, 2011	June 30, 2011
Bagby - 04188	2009 and June, 2011	June 30, 2011

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2000. Central California Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health. Central California Resource Advisory Council. Approved July 13, 2000.

CHAPTER 2: PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1 – Proposed Action

This proposed action is to authorize grazing on the Blue Moon #04127 (previously Gann), Middle Mokelumne North #04133 (previously Hertlein), Marshes Flat-Stone Corral #04136 (previously Hope), La Paloma-Number Nine #04159 (previously Ortiz), and Bagby #04188 (previously Giusto) allotments with applicable provisions as discussed further in this section. We propose changes to the terms and conditions on two of the leases based on discussions with the lessees regarding how the allotments are actually used, as well as a change in season of use to improve riparian health on the Stone Corral area of Marshes Flat-Stone Corral allotment and the Fly Away and David Gulch areas of the Bagby allotment. These proposed changes are illustrated in Table 3 below. To understand how the Proposed Action (Alternative 1) differs from the Current Management Action (Alternative 2), compare Table 3 with Table 4 under the Current Management (no action) alternative below. Also refer to Table 1 above.

A. Mandatory Terms and Conditions

Table 3

Allotment	Acreage	Percent BLM	Number of Livestock	Kind	From	To	AUMs	Lease Length
Blue Moon #04127	80	20	48	Cows	1/1	4/30	39	5 years
Middle Mokelumne North #04133	301	100	18	Cows	4/1	5/15	27	10 years
Marshes Flat-Stone Corral #04136	775	100	Hope Pasture	Cows	11/1	4/15	110	2 years
			20 Brunette Pasture					
			20	Cows	11/1	4/15	<u>110</u> 220	

La Paloma- Number Nine #04159	125	10	Number 9 30 45 La Paloma 8	Cows Cows Cows	5/15 11/16 1/1	11/15 5/14 4/15	18 27 <u>24</u> 69	10 years
Bagby #04188	3334	100	60	Cows	11/1	4/15	330	2 years

In addition, changes to the Marshes Flat-Stone Corral allotment boundary is being made based on a discussion with the lessee regarding the areas of the allotment actually used. This change is that a small, disconnected 20-acre parcel in Section 9 is no longer being used for cattle grazing, and should be removed from the allotment. The larger change is that an area south of the currently portrayed allotment boundary is fenced in with the allotment. The allotment boundary should include land south of the current allotment boundary down to the lake. These cumulative changes will increase the acreage of the allotment from 483 acres to 775 acres.

Blue Moon (04127) – *Clarkia rostrata* (BLM sensitive plant species) is found on this allotment. Cattle grazing clearly affects *Clarkia rostrata*. Cattle consume stems of the plant. However, grazed pastures support large populations of the species. In fact, in the vicinity of Lake McClure and Lake McSwain, all the large populations of the species are in grazed pastures. These pastures have been grazed for over 100 years. So while grazing affects the species, the long term effects appear to be either (1) mildly detrimental but not negative enough to affect population viability, (2) neutral, or (3) positive. It is recommended that reconnaissance monitoring and perimeter mapping with GPS for the *Clarkia rostrata* occurrences should occur with grazing monitoring. This monitoring should occur at least once every 5 years, during the appropriate season. Italian thistle is present near some *Clarkia rostrata* populations; monitoring the thistle will be part of the monitoring.

Marshes Flat-Stone Corral (04136) - The Stone Corral area of the Marshes Flat-Stone Corral allotment provides the only water for cattle in this portion of the allotment. The cows naturally congregate in this area, and heavy grazing use occurs. This heavy use is trampling the riparian vegetation. There are also several invasive species within the riparian area, including tocalote and Italian thistle. The riparian area is assessed as functional at risk with a downward trend. The lease season of use will change from November 1 through May 31 to November 1 through April 15 to allow the riparian area a rest from grazing pressure, and potential to recover. The riparian area will be observed after a 2-year period to determine if this management action is resulting in an improvement of the riparian area at Stone Corral.

Bagby (04188) – The Fly Away Gulch and David Gulch riparian areas are being degraded due to a prevalence of Italian thistle. Fly Away Gulch is assessed as functional at risk due to weeds. David Gulch was not appropriate for riparian assessment due to the length (less than ¼ mile) of the creek on BLM that is undergoing grazing pressure. The season of use will end on April 15 versus the current May 31 to allow the riparian area a rest from grazing pressure, and potential to recover. The riparian area will be observed after a 2-year period to determine if this management action is resulting in an improvement to the riparian areas.

Alternative 2 – Current Management (No Action)

A 10-year permit would be issued for each lease with the terms and conditions unchanged from the previous leases. This action is illustrated in Table 4 below. Under the Current Management alternative, the Middle Mokelumne North (04133) lease terms and conditions are the same as the proposed action. However, under this alternative the allotment area for Marshes Flat-Stone

Corral (04136) would not be changed to more accurately reflect how the allotment is actually used. The terms and conditions of the Blue Moon (04127) and La Paloma-Number Nine (04159) would not be changed to more accurately reflect actual grazing use of the allotments. Rare plant and weed monitoring would not occur on the Blue Moon allotment every 5 years. The season of use would not change for the Marshes Flat-Stone Corral (04136) allotment and the Bagby (04188) allotment to allow improvement to the riparian areas on these allotments. See Table 3 in proposed action section to compare terms and conditions to this alternative. Also refer to Table 1 for a comparison of the current and proposed. The existing terms and conditions are as follows:

Table 4

Allotment	Acreage	Percent BLM	Number of Livestock	Kind	From	To	AUMs	Lease Length
Blue Moon 04127	80	100	10	Cows	1/1	4/30	39	10 years
Middle Mokelumne North 4133	301	100	18	Cows	4/1	5/15	26	10 years
Marshes Flat-Stone Corral 04136	483	100	Hope 18	Cows	11/1	5/31	108	10 years
			Brunette 18	Cows	11/1	5/31	<u>108</u> 216	
La Paloma-Number Nine 04159	125	100	Number 9 2	Cows	2/28	3/1	24	10 years
			La Paloma 5	Cows	2/1	5/31	<u>15</u> 39	
Bagby 04188	3334	100	60	Cows	11/1	5/31	419	10 years

No mitigation monitoring, or other management actions would occur under current management.

Alternative 3 - No Grazing

This alternative would cancel the lease on the Blue Moon (04127), Middle Mokelumne North (04033), Marshes Flat-Stone Corral (04136), La Paloma-Number Nine (04159), and Bagby (04188) allotments. As a result, grazing would not be authorized on these allotments. Under this alternative, BLM would initiate the process in accordance with the 43 CFR parts 4100 and 1600 to eliminate grazing on these allotments and amend the Sierra Resource Management Plan.

Current Livestock Management

Blue Moon (04127) – Mr. Gann grazes approximately 48 cow/calf in winter and spring between his private ranch (350 acres) and the two BLM parcels (80 acres). The lower 40 acres is more extensively grazed than the upper 40 acres. The public land is fenced.

Middle Mokelumne North (04133) – Mr. Hertlein reports that 18 head of cattle use the allotment over a six-week period in spring. Livestock are controlled by an existing fence between the Hertlein Ranch and the allotment and the steep slopes within the allotment along the Middle Fork,

Mokelumne River. The fence between the properties is in good condition. During the time the allotment is in use, a gate is left open and livestock are allowed to wander between the allotment (180 acres) and a pasture area located on the Hertlein private property (160 acres). The cows go in when the grass is coming up and are taken off before the river gets so low that the cows cross to the other side.

Marshes Flat-Stone Corral (04136) – Mr. Hope reports that he has 35 to 40 cows, and that the cows use the allotment during the spring, prior to the grasses drying up. The cows drift through open gates between the private ranch and the BLM allotment. The cows tend to concentrate in the riparian areas, particularly the Stone Corral area. Mr. Hope has developed a spring, and is piping water through a 500-gallon water tank to a trough. Mr. Hope indicates plans to complete a fence in Section 8 between the private and BLM boundary. This fence would facilitate in controlling cattle use between the private ranch/public allotment. Mr. Hope indicated that the allotment boundary should be adjusted so it basically extends directly south all the way down to the lake.

La Paloma-Number Nine (04159) – The allotment is divided into 2 pastures (La Paloma and Number 9 pastures). La Paloma pasture is 80 acres and Camp 9 pasture is 47 acres. During an interview, Richard Ortiz indicated on the La Paloma parcel that he runs a total of 8 dry cows from January 15 through April 15 each year. On the Number 9 pastures, he runs cattle on 450 acres of private land and 47 acres of public land. He runs 30 cows on the BLM/private property from May 15 through November 15, and 45 cows from November 16 through May 14 each year. The BLM allotment only accounts for 10% of the grazed land at the Camp 9 pastures. There is no active herding of cows. Livestock drift between the private ranch and BLM allotment.

Bagby (04188) – Mr. McDow, the ranch manager, reports that 60 cows are potentially on the BLM allotment at any given time. Mr. McDow has built gathering pastures on the private property. There are no fences between the allotment and the private base lease. He allows the cows to enter the BLM allotment on November 1 and takes them back off on May 31 each year. The cows drift some onto the BLM, but stay mainly on his private ranch. On BLM, the cows mostly use Flyaway Gulch and west toward Highway 49. The cows use the less brushy, gentler topographical areas of the allotment. The total acreage of the allotment is 3334 acres. The private ranch is between 4000 to 5000 acres.

CHAPTER 3: ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The following supplemental authorities are not relevant to this project because related resources or conditions are not present: environmental justice, essential fish habitat; prime or unique farmlands; floodplains; Native American cultural values; solid or hazardous wastes; wild and scenic rivers; or wild horse and burro herds.

Air Quality

Affected Environment

The project areas are in the Mountain Counties Air Basin in an area classified as federal non-attainment for ozone 8-hour standard under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (www.arb.ca.gov/desig/adm.htm). A state implementation plan (SIP) for California identifies sources of emissions which include motor vehicles, consumer products, and pesticides (www.arb.ca.gov/planning/sip/94sip/sipvoll.htm). The SIP also includes control measures to reduce emissions.

Impacts of all Alternatives

The small livestock operations and slight vehicle use would not affect air quality. Cancellation of these small leases similarly would not affect air quality.

Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

Affected Environment

A substantial portion (77%, 2569 acres) of the Bagby allotment is within the Bagby Serpentine ACEC, designated in 2008. The relevant and important values in this ACEC are the Henneke soil series soils developed on a serpentine substrate supporting at least two BLM sensitive serpentine endemic species (*Lupinus spectabilis* and *Cryptantha mariposae*), other serpentine endemics, and the serpentine buckbrush chaparral community.

Impacts of Proposed Action and Current Management (no action)

Grazing does not appear to be impacting *Lupinus spectabilis* and *Cryptantha mariposae*, other serpentine endemics, or the serpentine buckbrush chaparral community. Grazing impacts seems to be limited to mesic and riparian areas that are not suitable sensitive species habitat. The special soils within the ACEC do not show signs of compaction or erosion in the sensitive species habitat, and continue to support the serpentine plant communities.

Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative

Elimination of grazing on this allotment would not affect ACEC values.

Cultural Resources

Affected Environment

0404127– Blue Moon – All 80 acres of this allotment were intensively inventoried for cultural resources in 1988 by archaeologist L.K. Napton and his crews from Stanislaus State University. Napton identified two cultural resources within the allotment. The first consists of mine workings and other features associated with Blue Moon Mine site. This resource also includes a prehistoric quarry. The other resource consists of a prehistoric site. The condition of the two cultural resources was field checked by BLM archaeologist Dean Decker in 2001 and by BLM archaeologist James Barnes in 2011. The condition of the resources has not changed; grazing is not negatively affecting them. Native Americans were contacted in 2011 to determine whether they have any issues with the proposed lease renewal. To date, no issues have been identified.

0404133 – Middle Mokelumne North – Cultural resource inventories were conducted by BLM archaeologists in 1980, 1990, and 1994. BLM archaeologist Dean Decker specifically studied the allotment in 2001 for a grazing lease renewal project. He conducted additional inventory in areas of the allotment where conflicts between grazing and cultural resources are most likely to occur. Decker's 2001 study (as well as the earlier inventory efforts) resulted in no cultural resources being identified within the allotment. Native Americans were contacted in 2011 to determine whether they have any issues with the proposed lease renewal. To date, no issues have been identified.

0404136 – Marshes Flat-Stone Corral – Select portions of this allotment were intensively inventoried in 2009 and 2011 by BLM archaeologist James Barnes for grazing lease renewal projects. Cultural resources found include a rock foundation and a prehistoric bedrock mortar site.

Native Americans were contacted in 2009 and 2011 to determine whether they have any issues with the proposed lease renewal. To date, no issues have been identified.

0404159 – La Paloma-Number Nine – An intensive inventory of the two Number Nine pastures/parcels was conducted in 2000 by BLM archaeologist Dean Decker for a grazing lease renewal project. The remains of a historic-era hardrock mine were identified. In 2011 BLM archaeologist James Barnes conducted an intensive inventory of the southernmost 80-acre parcel (La Paloma). Dredge mining evidence and a possible single bedrock mortar were found. Barnes also checked the condition of the hardrock mine found in 2000. Its condition has not changed. It is not being affected by grazing. Native Americans were contacted in 2011 to determine whether they have any issues with the proposed lease renewal. To date, no issues have been identified.

0404188 – Bagby – In 2002 BLM archaeologist Dean Decker conducted an intensive inventory (totaling approximately 40 acres) of select portions of the allotment. He identified and recorded several cultural resources: TM-248, a single BRM on Flyaway Gulch; TM-249, an extensive historic-era placer mining and occupancy remains; and TM-250, historic-era placer mining. Decker also recorded TM-128, BRMs and historic-era placer mining and occupancy remains (TM-263 recorded in 2003 by Barnes probably includes some of the features in TM-128). TM-128 was noted at an earlier time but not recorded by Decker until 2002. Recently, archaeologists under contract to the Merced Irrigation District (MID) have conducted an intensive inventory of lands within the FERC project boundary for the relicensing of MID's operations at Lake McClure. A portion of the recently inventoried lands, along Lake McClure/Merced River just east of Bagby, falls within the Bagby allotment. The contracted archaeologists are still finalizing their report on the inventory. However, they sent us draft cultural resource records. Resources recorded within the allotment include MID-615, elements of a proposed Bagby historical district; MID-661, a BRM site; and elements of CA-MRP-720H, the remains of the Yosemite Valley Railroad. BLM archaeologist James Barnes conducted fieldwork in 2011 to verify resource locations and conditions, and to conduct additional inventory. Native Americans were contacted in 2011 to determine whether they have any issues with the proposed lease renewal. To date, no issues have been identified.

Impacts of Proposed Action and Current Management (no action)

The BLM is in the process of completing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), pursuant to BLM's statewide Protocol Agreement, for the proposed action. Section 106 will be completed before a decision is made to issue renewals. At this point in the Section 106 process, it seems clear that the cultural resources identified on the allotments are not being negatively affected by the current level of cattle grazing. This situation is not likely to change under the proposed action. The level of grazing use would not change substantially, and there are no range improvements proposed that would affect cultural resources. The smaller-acreage allotments (0404127 Blue Moon and 0404159 La Paloma-Number Nine) have been intensively inventoried in their entirety. The larger allotments (0404136 Marshes Flat-Stone Corral and 0404188 Bagby) have not. However, portions of the larger allotments where conflicts between grazing and cultural resources are most likely to occur have been intensively inventoried. In other words, the areas with the highest sensitivity have been inventoried. Given the brushy, rugged, and dry nature of much of the terrain of the larger allotments and the relatively low, dispersed level of grazing proposed, it is very unlikely that there would be any conflicts between grazing and cultural resources, significant or not, within the un-inventoried areas. If conflicts between grazing and cultural resources (causing negative effects to the resources) are identified, measures would be incorporated into the lease agreement(s) to greatly reduce or eliminate the conflicts. One typical measure is to put up cattle-control fencing to prevent cattle from negatively affecting a cultural resource. Renewing the leases, as proposed, would not affect significant cultural

resources. If changes to the terms and conditions of any of the lease agreements were proposed (i.e., range improvements were proposed), then further Section 106 review would be necessary before the terms and conditions could be modified.

Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative

Elimination of grazing on these allotments would not affect cultural resources.

References

Barnes, J. 2011. Section 106 compliance for the Hope, Gann, Ortiz, and McDow grazing lease renewals, Tuolumne and Mariposa counties. Memorandum to the Field Manager and attached Cultural Resource Inventory Report (CA-018-S-TM-11/07). U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Mother Lode Field Office, El Dorado Hills, California.

Barnes, J. 2011. Section 106 compliance for the Hertlein grazing lease renewal, Calaveras County. Memorandum to the Field Manager. U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Mother Lode Field Office, El Dorado Hills, California.

Invasive, non-native species

0404127– Blue Moon –Patches of Italian thistle occur throughout the allotment

0404133 – Middle Mokelumne North – There is some star thistle along the road that parallels the river at the top of the allotment. The star thistle is at acceptable levels and is not affecting rangeland health. Several bull thistle plants were identified in 2011 along a road. Less than 10 occurrences of oblong spurge were located in the area inventoried in 2011. Oblong Spurge is listed by the California Department of Food and Agriculture as a ‘list B’ pest. Some occurrences contained hundreds of flowering individuals while others were much smaller.

0404136 – Marshes Flat-Stone Corral – Italian thistle was prominent especially in disturbed areas and around riparian areas. Sow thistle and fig are also found in drainages. Tocalote was significant in some upland areas. The weedy annual catch-fly, *Silene gallica*, appears to be one of the dominant species of the “bathtub ring” surrounding the lake. The allotment is not meeting the species standard for rangeland health due to the presence of invasive weeds.

0404159 – La Paloma-Number Nine – Italian thistle and milk thistle present in patches in the riparian areas. Some medusa head patches also present on the allotment.

0404188 – Bagby – There are large patches of Italian thistle at Flyaway Gulch, and the isolated, small (20-acre) parcel in the western portion of the lease at David Gulch. Grazing is evident in these areas. There are patches of milk thistle at Washington Flat on the Merced River, which is not subject to grazing. This allotment is not meeting the species standard for rangeland health due to the presence of invasive weeds in the riparian areas.

Impacts of the Proposed Action and Current Management

Although invasive weed species are present on these allotments, they do not appear to be significantly impacting the abundance or cover of native species. Cattle can spread weed seed through their scat and on their hair. The proposed, low level of grazing that will occur on these allotments would not significantly affect the spread of invasive weeds.

Impacts of No Grazing

Under the no grazing alternative, the potential for dispersal of seeds through livestock hairs and scat would decrease throughout the allotments. Once weeds are established, moderate grazing during their growth period and when they are palatable can help control some important herbaceous weed species including yellow starthistle. Elimination of grazing could exacerbate existing weed problems in some areas. Because current, low levels of grazing do not appear to be significantly affecting weed spread, elimination of grazing would not be expected to noticeably reduce invasive species on the allotments.

Franklin, A. 2002. Botanical Resource Inventory Report (Giusto #04188) grazing lease renewal. Unpubl. rep. U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 1 p.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2002. Environmental Assessment CA-180-02-59. Livestock grazing authorization for the Ortiz allotment. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 15 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2004. Environmental Assessment CA-180-04-57. Livestock grazing authorization for 12 allotments. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 37 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2004. Environmental Assessment CA-180-04-11. Livestock grazing authorization for the Hertlein allotment. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 10 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2009. Environmental Assessment CA-180-09-37. Livestock grazing authorization for the Banks, Hope, Turpin, and Haigh allotments. Mother Lode Field Office, El Dorado Hills, California. 18 pp.

Recreation

Affected Environment

Very little or no recreation is occurring on any of the allotments. Two of the allotments, Marshes Flat-Stone Corral and La Paloma-Number Nine are only accessible through private land. Marshes Flat-Stone Corral could potentially be accessed from Don Pedro Reservoir. However, the lessee communicated that recreationists do not travel far from the lake. Blue Moon is perhaps the most accessible allotment, however signs of recreation use were not observed on any of the allotments. Similarly, the Middle Mokelumne North allotment does not appear to have recreational use.

Impacts of the Proposed Action and Current Management

The primary impact of grazing on recreation opportunities will be the presence of domestic livestock and the livestock operator in the area during the grazing season. Due to limited access and no observed recreation, the proposed action is not impacting recreational opportunities.

Impacts of No Grazing

Due to limited access and no observed recreational use, elimination of already low/no impact grazing is not expected to affect recreation in the allotments.

Social and Economic Values

Due to the size and nature of these allotments, it is expected that the lessees employ few if any individuals in the community. Livestock grazing on the scale of these allotments contribute little economic value to the community. Economic impacts of all of the alternatives are insignificant. For example, according to an online profile (http://www.tuolumnecountyprofile.org/economy_and_infrastructure/economy_and_infrastructure_pg43.htm), in 2007 (before the start of the current recession) Tuolumne County had **228** jobs in “Natural Resources and Mining” which presumably includes livestock ranching. There was a total of 17,782 jobs in the county in all sectors in 2007. Therefore, jobs in “Natural Resources and Mining” accounted for approximately **1.3** percent of jobs in the county. This is an extremely small portion of the county’s overall job picture (and remember that this category also includes jobs in mining and other natural resource industries).

Using official government statistics to look at the economic role of the cattle industry statewide (http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Statistics/PDFs/AgResourceDirectory2008/5_2008_LivestockAndDairy.pdf), in 2009 Tuolumne County had 12,000 cattle. This was less than 10 percent of central Sierra Nevada cattle which stood at 119,000. Mariposa had a larger number of cattle with 19,000. El Dorado, Tuolumne, and Mariposa counties had combined a total of 38,000 cattle. This was only about 32 percent of cattle in the central Sierra Nevada (District 60). Overall, the central Sierra Nevada district was ranked 5th out of 8 districts/regions in terms of cattle production in 2009. It is clear from these statistics that the central Sierra Nevada is not an economically important player in California’s cattle industry. It is also notable that the cattle industry is not one of the state’s important agricultural industries. The lease renewals analyzed in this EA are part of very small cattle or horse operations in the central Sierra Nevada. They are not economically important at either at local or statewide/regional levels.

Because the leases have been in the families for a number of years, livestock grazing has become a way of life and a tradition passed from generation to generation through the years. Social impacts of the lease cancellation would impact the lessee’s way of life.

Soils

Affected Environment

0404127 – Blue Moon – Daulton very rocky loam, 30% to 75% slopes. Erosion potential of this soil is very high. Erosion is not occurring on this allotment. The allotment is currently meeting the soil standard for rangeland health.

0404133 – Middle Mokelumne North – From the top of the divide down into the North Fork, the soils are of the Holland-Shaver association. These are deep, well-drained, acid, rocky soils. Erosion hazard is moderate if the vegetative cover is removed. The remainder of the subject land has soils of the Musick Association. These soils are very deep, well drained and acid. Erosion hazard is slight to moderate. Residual dry material ranged from 250 to 750 pounds per acre in the grazed portions of the lease. The ungrazed portion of the lease had an RDM exceeding 1000 pounds per acre. No erosion is evident within the allotment. A diversity of plant species and ground cover is present to protect sites from accelerated erosion. Residual dry matter appears to be protecting the soil surface. The allotment is currently meeting the soil standard for rangeland health.

0404136 – Marshes Flat-Stone Corral – The soils are mapped as Mesozoic volcanic and metavolcanic rock. NRCS is in the process of producing the first County soil map for Tuolumne County. According to Soil Vegetation Maps of California (1977), among the dominant soil series are Stonyford, Trabuco, Auburn, Exchequer, and Rescue. The allotment is currently meeting the soil standard for rangeland health. It has good ground cover with a residual dry matter of 1,000 lbs/acre and no evident erosion/compaction.

0404159 – La Paloma-Number Nine – Soils on the allotment consist of four different soil types: Auburn very rocky loams, 15 to 30% slopes, occurs on all of the northern-most parcel (~20 acres), 2/3 of the parcel in Section 15 (~17 acres), and 2/3 of the southern-most parcel (~50 acres); Blasingame loam, 15 to 30% slope, occurs on 1/3 of the parcel in Section 15 (~8 acres); Redding gravelly loam, 2 to 15% slope, occurs on 1/3 of the southern-most parcel (~29 acres); and river wash and tailings occurs on less than 1% of the southern most parcel (<1 acre). Auburn very rocky loams are well-drained soils underlain at a depth of 20 inches by basic igneous rock. This soil is on uplands. Rock outcrops cover 10 to 25% of the surface area. Runoff is medium to rapid, and the hazard of erosion is moderate to high. Blaingame loams are somewhat excessively drained soils on uplands. Permeability is moderately slow. Rock outcrops cover less than 2% of the surface area. Runoff is medium to rapid and the hazard of erosion is moderate to high. Redding gravelly loams are well-drained soils on old terraces underlain by hardpan. This sloping soil is on terraces. The relief is somewhat hummocky. Runoff is slow to medium, and water often stands in the intermound areas. The hazard of erosion is slight to moderate. River wash and tailings are gravelly, cobbly, and stony mixed alluvium adjacent to stream channels. These soils are mostly stable.

The allotment is currently meeting the soil standard for rangeland health. It has good ground cover with a RDM of 700-1000 lbs/acre and no erosion is present.

0404188 – Bagby – Soils are mapped as Henneke, rock land, Blasingme-Las Posas, riverwash and trailings, Auburn, Maymen, loamy alluvial land, Hornitos, Blasingame, and Trabuco.

The allotment is currently meeting the soil standard for rangeland health. It has good ground cover with a RDM of 700-1000 lbs/acre and no erosion is present.

Impacts of the Proposed Action and Current Management

There is little evidence of erosion or compaction on any of the allotments. Therefore, livestock grazing is not impacting soils on these allotments.

Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative

Elimination of grazing will not affect soil productivity or stability.

Franklin, A. 2002. Botanical Resource Inventory Report (Giusto #04188) grazing lease renewal. Unpubl. rep. U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 1 p.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2002. Environmental Assessment CA-180-02-59. Livestock grazing authorization for the Ortiz allotment. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 15 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2004. Environmental Assessment CA-180-04-57. Livestock grazing authorization for 12 allotments. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 37 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2004. Environmental Assessment CA-180-04-11. Livestock grazing authorization for the Hertlein allotment. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 10 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2009. Environmental Assessment CA-180-09-37. Livestock grazing authorization for the Banks, Hope, Turpin, and Haigh allotments. Mother Lode Field Office, El Dorado Hills, California. 18 pp.

Water Quality

Affected Environment

0404127 – Blue Moon – The allotment is located in the Upper Merced River watershed. There is no riparian or wetland habitats present on the allotment.

0404133 – Middle Mokelumne North – The allotment is located in the Upper Mokelumne River watershed. An intermittent tributary (1/4 mile) of the Middle Fork, Mokelumne River runs through the allotment. The allotment boundary is about 2 miles of the Middle Mokelumne. There are no developed springs on the allotment.

0404136 – Marshes Flat-Stone Corral – The allotment is in the Upper Tuolumne River watershed. Surface runoff flows into Don Pedro Reservoir. The allotment is drained by three streams totaling approximately 1 mile. There is one developed spring on the allotment.

0404159 – La Paloma-Number Nine – The allotment is in the Upper Merced River watershed. There is one spring in the northeast corner of the southern most parcel of the No. Nine pastures that livestock use on the allotment. There is a well-developed wetlands area with ponds and marshy habitat in the southern-most 80-acre parcel. There are no developed water sources on the allotment.

0404188 – Bagby – The allotment is in the Upper Merced River watershed. There are two creeks that run through the allotment: Flyaway Gulch (1 mile) and David Gulch (2 miles). There is one developed spring on the allotment.

Impacts of the Proposed Action and Current Management (no action)

Because the State has not identified these rivers as water quality impaired, further grazing at current levels are not expected to affect water quality or beneficial water uses.

Impacts from the No Grazing Alternative

Elimination of grazing is not expected to significantly improve water quality on the allotments.

References

California Regional Water Quality Board, Central Valley Region. Revised 2009. The Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan) for the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River Basins.

Wetlands/Riparian

Riparian-wetland areas are functioning properly when adequate vegetation, landform, or large woody debris is present to dissipate stream energy associated with high waterflows, thereby reducing erosion and improving water quality; filter sediment, capture bedload, and aid floodplain

development; improve flood-water retention and ground-water recharge; develop root masses that stabilize streambanks against cutting action; develop diverse ponding and channel characteristics to provide the habitat and the water depth, duration, and temperature necessary for fish production, waterfowl breeding, and other uses; and support greater biodiversity. The functioning condition of riparian-wetland areas is a result of interaction among geology, soil, water, and vegetation.

Lentic riparian/wetland area are functioning properly when adequate vegetation, landform, or debris is present to: dissipate energies associated with wind action, wave action, and overland flow from adjacent sites, thereby reducing erosion and improving water quality; filter sediment and aid floodplain development; improve flood-water retention and ground-water recharge; develop root masses that stabilize islands and shoreline features against cutting action; restrict water percolation; develop diverse ponding characteristics to provide habitat and the water depth, duration, and temperature necessary for fish production water-bird breeding, and other uses and support greater biodiversity.

Affected Environment

0404127 – Blue Moon – There are no riparian or wetland areas on the allotment.

040133 – Middle Mokelumne North – An intermittent tributary (1/4 mile) of the Middle Fork, Mokelumne River runs through the allotment. The allotment boundary is about 2 miles of the Middle Mokelumne. The ¼ mile intermittent tributary was assessed as properly functioning. Riparian habitat along the Mokelumne River portion of the allotment was not accessed since cattle do not typically graze along the river due to steep topography.

0404136 – Marshes Flat-Stone Corral – Two perennial streams totaling approximately 1 mile occur on the allotment. These streams drain directly into Don Pedro Reservoir. Both streams have a weed component, but one stream was assessed as properly functioning. The stream associated with the Stone Corral area provides the only water on this portion of the allotment during several months of the year. The cattle naturally congregate in this area. The riparian vegetation in the flatter portions of the stream is being trampled by the cattle, and invasive weeds, such as tocalote thistle and Italian thistle are prominent. This stream is assessed as functional at risk with a downward trend. As the riparian areas steepen, the cattle impacts are greatly reduced.

0404159 – La Paloma-Number Nine – There are no creeks running through the allotment. There are two wet areas. There is one wet area associated with a mine shaft in the northeast corner of the southern-most parcel of the Camp Nine pastures that livestock use on the allotment. This spring is classified as functioning at risk. Two old decadent willows and a very small group of cattails are all that remains of the lentic area. Erosion is evident including collapsing banks. Evidence of pigs was abundant on this parcel during a field visit on January 31, 2002, and again in 2011. Wild pigs appear to be a large factor in the degradation of the spring area. Another lentic area is located in the southern portion of the La Paloma pasture. This area had 2 or 3 small, interconnected ponds, and a marshy area surrounding the ponds. This lentic area, although somewhat weedy (Italian thistle and milk thistle), was assessed as properly functioning.

0404188 – Bagby – There are two creeks that run through the allotment: Flyaway Gulch (1 mile) and David Gulch (2 miles). Flyaway Gulch has been assessed as functional at risk. David Gulch has not been assessed to date.

Impacts of the Proposed Action

A change in season of use from November 1 to May 31 to November 1 to April 15 is proposed for the Marshes Flat-Stone Corral and Bagby allotments. The goal of this change in the season of use is to allow the riparian area a rest from grazing pressure, and potential to recover. The riparian area will be observed after a 2-year period to determine if this management action is resulting in an improvement of the riparian areas at Stone Corral on the Marshes Flat-Stone Corral allotment and Flyaway Gulch and David Gulch on the Bagby allotment. The proposed alternative should result in an improvement to the riparian area.

On the remaining allotments, the proposed action will not impact riparian areas.

Impacts of the Current Management (no action)

Current management on the Marshes Flat-Stone Corral allotment is resulting in degradation of a riparian area at the Stone Corral area of the allotment. The stream associated with the Stone Corral area provides the only water on this portion of the allotment during several months of the year. The cattle naturally congregate in this area. The riparian vegetation in the flatter portions of the stream is being trampled by the cattle, and invasive weeds, such as tocalote thistle and Italian thistle are prominent. This stream is assessed as functional at risk with a downward trend. As the riparian areas steepen, the cattle impacts are greatly reduced.

Current management on the Bagby allotment is resulting in similar issues as describes above on Flyaway Gulch and a small portion of David Gulch in the isolated 20-acre BLM in the western portion of the allotment. Flyaway Gulch is assessed as functional at risk largely due to invasive Italian thistle.

On the remaining allotments, current management is not impacting the riparian areas.

Impacts of No Grazing Alternative

On the Marshes Flat-Stone Corral allotment, cattle grazing is degrading the riparian area at the Stone Corral area of the allotment. The stream associated with the Stone Corral area provides the only water on this portion of the allotment during several months of the year. The cattle naturally congregate in this area. The riparian vegetation in the flatter portions of the stream is being trampled by the cattle, and invasive weeds, such as tocalote thistle and Italian thistle are prominent. This stream is assessed as functional at risk with a downward trend. As the riparian areas steepen, the cattle impacts are greatly reduced. Elimination of grazing on the allotment may result in improvement to Stone Corral riparian area.

On the Bagby allotment, cattle grazing is degrading the riparian area at the Flyaway Gulch and a small portion of David Gulch. Italian thistle is fairly prevalent in these areas. Flyaway Gulch is assessed as functional at risk. Elimination of grazing on the allotment may result in improvement to these two riparian areas.

Cattle grazing is not impacting riparian habitat on any of the remaining allotments, therefore elimination of grazing will have no affect on riparian habitat.

References

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2002. Environmental Assessment CA-180-02-59. Livestock grazing authorization for the Ortiz allotment. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 15 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2004. Environmental Assessment CA-180-04-57. Livestock grazing authorization for 12 allotments. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 37 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2004. Environmental Assessment CA-180-04-11. Livestock grazing authorization for the Hertlein allotment. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 10 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2009. Environmental Assessment CA-180-09-37. Livestock grazing authorization for the Banks, Hope, Turpin, and Haigh allotments. Mother Lode Field Office, El Dorado Hills, California. 18 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2011. Grazing Use Management/Rangeland Health Assessment and Determination for the La Paloma-Number Nine allotment. Mother Lode Field Office, El Dorado Hills, California. 2 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2011. Grazing Use Management/Rangeland Health Assessment and Determination for the Bagby allotment. Mother Lode Field Office, El Dorado Hills, California. 3 pp.

Wilderness

The Merced River Wilderness Study Area CA-040-203 encompasses 12,835 acres of which 1,500 acres occur on the allotment. Wilderness values include naturalness, solitude, primitive recreation, and special resource characteristics. Uses that conflict with wilderness designation include recreational ORV use and mining. The WSA was recommended as non-suitable for designation as wilderness by the Bureau in its report to Congress. The rationale for this proposal are: (1) the wilderness values of the area are not outstanding; (2) the area has a high probability for mineral development on the large number of placer and lode claims found throughout the area – development of these claims and the noise and visual intrusions associated with this development will further hinder effective management of the area as wilderness; and (3) current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources, including the limestone salamander, a State-listed threatened and BLM sensitive species. There is no wilderness management plan for this area. In the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations for the Central California Area, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 1986, livestock grazing was not considered a factor affecting wilderness values.

Impacts of the Proposed Action and Current Management (no action)

Current levels of livestock use do not appear to be impacting wilderness values. No new improvements are planned for this allotment.

Impacts of No Grazing Alternative

No grazing alternative would eliminate any possible impacts to wilderness values.

References

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 1989. South Fork Merced and the Merced Wild and Scenic River Boundary Environmental Assessment. Unpubl. Rep. Folsom, California.

Wildlife

0404127– Blue Moon – The allotment consists largely of blue oak woodland. Blue oak woodlands supports a variety of wildlife species, including 29 species of amphibians and reptiles, 57 species of birds, and 10 species of mammals. The allotment is in the year-long range of the Yosemite Deer Herd. Surveys of the allotment indicate a diversity of typical, native wildlife species for the area, such as coyote, deer, California quail, American robin, and several other bird species. No special status species were observed on the allotment.

0404133 – Middle Mokelumne North – On the upper reaches of the allotment, where cattle are not prevented from grazing due to steep gradients, the montane hardwood plant community is dominant. Along the steeper slopes bordering the river, montane hardwood and mixed chaparral are the dominant plant communities. Riparian habitat occurs along the river. Wildlife characteristic of montane hardwood habitat include disseminators of acorns (scrub and Steller's jays, acorn woodpecker, and western gray squirrel) plus those that use acorns as a major food source—wild turkey, California quail, band-tailed pigeon, California ground squirrel, dusky-footed woodrat, black bear, and mule deer. Deer also use the foliage of several hardwoods to a moderate extent. The area is part of the year-long range of the Railroad Flat and Placerville deer herds. Many amphibians and reptiles are found on the forest floor in the montane hardwood habitat. Among them are ensatina, relictual slender salamander, and western fence lizard. Snakes include rubber boa, western rattlesnake, kingsnake, and sharp-tailed snake. Riparian habitat along the river is also of exceptionally high value to many species of wildlife. Such areas provide water, thermal cover, migration corridors, and diverse nesting and feeding opportunities. Rock outcrops on the steep river canyon provide nesting sites for several raptor species. No special status species were observed on the allotment.

0404136 – Marshes Flat-Stone Corral – One elderberry bush was found on the allotment. These shrubs could host the federally threatened valley elderberry longhorn beetle. The elderberry bush showed no evidence of grazing. The lease underwent brush conversion during the late 1950's. This involved prescribed burning, followed by aerial application of an herbicide, and aerial seeding. After two years of treatment, the conversion took, and there are large areas of the lease that are open grassland habitat. The natural habitat on the allotment is largely dense chaparral/chamise. There are a few scattered oaks and gray pine. Riparian vegetation, such as willow, coffeeberry, rushes, and cattails, is supported by 2 perennial streams that drain into Don Pedro Reservoir. Available forage is abundant, with no apparent competition between wildlife and livestock. The allotment is within the yearlong range of the Mariposa deer herd. Wildlife species (sight or sign) observed during field exams included coyote, California quail, spotted towhee, ash-throated flycatcher, common bushtit, wrentit, American robin, western kingbird, black phoebe, Nuttall's woodpecker, mourning dove, bullfrog, and crawdads.

0404159 – La Paloma-Number Nine – The allotment largely consists of annual grasses and forbs on gently rolling hills with a very few scattered oaks. The allotment is part of the year-long range of the Mariposa deer herd and provides high habitat value for mule deer. The allotment area also appears to be important to bobcat and coyote. Wild pigs also occur on the allotment. The allotment area largely consists of the annual grassland habitat type. Many wildlife species use annual grasslands for foraging, but some require special habitat features such as cliffs, caves, ponds, or habitats with woody plants for breeding, resting, and escape cover. Characteristic

reptiles that breed in annual grassland habitats include the western fence lizard, common garter snake, and western rattlesnake (Basey and Sinclear 1980). Mammals typically found in this habitat include the black-tailed jackrabbit, California ground squirrel, Botta's pocket gopher, western harvest mouse, California vole, and coyote (White et al. 1980). Common birds known to breed in annual grasslands include the burrowing owl, short-eared owl, horned lark, and western meadowlark (Verner et al. 1980). This habitat also provides important foraging habitat for the turkey vulture, northern harrier, American kestrel, black-shouldered kite, and prairie falcon. No special status species were observed on the allotment.

0404188 – Bagby – The allotment is part of the year-long range of the Mariposa deer herd. The brush is very dense which reduces its habitat quality for deer. The allotment area appears to be important to upland game birds, such as California quail, as well as many other bird species that use the dense brush for cover. The allotment area largely consists of the mixed chaparral/chamise habitat type. Fire is important to maintain habitat quality for wildlife such as deer, small mammals, and birds in this habitat type. No special status species were observed on the allotment.

Impacts of all Alternatives

Neither proposed, current management or elimination of grazing are expected to impact wildlife because grazing does not appear to be adversely affecting special status species known to occur on the allotments or their habitats, and there is no apparent competition for forage between wildlife and livestock.

References

Mayer, K.E., and W.F. Laudenslayer, Jr., Editors. 1988. A guide to wildlife habitats of California. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Sacramento, CA. 166 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 1982. Proposed Livestock Grazing Management for the Sierra Planning Area Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Sacramento, California. 145 pp.

Vegetation

Affected Environment

0404127 – Blue Moon – The western area of the lease was surveyed. Blue oak savannah is dominant. Interior live oak and buckbrush are the other important woody species. Understory herbaceous vegetation, annual grasses and common wildflowers like pretty faces and lupine and brodiaea, appeared ungrazed in 2011. Italian thistle is present on the allotment.

Special status species – *Clarkia rostrata*, a BLM sensitive plant species, was found on the allotment.

0404133 – Middle Mokelumne North – On the upper reaches of the allotment, where cattle are not prevented from grazing due to steep gradients, the montane hardwood plant community is dominant. Along the steeper slopes bordering the river, montane hardwood and mixed chaparral are the dominant plant communities. Riparian habitat occurs along the river. The overstory consists of ponderosa pine, California black oak, scattered gray pine, and canyon live oak. Shrub species include toyon, poison oak, manzanita, and bear clover. Herbaceous species include blue wild-rye, dogtail, California brome, and filaree.

Special status species – No special status plant species occur on the allotment.

0404136 – Marshes Flat-Stone Corral – Chaparral and non-native annual grassland dominate the lease area. Small stands of gray pine and oaks are mostly associated with drainages. Apparently the grassland is mainly the result of range-improvement/brush-control projects begun in the 1950's and maintained (extended?) by the lessee in the years since. Woody species of uplands include gray pine, blue oak, interior live oak, chamise, toyon, common manzanita, whiteleaf manzanita, flowering ash, buckbrush, western redbud, poison oak, holly-leaf redberry, and yerba santa. In mesic drainage locations (borderline riparian), there is California buckeye, fig, and western spicebush.

Special status species – No special status plant species were found on the allotment.

0404159 – La Paloma-Number Nine – The allotment largely consists of annual grasses and forbs on gently rolling hills with a very few scattered oaks.

Special status species – No special status plant species occur on the allotment.

0404188 – Bagby – Woody plant species observed on the western portion of the allotment included interior live oak, blue oak, gray pine, coffeeberry, ceanothus, California juniper, Yerba Santa, chamise, toyon, and poison oak. There is also a buckbrush chaparral community associated with the serpentine formation. Riparian areas of the Bagby lease have interior live oak, willows and annual grasses.

Special status species – Shaggy hair lupine (*Lupinus spectabilis*), a BLM sensitive plant species, is present on the allotment.

Impacts of the Proposed Action and Current Management

0404127 – Blue Moon – *Clarkia rostrata*, a BLM sensitive species, was found on the allotment. Cattle grazing clearly affects *Clarkia rostrata*. Cattle consume stems of the plant. However, grazed pastures support large populations of this species. In fact, in the vicinity of Lake McClure and Lake McSwain, all the large populations of the species are in grazed pastures. These pastures have been grazed for over 100 years. So while grazing affects the species, the long term effects appear to be either (1) mildly detrimental but not negative enough to affect population viability, (2) neutral, or (3) positive. For this reason, changing the grazing on this parcel is not considered necessary.

0404133 – Middle Mokelumne North – None to special status species.

0404136 – Marshes Flat-Stone Corral – The allotment does not meet the species standard for rangeland health due to invasive weedy species, especially prevalent in the riparian areas. Also, apparent is the non-native species, such as Texas rose clover, that are prevalent in the formerly treated areas of the allotment. Despite weedy species and non-native species in areas of the allotment, in the majority of the allotment and especially in the upland area, native vegetation is diverse and healthy, and not being impacted by livestock grazing. Grazing is not impacting special status species on the allotment. By assisting in controlling weeds, and allowing recovery of riparian vegetation, the proposed change in the season of use will benefit native vegetation in these areas.

0404159 – La Paloma-Number Nine – None to special status species.

0404188 – Bagby – *Lupinus spectabilis*, a BLM sensitive species is present on the allotment, however, it does not appear to be undergoing any grazing impacts. None to special status species.

Impacts of No Grazing – Elimination of grazing is not expected to impact vegetation.

References

Franklin, A. 2002. Botanical Resource Inventory Report (Giusto #04188) grazing lease renewal. Unpubl. rep. U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 1 p.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2002. Environmental Assessment CA-180-02-59. Livestock grazing authorization for the Ortiz allotment. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 15 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2004. Environmental Assessment CA-180-04-57. Livestock grazing authorization for 12 allotments. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 37 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2004. Environmental Assessment CA-180-04-11. Livestock grazing authorization for the Hertlein allotment. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 10 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2009. Environmental Assessment CA-180-09-37. Livestock grazing authorization for the Banks, Hope, Turpin, and Haigh allotments. Mother Lode Field Office, El Dorado Hills, California. 18 pp.

Cumulative Impacts

Because no site specific adverse impacts are expected for any resources (described above), cumulative impacts at the larger, watershed scale are not anticipated, for the proposed alternative. Lease cancellation could lead to cumulative social impacts. The rural way of life is being impacted in these areas due to expanding development and urbanization. Livestock grazing is a tradition and lifestyle choice for many of the current lessees. Lease cancellation would impact this lifestyle and tradition.

CHAPTER 4: CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Persons, Groups, and Agencies Consulted

- Phil Hope
- Richard Ortiz
- Bob McDow
- Norman Hertlein
- Indian tribes

Public Participation

The EA will be available on BLM's website for a 15-day public review period.

List of Preparers and Reviewers

- Peggy Cranston, Wildlife Biologist and Range Program Lead
- Lauren Fety, Botanist
- James Barnes, Archaeologist and NEPA Coordinator

Reviewers:

/s/ James Barnes

6-30-11

NEPA Reviewer/Cultural Resources

/s/ Lauren Fety

6-30-11

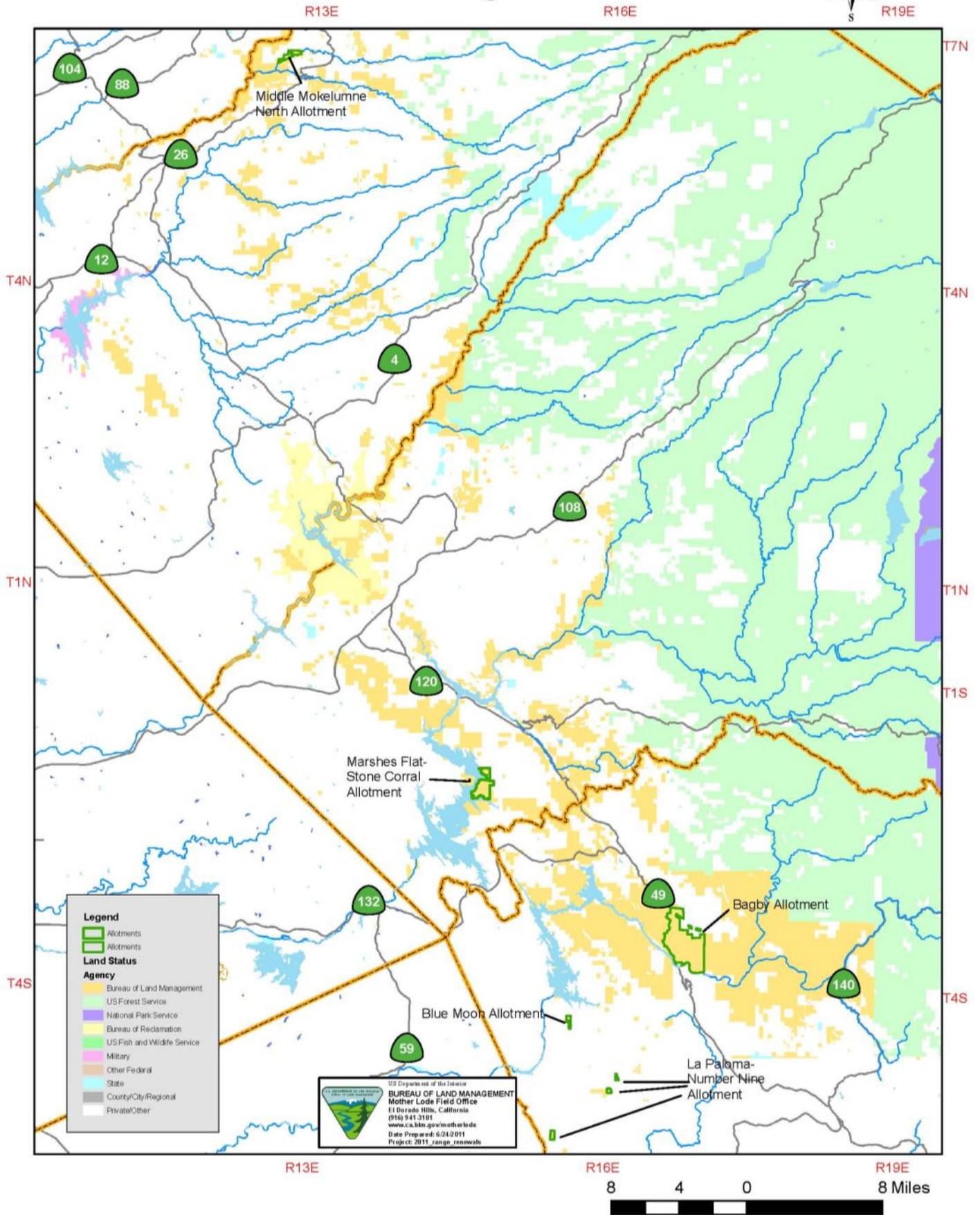
Botany

/s/ Peggy Cranston

6-30-11

Wildlife

Map 1 - Range Allotments



Map 2 - Blue Moon Allotment

R15E

R16E

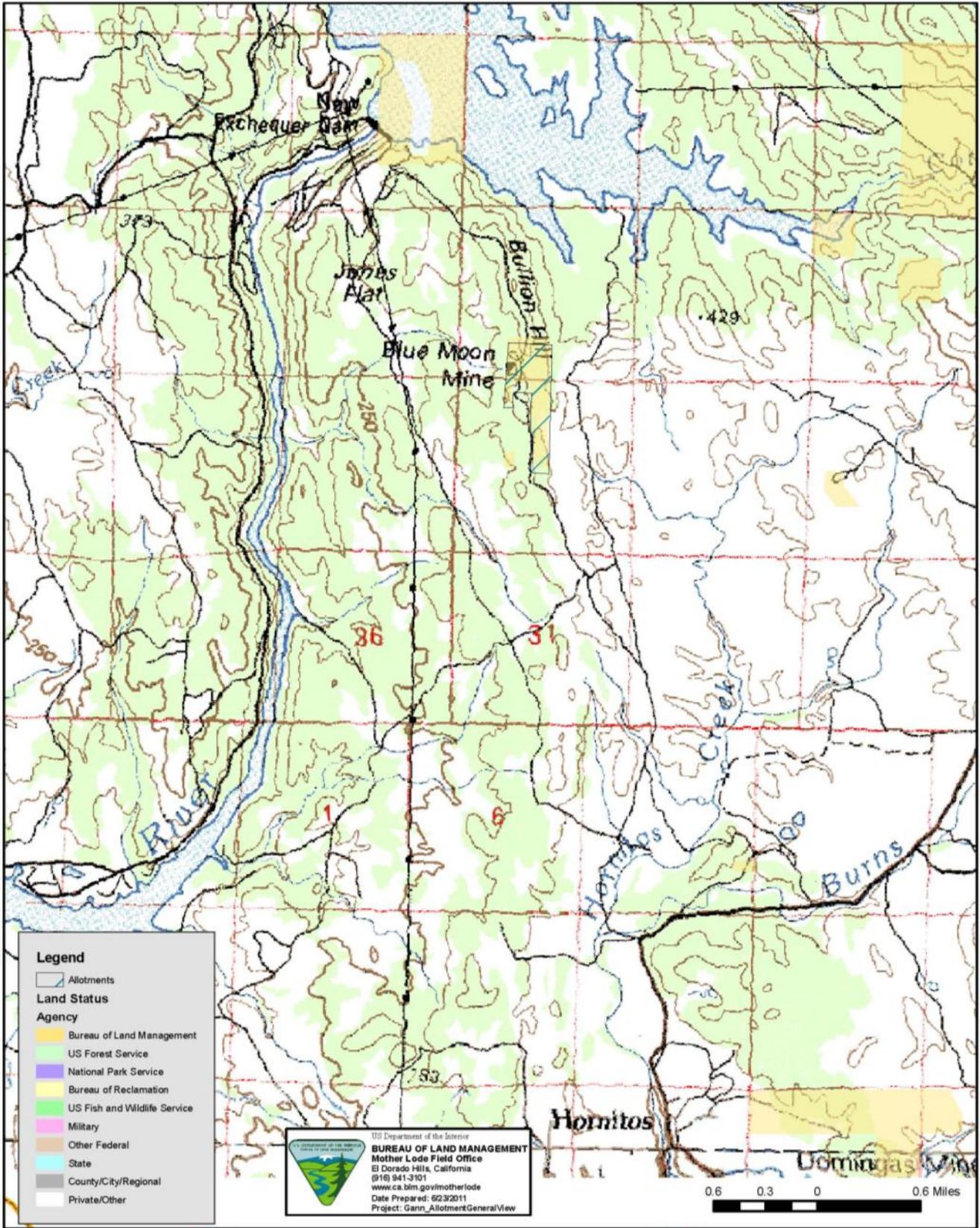


T4S

T4S

T5S

T5S



R15E

R16E

Map 3 - Middle Mokelumne North Allotment



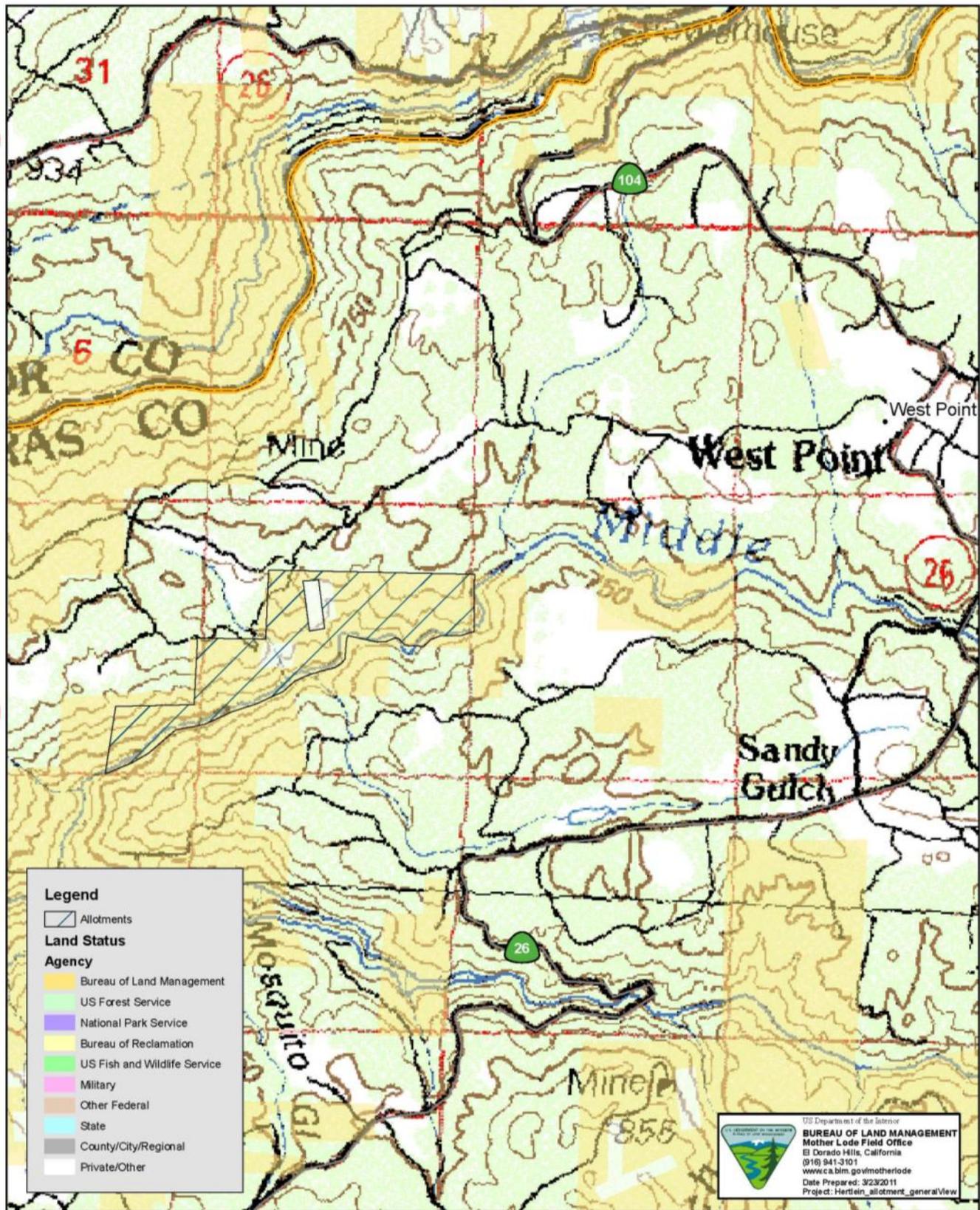
R13E

T7N

T7N

T6N

T6N

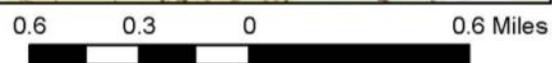


Legend

- Allotments
- Land Status**
- Agency**
- Bureau of Land Management
- US Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Reclamation
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Military
- Other Federal
- State
- County/City/Regional
- Private/Other

US Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
 Mother Lode Field Office
 83 Dorado Hills, California
 (916) 941-3301
 www.ca.blm.gov/motherlode
 Date Prepared: 3/23/2011
 Project: Hertlein_allotment_generalView

R13E



Map 4 - Marshes Flat-Stone Corral Allotment



R14E

R15E

T1S

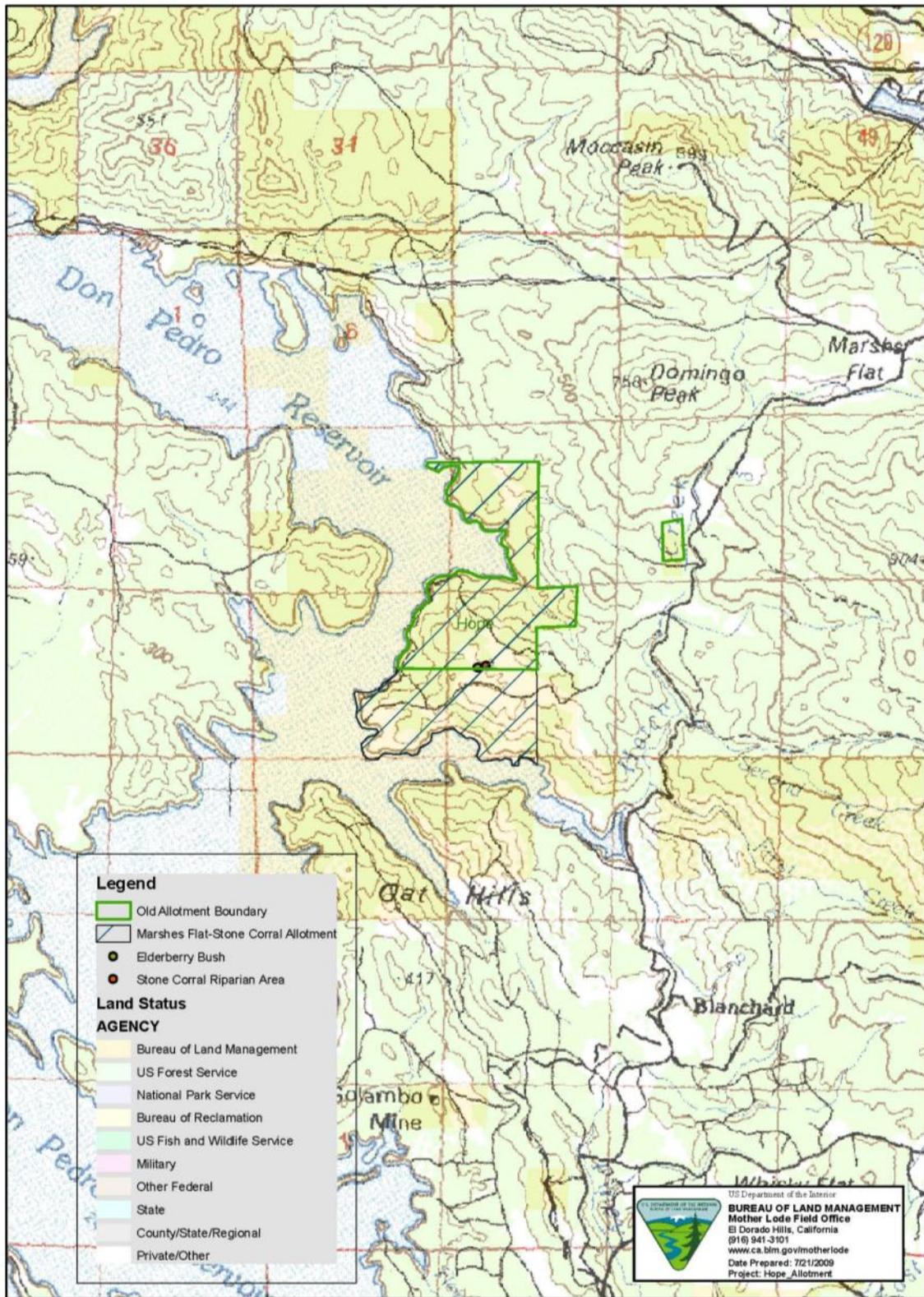
T1S

T2S

T2S

T3S

T3S



Legend

- Old Allotment Boundary
- Marshes Flat-Stone Corral Allotment
- Elderberry Bush
- Stone Corral Riparian Area

Land Status

AGENCY

- Bureau of Land Management
- US Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Reclamation
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Military
- Other Federal
- State
- County/State/Regional
- Private/Other

US Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
 Mother Lode Field Office
 El Dorado Hills, California
 (916) 941-3101
 www.ca.blm.gov/motherlode
 Date Prepared: 7/21/2009
 Project: Hope Allotment

R14E

R15E

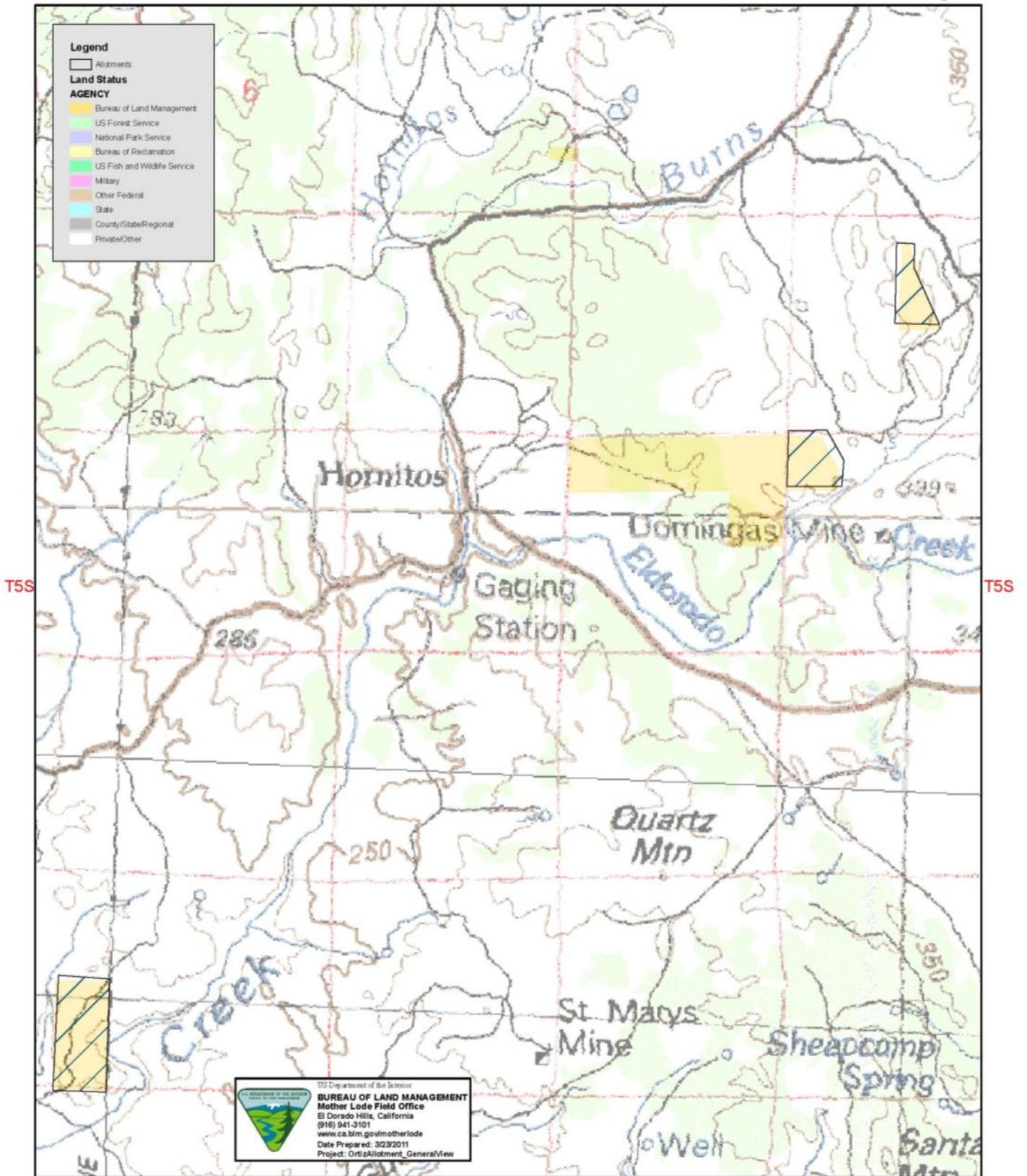


Map 5 - La Paloma-Number Nine Allotment



R15E

R16E



T5S

T5S

R15E

R16E

0.7 0.35 0 0.7 Miles

100 Department of the Interior
 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
 Mother Lode Field Office
 El Dorado Hills, California
 (916) 941-3101
 www.ca.blm.gov/motherlode
 Date Prepared: 3/23/2011
 Project: OrlaAllotment_GeneralView

Map 6 - Bagby Allotment



R16E

R17E

T2S

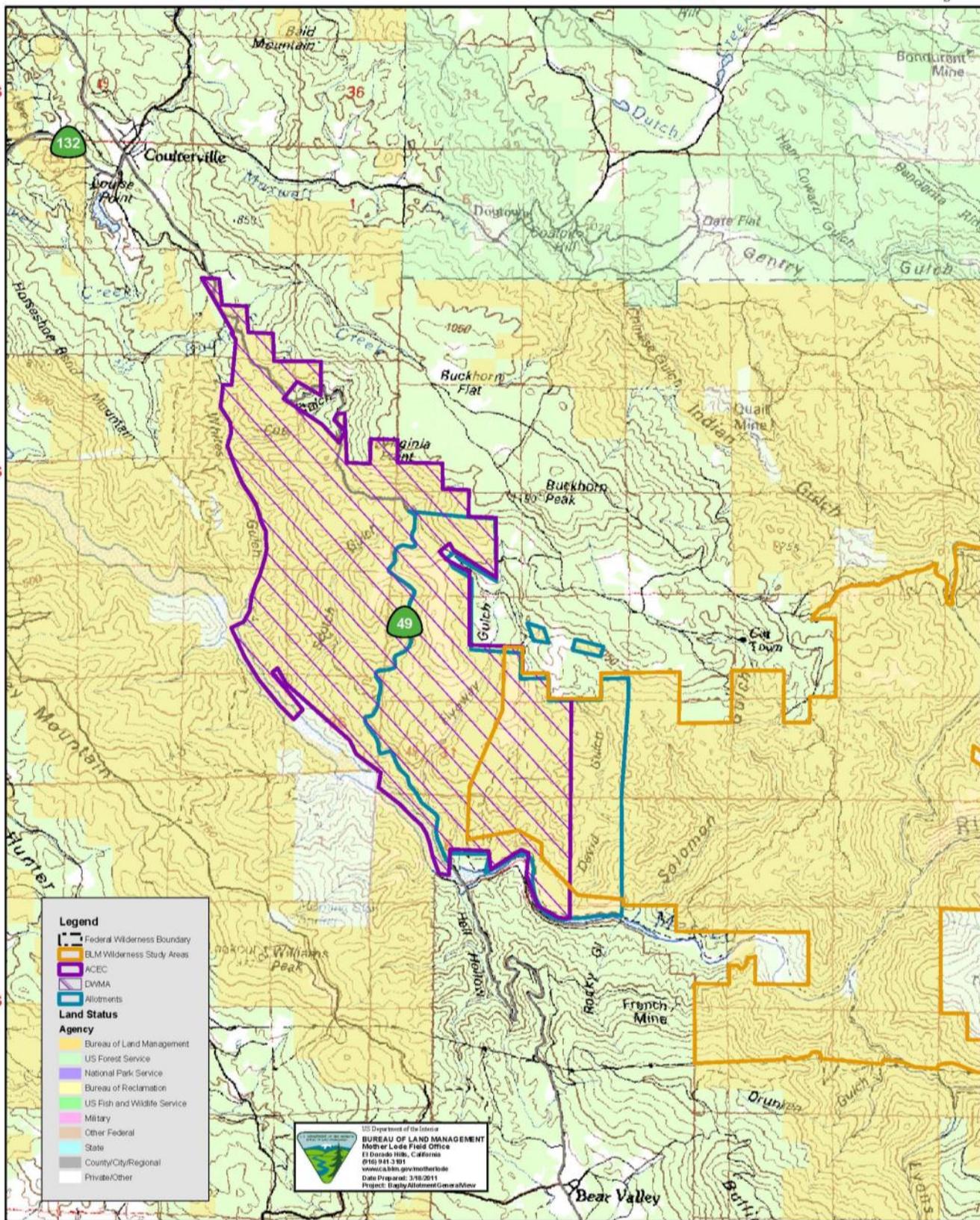
T2S

T3S

T3S

T4S

T4S



Legend

- Federal Wilderness Boundary
- BLM Wilderness Study Areas
- ACEC
- DVMA
- Allotments

Land Status

Agency

- Bureau of Land Management
- US Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Reclamation
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Military
- Other Federal
- State
- County/City/Regional
- Private/Other

US Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
 Mohr & Lode Field Office
 11 Grange Hall, Coalinga
 (916) 941-3191
 www.blm.gov/mohrloade
 Date Prepared: 3/16/2011
 Project: Bagby Allotment General View

R16E

R17E

