BLM

Draft Kanaka Valley Management Plan and Environmental Assessment

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April 2012

Mother Lode Field Office

Environmental Assessment Number CA-180-12-03

Executive Summary

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared this draft Kanaka Valley Management Plan to provide direction for managing 695 acres of public lands recently acquired by the Mother Lode Field Office. Beginning in section V of this plan, you will find the corresponding environmental assessment (EA) (number CA-180-12-03) which analyzes environmental impacts resulting from the implementation of the proposed Kanaka Valley Management Plan.

The purpose of the proposed management plan is to protect and manage environmental, cultural, and recreation resources in a manner that is consistent with the intent of the Kanaka Valley acquisition. The plan will supplement existing law and policy and will be used to steer the BLM's management actions at Kanaka Valley.

Located in western El Dorado County, California, the planning area is in a rural neighborhood and is within an hour's drive of Sacramento. In a series of 16 community-based planning meetings, recreationists, local residents, and other members of the public expressed their opinions, concerns, and worked together to provide solutions for resource management at the planning area. The plan presents a collaborative, community-based vision for the future of Kanaka Valley.

The proposed management plan was developed by the Mother Lode Field Office, and it draws heavily on management recommendations developed by attendees. The BLM considers the proposed management plan (alternative 1) to be the best approach to fulfill BLM policy requirements, provide for public safety and education, honor the intent of the acquisition, conserve rare plant species and other significant resources, provide recreational opportunities, and balance community input from planning meetings.

A variety of management alternatives were developed and explored to find the appropriate balance for the planning area. Six alternatives were developed for detailed analysis. Alternative 1 is the proposed management plan, the draft "Kanaka Valley Management Plan". Alternative 2 would continue current management practices and is called the "no action" alternative. Alternatives 3-6 were developed to study environmental impacts under several different scenarios for hunting, camping, parking, equestrian use, and ACEC designation. The complete proposed management plan can be found in section III. The proposed management plan along with alternatives 2-6 are analyzed in the EA, section V. The proposed management plan (alternative 1) is summarized in the table on the following page.

Resource	Proposed Management Actions (alternative 1)
Habitat Quality*	Manage for air quality, water quality, appropriate hydrology, soil quality, and habitat management for populations of wildlife (including animals and plants). Manage habitat with a "full management toolbox"; implement best management practices.
Vegetation*	Protect special status plants and their habitat; provide interpretation where suitable.
Cultural Resources*	Protect significant cultural resources; provide interpretation where suitable.
Scenic Values*	Classify as BLM visual resource management class II.
Fuels & Fire Program*	Create fuels management plan.
Access, Kanaka Valley Road*	Coordinate with El Dorado County to find solutions to potential congestion, unsafe parking, and other access issues.
Private Property*	Build trails to avoid private property; clearly sign trailhead and parking.
General Recreation*	Prohibit campfires and overnight camping; encourage users to follow Leave No Trace outdoor ethics.
Trail Based Recreation*	Construct trails to provide safe, multiple-use trails for non-motorized recreation; build trails to avoid sensitive resources and private property. Allow hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian use.
Hunting Recreation	Establish "Hunting" and "No Hunting" zones (maps, appendix 3). In the fall season, restrict hunting to deer and turkey, and quail and mourning doves. Game for falconry consistent with CDFG regulations. Limit methods of take to archery, falconry, shotgun, and air gun. Establish a lottery hunting program in collaboration with interested partners for spring turkey season (section III, hunting recreation).
Facilities*	Build a vault toilet and other trailhead facilities.
Facilities: Parking Lot*	Build a small parking lot.
Roads & Motorized Use	Continue to allow motorized vehicle access along Kanaka Valley Road, but do not designate routes for motorized recreation in the planning area.
Shooting Recreation	Prohibit target shooting, plinking, and similar activities.
Minerals & Gold Seeking	Allow only hands and pans for recreational gold seeking. No mineral entry.
Firewood Permits	Issue permits on a case-by-case basis and ensure consistency with intent of acquisition, vision statement, and protection of significant resources.
Land Use Authorizations & Realty	Issue on a case-by-case basis and ensure consistency with intent of acquisition, vision statement, and protection of significant resources. Retain lands; do not dispose.
SRUPs	Issue on a case-by-case basis and ensure consistency with intent of acquisition, vision statement, and protection of significant resources.
ACEC Designation*	Designate as a standalone ACEC called the Kanaka Valley ACEC.

*Indicates management actions recommended at public planning meetings.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures vi

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms vii

I. INTRODUCTION 1

Kanaka Valley: New Public Land 2

Purpose and Need 3

Nearby Public Lands: Pine Hill Preserve ACEC & South Fork American River SRMA 4

Collaborative, Community-Based Planning 5

Vision Statement 9

II. DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING AREA 11

Present Management Situation 11

Air, Soil, and Water 11

Vegetation: Habitat Type 12

Vegetation: Special Status Plant Species 13

Wildlife 15

Cultural Resources 16

Scenic Values 19

Fuels Program and Fire Protection 19

Access to Planning Area, Kanaka Valley Road 20

Private Property 20

Recreation and Facilities 20

ACEC Designation 21

III. PROPOSED MANAGEMENT PLAN 23

Habitat Quality: Air, Soil, Water, Vegetation, and Wildlife Habitat 23

Vegetation: Habitat Management 23

Cultural Resources 23

Scenic Values 23

Fuels Program and Fire Protection 24

Access to the Planning Area, Kanaka Valley Road 24

Private Property 24

General Recreation 25

Trail Based Recreation 25

Hunting Recreation 26
Facilities 26
Facilities: Parking Lot 26
Roads and Motorized Use 27
Shooting Recreation 27
Mining Claims, Mineral Development, and Recreational Gold Seeking 27
Firewood Permits 27
Land Use Authorizations and Realty 27
Special Recreation Use Permits 28
ACEC Designation 28
IV. GENERAL MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES 29
Relationship with Law, Policy, and Other Planning Documents 29
Relationship between the BLM and the Community 29
Cooperative Management 29
Monitoring 29
Adaptive Management 29
Plan Amendments 30
V. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW 31
Overview of Alternatives 32
VI. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: DIRECT AND INDIRECT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS 35
Air, Soil, and Water 35
Vegetation 36
Wildlife 38
Cultural resources 40
Scenic Values 42
Fuels Program and Fire Protection 43
Access to the Planning Area, Kanaka Valley Road 44
Private Property 46
General Recreation 47
Hunting Recreation 51
Facilities: Equestrian Use and Parking Lot 55
Facilities: Formal Campground Facilities 57

Land Use Authorizations and Realty 59
Special Recreation Use Permits 61
Firewood permits 62
Grazing 63
Mining Claims, Mineral Development, and Recreational Gold Seeking 64
ACEC Designation 65
VII. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: CUMULATIVE IMPACTS 69
VIII. FONSI 73
IX. APPENDICES 77
Appendix 1: Works Cited 77
Appendix 2: Kanaka Valley Maps 78
Appendix 3: Hunting Maps 83
Appendix 4: ACEC Map 86
Appendix 5: Acres of Vegetation Communities 90
Appendix 6: Parking Lot Design 91
Appendix 7: Meeting Locations and Numbers of Attendees 94

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Spring Wildflowers in Kanaka Valley Grassland 2
Figure 2: Kanaka Valley Planning Process 8
Figure 3: Black Bear at Woodland Edge 11
Figure 4: Chaparral, Oak Woodland, and Grasslands 23
Figure 5: Layne's Butterweed in Bloom 28
Figure 6: Lupine 36
Figure 7: Watching Wildlife at Kanaka Valley 55
Figure 8: Woodpecker Granary in Blue Oak Tree 62
Figure 9: Larkspur 69

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ARC	American River Conservancy
ARPA	Archaeological Resources Protection Act
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	Best Management Practices
BOR	Bureau of Reclamation
CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
CVPCP	Central Valley Project Conservation Program
DBH	Diameter at Breast High
DR	Decision Record
EA	Environmental Assessment
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
FO	Field Office
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FR	Federal Register
Folsom DS/FDR	Folsom Dam Safety and Flood Damage Reduction
FUP	Free Use Permit
FWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
PHP	Pine Hill Preserve
R&PP	Recreation and Public Purposes Act
Sierra RMP	Sierra Resource Management Plan
SRMA	Special Recreation Management Area
SRUP	Special Recreation Use Permit
VRM	Visual Resource Management
WUI	Wildland Urban Interface

I. INTRODUCTION

This document is a draft comprehensive management plan for public lands known as Kanaka Valley. The proposed Kanaka Valley Management Plan was created through a collaborative, community-based planning effort. Public meetings provided opportunities for interested community members, regional experts, and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) specialists to share ideas and solutions. Sixteen public meetings were held between June of 2010 and July of 2011; 230 members of the public attended at least one meeting. These meetings resulted in recommendations which are the foundation of this document. Many resources and land uses were discussed during the public meetings and are addressed in this plan.

The BLM is a federal agency in the United States Department of the Interior responsible for managing 261 million acres of public land, most of which are remnants of the original public domain. Management authority is derived from the Federal Land Policy and Management Action (FLPMA) of 1976. The mission of BLM is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. Guided by the Sierra Resource Management Plan (Sierra RMP), the Mother Lode Field Office manages approximately 230,000 acres including the public lands in Kanaka Valley.

Throughout this document both "planning area" and "Kanaka Valley" refer to the 695 acres of public lands acquired in 2010 by the BLM. Located in western El Dorado County, California, the planning area contains a variety of terrain, vegetation types, and wildlife. Maps of the planning area are included in appendix 2. The public lands are located in township 10 north, range 9 east, sections 5, 6, 7, 8 El Dorado County, Mount Diablo Meridian; and township 11 north, range 9 east, section 31 El Dorado County, Mount Diablo Meridian.

Management of public land in the planning area is the focus of this document. Throughout the collaborative, community-based effort, actions were suggested to address land management challenges by public meeting participants; and these actions have been included in the proposed management plan. The plan also identifies strategies and infrastructure to reduce conflicts between public land users, neighbors, and other people in the area while protecting the resource values for which the land was acquired.

Kanaka Valley contains features similar to those in the nearby Pine Hill Preserve (PHP) Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and the South Fork American River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), and the BLM determined that management of Kanaka Valley would be best guided by a site-specific management plan tailored through collaborative, community-based planning. The result is this document.

There are eight main sections and appendices in this draft plan. The introductory section outlines the planning process including a description of planning, background of the planning area, and the vision statement. The next section is a description of Kanaka Valley. The third section is the proposed management plan and it is followed by a section describing general management principles. An

overview of the environmental assessment (EA), the EA, and the unsigned finding of no significant impact (FONSI) are the final three portions of the plan. Maps and other supporting materials are in the appendices.

Kanaka Valley: New Public Land

In February 2010, Kanaka Valley became public land administered by the BLM. Prior to the change in ownership, the property was privately owned and mostly unused. More about Kanaka Valley's past uses can be found in the cultural resource portion of section II.

The property was brought into federal ownership through a cooperative acquisition process with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), American River Conservancy (ARC), and the BLM. The BLM now administers Kanaka Valley, and is committed to honoring the intent of the acquisition while adhering to its guiding legislation, Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Partners funded the acquisition and the donation of the planning area to the BLM. The land acquisition was driven by conservation needs and funding from two separate sources: Folsom Dam Safety and Flood Damage Reduction Project (Folsom DS/FDR) and the Central Valley Project Conservation Program (CVPCP).

One of the intents of the acquisition was to provide partial in-kind conservation compensation for the impacts of the Folsom DS/FDR project. The Folsom DS/FDR project remedies dam safety concerns and provides increased flood damage protection. The Folsom DS/FDR project is important because the Sacramento metropolitan area is just downstream from the Folsom Reservoir, and safety of many people and their property could be compromised. The dam safety project negatively impacted oak/grey pine woodlands, chaparral, and riparian woodland. Because management and preservation of the Kanaka Valley acquisition was considered to be at least equivalent to the prescribed habitat creation, the BOR funded the acquisition of 609 acres of Kanaka Valley to mitigate the Folsom DS/FDR impacts and transferred it to the BLM with the intent that the BLM would "manage and preserve the new lands in perpetuity as part of the Pine Hill Preserve ACEC or other conservation area in the Sierra Resource Management Plan (Sierra RMP)".

FIGURE 1: SPRING WILDFLOWERS IN KANAKA VALLEY GRASSLAND

The acquisition of rare plant habitat in Kanaka Valley was funded by the CVPCP grant agreement which provided funding to acquire 86 acres of the recovery areas of the Gabbro Rare Plant Recovery Plan (FWS 2002). This plan highlights these conservation areas ("recovery areas") to stabilize and protect rare plant populations. The intent of the CVPCP grant is "to protect habitat for federally listed plant species in the Pine Hill Preserve in western El Dorado County" and to further the conservation of the rare plants and their habitat. The grant explains, "Protection of lands in the Pine Hills [sic] Preserve will have

significant benefits for listed plant species found specifically on gabbro soil habitat… Urban development and offsite impacts have threatened the continued existence of these species. Accordingly, protection and long-term management of Pine Hills Preserve is considered a priority task." Protecting and appropriately managing conservation areas with rare plants and their habitat is necessary to fulfill the priorities outlined in the FWS Gabbro Rare Plant Recovery Plan (2002).

Purpose and Need

This management plan will guide the management of 695 acres of public land administered by the BLM's Mother Lode Field Office.

The proposed action is to adopt a collaborative, community-based management plan to guide management of Kanaka Valley. The intent is to use the plan to steer the BLM's management actions at Kanaka Valley for the next several decades in a manner that supplements existing law and policy. This plan is consistent with, and will be used in conjunction with, the Sierra RMP. Items and issues not covered in this plan will be guided by the Sierra RMP and appropriate BLM policies.

The development of the Kanaka Valley Management Plan was initiated because management as described in the Sierra RMP does not appropriately protect or address the range of uses and public concerns. The planning area has conservation and cultural values, recreation opportunities, safety concerns, a unique sense of place, and is in a neighborhood of concerned citizens. The BLM has had success with tailoring similar collaborative, community-based plans to address concerns in other areas of the Sierra Nevada foothills.

The area around the planning area contains open spaces, rural lifestyles and values, and a variety of vegetation types and wildlife. It is an hour away from rapidly-growing Sacramento metropolitan area and is vulnerable to the impacts of growth and conflicts of land use change as the metropolitan area grows. It is considered to be part of the wildland urban interface (WUI). Visitors are drawn to the area by world-class whitewater rafting and a popular network of multiple-use trails. Successfully incorporating new public lands into this matrix requires careful planning.

Nearby Public Lands: Pine Hill Preserve ACEC & South Fork American River SRMA

There are two unique BLM areas with specific management plans near the planning area: the Pine Hill Preserve ACEC and the South Fork American River SRMA. Other nearby public lands are managed by BOR, California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), and California State Parks.

The Pine Hill Preserve (PHP) ACEC is composed of BLM-administered lands in the multiagency Pine Hill Preserve. The multiagency PHP is a system of federal, State, and County lands set aside to protect habitat for eight rare plant species. Although there are various landowners, the entire PHP system is managed by the BLM. The PHP system is a cooperative conservation effort among ten federal, State, County, and private non-profit entities. Partners of the PHP include the BLM, BOR, and FWS; CDFG and CalFire; El Dorado County, El Dorado County Water Agency, and El Dorado Irrigation District; and ARC and California Native Plant Society (CNPS). All partners, except for CNPS, are signatory parties in a PHP cooperative management agreement. All parties provide regular contributions to the management and conservation of the rare plants. In the multiagency PHP, the CDFG-owned parcels are designated as Pine Hill Ecological Reserves.

The PHP is an approximately 4,100-acre non-contiguous system of protected lands located within a unique soil series; the rare Rescue series soils are derived from gabbro and pyroxenite parent material. The primary mission of the multiagency PHP is conservation of the rare plants with additional emphasis on education and wildfire prevention.

The other BLM special management area is the South Fork American River SRMA which is an approximately 6,685-acre management area along the South Fork American River. Located along the river, the lands provide extensive opportunistic recreation: waterplay, whitewater boating, hiking, mountain bike and horseback riding, hunting, geocaching, paragliding, and nature-watching. The designation of these lands as a SRMA indicates that recreation management is a primary management concern.

Collaborative, Community-Based Planning

The long-term protection and use of the public lands is everyone's responsibility. The BLM cannot achieve this without the full participation and commitment of the American public.

Ann Aldrich
Bureau of Land Management
in "A Desktop Reference Guide to Collaborative, Community-Based Planning"

To produce a management plan for Kanaka Valley, the BLM used a collaborative, community-based planning process. Benefits of this process include better, more thorough, decision-making methods, and a more engaged community. This technique for developing management plans directly involves the community in developing a draft plan. After drafting, the plan continues through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process (see figure 2). NEPA strongly supports collaborative, community-based planning: it directs federal agencies to encourage and facilitate, to the fullest extent possible, public involvement in federal decisions that affect the quality of the human environment.

Beginning in June 2010, the BLM held a series of public meetings near Rescue, California. Outreach efforts invited all interested members of the public to the meetings and gave them an opportunity to participate. The BLM distributed flyers, press releases, letters, and used word-of-mouth to reach diverse and interested people. A total of sixteen meetings were held on average once a month and covered a wide array of issues (appendix 7). Meetings were held in the evening and lasted about two hours. Those who could not attend the meetings were welcome to contribute their thoughts via letter or telephone call. Further public participation will be encouraged during the NEPA comment period.

The BLM was impressed and pleased with the diversity and commitment of participants. Some participants were from the community of Rescue or neighboring towns, but others traveled from farther away. Attendance at the planning meetings varied. Throughout the planning process, 230 people were involved in at least one planning meeting. Each planning participant brought knowledge of the Kanaka Valley area, personal experience, and ideas about how the BLM could best manage the land.

The basic goal in the community-based planning meetings was to reach consensus among meeting participants on management direction and actions. In order for the community to impact decisions made in this plan, a definition of agreement was established at the planning meetings. It was understood that achieving total consensus was an unrealistic expectation. Meeting participants agreed that 80 percent or more of persons participating in polling at a meeting constituted "consensus" on a particular issue; "total consensus" was 100 percent agreement. Many actions in the Kanaka Valley Management Plan were recommended with total consensus. On all topics discussed, except hunting, consensus was reached.

The vision statement was the first task completed in the community meetings, and it guided subsequent discussions. To divide the rest of the process into workable pieces, a list of anticipated management issues and concerns was developed. Specific meetings were then scheduled, and the BLM brought in specialists in each field. These specialists gave presentations describing the current resource conditions at Kanaka Valley and answered questions about possible effects of future management. Through

discussion groups, participants combined their knowledge with the professional expertise to recommend actions to the BLM (proposed management plan, section III). The actions and the vision statement reflect the values of local residents and land users as well as the practical concerns of implementation. In general, the recommendations are also consistent with BLM policy and regulations. With the Kanaka Valley Management Plan, the BLM will adopt and implement these recommendations wherever possible; however, in certain situations, the BLM may need to alter recommendations due to fiscal constraints or policy changes.

Management Concerns

Management concerns were identified by participants at the community-based planning meeting. These were topics or resources that attendees wanted to address during the planning process. Throughout the community-based collaboration, it was open to additions and used to guide meetings. Some concerns were directly related to a particular resource while other multidisciplinary issues were addressed under several themes.

Recreation concerns included a variety of activities: hunting, equestrian activities, mountain biking, camping, and trails (creation, routing and use). Facilities, traffic/access, and public safety were closely related concerns. Private property concerns and fuels management/fire protection highlighted the interaction of public use and community protection.

On-the-ground resources were also discussed: habitat, wildlife and plants, ecology, scenic values, special status species, hydrology/soils, and cultural—including both prehistoric and historic—resources.

Planning Assumptions and Planning Constraints

The planning assumptions were developed by BLM staff with input from the public: the BLM will manage Kanaka Valley to honor the intent of acquisition and in compliance with BLM policy and law; federal lands will remain in federal ownership; the population of El Dorado County and the surrounding area will continue to increase; surrounding private lands will be developed consistent with the El Dorado County General Plan; public lands will continue to attract recreational users; the natural environment is not pristine wilderness, it has been impacted by human use.

As in any process, there are limitations to what can be included for consideration or accomplishment. The following constraints outline what the planning process did not cover, and what it could not do: no plan alternative that results in significant adverse environmental effects will be selected; the plan will be consistent with federal laws, regulation, and policy, and, to the greatest degree possible, applicable local and state laws; planning will be based on available data; implementation of planning actions will be subject to financial constraints and availability of funds; per the Sierra RMP, motorized use will be restricted to existing designated routes; the BLM will not improve the Kanaka Valley Road which is county jurisdiction; management planning and future actions will be consistent with the intent of the acquisition from the CVPCP and the Folsom DS/FDR.

Hunting Recreation: Community-Based Planning Meetings & Working Group

During community-based meetings focused on hunting recreation, no consensus recommendations were reached. Some attendees wanted to ban hunting; others wanted to allow hunting with no restrictions. Therefore, the community-based meeting discussions focused on modified hunting alternatives. After four meetings dedicated to the topic, the community-based meeting attendees did not have any consensus recommendations and were not making headway. Attendees at the community-based planning meetings agreed to refer the issue to a small working group.

The working group was tasked with finding a consensus solution which would be brought back to a larger community planning meeting for review. By standing and agreeing to participate in additional planning, the working group was composed of self-identified members of "Hunter", "Landowner", and "Other Interests" factions representing the participants as a whole. Planning participants at the meeting were given an opportunity to indicate comfort with having the working group members be representatives of their various perspectives. The three members of each perspective, for a total of nine people, were approved and met on two occasions in March 2011. Both meetings were at the Mother Lode Field Office. The meetings were attended by the working group as well as BLM staff: BLM Field Manager William Haigh, Kanaka Valley planner Lauren Fety, lead recreation planner Jeff Horn, and, for the second meeting, CDFG biologist Shelly Blair. Each meeting lasted at least three hours. At the end of the second session, the working group still could not agree on a solution and so they disbanded. The working group agreed that the BLM would take on the responsibility of crafting the proposed management action for hunting. At the planning meeting on April 7, 2011, the BLM Field Manager communicated to the community-based meeting attendees that hunting recreation would not have a community recommended alternative and the BLM would develop a hunting recommendation.

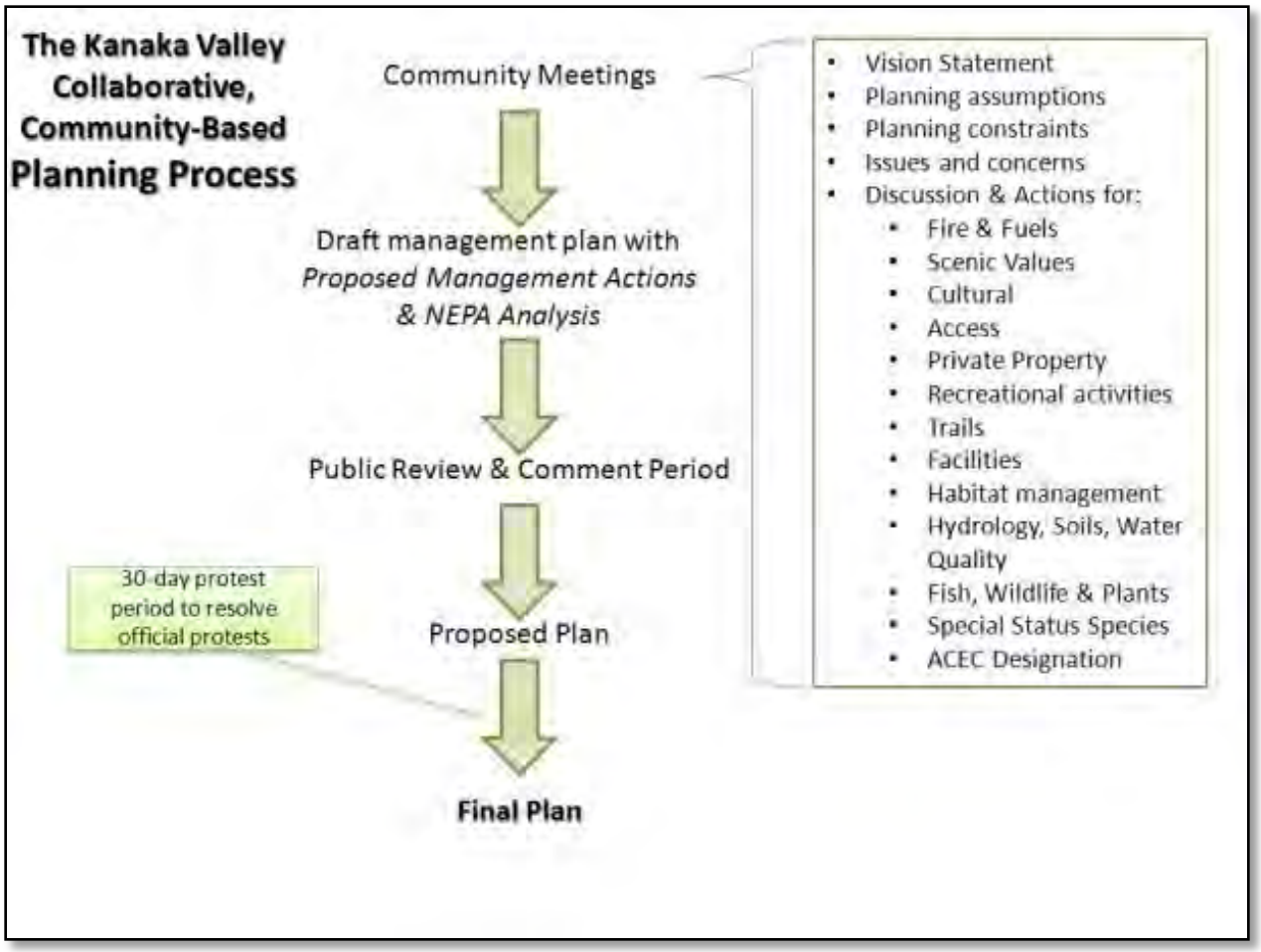

FIGURE 2: KANAKA VALLEY PLANNING PROCESS

Vision Statement

A vision statement is a declaration of the BLM's and community members' intent. Early in the community-based planning process, the following vision statement was developed at the planning meetings and adopted through consensus. The vision statement is the long-term, overall view of Kanaka Valley management.

> *The public lands in Kanaka Valley will be managed to conserve in perpetuity its various terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems; to protect unique biological, historic/prehistoric and cultural values; and to enhance plant and wildlife habitats to be sustainable, fire-safe, healthy, and diverse.*
>
> *In a manner that provides safety and enjoyment for residents and visitors, the BLM will manage Kanaka Valley as open space for habitat connectivity, educational and interpretive activities, and compatible recreational uses with no detrimental impacts to unique resources.*
>
> *Consistent with existing BLM plans, recreational use of motorized vehicles will not be permitted in Kanaka Valley. Kanaka Valley lands will not be opened to mineral entry.*
>
> *Environmental education and volunteer stewardship will be encouraged at Kanaka Valley; education and volunteerism will facilitate conservation of biological and cultural resources and enhance their unique values.*
>
> *At least a portion of the Kanaka Valley lands will be included in an ACEC to ensure protection of rare and special status plants and their habitat.*
>
> *The Kanaka Valley lands will be managed in a way that respects and protects private property rights, balances uses, and fosters a positive relationship with communities/residents.*

II. DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING AREA

Present Management Situation

Following acquisition in February 2010, Kanaka Valley became subject to the Sierra RMP adopted in 2008, and to the guidance laid out in the acquisition agreements. The observed level of public use at Kanaka Valley is relatively low, but constant. It is reasonable to assume that use will increase as knowledge of the planning area is spread and BLM proactively manages it for multiple uses. Presently, there are no facilities such as parking, trails, maps, or toilets available at the planning area.

In September of 2010, a temporary use restriction on the discharge of firearms was placed on Kanaka Valley. The temporary use restriction will last until supplemental rules for the Kanaka Valley Management Plan are published in the *Federal Register* or until September 23, 2012, whichever comes first. There have been local concerns about the use of firearms because Kanaka Valley is a relatively small parcel intersected by a public road. The temporary use restriction has allowed BLM staff and planning participants adequate time to engage in planning for safe and appropriate use of firearms.

Air, Soil, and Water

Although it has not been extensively studied, the air quality in Kanaka Valley is generally considered good, but there are some fluctuations in quality during the summer months due to inversion layers. The planning area includes part of a small valley and surrounding terrain in the Sierra Nevada foothills. Its air quality is influenced by multiple factors including weather, geography, wood smoke from woodstoves, air pollution from nearby metropolitan areas, and vegetation control (i.e., burn piles).

The planning area has rare soils classified as the Rescue series (NRCS). The rare Rescue series soil in Kanaka Valley and the surrounding area have been derived from gabbro and pyroxenite parent rock. Recognized by their distinct reddish color, these soils are rich in iron and magnesium and have low concentrations of cobalt, chromium, and nickel. The calcium/magnesium ratios of these soils are much higher than those in serpentine soils but slightly lower than those in the more common silicate rocks. It is generally understood that the Rescue soils are not as inhospitable to plant growth as the similarly formed serpentine soils; however, both soil types support, and may even contribute to, unique assemblages of plants and rare plant species (FWS 2002).

FIGURE 3: BLACK BEAR AT WOODLAND EDGE

The water resources in Kanaka Valley are seasonal. There are two small seasonal creeks; the smaller one flows directly into the South Fork American River. Crocker Creek flows southwest through dense riparian vegetation into Sweetwater Creek, and then into Folsom Reservoir (formed by the South Fork American River). From observed tailings piles and contouring, it appears that Crocker Creek was altered during the 1850s gold rush and the other creek was possibly impacted later during agricultural use. The creeks have not been found to support fish

populations, although there may be some aquatic wildlife that lives in the deeper perennial pools in the riparian areas. These pools provide drinking water and are important wildlife habitat. There is one wetland area with hydrophilic vegetation including cattails near the smaller creek.

Vegetation: Habitat Type

Kanaka Valley consists of several vegetation types and landscape features. The interactions between these vegetation types are important; they provide plant pollination, shelter and feeding areas for wildlife, as well as shade and views for hikers. A visitor will notice that oak woodlands at Kanaka Valley have a variety of ages, from large mature oak trees that could be over a hundred years old to a multitude of seedlings. This range of tree sizes is an indicator of good ecosystem health. Explored below are classifications of vegetation types found at Kanaka Valley. Acreage values are from a mapping effort by CDFG's CalVeg program (appendix 2).

Whiteleaf manzanita chaparral & chamise chaparral

In its maturity, chaparral is a natural community which is dominated by drought-hardy, woody shrubs. The density of shrubs can make it difficult to hike through, although clearings in the chaparral provide unique habitat for several rare plants. Most chaparral in the planning area is whiteleaf manzanita (*Arctostaphylos viscida*) chaparral which is dominated by its namesake. Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) is mixed in with whiteleaf manzanita, and in a few areas it forms constant stands. Grey pine (*Pinus sabiniana*) is also intermixed in the chaparral. The shrub layer is typically dense, and the herbaceous ground cover is sparse. It is found on steep ridges and slopes in the planning area. There are a total of 283 acres of chaparral at Kanaka Valley, approximately 40% of the planning area.

Annual grassland

Annual grasslands comprise approximately 113 acres, approximately 16%, of Kanaka Valley. The annual grasslands are presently dominated by nonnative invasive plants including barbed goatgrass (*Aegilops triuncialis*), yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), medusahead (*Taeniatherum caputmedusae*), and rush skeletonweed (*Chondrilla junceae*). Although not common, native forbs and grasses such as brodiaea (*Brodiaea sp.)* and purple needlegrass (*Stipa pulchra*) are found in the grasslands. The grasslands are flat or gently sloping and are surrounded by oak woodlands.

Interior Live Oak Woodland

The interior live oak (*Quercus wislizeni*) woodland habitat at Kanaka Valley is approximately 158 acres or 23% of the planning area. Interior live oak keeps its leaves year round. It is slow-growing and can re-sprout after being cut or burned in a wildfire. Interior live oak woodland is found in shallow soils on upland slopes. Other oaks, California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*), grey pine, toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), and a sparse shrub layer complete this woodland type.

Blue Oak Woodland

Blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*) woodland covers approximately 101 acres of Kanaka Valley, around 15% of the planning area. In the planning area, blue oaks are near grasslands and other woodlands and vary in density from and open savannah to closed tree canopy. These deciduous, drought and flood tolerant species have high genetic diversity. Blue oak woodlands are often found in valley bottoms where soils are shallow and low in fertility. Other species occurring in blue oak woodlands include grey pine, valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), buckbrush (*Ceanothus cuneatus*), and interior live oak. A sparse shrub layer with a seasonal herbaceous layer also characterizes blue oak woodland.

Riparian Mixed Hardwood & White Alder Dominated Wetland

There are 17 acres of riparian mixed hardwood wetland and 12 acres of white alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*) dominated wetland, with each accounting for about 2% of Kanaka Valley. The riparian mixed hardwood and white alder-dominated wetland habitat types occur along riparian corridors, stream banks, and floodplains. Other common species are big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), Oregon ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*), cottonwood (*Populus sp.*), willows (*Salix sp.*), and oaks (*Quercus sp.*). In some places there is a continuous shrub layer, but herbaceous vegetation is usually absent. In Kanaka Valley, Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*) thickets are common in the riparian understory.

Valley Oak Woodland

Just over 10 acres of valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) woodland occur in Kanaka Valley, nearly 2% of the planning area. In the southern portion of Kanaka Valley, valley oak woodland occupies a valley bottom that is seasonally saturated with water. Box elder (*Acer negundo*), white alder, Oregon ash and other oak species also grow in valley oak woodland. Shrub species are also common and there is a grassy herbaceous layer.

Vegetation: Special Status Plant Species

The planning area is adjacent to ACEC-designated PHP lands and provides connectivity between two parcels. Some of the habitat types in Kanaka Valley provide appropriate growing conditions for the rare plants found in the PHP. Part of Kanaka Valley has Rescue series soils that influence the vegetation, contributing to its unique diversity and endemism. Five species of rare plants occur in the planning area: the federally and State listed Pine Hill ceanothus and Layne's butterweed; the BLM sensitive El Dorado mule-ears and Red Hills soap root; and the rare Bisbee Peak rush-rose. Other rare plants that occur at the PHP, in areas adjacent to the Kanaka Valley, are the federally and State listed El Dorado bedstraw and Stebbins' morning glory.

By law and policy, all plants or animals identified as threatened or endangered by the federal government or as rare or endangered by the State of California are given conservation priority and appropriate management.

Federally Listed Plant Species

Stebbins' morning-glory (*Calystegia stebbinsii*) is a perennial herb, trailing along the ground for less than

a meter, producing white flowers from May through July. This species requires pollination by bees and other insect species to successfully establish seed but can also propagate by rhizomes. This species responds extremely well to fire, but its populations drastically decline once the aerial canopy of other species close open spaces. Stebbins' morning-glory is present in chaparral areas adjacent to Kanaka Valley.

Pine Hill ceanothus *(Ceanothus roderickii)* is a perennial, evergreen shrub with branches that generally bend toward the ground and can root when in contact with the soil. It has small white flowers that bloom in clusters from April through June. Pine Hill ceanothus requires pollination by insects, is intolerant to shade, does not re-sprout after fire, and depends on re-establishment from seeds that germinate after fire. This endemic species is found in the chaparral areas of the planning area and in adjacent units of PHP.

El Dorado bedstraw *(Galium californicum ssp. sierrae)* is a small perennial herb with hairy above-ground stems up to 14 cm in length that are sometimes connected underground. Flowers are pale yellow, and the species blooms between May and July. This endemic species grows mostly in the understory of live oak or black oak woodlands, often on north facing slopes; in the PHP it is also found in the chaparral understory. El Dorado bedstraw is present in units of the PHP adjacent to the planning area. Historically, there were occurrences of this species in a woodland area of the planning area.

Layne's butterweed *(Packera layneae)* is a perennial herb 25 to 45 centimeters tall that grows from a rootstock. The flower heads are yellow, and this species blooms from April to July. The predominant breeding system for this species is outcrossed pollination, but it can also spread through cloning. This species is mostly found in open, rocky areas in chaparral and woodland habitats and in some grassland patches. Layne's butterweed is an early successional species that occupies openings on gabbro soils such as open spaces created by fire. It also occurs in the grassland and chaparral habitats of the Kanaka Valley, and is found in nearby units of the PHP system.

BLM sensitive plant species

Red Hills soaproot *(Chlorogalum grandiflorum)* is a perennial herb that grows from an underground bulb. This species has narrow basal leaves with wavy margins, a thin branching stem between 30 and 100 centimeters tall, and scattered whitish flowers. The flowers, which bloom in June, open in the evening and close by the next morning. This species responds well to disturbances by fire or mechanical removal of shrubs. Red Hills soaproot is present in units adjacent to Kanaka Valley and is typically found on rocky soils in open areas in chaparral, woodlands and grasslands. It also occurs in the chaparral areas of the Kanaka Valley.

Bisbee Peak rush-rose *(Helianthemum suffrutescens)* is a broom-like perennial shrub between 12 and 64 centimeters in height, with many straight, slender stems. The yellow flowers have five broad petals and appear from April to August. This species responds well to disturbance by fire. Bisbee Peak rush-rose is distributed on rocky areas of the PHP system. Bisbee Peak rush-rose also occurs in the chaparral areas of the Kanaka Valley.

El Dorado mule-ears *(Wyethia reticulata)* is a perennial plant up to 1 meter tall that spreads through underground rhizomes. The yellow sunflower-like heads bloom from July to September. This endemic species is pollinated by insects and grows mostly in open areas of chaparral, woodland, and grassland habitat types at the PHP and Kanaka Valley.

Most of these rare plants respond favorably to certain degrees of disturbance, especially disturbance caused by fire. In general they are shade intolerant, except for El Dorado bedstraw, and tend to occupy open habitat. In the PHP system, management practices to enhance habitat for the rare plants have focused on the removal of shrubs, using a combination of hand techniques and fire, to increase open spaces. Another management practice is the mechanical control of weeds. Similar restoration practices may be considered and implemented at Kanaka Valley to enhance habitat for the rare plants and other native species. Special considerations regarding the time of year when practices would be applied and the intensity of implementation would be explored to prevent detrimental effects on the rare plants.

Kanaka Valley connects two PHP system units and creates an area of continuous rare plant habitat that contributes to the conservation and appropriate management of the rare plants and their habitat. The planning area also facilitates access to PHP lands for management and, to a certain extent, public access. Furthermore, the planning area provides a buffer area for the rare plants of the PHP partially by limiting the ecological effect known as an edge effect. An edge effect includes invasion by non-native weeds, changes in microclimates, and loss of pollinating insects, and occurs when a vegetation type abruptly transitions into something else. Conservation of Kanaka Valley native habitat would eliminate potential edge effects and help conserve natural habitat to the benefit of the rare plants. The planning area also increases management opportunities and creates a protected landscape corridor.

Wildlife

The planning area has a variety of quality wildlife habitat which complements the regional landscape. Kanaka Valley is adjacent to pre-existing public lands, creating a contiguous corridor of over 3,000 acres of various wildlife habitats.

Studies indicate that 29 species of amphibians and reptiles, 57 species of birds, and 10 species of mammals find mature stands of blue oak, blue oak-grey pine, and valley oak woodlands suitable for breeding. Western scrub jay (*Aphelocoma californica*) and western gray squirrel, both seen at Kanaka Valley, bury acorns and are likely important to oak germination in the planning area. In addition, acorns provide an important food source for many other species of birds and mammals, including black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*) and wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*), which are prevalent in the area. Other bird species that have been observed in Kanaka Valley oak woodland include red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), spotted towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*), oak titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus*), bushtit (*Psaltriparus minimus*), acorn woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*), and white-breasted nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*).

Riparian habitats have an exceptionally high value for many wildlife species, and they provide essential water, thermal cover, migration corridors, and diverse nesting and feeding opportunities. The linear nature of streams maximizes the development of edge habitat, which is highly productive for wildlife.

Amphibians that may live in the section of the creeks which have water year-round and are closer to a main river corridor include California newt (*Taricha torosa*) and California slender salamander (*Batrachoseps attenuates*).

In the chaparral habitat of Kanaka Valley bird species include blue-gray gnatcatcher (*Polioptila caerulea*), California thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*), wrentit (*Chamaea fasciata*), and rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps*). Reptile species that could be expected to occur in Kanaka Valley include western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), common side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*), western skink (*Eumeces skiltonianus*), southern alligator lizard (*Elgaria multicarinata*), striped racer (*Masticophis lateralis*), ring-necked snake (*Diadophis punctatus*), gopher snake (*Pituophis catenifer*), and western rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*).

Other wildlife or wildlife signs that have been observed at Kanaka Valley: coyote (*Canis latrans*), mountain lion (*Felis concolor*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), black bear (*Ursus americanus*), gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), black-tailed deer, western gray squirrel (*Sciurus griseus*), turkey vulture (*Buteo jamaicensis*). This is not a comprehensive list of wildlife species that occur in the area, just the species that have been verified. Based on the number of predatory animals observed, there are undoubtedly reptiles and amphibians, and other prey species such as California vole (*Microtus californicus*), valley pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), and California mole (*Scapanus latimanus*).

Each wildlife species requires a unique set of resources to survive and reproduce, and the needs of wildlife change throughout the year. Some wildlife may occur in Kanaka Valley only during the breeding season, some may occupy the area year-round, while others may only be present during winter.

Cultural Resources

Kanaka Valley has been, and continues to be, the subject of cultural resource studies. Major studies were undertaken in 1991 and 1998. These studies were done to help meet requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act in advance of proposed subdivision and golf course projects. As a result of the studies, the planning area was thoroughly inventoried for cultural resources. Several cultural resources were identified and recorded. The studies, including reviews of historical newspaper articles, also led to the identification of people historically associated with the planning area.

In this plan, cultural resources are defined as sites, structures, buildings, objects, districts, and traditional cultural places at least 50 years old. Cultural resources may include archaeological sites (i.e., prehistoric bedrock mortars, historic-era house sites, and evidence of placer mining, etc.) as well as old fence lines, dams, and roads that may still be in use.

To date, it is clear from the cultural resources that past land uses in the planning area are typical of El Dorado County and the west-central Sierra Nevada. The cultural resources reflect a broad range of land uses over several centuries, from the prehistoric period (pre-1848), to placer mining and settlement of the mid-nineteenth century, to homesteading and agricultural uses of the late nineteenth century and twentieth century. The planning area's land use history is briefly summarized below.

The prehistory of the planning area is poorly understood. Information about the area's prehistoric inhabitants is contained in archaeological sites. Investigations of these sites (i.e., controlled excavations, collection of artifacts and other archaeological data, analysis of the collected data, report preparation, etc.) by professional archaeologists is needed to shed light on this issue. In lieu of these investigations, the area's prehistory can be inferred from archaeological investigations elsewhere in the west-central Sierra Nevada. Based on these investigations, the planning area was probably used by highly mobile hunter-gatherer groups for at least four to five thousand years (and perhaps as long as 10 to 12 thousand years) prior to Anglo-American contact beginning around 1848. High mobility may have been advantageous in the west-central Sierra Nevada due to this region's steep elevation gradient—a gradient that affected the seasonal timing and distribution of plants and animals economically important to natives.

A notable change in prehistoric lifeways occurred around 1100 years ago and is reflected in the archaeological record (i.e., the appearance of arrow points and bedrock mortars, increased use of obsidian from far-off sources, etc.). The use of arrow points indicates a switch from the atlatl and dart to the bow and arrow. Bedrock mortars (or grinding rocks) signal increased acorn and other plant-food processing. While more research is needed, this change in the archaeological record probably reflects decreasing mobility, shifting hunting and gathering strategies, and other socioeconomic changes. The reasons for these changes are unclear, but they may have been in response to multiple factors (i.e., migration of other groups into the area, demographic changes, the spread of new technologies, and perhaps even severe long-term droughts). Of note, the ancestors of the modern-day Nisenan may have entered the west-central Sierra Nevada during this time.

Prehistoric lifeways ended abruptly in 1848 with James Marshall's discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill on the South Fork American River in Coloma. This discovery ushered in the Gold Rush (1848 to circa 1858) and California statehood (1850). During this time, people from all over the world arrived in the west-central Sierra Nevada to search for gold. As the epicenter of James Marshall's strike, the South Fork American River was almost immediately the scene of placer mining and associated settlement and business activity. By the close of 1849, droves of miners were combing the South Fork and its tributaries. Placer mining quickly spread to adjacent watersheds in the west-central Sierra Nevada and other parts of California with placer gold potential. Native Americans either fled or were removed by force. Dispossessed of their lands, they faced the option of blending into Anglo-American society or being destroyed. Despite the hardships faced during the Gold Rush and throughout the historic period, Native Americans still maintain ties to their traditional lands and culture and are participating in this planning process.

Within a year of Marshall's strike, mining and related activity was likely occurring along upper Crocker Creek in the planning area. Indeed, evidence of placer mining is conspicuous here. Based on maps made around 1868, it is known that this area was probably given the name Kanaka Valley during the Gold Rush. The derivation of this name has yet to be determined and may be lost to history. It remains an intriguing aspect of the planning area. "Kanaka" was the common Anglo-American designation for a native of the Hawaiian Islands during the mid-nineteenth century. A review of E. W. Gudde's book *California Gold Camps* (pages 181-182) indicates that the name was used for at least fourteen gold-rush

places (i.e., Kanaka Bar, Kanaka Creek, Kanaka Diggings, etc.) across California. Gudde believes that it may have been used in mining areas in reference to the Hawaiians who participated in the Gold Rush (including in El Dorado County).

In most mining areas of the west-central Sierra Nevada, the relatively easy-to-find gold was depleted within the first few years of the Gold Rush. As a result, many miners left for other frontiers or stayed in the region to build homes, start families, and pursue farming, ranching, and other economic opportunities.

While many of El Dorado County's earliest settlements like Coloma, Shingle Springs, and Salmon Falls continued to grow after the Gold Rush in response to growth in agriculture and the region's other fledging industries, many of the small placer mining camps focused on a single tributary were abandoned by the late 1850s. By this time, Crocker Creek would have likely been depleted of gold deposits capable of sustaining the interest of Anglo-American miners. The district appears to have been absent of mining activity by the 1860s. Small groups of Chinese miners are known to have mined areas along the South Fork and its tributaries abandoned by Anglos, and there is some emerging evidence that the Chinese operated in the planning area.

During the 1860s the planning area was occupied by a handful of settlers—some apparently left over from the Gold Rush (i.e. Levi Smith). House sites and small farms were developed. Lands in the planning area were transferred from public domain status to private ownership under the Homestead Act and other authorities. Other lands in the planning area were granted to the Central Pacific Railroad Company in anticipation of the transcontinental railroad project (which was completed further north in what is now the I-80 corridor). By the late nineteenth century, E.A. McDonald was a prominent local landowner in the Kanaka Valley area. E. C. Kipp was prominent in this area in the early twentieth century.

A brief article in the *Sacramento Daily Union* on January 7, 1867 describes Levi Smith's "ranch" in Kanaka Valley as having "a pleasant, and healthy location, containing about 200 acres, well watered and fenced, with a good two-story house furnished throughout, a large barn and sheds and large and valuable orchard of different varieties of fruit containing about 1,000 trees, with natural water for irrigation, and is capable of producing 150 tons of hay in one season."

In summary, the planning area contains cultural resources reflecting land uses typical of El Dorado County and the west-central Sierra Nevada during the historic and prehistoric periods. Some of these cultural resources appear to have potential, through archaeological and historical research, to shed additional light on these land uses of the past. The resources also have aesthetic and other public values. It is therefore desirable to preserve and protect planning area cultural resources—a stated goal of this plan.

This goal can, in part, be accomplished through compliance with applicable federal environmental laws, regulations, and BLM policies. Implementation of this plan and all future management actions in the planning area will require compliance with these authorities. With respect to preservation of cultural resources on BLM-administered land, the principle authority is Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 requires federal agencies like the BLM to consider the effects of their

proposed actions on significant cultural resources—those listed (or eligible for listing) on the National Register of Historic Places. The goal of Section 106 is to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to significant cultural resources.

Looting and vandalism is sometimes a problem on public lands in California. Cultural resources in the planning area are protected from looting and vandalism under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and other authorities. Under ARPA, it is illegal to damage, excavate, or remove archaeological resources (including Gold Rush-era and prehistoric archaeological sites) on federal land without a permit. Native American burials and associated items, if they are discovered, receive additional consideration under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). The public can help stop looting and vandalism by reporting suspicious behavior (unauthorized metal detecting, digging, artifact collection, etc.) to the BLM.

Scenic Values

The BLM manages scenic values according to a visual resource management (VRM) system. Through the system, scenic values are identified, evaluated, and the appropriate level of management is determined. The VRM system also provides guidance for design techniques to ensure that management actions maintain harmony with the landscape.

The planning area has striking scenic values, and the chances of wildlife sightings are good. Hiking cross country in Kanaka Valley, a visitor can move from dense chaparral and live oak woodland into oak woodlands and open grasslands. In the spring, wildflowers bloom in abundance. The gently sloping valley offers expansive views of large oak trees and the hills beyond; slopes are unbroken swaths of wildland. Once common in the Sierra Nevada foothill region, panoramic views of undeveloped landscapes are now rare.

Fuels Program and Fire Protection

Currently, there is not an individually tailored fuels management and fire protection plan for Kanaka Valley. The planning area is managed like other BLM-administered public land. Limited reduction of fuels has taken place on the pullouts frequently used for parking at the planning area; this is routine maintenance to reduce the chances of accidental ignition of fine fuels.

The density and type of naturally occurring vegetation are known as fuels. Fuels consist of both live and dead vegetation; the quantity of vegetation in a landscape is called fuel loading. Although it is impossible to know the full history of the planning area, because of the vegetation type it is assumed that current fuel loading in Kanaka Valley is higher than historic levels. Much of the planning area has not seen a wildfire for decades due to modern fire suppression techniques, and it is thought that historically fires were more frequent in Kanaka Valley. With a higher level of fuel loading, a natural wildland fire occurrence could be harmful to ecosystems due to the predicted fire severity.

Kanaka Valley is within the WUI because there are dwellings and outbuildings adjacent to wildland. These homes are currently considered to be at risk due to the increased fuel loading on public and private land surrounding the planning area. The Mother Lode Field Office Fire Management Plan and the

Sierra RMP provide guidance to fire and fuels management in the planning area. These plans direct the BLM to reduce fuels using many different methods such as mechanical mastication, hand treatment, and prescribed fire. These activities are implemented in a safe and cost-effective manner in high risk areas.

Access to Planning Area, Kanaka Valley Road

Kanaka Valley is publically accessible by a county maintained road, Kanaka Valley Road. This paved, narrow road runs through the planning area in a meandering north-south direction along the eastern edge (maps, appendix 2). It is not a through road and primarily leads to residences and the planning area. Kanaka Valley does not currently have formal parking facilities; however, several pullouts can safely accommodate a small number of cars and allow public access to the planning area. The road is the main access point to residences.

Private Property

Private parcels of various sizes, ranging from one to over 100 acres, surround the planning area. Many parcels have single family dwellings and outbuildings on the property; most have some natural vegetation.

In general, homes are secluded and cannot be seen from the planning area. Residents report frequent observations of wildlife in the area and say they value the privacy that comes with rural living. Residents also indicate they use Kanaka Valley Road multiple times a day as they come and go from their homes. One undeveloped private property is regularly accessed by the landowners through the planning area.

Recreation and Facilities

Currently, recreational use of Kanaka Valley is relatively low. Few visitors have been observed at Kanaka Valley; inquiries and reports from the public about recreational opportunities have been limited to archery hunting, wildlife and wildflower viewing, and cross-country hiking.

Recreation facilities, such as trails or formal parking areas, are not present at Kanaka Valley. Access is limited to pedestrian entryways next to locked gates along Kanaka Valley Road. Currently, hikers and mountain bikers infrequently recreate at Kanaka Valley. They primarily use old ranch tracks. Some small sections of the ranch tracks could be turned into formal trails; however, due to the character of most tracks, this is not a viable option in many places.

Due to local concerns over hunting and the use of high powered rifles, the discharge of firearms is currently not allowed through a temporary use restriction. Archery hunting has been observed taking place and is allowed in the planning area. Moderate numbers of hunters have used Kanaka Valley. Based on hunter contact inquiries, successful take of turkey has been low.

Presumably, as facilities are developed to support trail users and other recreationists, public use will increase. In addition, because Kanaka Valley is a relatively recent acquisition, it can be reasonably assumed that there will be an increase in visitors as knowledge of the public land spreads; however, the size and nature of the planning area (i.e., high summer temperatures, limited area for trails) indicate the recreation potential of the planning area is of a low density.

ACEC Designation

Kanaka Valley does not have a special designation, such as an ACEC designation. Lands are only designated as an ACEC during the land use planning process. Because Kanaka Valley is a recent acquisition and is currently undergoing its first land use planning process, it has not been previously considered for ACEC designation.

An "Area of Critical Environmental Concern" (ACEC) is defined in FLPMA as an area "within the public lands where special management attention is required… to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes" [Sec. 103(a)]. ACECs must have relevant and important values, as defined by FLMPA. These values can include significant historic, cultural, or scenic value; fish and wildlife resources, including habitat for special status species; or a natural process or system, including special status plant species, rare or relic plant communities, or rare geological features.

III. PROPOSED MANAGEMENT PLAN

The following recommendations were made by consensus at the community-based planning meetings, except where noted. The proposed management actions listed below are analyzed in the EA (section V) as alternative 1.

Habitat Quality: Air, Soil, Water, Vegetation, and Wildlife Habitat

Protecting and maintaining diverse natural communities, soil structure, and air quality standards are all part of upholding habitat quality. Habitat quality also includes ecosystem health such as young plant survival, available habitat structure for wildlife, and abundance of nonnative invasive weeds.

- The BLM would support the health of air quality, water quality, and appropriate hydrology, soil quality, and habitat management for populations of wildlife (including animals and plants).
- The BLM would implement best management practices (BMPs) to manage the special status species and their habitat. Where possible, the BLM would educate the public about the rare plant species.

Vegetation: Habitat Management

Habitat management specifically addresses the actions that improve habitat quality. These actions might include techniques to control nonnative invasive weeds, restore native vegetation, and provide for wildlife needs.

- Habitat at Kanaka Valley would be managed with a "full management toolbox" including mechanical, chemical, and cultural control methods (i.e., grazing, education, mowing).

FIGURE 4: CHAPARRAL, OAK WOODLAND, AND GRASSLANDS

Cultural Resources

The BLM cultural program studies, protects, and conserves prehistoric and historic resources.

- The BLM would protect significant cultural resources and provide interpretive information (i.e., educational panels or field trips) where appropriate.

Scenic Values

The natural aesthetic of public lands is categorized by a BLM classification system; management actions, such as fencing or signs, are then designed to meet the corresponding standards.

- The scenic values of Kanaka Valley would be classified as a BLM VRM class II. (Landscapes with a VRM class II should "retain the existing character of the landscape… management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer.")

Fuels Program and Fire Protection

Many types of vegetation can carry wildfires under the right circumstances. There are various ways to strategically reduce fuel loading, depending on the landscape and desired outcome.

- The BLM would complete a fuels management plan with emphasis on protecting Kanaka Valley Road and areas near residences.
- Fuel breaks on BLM land bordering residences would be a priority.
- Controlled use of goats, sheep, and similar-sized grazers would be allowed only for vegetation management.
- Campfires would not be allowed.

Access to the Planning Area, Kanaka Valley Road

The access theme primarily focuses on the ability of members of the public to legally and safely reach the planning area. There is one vehicular access point: a paved, public road that travels through the eastern edge of the planning area. Kanaka Valley Road is not a through road. The road and associated infrastructure (i.e., road signs) are maintained by El Dorado County. The BLM would coordinate with El Dorado County for management actions involving the road.

- The BLM would partner with El Dorado County to form and execute an appropriate signage plan, which could include “no parking” signs along the road and parking lot restrictions; signage options would also be explored to warn motorists of road constraints (i.e., turn-around limitations).
- The BLM would work with the County to study turn-around area potential and creating and maintaining turn-outs.

Private Property

The planning area is surrounded by private properties of various sizes. To encourage understanding of and respect for private property, the following measures were recommended.

- There would be appropriate signage/informational kiosk on Kanaka Valley property stating what activities would or would not be allowed.
- The BLM would provide adequate educational information, including pertinent emergency numbers and effective maps.
- The location of trails would be planned to avoid private property (i.e., 150 yards from private property).
- Unauthorized trail sections would be closed, especially those sections near private property that have “desirable” features such as scenic overlooks, ponds, or shade trees.
- The BLM would clearly indicate designated parking area and trailheads.

General Recreation

A wide variety of recreation opportunities would be available at Kanaka Valley. Occasionally new recreational pastimes emerge (i.e., geocaching), the BLM would allow these activities if they are consistent with the intent of the acquisition, vision statement for the planning area, and protection of significant resources. If activities negatively impact a resource, adaptive management options will be explored to conserve its integrity.

- Hiking would be allowed.
- Horse and mountain bike riding on trails at Kanaka Valley would be allowed.
- The BLM would explore ADA accessible trail options that do not adversely affect the environment.
- Overnight camping at Kanaka Valley would not be allowed.
- Interpretative signs and kiosk signage would provide information on flora, fauna, Native American cultural resources (where appropriate), cultural sites (where appropriate), hunting seasons, EMS numbers, and the CalTIP number.
- Users would be encouraged to follow Leave No Trace principles and "Pack It In, Pack It Out" outdoor ethics.
- School group or other educational group use would be only by Special Recreation Use Permit (SRUP) or, if appropriate, Free Use Permit (FUP).
- The BLM would encourage recreationists with dogs to follow the County Leash Law (El Dorado Ord. 9.46.600).

Trail Based Recreation

Trails at Kanaka Valley would support low impact recreation.

- The BLM would construct trails.
- The BLM would provide safe, multi-use trails for non-motorized activities.
- The BLM would establish loop trails for longer distance trails at Kanaka Valley.
- The BLM would explore, where possible, connections from Kanaka Valley to other trails and public lands.
- The BLM would build trails to scenic overlooks or other "destinations" on public land where appropriate.
- The BLM would provide trail maps (i.e., at the kiosk, on the BLM website).
- The BLM would close or re-route trails or ranch tracks that are inappropriate or unsustainable (i.e., muddy, steep, dead-end at private property, prone to erosion).
- The BLM would avoid building trails which may lead to trespass on private property.
- The BLM would plan trails to avoid user conflict.
- Signage to alert recreationists of multiple uses would be placed at Kanaka Valley.
- The BLM would avoid significant or potentially significant cultural resources and Native American resources when building trails and other facilities.

Hunting Recreation

Hunting recreation was extensively discussed during the public meetings. There were a wide variety of concerns ranging from available recreational opportunities to safety of other recreationists and people driving on the public road. The capability of the road, especially during winter, was another concern raised during public meetings. There was not a hunting recreation management action recommended to the BLM by community planning meeting attendees. The following proposed management action was drafted by the BLM after careful consideration of comments and recommendations during public meetings.

- "Hunting" and "No Hunting" zones would be established (maps in appendix 3).
- Hunting would be restricted to deer and turkey during the fall season, deer during the summer archery-only season, and quail and mourning doves in season; species of game available for falconry hunting would be consistent with CDFG regulations. Hunting would be allowed on all days of the appropriate CDFG hunting season.
- Methods of take would be limited to archery, falconry, shotgun (muzzle loader allowed after fire season is declared over) and air gun.
- The BLM would work to establish a limited hunting program in collaboration with interested partners for spring turkey season, as described below.

The BLM would partner with a local group or agency and offer lottery spring turkey hunts held at the planning area. The program would consist of hunts open only to successful applicants on specific dates during the spring turkey hunt season. Parties of hunters would be drawn for the general hunt by the partner group or agency. The BLM would monitor the check-in and include a brief safety orientation with the hunters. Per day, approximately five parties would hunt in the hunting zone; hunters would be assigned either the northern or southern sections of Kanaka Valley to disperse participants, increase the quality of the hunt, and promote safety. The total number of days the special hunt would run and other logistics would be outlined in a Kanaka Valley spring turkey hunt plan which would require a separate plan and NEPA analysis; the plan would be consistent with CDFG regulations.

Facilities

Facilities would be developed at the Kanaka Valley trailhead to prevent littering and nuisance garbage.

- The BLM would encourage a "Pack It In, Pack It Out" policy, but if trash becomes a problem, installing a trash receptacle or other adaptive management measures would be followed.
- The BLM would install a vault toilet at the Kanaka Valley parking lot.

Facilities: Parking Lot

Roadside parking at Kanaka Valley is limited, and building an appropriate parking lot would help to prevent traffic congestion and illegal parking. The parking lot design is included as an appendix (appendix 6). Eight small blue oaks would have to be removed for the construction of the parking lot, but restoration elsewhere in the planning area would off-set the impacts.

- A parking lot has been designed for Kanaka Valley that would follow BMPs and would provide parking for up to six car/truck spaces, including one handicap space. The following are also proposed: 1 bus space and 2 equestrian trailer spaces.

Roads and Motorized Use

Motorized use in lands managed by the Mother Lode Field Office is restricted to designated routes (BLM 2008). Motorized use may be allowed outside of designated routes for "any vehicle whose use is expressly authorized by the authorized officer, or otherwise officially approved" (43 CFR 8340.0-5(a)(3)). Public ownership in the region is limited and scattered, and motorized recreation conflicts with adjacent private landowners (i.e., trespass, noise, environmental damage) would be reasonably foreseeable. Cultural and natural resource damage would also be likely. Motorized use at Kanaka Valley would not be considered feasible or consistent with existing plans. The following was drafted by the BLM after careful consideration.

- The BLM proposes that motorized vehicle access via Kanaka Valley Road to parking lots and trailheads would continue with this plan; however, designated routes for motorized recreation would not be created in Kanaka Valley because the area is too small to accommodate the use.

Shooting Recreation

The following proposed management action was drafted by the BLM after careful consideration.

- Target shooting, plinking, and similar activities would not be allowed at Kanaka Valley.

Mining Claims, Mineral Development, and Recreational Gold Seeking

The planning area would be closed to mineral entry, which involves filing mining claims and developing the mineral resource. By policy, lands acquired by BLM are not open to mineral entry.

- For recreational gold seeking, only hands and pans would be allowed.

Firewood Permits

The following action was drafted the BLM.

- Firewood permits would be considered on a case-by-case basis and approved if consistent with the intent of the acquisition, vision statement for the planning area, and protection of significant resources.

Land Use Authorizations and Realty

Land use authorizations include leases, Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP) leases, and right-of-ways. A right-of-way is the BLM equivalent of an easement under State law. Unlike easements, which are attached to a deed, right-of-ways are assigned to an individual for a specified time period, usually 30 years. There is an annual fee, based on the amount of land contained in the right-of-way. Should the holder sell their property, a right-of-way can be transferred to another person. The following actions were drafted by the BLM.

- Requests for the granting of land use authorizations such as right-of-ways over public land for various purposes, including access roads, power lines, waterlines, or telephone lines, will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Applications for must be made to the BLM.
- Right-of-ways, R&PP leases, and other land use authorizations would be approved only if consistent with the intent of the acquisition, vision statement for the planning area, and protection of significant resources.
- The BLM would retain the planning area in federal ownership.
- The BLM would consider opportunities to acquire additional property if the acquisition would enhance the natural and/or cultural resources as well as the public uses. Newly acquired lands would be managed like similar, nearby public lands until site-specific guidance is crafted through the NEPA analysis. All land acquisitions would be made on a willing seller, willing buyer basis.

Special Recreation Use Permits

A Special Recreation Use Permit (SRUP) must be obtained from the BLM in order for visitors to engage organized group activities or for uses requiring a fee. These could include activities such as fundraising events, professionally guided outings, commercial filming, commercial photography, or commercial gathering of natural materials (i.e., mushrooms, plant materials) except uses in accordance with the Traditional Gathering Policy. The following action was drafted by the BLM.

- SRUPs would be evaluated by the BLM on a case-by-case basis through the permitting process and approved only if consistent with the intent of the acquisition, vision statement for the planning area, and protection of significant resources.

ACEC Designation

Area of critical environmental concern (ACEC) status designates a management area that has relevant and important values that need special management.

- Kanaka Valley would be designated as a standalone ACEC; the relevant and important values of this ACEC would include blue and valley oak woodlands, Rescue soil series, and rare plants (Layne's butterweed, Pine Hill ceanothus, El Dorado mule-ears, Red Hills soap root, and Bisbee Peak rush-rose) and their habitat.

FIGURE 5: LAYNE'S BUTTERWEED IN BLOOM

IV. GENERAL MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

The following management guidelines or policy statements apply to Kanaka Valley. These address plan maintenance and implementation, and reflect a mixture of conformance to federal law, policy, and BLM planning guidelines.

Relationship with Law, Policy, and Other Planning Documents

The Kanaka Valley Management Plan addresses several resources and goals and is consistent with the Sierra RMP, approved in February 2008. On page 2-19 of the Sierra RMP, it states that the BLM will "Conserve and restore oak woodland, coniferous forest, chaparral, riparian habitats." On page 2-35 of the Sierra RMP, it states that the BLM will "Protect and enhance the scenic qualities and visual integrity of the characteristic landscapes." And on page 2-50, it states that the BLM will "Ensure the continued availability of outdoor recreational opportunities sought by the public while protecting other resources and uses." Federal laws, such as the Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and FLPMA, apply to all BLM lands including the planning area.

Relationship between the BLM and the Community

The BLM will communicate with the community about proposed projects, environmental analyses, recreational opportunities, volunteer workdays, and plan implementation via the BLM website. The BLM will strive to sustain open communication and working relationships with the community and partner organizations.

Cooperative Management

The BLM will encourage compatible stewardship and volunteerism at Kanaka Valley. Working relationships between agencies, organizations, and individuals will be explored. Where mutual objectives exist, a cooperative management agreement could be negotiated for sustained collaboration. For example, local school groups could learn about land stewardship through volunteerism at Kanaka Valley. Trail recreationists might be interested in working with the BLM to coordinate trail improvement days.

Monitoring

An active program of monitoring conditions will be instituted in the planning area. Information from the monitoring program will be compared to baseline data to identify trends and to evaluate progress in achieving management goals and objectives. For effectiveness, the monitoring objectives will be closely tied to management objectives. Targeted studies will be used to gather information. Monitoring methodology will be simple and consistent, and photographic documentation of sites will play a key role.

Federal or State listed rare, threatened, and endangered species will be given special attention. Cultural resources, noxious weeds and other habitat indicators will also be tracked.

Adaptive Management

If the proposed management plan is adopted and implemented and through time monitoring shows that management is not supporting the vision statement or is having unintended consequences, the BLM will

take action necessary to correct the situation. Typically, this will be some sort of restriction on visitor behavior or perhaps an expansion of recreation facilities. The policy of the BLM will be to first utilize the least restrictive management actions required to resolve the problem, and then, if necessary, progress to more restrictions. These small changes in the plan may be made administratively. These changes would be directly related adaptive management strategies to resolve problems (e.g., placing trash cans to limit nuisance littering).

Plan Amendments

To be effective, a plan must have some flexibility built into it. Even the best of plans sometimes have unforeseen consequences which might be undesirable. On the other hand, plans that are easy to change have no stability, and stability is one of the main reasons for having a plan. The Kanaka Valley Management Plan could be modified only if a good case can be made for the change, based on significant new information or circumstances. For example, if the monitoring program or an independent research project produces information which could justify a change, then a plan amendment should be prepared.

Plan amendments will be treated formally. The BLM will prepare an EA and submit both the proposed amendment and the EA for public review. Following laws and BLM policy, a plan amendment will not be finalized until the public review process had been completed.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), federal agencies are required to examine the impacts of their actions on the environment. The NEPA states the federal government's policy is to create and maintain conditions under which people and nature can exist in productive harmony and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans. The goals of NEPA are to help federal agencies make informed decisions based on an understanding of environmental consequences and take actions that protect, restore, and enhance the environment. Additionally, the NEPA created the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), in the Executive Office of the President, to be the "caretaker" of the NEPA. The CEQ issued final regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR 1500–1508) in 1978 (revised in 1986) and added to them in 1981 with a guidance document titled "Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning CEQ's NEPA Regulations". The NEPA and the CEQ procedures ensure proper consideration of environmental concerns but do not dictate a particular result or decision. The CEQ regulations require that agencies "make diligent efforts to involve the public in preparing and implementing their NEPA procedures" (40 CFR 1506.6(a)). Additionally, the BLM is guided by the BLM's NEPA Handbook, H-1790-1.

The BLM's proposed action is to adopt a management plan and to construct a parking lot for Kanaka Valley. The BLM is required to prepare a NEPA document for this action. All management actions necessary to implement the plan (i.e., trail building, etc.) will be subject to further specific NEPA analysis except the parking lot. Analysis in this document is sufficient to implement the parking lot construction.

In the following analysis, the BLM has laid out "alternatives" to assess the environmental impacts of adopting the management plan. Alternative 1 is the proposed management plan; it includes recommendations made at community-based planning meetings. Alternative 1 includes a recommended action to begin the process of designating Kanaka Valley as an ACEC. The other alternatives (alternatives 2-6), including the "no action" alternative (alternative 2), were developed to help the BLM compare and contrast environmental impacts of the proposed management plan (alternative 1). Alternatives 3-6 were developed to thoroughly analyze complex issues such as hunting, formal campgrounds, equestrian use, and ACEC designation.

This NEPA analysis is an EA rather than an environmental impact statement (EIS). An EA-level analysis is appropriate because adopting the proposed management plan, as laid out in alternative 1, would not have a significant impact on the environment. The BLM intends to use this analysis, as well as public comments, to reach a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) and make a decision to adopt the management plan.

The decision record (DR) will address public comment letters and describe how substantive comments from members of the public and other groups were considered and used in making the decision. Comments may lead to changes to the management plan, EA, or FONSI. Neither this proposed management plan nor the attached FONSI (section VIII) are decision-making documents. The final decision will be made and documented in a DR that will be produced following the public comment period. The DR will also clearly identify and describe the alternative selected. The BLM anticipates that the BLM Field Manager will select the proposed management plan (alternative 1, section III) in its

entirety; however, the BLM can incorporate actions from alternatives 2-6 and public comments to develop the best management plan. (Note that the FONSI included with this document is unsigned and will remain unsigned until comments are considered and the DR is ready for signature.) Decision making will be carefully documented in the DR and issued with the final plan. Once signed by the BLM Field Manager, the final documents will be made available to the public. Members of the public will then have an opportunity to appeal the decision. Those procedures will be described in the DR document. Once the appeal opportunity has passed, the action as described in the DR will be implemented. A general flow chart of the process is shown in figure 2.

Overview of Alternatives

For each resource, all six alternatives were analyzed in detail. For many categories, alternative 1 (proposed management plan) and alternative 2 (no action) were examined in the most detail; alternatives 3-6 provide additional analysis on ACEC designation, hunting, camping, and equestrian use.

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

Alternative 1 is the proposed management plan. All recommendations made by consensus at the community-based planning meetings as documented in the proposed management plan (section III) would be adopted by the BLM and implemented. Rare plants and their habitat would be managed using current knowledge and methods by BLM specialists, and management actions would be consistent with surrounding lands. The entire planning area would be designated as the Kanaka Valley ACEC. Additionally, parking facilities would be built (appendix 6, figures).

Planning meeting participants could not find consensus on hunting recreation. The issues of formal campground facilities and equestrian use/parking capacity also warranted further analysis by the BLM. With respect to these issues the BLM proposes to do the following in the proposed management plan:

- Hunting: adopt the recommendation described in section III, the proposed management plan, under Hunting Recreation (i.e., hunting zones, restricted methods of take and species, and lottery spring turkey hunt).
- Campground facilities: no formal campground facilities would be built. Overnight camping and campfires would be prohibited.
- Equestrian use/parking capacity: a parking lot with two horse trailer spaces, one bus space, and six car spaces would be built.
- ACEC designation: the planning area would be designated as the standalone Kanaka Valley ACEC.

Alternative 2: no action

Under alternative 2, the BLM would not do any proactive management in the planning area beyond what is prescribed in the Sierra RMP and required by applicable law, regulations, and BLM policies. This alternative allows a comparison of impacts of the proposed management plan with the current condition and expected future condition in the absence of the proposed management plan. Under alternative 2, the BLM would manage the planning area in accordance with the Sierra RMP as an "extended recreation area". Extended recreation areas are defined in the Sierra RMP as all lands

outside of SRMAs. The management of extended recreation areas is largely custodial rather than proactive in providing recreational opportunities. Of note, the planning area would not be designated an ACEC. With respect to hunting, formal campground facilities, and equestrian use, the BLM would do the following:

- Hunting: hunting would be allowed in accordance with CDFG rules and regulations; there would be no BLM use restrictions.
- Campground facilities: formal camping facilities would be possible but the capacity, location, and the timing of construction would be undetermined and would be pending future public interest. Informal camping and campfires would be allowed following the BLM's rules and regulations.
- Equestrian use/parking capacity: equestrian use would be allowed; however, it is uncertain whether a parking facility would be built, and, if a parking lot is built, it is uncertain if it would accommodate trailers. It is likely that the BLM would not build a parking lot that accommodates horse trailers unless there is strong public interest.
- ACEC designation: the planning area would not be designated as an ACEC.

Alternative 3: modified hunting, campgrounds, and equestrian use
This alternative is the same as alternative 1, the proposed management plan, with a few exceptions: hunting, formal campgrounds, and equestrian use/parking capacity. For these, the BLM would do the following:

- Hunting: no hunting would be allowed.
- Campground facilities: normal camping would be allowed in zones designated by the BLM. The zones would offer walk-in, primitive camping with fire rings. Camping would be by SRUP only.
- Equestrian use/parking capacity: equestrian use would not be allowed in the planning area.
- ACEC designation: the planning area would be designated as the standalone Kanaka Valley ACEC.

Alternative 4: modified hunting and campgrounds
Alternative 4 is the same as alternative 1, the proposed management plan, except regarding hunting and formal campgrounds. With respect to these issues the BLM would do the following:

- Hunting: hunting would be limited to archery, falconry, and shotguns (no slugs). The following would be allowed: deer and turkey during the fall season, deer during the summer archery-only season, and quail and mourning dove in season. Game for falconry would follow CDFG regulation. There would be no hunting for spring turkey. Hunting zones would not be created.
- Campground facilities: camping would be by SRUP only. No campfires and no campfire rings would be allowed.
- Equestrian use/parking capacity: equestrian use would be allowed on trails; a small parking lot would be built.
- ACEC designation: the planning area would be designated as the standalone Kanaka Valley ACEC.

Alternative 5: portion of the planning area designated as PHP ACEC

This alternative is the same as alternative 1 with the exception of ACEC designation. The recommendation from the community-based planning meetings, to designate the entire planning area as a standalone ACEC, would not be implemented. In alternative 5, only the portions of the planning area in the FWS recovery boundary, as outlined in the 2002 Gabbro Soils Rare Plants Recovery Plan, would be designated as an ACEC. These portions add up to approximately 117 acres. These 117 acres would be included in the existing PHP ACEC and managed under the 2008 PHP Management Plan with the PHP multiagency system. The rest of the planning area would not be designated an ACEC, and would be managed under the Kanaka Valley Management Plan.

Alternative 6: two ACEC designations

Alternative 6 is similar to alternative 1, with the exception of ACEC designation. The ACEC designations being examined in alternative 6 include designating a portion of the planning area as Kanaka Valley ACEC and a portion of the planning area as PHP ACEC. As in alternative 5, the approximately 117 acre portion of the planning area in the FWS recovery boundary, as outlined in the 2002 Gabbro Soils Rare Plants Recovery Plan, would be designated as a part of PHP ACEC. This area would be managed as part of the PHP system of lands, and would be included in the existing PHP ACEC under important and relevant values as outlined in the Sierra RMP. It would be managed under the 2008 PHP Management Plan. The remaining approximately 578 acres of the planning area would be designated as a Kanaka Valley ACEC and would be managed under the Kanaka Valley Management Plan. The important and relevant values for Kanaka Valley would include rare plants and their habitat, Rescue soil series, and blue and valley oak woodlands.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: DIRECT AND INDIRECT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Air, Soil, and Water

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

The proposed management plan would have long-term beneficial impacts on air, water, and soil resources. Kanaka Valley contains rare soils. The Rescue soil series are of limited distribution (covering less than 30,000 acres) and support a unique biotic community. The rare soils would be an important and relevant value in the proposed ACEC designation. Alternative 1 includes an action recommended in the community-based planning meetings to protect and maintain the soil structure. The parking lot would be built using best management practices to minimize impacts to the planning area's water and soil resources. Water resources in the planning area are of a limited scope; there are two seasonal creeks and some perennial pools of water. Best management practices would be applied to water runoff from the parking lot; there would be no direct effects on water resources. There would likely be temporary negligible level of dust created by parking lot construction; otherwise there would be no active impact to air quality.

Alternative 2: no action

Under the no action alternative, the planning area would be managed in accordance with the Sierra RMP, which has specific provisions for air, water, and soil resources. All future BLM actions in the planning area would be subject to environmental review. The rare soils in the planning area would not be highlighted as an important and relevant value; they may not receive the recognition afforded to them under the proposed management plan. The nature of potential impacts under the no action alternative is uncertain, but the rare soils, as well as air and water resources, would be better protected under the proposed action. It is possible that the proposed parking lot would not be built. This would result in negligible soil conservation. Trails would probably be constructed under the no action alternative. The trails would be built to the same standards laid out in the proposed management plan; however, without a comprehensive trails vision as outlined in alternative 1, there is potential for unauthorized trails to develop, causing minimal, or perhaps minor, degradation to soil and water resources. The BLM would likely attempt to address trail problems, as resources allow.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 prohibits equestrian use in the planning area. This rule would have a small, but long-term positive impact for soil resources. The size and weight of horses could cause erosion and degrade the soil structure on trails under the proposed alternative; these impacts would not occur under alternative 3. Other potential impacts are the same as alternative 1.

Alternative 4

Equestrians would not be restricted to trails under alternative 4. Depending on the amount and location of use, the impacts would vary. The impact of horse-riding off trail would be expected to be negative

and minimal because there would not be much use expected on steep terrain; however, a remote, but possible effect is if horses were accidently ridden through rare plant populations, even once, the result would be strongly negative due to the soil compaction and direct damage to federally listed resources.

Alternative 5

Under alternative 5, the Rescue series soils would not be designated as an important and relevant value for 578 acres (maps, appendix 4). For the 117 acres of rare plant area, the rare soils would be an ACEC value designated as part of the PHP ACEC and managed under the PHP Management Plan. For the remaining portion of the planning area, there would be long-term negative effects because activities that cause soil disturbance may be more likely to be allowed. The BLM would follow the proposed management plan guidance and would support soil quality, hydrology, and use BMPs.

FIGURE 6: LUPINE

Alternative 6

This alternative has long-term soil, air, and water benefits similar to the ones described in alternative 1, except that the protection of unique soils and 117 acre rare plant area would be designated as part of the PHP ACEC and managed under the PHP Management Plan. The Rescue series soils in the remaining 578 acres would be designated and protected as the Kanaka Valley ACEC. The benefits described in alternative 1 would be the same for the Kanaka Valley ACEC. Both the PHP Management Plan and the proposed Kanaka Valley Management Plan put emphasis on erosion control and minimizing impacts of recreation (i.e., trails) on sensitive resources including soils.

Vegetation

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

The intent of the acquisition was to protect and preserve native vegetation; vegetation would be a management focus under alternative 1. The proposed management plan would have a long-term beneficial impact on native vegetation. It includes direction for the BLM to protect and maintain Kanaka Valley's diverse natural communities, including special status plants and their habitat. The special status plants in the planning area would benefit from the adoption of the plan; it calls for interpretation of appropriate areas, protection of populations, restoration of native vegetation types, and management of nonnative invasive species. Rare plants and their habitat would be managed using best available knowledge and conservation techniques by BLM specialists. The BLM would manage nonnative, invasive plants with appropriate techniques; these projects would be subject to full environmental review.

Blue and valley oak woodlands would be designated as an ACEC value under the proposed management plan. As an important and relevant value, the oak woodlands would benefit over the long-term. The chaparral community, which is where the rare plants usually occur, would also be designated as an

important and relevant ACEC value under the proposed management plan. This alternative would also include the BLM special status plants and their habitat as an ACEC value. Over the long-term the ACEC designation and proposed management plan would benefit vegetation.

Alternative 1 would have a beneficial impact on BLM special status plant species, especially their habitat. The BLM is directed to protect, and where possible interpret with informational signs, native vegetation and rare plant species. Although the individual plants are protected by law and policy, the ACEC designation and proposed management action call for more comprehensive ecosystem conservation of plants. Trail development and any other future management actions would be subject to site specific environmental analysis, including biological studies.

The proposed management plan under alternative 1 and the parking lot design would not directly affect special status plants because the plants are located in portions of the planning area which are difficult to access. The parking lot proposal was analyzed by a BLM botanist to determine whether special status plants would be negatively affected. Special status plants would not be affected. Blue oak woodland would be minimally affected. A total of eight blue oaks (3, 6, 6, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 20 inches diameter at breast height [DBH] and one live oak 12 inches DBH) would be removed for the proposed parking lot. The BLM proposes blue oak restoration or enhancement of existing populations in the planning area to mitigate the loss of these oaks.

Alternative 2: no action

The planning area's special status plants and rare plant communities would receive protection under the Sierra RMP as well as applicable federal laws, regulations, and BLM policies; however, under alternative 2, the native vegetation types would not receive the same level of protection as under the proposed management plan. The proposed management plan specifically identifies the planning area's vegetative resources for protection. The Sierra RMP has more general guidance for these resources to, "conserve and restore oak woodland,… chaparral, riparian" habitats (BLM 2008). Under alternative 2, the parking would not be built and thus the blue oak trees potentially affected by the proposed parking lot would not be removed; however, the natural community would not be designated and managed as an ACEC value. Trail projects would be subject to a full environmental review, including biological studies. Significant resources could be avoided; however, it is possible that without a trail vision, as laid out in alternative 1, unauthorized trails might develop. Overnight camping, target shooting, and recreational gold seeking with hand tools could occur in the planning area under the no action alternative. These uses have been known to degrade vegetation.

Alternative 3 and Alternative 4

Negligible impacts to vegetative resources associated with camping and campfires could be possible under alternatives 3 and 4. These impacts are expected to be small because the camping opportunities would be regulated and of low intensity. Because horse-riding generally takes place through open areas, it is not expected to noticeably impact vegetative resources except through possible weed spread.

Alternative 5

Under alternative 5, oak woodlands would not be designated as an important and relevant ACEC value; otherwise management under alternative 5 is similar to alternative 1. Not designating oak woodlands as an ACEC value could have long-term negative effects on habitat because the conservation of vegetation would not be considered as thoroughly in planning and projects with a larger impact are more likely to be approved. Restoration of native vegetation might also be a lower priority without a special designation. Rare plant species would be protected by applicable law and policy, but the overall integrity of the natural habitats could be lower. One hundred-seventeen acres of chaparral rare plant habitat would be included in the PHP ACEC as a relevant and important value and managed under the PHP Management Plan.

Alternative 6

Management of native vegetation would be according to the proposed management plan (alternative 1) for the western 578 acres. The difference between alternatives 1 and 6 is that by including 117 acres of rare plant chaparral habitat as part of the PHP ACEC, the protection of the rare plants and their habitat would take priority over other public uses and the acreage would be managed under the PHP Management Plan; however, under the proposed management plan (alternative 1) appropriate management and conservation of the rare plants and their habitat would also be a management priority and rare plants species would still be protected by applicable law and policy. In alternative 6 the rare plant habitat would be split off from the Kanaka Valley ACEC and would be managed as part of the PHP ACEC. For the (578 acre) Kanaka Valley ACEC, important and relevant ACEC value would consist of the blue and valley oak woodlands, rare plants and their habitat, and Rescue soil series. Designating the 578 acres in alternative 6 as an ACEC would provide more protection through greater intensity of environmental review for vegetation and rare plants than under alternative 5 where the eastern 578 acres would not be in an ACEC.

Wildlife

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

The proposed management plan calls for the BLM to protect and maintain diverse natural wildlife and habitat features. This management strategy would indirectly affect wildlife in a beneficial way over the long-term. Habitat requirements such as feeding, nesting, and shelter would be protected and, when and where possible, improved as a result of the proposed management plan. Designating the entire planning area as an ACEC would also provide long-term benefits for wildlife because chaparral habitat and oak woodlands would receive management priority thus increasing the habitat quality. The parking lot proposal was specifically analyzed by a BLM wildlife biologist to determine whether there would be negative impacts to special status wildlife. No such impacts are anticipated.

Kanaka Valley has abundant wildlife; however, no special status wildlife species have been identified in the planning area. The intensity, type, and frequency of recreation influences the degree to which wildlife are disturbed. An occasional passing hiker is not likely to interrupt nesting; however frequent disturbance by noisy recreationists might be detrimental (Hall and Dearden 1984). Generally, the more

people recreating in an area at one time, the more disturbance to wildlife (Bennett and Zuelke 1999). Not all recreational impacts are of equal significance in their potential disturbance of wildlife. The most destructive tend to be those related to off-road/mechanical travel (Hall and Dearden 1984). This type of recreation would not be an allowed use in Kanaka Valley. Under the proposed alternative no target shooting, no camping, and no motorized vehicles would be allowed in the planning area. These activities can be loud, and the noise could have detrimental impacts to wildlife, prohibiting these activities would improve wildlife habitat.

The modified hunting action under alternative 1 may result in the harvest of some game species individuals and the temporary decline of these species; however, these species would only be hunted during CDFG seasons according to their rules and regulations. Game species can generally withstand legal hunting without serious population declines. For more detail on hunting impacts, see the hunting recreation section.

Alternative 2: no action

Only the CDFG hunting rules and regulations would be in effect under alternative 2, hunters would have more methods and species available to hunt than under the other alternatives. There would likely be more impacts to the wildlife resources because increased hunting options means that more animals would probably be taken from the planning area. Animal populations are managed by CDFG, and the BLM would continue to manage wildlife habitat. Overnight camping and target shooting could also occur under the no action alternative. Increased use and noise have a tendency to degrade wildlife resources, and cause some species to flee the area. A less regulated trail system could have a similar effect. All future actions would require environmental review, consistent with the Sierra RMP as well as all applicable federal laws, regulations, and BLM policies.

Alternative 3

Under alternative 3, there would be no hunting in the planning area. The impacts are more fully analyzed in the hunting recreation section. Without the increased presence of hunters and the noise associated with hunting, some species would probably benefit from the lack of hunting under this alternative. Because there are no known occurrences of BLM special status animal species, only common species would be expected to benefit from the hunting prohibition and a probable decrease in off-trail recreation.

Alternative 4

In general, impacts to wildlife resources under alternative 4 would be similar to those under the proposed management plan, with the exception of the spring turkey hunt. Under alternative 4, there would be no spring turkey hunt. The impacts of the spring turkey hunt to wildlife populations are expected to be negligible. Wild turkeys have been introduced and managed in northern California as a game species. According to wildlife experts, regional populations of turkeys are robust, and impacts to turkey populations from a special spring hunt would be negligible.

Alternative 5

Management of wildlife would be identical to the strategies discussed under the proposed management plan for the western 578 acres; however, the area would not be designated as the Kanaka Valley ACEC and more disruptive uses would be possible, and habitat quality for wildlife would be lower. Under this alternative, 117 acres of the total 695 acres would become part of the PHP ACEC and managed under the PHP Management Plan. Under the PHP Management Plan vegetation would be protected and would provide less fragmented and disturbed habitat for wildlife. There are no restrictions on hunting recreation under the PHP Management Plan and a larger variety wildlife species could be hunted, although the terrain and vegetation are challenging in the 117 acres and high levels of use are unlikely.

Alternative 6

The impacts to wildlife would be similar to those discussed under alternative 5; however, the eastern portion of the planning area would also be designated as an ACEC and the oak woodlands would be protected as one of the important and relevant values. Over the long-term, the designation would improve habitat quality and discourage fragmentation. Hunting recreation and other wildlife management in the eastern 578 acres would follow the proposed management plan. The 117 acres would be designated as PHP ACEC and would follow the PHP Management Plan; there would not be restrictions on hunting activities as long as these activities do not impact rare plants.

Cultural resources

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

The proposed management plan would have long-term beneficial effects on cultural resources. Cultural resources include historic, prehistoric, and places of traditional cultural use. Alternative 1 includes an action that directs the BLM to protect significant cultural resources in the planning area. It also directs the BLM to interpret suitable cultural resources. These actions underscore cultural resource preservation. The prohibitions on general motorized use and overnight camping under this alternative are also beneficial to cultural resources because these types of uses may facilitate looting and vandalism.

Trail development is proposed under this alternative. All trail projects would be planned through a designation process requiring a full environmental review including compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 directs federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on significant cultural resources. Under Section 106, the BLM is required to make a reasonable and good faith effort to identify significant resources (including historical research, fieldwork, and Native American consultation) and avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential adverse effects on these resources. In fact, implementation of all proposals affecting Kanaka Valley will require Section 106 compliance. The parking lot design was specifically analyzed by the BLM archaeologist to determine whether it would affect significant cultural resources. No significant cultural resources were identified in the area of potential effects.

Alternative 2: no action

Compared to the proposed management plan, alternative 2 could have decidedly negative long-term impacts on the planning area's cultural resources. The two alternatives are similar in that all future actions at Kanaka Valley would require a full environmental review including compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 directs federal agencies to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential adverse effects on significant cultural resources; however, overnight camping, target shooting, and recreational gold seeking are known to negatively affect cultural resources and these uses would be allowed under the no action alternative.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 would allow a low level of dispersed camping; this activity has been known to negatively impact cultural resources because it could facilitate looting. Otherwise, the cultural resources management and future effects under alternative 3 are nearly identical to the effects analyzed under the proposed alternative.

Alternative 4

Although the impacts to cultural resources under alternative 4 would be similar to the effects analyzed under the proposed alternative, alternative 4 would allow modified hunting recreation and a low level of dispersed camping which has been known to negatively impact cultural resources.

Alternative 5

Management of cultural resources would be similar to those discussed under the proposed management plan; however, alternative 5 would have long-term negative impacts to cultural resources because there would be fewer limitations on soil disturbance without the ACEC designation for 578 eastern acres and cultural resources would be less likely to be indirectly preserved. For the 117 acres of rare plant habitat, which would become part of the PHP ACEC and managed under the PHP Management Plan, there would be restrictions on soil disturbance and thus indirect benefits to cultural resources.

Alternative 6

The impacts to cultural resources under alternative 6 would be similar to the proposed management plan because both of the ACEC designations would indirectly protect and preserve cultural resources through limitations on soil disturbance. One difference between the proposed management plan and alternative 6 is that there is not a strategy to provide interpretation of cultural resources under the PHP Management Plan (which 117 acres of the planning area would be included in), because there is low potential for cultural resources in the PHP.

Scenic Values

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

The proposed management plan would have a long-term beneficial impact on scenic resources in the planning area. This alternative includes an action to manage the planning area in accordance with BLM's VRM class II standard. Under this standard, the BLM is required 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. The class II standard is very beneficial to preserving air, soil, water, and vegetation resources. There are often indirect beneficial effects on wildlife and cultural resources. VRM class II would be also consistent with the vision statement for the planning area, including the desired recreational experience. There could be long-term negative effects on right-of-way applications or other land use authorizations that require visual disturbances which do not meet class II standards.

The proposed parking lot is designed to have a low visual impact. It is relatively small in size. Informational signs would also adhere to the visual requirements and have a low visual impact. The vault toilet would have a size, shape, and color that would not attract the attention of the casual observer. The parking area and toilet facilities would not violate the class II standard.

Alternative 2: no action

Under the no action alternative, the BLM would not manage Kanaka Valley in accordance with the BLM's VRM class II standard. The planning area would be managed under the class III standard, which is less restrictive. The objective of class III is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. According to the standard, the level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate; management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer; changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape. The class III standard was not recommended during the community-based planning meetings or outlined in the vision statement. Under this standard, the BLM could approve right-of-ways or other land use authorizations that cause visual disturbances and attract attention. The less restrictive standard could be potentially beneficial to land use applicants over the long-run. Significant biological and cultural resources would be avoided as required under applicable laws, regulations, and policies but air, soil, water, and vegetative resources tend to suffer.

Alternative 3 and Alternative 4

The impacts to scenic values would be similar to those discussed under the proposed management plan because primitive camping by permit or modified hunting would be planned to have negligible impact on visual resources.

Alternative 5

The impacts to scenic values for the eastern 578 acres would be similar to those discussed under the proposed management plan; however, this alternative would have a negative impact on visual resources as compared to the proposed alternative because there would not be an ACEC designation to protect and promote the preservation and special management of the aesthetically striking oak woodlands. The 117 acres that would be included in the PHP ACEC under alternative 5 would also be classified as VRM class II per the PHP Management Plan.

Alternative 6

The 117 acres that would be included in the PHP ACEC under alternative 6 would be classified as VRM class II, which is the designation of the PHP. The designation of the remaining 578 acres as the Kanaka Valley ACEC and VRM class II would protect and promote the preservation and special management of the oak woodlands and other ACEC values minimizing the potential negative visual impacts of structure development much like the proposed management plan.

Fuels Program and Fire Protection

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

The proposed management plan would be expected to have a long-term beneficial impact on wildfire prevention. The planning area, similar to most lands in the western Sierra foothills, has high wildfire potential. Under this alternative, the BLM would develop a fuels management plan specific to the planning area. Strategic fuel breaks to protect adjacent residences and the Kanaka Valley Road ingress and egress would be a high priority. Overnight camping and campfires would not be allowed. Fuel breaks would be planned and built in a way that does not negatively affect ACEC values, VRM classification, or other significant environmental resources.

Alternative 2: no action

Under the no action alternative, fuels in the planning area would be managed in accordance with the Sierra RMP and the BLM's Mother Lode Field Office Fire Management Plan. The planning area has high wildfire potential. Under this alternative, the BLM would not develop a fuels management plan specific to the planning area; fuel breaks and other needed fuels projects may not receive priority. Fuels management would be planned and managed as time priorities allowed. This could have negative effects on wildfire prevention. Camping and campfires would be allowed.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 would allow a low level of dispersed camping with campfires in fire rings. For many campers, evening campfires are a quintessential part of the experience. Fire prevention and fuels resources would be managed as they would be under the proposed management plan; however, campfires are known to increase the potential for wildlife ignition.

Alternative 4

The impacts to fire prevention and fuels under alternative 4 would be nearly identical to the effects analyzed under the proposed alternative. Alternative 4 would allow modified hunting recreation and a low level of dispersed camping; however, campfires would not be allowed as in the proposed alternative. The prohibition on campfires may be difficult to enforce when camping is permitted.

Alternative 5

Under alternative 5 management of recreation, vegetation, and fuel loading would mostly be as under the proposed management plan. The two differences would be that the 117 acres of rare plant habitat would be incorporated into the PHP ACEC and the remaining portion of the planning area would not have an ACEC designation. Without a special designation, there may be less care taken in the oak woodlands during fuels reduction.

Alternative 6

Under alternative 6, management for the eastern 578 acres would be the same as under the proposed management plan (alternative 1). The 117 acres of rare plant habitat would be managed with the PHP which has successfully conducted fuels management in some WUI areas. The PHP has specific direction to restore or mimic appropriate fire regimes; the proposed management plan suggests development of a fuels management plan. The proposed management plan explicitly prohibits campfires.

Access to the Planning Area, Kanaka Valley Road

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

Primary access to the planning area—Kanaka Valley Road—is managed by El Dorado County. The BLM's management of the planning area as a recreation area is expected to put additional strain on this public road, which is already used by local residents. With increased public use, the proposed management plan is expected to have long-term negative impacts on the condition of the road, thus also affecting the local residents and potentially the County's ability to maintain it. Local residents would likely experience additional traffic. This impact is considered long-term but minor. It would create temporary inconveniences for local residents during periods of higher use (i.e., weekends during the spring wildflower season). The County may also have to increase its maintenance of the road, and it is undetermined how severe this impact would be. In 2011, the county installed "no parking" signs along much of the length of the road and chip sealed the road which will extend pavement life. The impacts to the local residents and the county would be lessened by the smaller proposed parking lot design and other actions under alternative 1. Limited hunting seasons and a lottery-based spring turkey hunt would also serve to reduce traffic, especially during the wet winter when there were concerns from residents about road degradation. Additionally, the negative impacts would be offset by the direction for the BLM to coordinate with El Dorado County to prevent unsafe, unlawful parking and to study a potential turnaround area.

Alternative 2: no action

Under the no action alternative, there would not be a management plan and the proposed parking lot may not be built, or it may be built in a different location, or with a different capacity. It is unclear what would happen over time. It is unclear under the no action alternative if the BLM would coordinate with El Dorado County to prevent unlawful parking and to study a potential turnaround area. It is possible that Kanaka Valley could become very popular, leading to parking problems and traffic congestion along Kanaka Valley Road. This could cause an unsafe situation for local residents as well as additional maintenance burden for El Dorado County. Alternative 2 would have fewer use restrictions and would be inconsistent with the vision statement which describes Kanaka Valley as a non-motorized, low impact, low density recreation area. On the other hand, the lack of a parking lot and other parking direction may cause the public to become discouraged by lack of facilities and avoid the planning area during periods of high use such as weekends during the spring wildflower season. In either case, the BLM would lack explicit direction to coordinate with local residents and El Dorado County to create safe public access to the planning area via Kanaka Valley Road.

Alternative 3

The impacts to Kanaka Valley under alternative 3 would be similar to the effects analyzed under the proposed management plan. Spring would still be a popular time to visit the planning area, which would lead to periods of high use. Alternative 3 would allow a low level of dispersed camping, but no equestrian use or hunting. There may be increased use of the road due to camping recreationists. However, equestrian use would not be allowed; therefore, there would be less need for the larger equestrian trailers to use Kanaka Valley Road. Not having equestrian trailers on Kanaka Valley Road would increase the safety of the roadway because there are currently few adequate pullouts, and oversized vehicles could cause congestion. Similarly, hunting would not be allowed; thus, there would be no associated traffic during hunting season. However, because hunters typically travel in the early morning, the altered traffic flow would be expected to be minimally beneficial to Kanaka Valley Road.

Alternative 4

The impacts to the access road under alternative 4 would be nearly identical to the impacts analyzed under the proposed action. Alternative 4 would allow modified hunting recreation and a low level of dispersed camping. These activities would attract more users to the planning area; however, because permits are required for camping and hunting usually occurs in the early morning, it would be expected to have a minimal negative effect on Kanaka Valley Road traffic patterns.

Alternative 5

Under alternative 5 the portion of the planning area that Kanaka Valley runs through would not be designated as an ACEC. Without a special designation, some road associated projects outside the County right-of-way may have fewer conservation measures if ACEC values are impacted; however, these effects are expected to be minimal.

Alternative 6

The potential designation of the 117 acres as PHP ACEC would not impact allowed low-impact recreational activities or related traffic patterns. The impacts on the 578 acres that would be under the new designation of a Kanaka Valley ACEC would be identical to those discussed under the proposed management plan.

Private Property

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

Kanaka Valley is surrounded by private property, including residences. With increased use of the planning area, trespass may occasionally occur as members of the public inadvertently wander off public land; however, the proposed alternative includes actions designed to encourage understanding of and respect for private property. Information would be placed in strategic locations. Trespass-related impacts may be ongoing and undesirable for the neighbors, but they are expected to be minor and perhaps negligible if these actions—appropriate signage /public education and strategic location of trails—are implemented. One proposed management action specifically directs the BLM to close unauthorized trails or ranch tracks that are near or end at a private property boundary. Recreational use of Kanaka Valley under this alternative would be non-motorized and generally low impact. There would be little increase in noise because of the nature of low-impact activities.

Alternative 2: no action

Under the no action alternative, the BLM would likely respond to trespass complaints on a case-by-case basis. Under the proposed management plan, the BLM would be directed to take several proactive steps to help avoid trespass. Under alternative 2, there would be no proactive steps and there would likely be more trespass incidents.

Alternative 3

The impacts to private property under alternative 3 would be nearly identical to the impacts analyzed under the proposed alternative. There would be some potential for campers to become disoriented at night and trespass on private property, although the BLM would take proactive steps to manage the activities with designated zones.

Alternative 4

The impacts to private property under alternative 4 would be nearly identical to the effects analyzed under the proposed alternative. Alternative 4 would allow modified hunting recreation and a low level of dispersed camping; these activities could impact private property on a low level because there would be some potential for campers to become disoriented at night and trespass on private property.

Alternative 5

Because the proposed management plan has direction to close inappropriate or unsustainable trails, the lack of ACEC designation would minimally affect private property. With the 117 acres of rare plant area designated as PHP ACEC, the impacts to private property there would be similar to those discussed under the proposed management plan because PHP has provisions to close unneeded roads and trails.

Alternative 6

The impacts to private property would be similar to those discussed under the proposed management plan because the PHP ACEC and Kanaka Valley ACEC designations would not directly impact private property. The likelihood that the planning area would retain its characteristic features would be higher under alternative 6 than alternative 5 because ACEC designations would span the planning area.

General Recreation

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

The planning area has remarkable recreational potential. The proposed management plan is consistent with the vision statement created in the community-based planning meetings: non-motorized, low-impact, low-density recreation such as hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, educational fieldtrips, and so on. This alternative includes several actions that would have long-term benefits on low-impact recreation and educational use. To accommodate this level of use, the BLM proposes to build a parking lot with two horse trailer spaces, one bus space, and up to six car spaces (appendix 6). Also consistent with community-based recommendations, the BLM would install a vault toilet at the parking lot. To address trash, the BLM would encourage a "Pack It In, Pack It Out" ethic, but, if problems arise, adaptive management measures such as installing trash cans or closing facilities would be implemented.

The BLM envisions building multiple-use trails and providing information about these trails at Kanaka Valley and on the Mother Lode Field Office website. Details regarding the trail system are yet to be determined and will be studied in a full environmental review. Participants at the community-based planning meetings recommended loop trails and a shorter trail system. Hunting, equestrian use, and a parking lot would also be allowed, with limitations, and are analyzed in detail under following sections. Mountain bike and equestrian use would be restricted to designated trails. No negative impacts to visitor use are anticipated as a result of this restriction because most trail users prefer to travel through a landscape which has clearly marked trails and is not cluttered with unsafe, unauthorized trails created by users going cross country.

Motorized recreation would not be allowed; this prohibition is in accordance with the vision statement, intent of the acquisition, the Sierra RMP, and other plans covering BLM-administered lands along the South Fork American River. Motorized recreation is not viable in the planning area due to the nature of the land. Ranch tracks (i.e., tracks created by ranching use prior to BLM's acquisition) are muddy in the winter and inevitably lead to private inholdings or adjacent private property where motorized recreation is unwelcome. Some of the tracks go near sensitive habitat in the PHP. There is high wildfire potential during the summer months in the planning area, and wildfire potential is exacerbated by motorized use.

Additionally, the relatively small planning area contains rare soils and associated plants which are easily damaged by motorized use. The proposed management plan recommends the planning area for ACEC designation; motorized use could damage the important and relevant values.

Target shooting would not be allowed because the planning area is relatively small with numerous adjacent residences. California shooting requirements (i.e., distance from occupied dwellings, etc.) would be difficult to comply with in the planning area. There are no suitable natural backstops in the planning area that could appropriately accommodate the target shooting with firearms. It would be easy for a misinformed shooter to accidently fire toward residences on adjacent private land, threatening lives and property. The noise nuisance associated with shooting would disrupt low-impact recreation like hunting and hiking as well as private residences.

Under alternative 1, overnight camping and campfires would not be allowed. Formal campground facilities would not be built. Camping and campfire opportunities are available elsewhere on public lands along the South Fork American River managed by the BLM, around Folsom Lake managed by California State Parks, and by businesses in the Coloma Valley. Due to the planning area's proximity to residences on adjacent private property, overnight campers could not expect much privacy, and this activity is not consistent with the vision statement. There are also public concerns about an overnight camper inadvertently igniting a wildfire. The impact to those who enjoy camping is considered long-term and negative but generally minor in terms of intensity because there are many nearby opportunities.

Organized events, both recreational (commercial, competitive, etc.) and educational, would be reviewed and permitted on a case-by-case basis. Each proposal would be reviewed by the BLM under the BLM's SRUP regulations (43 CFR 2930). Applicants would require a SRUP before they could proceed with their event. This permitting process involves an environmental review and other requirements. The BLM would only allow organized events that are consistent with the vision statement, the intent of the acquisition, and would not harm ACEC values or other significant resources.

Other low-impact recreational activities that do not impact significant resources and are consistent with the vision statement and the intent of the acquisition but are not specifically discussed here would most likely be allowed activities. The BLM would follow adaptive management techniques for land uses at the planning area and likely would prohibit or restrict them if the uses begin to cause management problems.

Alternative 2: no action

Recreation under the no action alternative would be subject to the management prescription for an "extended recreation use area" under the Sierra RMP. This prescription is inconsistent with the vision statement crafted during the community-based planning meetings. The vision statement describes non-motorized, low impact, low density recreation for Kanaka Valley.

Under the no action alternative, it is unclear whether the BLM would build a parking lot that accommodates horse trailers, a school bus, and up to six cars. Without the parking lot it may be

impossible for a school bus or horse trailers to access the planning area. Educational and equestrian use at Kanaka Valley would be much more difficult. Without the parking lot, the BLM may not install other trailhead features such as a vault toilet or educational kiosk. It would be more difficult for the BLM to encourage a "Pack It In, Pack It Out" ethic or other adaptive management in response to sanitation problems. These problems could significantly detract from visitor experience and recreation.

Under the no action alternative, the BLM may at some point move forward with non-motorized trail projects at Kanaka Valley. Trail construction is likely given the popularity of regional trails. It is unclear whether the proposed trails would be designed for multiple-use, including hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian use. Trails would meet many standards highlighted in the proposed management plan: location, safety, respect for private property rights, environmental protection, and so on. That being said, trails may develop more haphazardly without proper infrastructure and informational signage provided by the BLM in response to public demand. Without the management vision laid out in the proposed management plan, a coherent trail system is less likely to be planned and built, and unauthorized trails are more likely to develop as the public searches for access, causing various management problems. Native plants or cultural resources would be less likely to be interpreted, lessening visitors' educational experience, and would be more likely to be inadvertently damaged by wandering recreationists.

Motorized recreation would not be allowed under alternative 2. Allowing motorized recreation is not consistent with the Sierra RMP and motorized recreation would not honor the intent of the acquisition. Motorized recreation is not viable in the planning area due to the size and nature of the planning area. Kanaka Valley is relatively small; existing roads inevitably lead to private property where motorized recreation is unwelcome. Additionally, the planning area has high wildfire potential during the summer months, and wildfire potential is exacerbated by motorized use. Kanaka Valley contains rare soils and associated plants which are easily damaged. The impacts to those who enjoy motorized recreation would be minimal because the planning area is small, does not offer any challenging terrain, and does not have any potential for connecting to other designated routes. Overall, the planning area has little value for motorized recreation.

Under the no action alternative, target shooting would occur in the planning area unless closed by signage by the BLM. Since Kanaka Valley lacks suitable natural backstops and is relatively small with numerous adjacent residences, potential conflicts would be likely. For adjacent residences and non-shooting recreationists, negative long-term impacts are expected. Allowing target shooting would be of some benefit to target shooters; however, it would be of a minor benefit because there are few safe shooting situations in the planning area.

Under the no action alternative, overnight camping and campfires would occur at Kanaka Valley in accordance with BLM's rules and regulations, fire orders, and the Sierra RMP. The BLM allows 14 days of camping during any three month period. The 14-day limit may be reached through continuous camping or by separate visits (*FR* 48[208]: 49555). Formal campground facilities could eventually be built. The close proximity of residences on adjacent private property to the planning area does not offer remote or wilderness camping opportunities. Still, there would be some long-term benefit for campers who seek

relatively low elevation lands in the western Sierra Nevada. With overnight camping and associated campfires, potential for wildfire ignition would increase under the no action alternative.

Alternative 3

Recreation management under alternative 3 would largely be similar to the proposed management plan with a few exceptions. Neither hunting nor equestrian use would be allowed in the planning area under alternative 3; these issues are explored in depth in the following sections. These prohibitions would have negative impacts on the particular activities, but otherwise would have minimal beneficial impacts on low-impact recreation. For instance, without equestrian recreation there would be fewer types of trail use and potentially less use overall. If there was no hunting at the planning area, there would be fewer off-trail hikers and less potential for wildlife decline or harassment; however, low levels of overnight camping would be allowed and this activity could negatively impact environmental resources.

Alternative 4

Recreation management under alternative 4 would largely be similar to the proposed management plan with a few exceptions. Hunting recreation would be more restricted in alternative 4 than in the proposed management plan; the issue is further discussed in the next section. Low levels of camping would also be allowed. In general these actions would be expected to have minimal impact on other recreational uses. For example, because there would not be any spring hunting allowed under alternative 4, recreational users during the spring bloom would not share the planning area with hunters.

Alternative 5

Management for the eastern 578 acres would be identical to the proposed management plan; however, these acres would not be designated as Kanaka Valley ACEC. Without the special designation, oak woodland, rare plants and their habitat, and soil resources would not be given special consideration during project planning, and more intensive recreation uses could be allowed. The 117 acre rare plant area would become part of the PHP ACEC and managed under the PHP Management Plan. Under the PHP Management Plan, there are no restrictions on hunting recreation although overnight camping is prohibited. Hiking and other low-impact recreation is allowed as long as the activities do not conflict with the rare plant resources.

Alternative 6

The impacts due to recreational activities under alternative 5 would be similar to those discussed in the proposed management plan for the 578 eastern acres. The 117 acres that would be included in the PHP ACEC would have use restrictions to protect the unique soils and rare plants; low-impact recreation activities that do not conflict with the protection of the rare plants and their habitat are allowed in the PHP.

Hunting Recreation

The BLM analyzed several alternatives for hunting in the planning area. Each alternative examines a different scenario for managing hunting recreation. The BLM carefully considered ideas, concerns, and opinions that were presented at community-based planning meetings. The BLM consulted with specialists to gain a complete picture of feasible options for hunting recreation at Kanaka Valley. The alternatives range from no restrictions (alternative 2) to prohibition (alternative 3). Alternative 1 and alternative 4 are modified hunting recreation alternatives that have been crafted by the BLM to reflect strategies seriously considered during planning meetings. These alternatives are not meant to be replications of community-based planning meeting ideas but rather to reasonably reflect the levels of hunting activity that the BLM is reviewing in the environmental analysis.

The planning area is located within an hour's drive of the growing Sacramento metropolitan area, and the regional demand for outdoor recreation is increasing. By policy, the BLM's public lands are typically open to hunting. The planning area has good habitat for common game species, and is very near homes and a public road. Safety concerns expressed during the community-based planning meetings led the BLM to consider modified hunting options.

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan – hunting with zones and a lottery spring turkey hunt

Alternative 1 considers safety and the quality of the hunting experience at Kanaka Valley. The proposed modified hunting solution would allow spring and fall hunting and several methods of take while simultaneously building in safety for other recreationists and neighboring residents. The proposed action seeks to balance safety with a good hunting experience. It is also consistent with the nearby high use area, Cronan Ranch, which is also managed by the BLM. Means of take in the planning area would be limited to archery, falconry, air gun, and shotgun. All other means of take (including cross-bows, pistols, and rifles) would be prohibited. Game would be limited to deer, turkey in the fall season, deer during the summer archery-only season, and quail and mourning dove in season. Falconry seasons and game species would follow CDFG regulations. The BLM would work with interested partners to have a lottery spring turkey hunt that would allow hunters selected through a lottery to hunt Kanaka Valley during specific days.

The limited spring hunt would have both a positive and negative impact on hunting recreation in the planning area. The spring turkey hunt would be a closely regulated event with only lottery-selected individuals allowed to hunt on particular days. If a participant is randomly selected through a lottery, there would be a positive effect on the quality of the experience because fewer hunters would be on the ground at a time thus improving their hunt. If a participant is not selected in the lottery for the spring turkey hunt, then their experience would be negatively impacted by the proposed management plan because that hunter could not participate. The overall days of hunting at Kanaka Valley in the spring would be relatively few. The limited spring turkey hunt would provide a quality experience for those selected to participate through a lottery while simultaneously providing some days without hunting during peak wildflower season when hiking and trail-based recreation is expected to be high. A spring turkey hunt program would positively impact these other recreationists in the planning area because there would be fewer conflicts between hunters and other recreationists. High anticipated use during

spring wildflower bloom was a concern repeatedly brought up during the planning meetings. A full and comprehensive plan with details such as days of hunts, the lottery process, and the number of participants would be developed with a BLM partner and would go through the NEPA process.

For safety, Kanaka Valley would be divided into two zones. In the safety "No Hunting" zone, hunting would not be allowed, even during the lottery spring turkey hunt. The zone boundary would follow natural drainages and other topographic features and would be signed. The "No Hunting" zone would include the public land between the indicated natural barriers and the property edge to the east (maps, appendix 3). The "Hunting" zone would include land west of the natural barriers. All hunting in the planning area would be restricted to this zone. The safety zone would increase the privacy of residences adjacent to the Kanaka Valley Road and improve their safety with a defined buffer of "No Hunting". In all cases, the minimum distance from the eastern edge of the safety zone to houses well exceeds State requirements. Within the "Hunting" zone, hunters would have more methods of take available to improve their experience than they would in alternative 4. Hunters would also have consistently better visibility, and safety concerns would be reduced. The "Hunting" zone is composed of 530 acres and a full spectrum of habitat types: grassland, oak woodland, chaparral, and riparian (appendix 5). The structure of the area provides sheltering and feeding ground for game species. Less land at Kanaka Valley would be available for hunting recreation, but the quality of the hunt would be desirable because of the good habitat and range of hunting options. The no hunting zone would buffer homes and Kanaka Valley Road, and informational signs at the trailhead would inform recreationists of all permissible uses within the planning area.

The BLM is proposing to limit the seasons of hunting to common game species so recreationists at Kanaka Valley can have an awareness of when it is, and when it is not, hunting season. Defined hunting seasons would improve safety for users on the ground. Members of the public recreating at the planning area would be able to take appropriate precautions in attire, location of activities, and timing of recreation during hunting season. There was strong support expressed during community-based planning meetings for this restriction because it would provide hunting recreation while increasing public safety.

Under the proposed alternative use of slugs in shotguns would be allowed. Slugs are considered to be the best means of take for deer with a shotgun, because they have a reasonable ethical kill distance. Residents along Kanaka Valley Road are buffered by a no hunting zone to mitigate safety concerns associated with the use of slugs for hunting.

Use of air guns would be allowed under the proposed management plan. Air guns are a legal means of take for some species in California, including turkey and quail, and are gaining popularity. When air guns are used, the pellet rapidly loses energy after leaving the muzzle and requires hunters to be close to their target to be effective. Air guns are also relatively quiet. Generally, the quietness is considered to be a benefit to members of the public, but the relative lack of sound of this type of hunting could also startle unsuspecting hikers or other recreationists unaware of hunting recreation.

Rifles would be prohibited as a means of take under the proposed management plan. Rifles have a long effective take distance, high velocity, and high energy. These traits create an effective long-range firearm widely used for hunting deer and other large game. Due to the relatively small size of the planning area, close proximity of neighborhood dwellings (maps, appendix 2), and many interested recreationists, there were extensive safety concerns discussed during community-based planning meetings. Not allowing the use of rifles in the planning area would mitigate these concerns.

Under alternative 1, there would be some negative impacts on hunting recreation in the planning area because of the hunting zones and limited species available to hunters. However, these effects would be minimized because the selected hunting area and seasons would provide for many of the recreational opportunities discussed during the community-based planning meetings. Game species were selected as a result of sustained interest expressed during the community-based planning meetings and consistency with other BLM plans; deer, turkey, quail, and dove are traditional game in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

Alternative 2: No hunting restrictions

Under alternative 2, the BLM would manage hunting recreation in accordance with the Sierra RMP. Hunting would be allowed following the CDFG rules and regulations.

Hunting would be allowed without any BLM management modification to accommodate safety concerns or other uses in the planning area. This is not the proposed alternative because the BLM and members of the public at the community-based public meetings have concerns about the safety of multiple-use recreation and unrestricted hunting. Because there is limited visibility in areas and some firearms have an average range as large as the entire parcel, the BLM believes it is reasonable to limit means of take to methods that can safely be employed in the planning area. Safety for recreationists in the planning area was a principle concern raised during the community-based planning meetings.

Alternative 2 would have increased opportunities for hunters. Means of take and species would not be limited under this alternative; however, there are safety concerns and potential negative impacts on other users due to possible accidents in light of visibility, topography, and parcel size of the planning area. Additionally, with unrestricted hunting, game would be diminished by increased hunting presence and would result in a lower quality hunt.

Alternative 3: No hunting

Alternative 3 would not allow any hunting in the planning area. The restriction would extend to falconry and archery as well as hunting with shotguns, air guns, rifles, and muzzle loaders.

Alternative 3 is not the proposed alternative because it would completely eliminate hunting in Kanaka Valley. Alternative 3 would deny hunters the opportunity to recreate and would have a moderate long-term negative impact on hunting recreation. Public lands managed by the BLM are open to hunting recreation unless action is taken. The BLM and some planning participants consider hunting to be a compatible recreational activity with hiking and other trail uses. Harmonious multiple-use recreation has been successfully achieved on lands managed by the Mother Lode Field Office and elsewhere. If

allowed, hunting would result in the reduction of some wildlife species from the planning area; however, the species in question are common, and the CDFG carefully manages total number of game species taken. The positive impacts of this alternative to wildlife would be long-term, but minimal because there would be no hunters using the planning area and thus the common species would not be taken or scared away. This alternative would have a positive impact on safety because no hunting would take place in the planning area, and the potential for hunting-related accidents would be eliminated; however, hunting recreation has been successfully and safely managed in many multiple-use areas.

Alternative 4: Modified hunting with archery and shotgun (no slugs)

In alternative 4, hunting methods of take would be allowed only by archery, falconry, and shotgun. Use of slugs for the shotguns would not be allowed. Air guns would not be allowed. Game would be restricted to deer and turkey in the fall season, deer during summer archery-only season, quail and mourning doves, and corresponding game for falconry. There would be no lottery hunt for spring turkey; there would be no safety zones.

Alternative 4 is not the proposed action because it would provide less safety and fewer hunting opportunities than the proposed management plan. Under alternative 4 the use of slugs would not be allowed. Slugs have a higher mass and can travel farther than shot. Prohibiting slugs may be difficult to enforce and would eliminate a means of take for deer. Prohibiting use of slugs would not significantly increase safety because the proposed alternative includes a “No Hunting” zone that is broad enough to mitigate safety concerns associated with the range of the slug projectile.

Under alternative 4, air guns would not be allowed. Air guns of certain calibers are legal for hunting specific species in California. They are increasing in popularity due to their quietness and effectiveness for short range hunts. Safety concerns were expressed during the community-based planning meetings about the newness and variability of air guns; alternative 4 would eliminate potential risk. There are fewer means of take, including no air guns, under alternative 4 which would reduce hunters’ options and have a negative impact on hunting recreation.

There would be no option for a lottery spring turkey hunt under alternative 4. Hunting would be limited to archery-only summer deer season and fall seasons, thus, hunting recreation would be negatively impacted. Under alternative 4, there would be one season of hunting at Kanaka Valley which would further reduce conflicts with other users and potentially improve safety.

Alternative 4 would limit the recreational opportunities for hunters at Kanaka Valley; however, an overall greater area would be available for hunting. Alternative 4 would not have a “No Hunting” zone and “Hunting” zone. As compared to alternative 1, there would be a larger area under alternative 4 which would provide more area for hunting at Kanaka Valley. This is not the BLM’s proposed management plan because residences and the public road are difficult to see in many places, and it would increase the possibility for unsafe situations and would have a negative impact on safety.

Alternative 5

Under alternative 5, hunting would be identical to the proposed management plan for the eastern 578 acres. Hunting, as outlined in the proposed management plan, is consistent with the intent of the acquisition, the vision statement, and the size of the planning area. The proposed management plan would include oak woodland among the ACEC values, and this would likely result in better habitat for wildlife, and thus better hunting, than management under alternative 5 because oak woodland would be restored and protected. Alternative 5 would have minimal, long-term negative impacts on hunting recreation because of the habitat effects. Under alternative 5, the 117 acres rare plant area would be included in the PHP ACEC and managed under the PHP Management Plan which allows hunting recreation according to CDFG rules and regulations. Designating the area as PHP ACEC would increase hunting recreation opportunities; however, the area's vegetation is chaparral and is not considered desirable hunting conditions.

Alternative 6

Under alternative 6, hunting following CDFG regulations would be allowed on the 117 acres that would become part of the PHP ACEC. The chaparral habitat type over these 117 acres is not ideal for game hunting because is difficult for both wildlife and humans to move through. It would be unlikely that designation of this area as a part of the PHP ACEC would dramatically increase the number of hunters using the area. The 117 acres of chaparral are located in the western portion of the Kanaka Valley, mostly surrounded by adjacent natural lands and away from the northeastern portion of the Kanaka Valley, where many of the houses adjacent to BLM lands are located. Because of its location in relation to the Kanaka Valley, potential safety concerns by the neighbors regarding hunting would be adequately addressed by the CDFG regulations. Hunting in this area would be allowed. Under this alternative, hunting for the 578 acres that would be designated as Kanaka Valley ACEC would be managed as outlined in the proposed management plan.

Facilities: Equestrian Use and Parking Lot

An aspect of this issue is whether the BLM should allow equestrian use in the planning area. Under alternative 1 (the proposed management plan), the BLM would allow equestrian use on designated trails (to be planned and built at a later time). The BLM would take the additional step of building a parking lot that would accommodate two horse trailers. The parking lot is significant because without it, public parking for equestrian access to the planning area would be difficult due to a lack of adequate parking unless riders are adjacent landowners or have permission to cross private lands. Of note, the issue of equestrian use was not controversial during the planning process. The participants in the process favored horse trailer parking spots to be incorporated into the proposed parking lot design.

FIGURE 7: WATCHING WILDLIFE AT KANAKA VALLEY

However, equestrian use is not without its drawbacks (i.e., wear and tear on Kanaka Valley Road, potential weed spread, etc.) and warrants further consideration. Therefore, in addition to the no action alternative (alternative 2), the BLM has developed an additional alternative to examine this issue, alternative 3, where no equestrian use would be allowed in the planning area.

Alternative 1: proposed management plan

Under alternative 1, which provides for horse trailer parking, Kanaka Valley Road would experience more wear and tear, and would possibility require additional upkeep. Costs to the County are expected to be minimal. The BLM would construct a parking lot with two horse trailer spaces; this size would meet the demand. Local residents could experience some additional traffic congestion as horse trailers pull in and pull out. Alternative 1 does offer a turnaround for horse trailers via the parking lot, which is beneficial to motorist safety.

This alternative also restricts equestrian use to designated trails in the planning area. Weed spread and erosion are still possible and could be serious problems, but they would likely be confined to the trail corridor where they could be quickly identified and controlled. Trails would be planned and built to avoid impacts to vegetation, soils, and cultural resources. The problem of unauthorized trails developing would also be minimized under the proposed management plan because riding would only be allowed on authorized trails. Consistent with the community-based planning process, alternative 1 would allow for equestrian use while providing environmental protection and public safety.

Trails for riding in the planning area would be of a limited scope, probably around two miles. The moderate quality of trails contrasts with the dozens of miles of connected trail in the South Fork American River watershed. There is not expected to be a high demand at Kanaka Valley.

Alternative 2: no action

Under alternative 2, the BLM would allow equestrian use in the planning area, but it is uncertain whether the parking lot with horse trailer spaces would be built. Equestrian use would be allowed under the no action but would be extremely difficult due to the lack of parking facilities. This alternative would essentially limit equestrian use to adjacent landowners or other riders who could stage on private lands. Those who could find access could ride throughout the planning area (use would not be restricted to trails) with negative impacts to vegetative, rare soils, and perhaps cultural resources. The magnitude of these impacts would depend on the amount and location of use but would probably be minimal and long-term. If equestrians rode through rare plant habitat or trampled the federally listed rare plants, the negative impacts would be much more severe. Weed spread as a result of horse dung is possible. Weed spread is very undesirable from a management perspective, because the planning area contains rare plant populations and their habitat.

Alternative 3: Equestrian use prohibited at Kanaka Valley

Alternative 3 would prohibit equestrian use all together and would be the most beneficial for vegetative, soil, and cultural resources. The no action alternative and alternative 3 would have a beneficial impact

on Kanaka Valley Road, the primary access to the planning area, and the local residents who use this road. The road was not designed to handle heavy traffic flows. Though the planning area could provide some space for riding, both the no action alternative and alternative 3 would have negative long-term effects on equestrian use. Alternative 3 would have the greatest impact because it would directly prohibit equestrian use and not provide for equestrian trailer parking.

Alternative 4

Under alternative 4, equestrian use on trails would be allowed; the analysis is identical to that of the proposed management plan.

Alternative 5

Under alternative 5, equestrian use and parking facilities would be identical to those discussed under the proposed management plan. The eastern 578 acres would be managed identically to the proposed management plan, except that the area would not be designated as an ACEC. The ACEC designation would not impact the parking lot as designed; however, trail construction might be more likely to negatively impact oak woodlands or the special soil resources under alternative 5. Because an unsustainable trail would be contrary to BMPs, the intent of the acquisition, and the vision statement, significant effects are unlikely. The 117 acre rare plant area would be designated as the PHP ACEC and managed under the PHP Management Plan. The PHP Management Plan allows equestrian use on existing trails and would approve new trails if they do not adversely affect the PHP ACEC's important and relevant values.

Alternative 6

Under this alternative, impacts of equestrian use and the construction of a parking lot that would accommodate for equestrian use would be similar to impacts discussed under the proposed management plan for the eastern 578 acres. Equestrian use would be allowed on the 117 acres that would become part of the PHP ACEC, as long as adverse impacts to ACEC values are avoided. Equestrian use and the construction of a parking lot that would accommodate equestrian trailers would take place on portions of the planning area that would be designated as Kanaka Valley ACEC. Impacts of equestrian use and parking lot on the Kanaka Valley ACEC are discussed in alternative 1.

Facilities: Formal Campground Facilities

This issue is whether the BLM should plan and build campground facilities within the planning area. Aside from alternative 1 (the proposed management plan) which would prohibit campground facilities and alternative 2 (no action) which leaves the door wide open for any size campground development, the BLM has developed two other alternatives to examine this issue: alternatives 3 and 4.

Alternative 1: proposed management plan

Alternative 1, the proposed management plan, remains the scenario that is the most consistent with the vision statement and the intent of the acquisition. Alternative 1 would prohibit camping and campground facilities in the planning area. It would be most beneficial to Kanaka Valley's environmental

and visual resources. It does have long-term negative impacts to campers; these impacts are offset to some extent by the availability of camping on public lands in the South Fork American River watershed. California State Parks, for instance, operates large formal campground facilities at Rattlesnake Bar on Folsom Lake. Primitive camping is also available by permit on BLM-administered lands along the South Fork American River; there are also private campgrounds in the area.

Alternative 2: no action

Alternative 2 is perhaps most beneficial to those who prefer the standard formal campground experience. Alternative 2 leaves the door open to a drive-in campground facility with toilets, picnic benches, fire rings, maintained tent sites, vehicle parking slots in close proximity, etc. Camp spaces would likely be available on a "first come, first serve" basis with a nominal nightly fee. Even if the BLM decided to do this in the future, it is unlikely that more than one campground containing more than half a dozen individual camping spaces would be built due to the BLM's current limited capacity to maintain recreational facilities. In fact it is unlikely that the BLM would even consider a campground unless strong public interest emerges. Alternative 2 would likely be inconsistent with the vision for recreation in the plan (low impact, low density), and the intent of the acquisition. Given the small size of the planning area and close proximity to residences, campers could not expect much privacy. The campground facility would be planned and built in accordance with all applicable environmental laws, regulations, and policies, but it would be expected to have negative long-term impacts on environmental resources, including soils, vegetation, and wildlife. The severity of the impacts is unclear. Local residences would experience increased noise and vehicle traffic. A larger campground scenario could change the visual resources. Campfires could be less dangerous because there would be appropriately developed campgrounds.

Alternative 3

Under alternative 3, camping would be allowed in zones designated by the BLM. The zones would offer walk-in, primitive camping with fire rings. Camping would be by SRUP only. Management under alternative 3 would likely cause less disturbance to environmental and visual resources. The possibility of having a campfire in fire rings provided by the BLM would make the experience more enjoyable for most campers. However, participants in the planning process, including local residents, are strongly against the idea of allowing campfires at Kanaka Valley, even if they are in a controlled setting, as proposed under alternative 3.

Alternative 4

Under alternative 4 camping would be by SRUP only. No zones would be defined, and no campfire rings would be provided. Campfires would be prohibited. Alternative 4 would allow for camping that is less controlled than under alternatives 3. Camping would be allowed anywhere in the planning area with a SRUP. Campfires would not be allowed. This could be difficult to monitor even if the campers are required to obtain a SRUP in advance.

Alternative 5

Under alternative 5, camping would not be allowed; management and environmental impacts to the resources are identical to the proposed management plan for the eastern 578 acres. For the 117 acre rare plant area, overnight camping would be prohibited because the activity is not allowed under the PHP ACEC and under the PHP Management Plan.

Alternative 6

Impacts analyzed under alternative 6 are identical to those discussed in the proposed management plan; camping would not be allowed. Under alternative 6, camping on the 117 acres that would become part of the PHP ACEC would not be allowed according to the PHP Management Plan.

Land Use Authorizations and Realty

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

Under this alternative, requests for a land use authorizations including right-of-ways (such as for access roads, power lines, or telephone lines) affecting the planning area would be considered on a case-by-case basis. Each land use authorization application would be reviewed and authorized by the BLM under the BLM's regulations (43 CFR 2800). The authorization process would involve an environmental review and other requirements.

The BLM would only grant land use authorizations consistent with the Kanaka Valley vision statement, intent of the acquisition, and the protection of significant resources. Land use authorizations such as right-of-ways, leases, and R&PP leases would not be granted if they damage ACEC values or other significant environmental resources, and they would also be denied if they would adversely impact rare plant populations or fragment their habitat. The proposed management plan is expected to have a long-term beneficial impact on ACEC values, special status plants, rare soils, and other significant resources in the planning area. The socioeconomic impacts would be potentially negative, but a large demand for land use authorizations is not expected because of the planning area's location and history. The proposed management plan would not necessarily preclude new right-of-ways.

Under the proposed management plan, the planning area would be retained in federal ownership. It is unclear what the fate of the planning area would be if it were managed privately or by another government agency; however, it is likely that some building projects would be contemplated because development was considered in the past. Additionally, the federally listed rare plants would not be protected if the land were in private or non-federal government ownership. Retention of the public lands in federal ownership would have a long-term beneficial impact on significant resources including rare plants and their habitat, blue and valley oak woodlands, cultural resources, and recreation values because the resources would continue to be managed for multiple-use and protected by federal law and policy. Retention of public lands would also honor the intent of the acquisition and the vision statement. Resources would be managed by applicable law and policy, and all future actions would be subject to full NEPA analysis.

Alternative 2: no action

Under alternative 2, requests for right-of-way grants and other land use authorizations affecting the planning area would be considered on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the Sierra RMP and all applicable laws, regulations, and BLM policies. Each application would be reviewed and authorized by the BLM under the appropriate authorities. The authorization process would involve an environmental review and other requirements. Significant resources would be avoided. Under the no action alternative, the BLM would be more likely to approve land use authorizations in the planning area, with perhaps some indirect impacts to significant environmental resources. In contrast, the proposed management plan highlights the vision statement and need for the BLM to carefully consider and avoid impacts to ACEC values, rare plants, or other significant resources in the planning area.

The no action alternative would have a long-term beneficial impact on applicants with more complex or invasive proposals. The socioeconomic impacts would be potentially positive, but a high demand for land use authorizations is not expected due to the planning area's location. ACEC values and other significant and sensitive resources may not get the attention recommended in the community-based planning meetings under this alternative.

Under the no action alternative, the planning area would likely be kept in federal ownership, but there would be a possibility for future lands disposal. Land disposal would have a long-term negative impact on vegetative, soil, cultural, and recreation resources because after disposal the lands would no longer be in federal ownership or open to public uses and would not be managed under the applicable federal laws and policy.

Alternative 3 and Alternative 4

The impacts to lands, right-of-ways, and other land use authorizations would be identical to those discussed under the proposed management plan because primitive camping or modified hunting would not impact these uses. Under alternative 3 and alternative 4, the planning area would be retained in federal ownership; this would have long-term beneficial impacts to Kanaka Valley resources.

Alternative 5

The impacts to land use authorizations under alternative 5 would be similar to the impacts under the proposed alternative, although the impacts would be less intense because much of the planning area would not be designated as an ACEC; therefore, corresponding restrictions would not affect uses. Under alternative 5, the planning area would still be designated as a VRM class II which could limit some activities. Kanaka Valley would be retained in federal ownership. For the 117 acre rare plant area, the PHP Management Plan land use authorization restrictions would apply. The PHP ACEC prohibits right-of-ways that adversely impact rare plant populations or fragment their habitat. Other land use authorizations in the PHP ACEC would probably also be restricted if they conflict with the rare plant resources.

Alternative 6

The impacts under alternative 6 would be similar to the impacts under the proposed management plan (alternative 1) for the eastern 578 acres. Under alternative 6, land use authorization restrictions that apply to the existing PHP ACEC would also apply to the 117 acre rare plant area. The current use restrictions for the PHP ACEC prohibit right-of-ways, if those activities adversely impact the rare plant populations or fragment their habitat.

Special Recreation Use Permits

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

Requests for commercial uses (i.e., collecting natural materials for commercial purposes, commercial filming or photography, professionally guided outings), except when covered by Tribal Gathering Policy, affecting the planning area would also be considered on a case-by-case basis under alternative 1. Commercial uses may require a special recreation use permit (SRUP) or other appropriate BLM authorization. The authorization process would involve an environmental review and other requirements. The BLM would allow SRUPs and other commercial or organized uses consistent with the Kanaka Valley vision statement, the intent of the acquisition, and protection of significant resources. SRUPs would not be authorized if they negatively impact rare plants or their habitat, or damage ACEC values or other significant environmental resources. This action is expected to have a long-term beneficial impact on ACEC values, special status plants, rare soils, and other significant environmental resources in the planning area. The socioeconomic impacts could be potentially negative because some commercial uses may be restricted.

Alternative 2

Under alternative 2, requests for SRUPs affecting the planning area would be reviewed and authorized on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the Sierra RMP and all applicable laws, regulations, and BLM policies. Each application would be reviewed and authorized by the BLM under the appropriate regulations. Applicants would need a SRUP before they could proceed with their event. The authorization process would involve an environmental review and other requirements.

It is possible that the BLM would be more likely to authorize such applications under the no action alternative. There would be fewer restrictions under alternative 2 than under the proposed management plan which promotes the vision statement, ACEC values, rare plants, and other significant resources. The no action alternative would have a long-term beneficial impact on applicants with more complex or invasive proposals, although significant resources may not get the attention recommended in the community-based planning meetings.

Alternative 3 and Alternative 4

Under alternatives 3 and 4, limited camping would be available through a SRUP permitting process. The availability of SRUP permits for commercial uses or other SRUP applicants would be identical to those

discussed under the proposed management plan because other permittees or modified hunting would not impact the case-by-case availability of the planning area for other commercial uses.

Alternative 5

Under alternative 5 there would be long-term positive impacts for SRUP applicants. For a portion of the planning area (the eastern 578 acres) there would not be ACEC designation; projects negatively affecting blue and valley oak woodlands and the special soils resources would be more likely to be approved. As in alternative 1, management of SRUP activities under alternative 5 for the eastern 578 acres would follow the vision statement, intent of the acquisition, and actions in the proposed management plan. For the 117 acres of the rare plant habitat that would be designated as PHP ACEC and managed under the PHP Management Plan, the PHP ACEC regulations state that commercial uses are allowed through SRUPs.

Alternative 6

The eastern 578 acres would be designated as Kanaka Valley ACEC under alternative 6, impacts would be identical to those described in the proposed management plan; applications would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Under alternative 6, use restrictions that apply to the existing PHP ACEC would also apply to the 117 acres that would become part of this ACEC. The current use restrictions for the PHP ACEC allow for commercial uses through a SRUP as long as those activities do not conflict with ACEC values.

Firewood permits

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

Firewood permits would be considered on a case-by-case basis. These types of BLM permits normally cause temporary and negligible impacts. Due to the nature of the planning area, the BLM does not anticipate many applications. The BLM would not issue permits if cutting the firewood causes any negative impacts to ACEC values, special status plants, rare soils, or other significant resources. Permits would be consistent with the vision statement and the intent of the acquisition.

FIGURE 8: WOODPECKER GRANARY IN BLUE OAK TREE

Alternative 2: no action

Firewood permits would be considered on a case-by-case basis, similar to management under proposed management plan. However, the BLM would be less likely to deny applications, or approve them with stipulations, because there would be no conflicts with ACEC values and fewer conflicts with recreation or other significant resources.

Alternative 3 and Alternative 4

The impacts to firewood permits would be identical to those discussed under the proposed management plan because primitive camping or hunting would not impact the case-by-case evaluation of firewood permits.

Alternative 5

Under alternative 5 firewood permits would be considered on a case-by-case basis, similar to the proposed management plan, for the eastern 578 acres. The BLM would probably be less likely to deny applications, or approve them with stipulations, because this portion of the BLM would not be an ACEC. Under the PHP Management Plan, vegetation is typically removed to reduce wildfire hazard or restore plant communities. Applications for firewood permits are not likely given the vegetation type; however, they would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Alternative 6

Under alternative 6, removal of vegetation (including wood) on the 117 acres that would become part of the PHP ACEC would be conducted primarily to reduce fuel hazard or to restore plant communities. Applications for firewood permits would be considered on a case-by-case basis. Under this alternative, firewood permits on the 578 acres that would be designated as Kanaka Valley ACEC would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Grazing

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

Under this alternative, grazing would only be allowed in a way that would have beneficial impacts on fuels reduction or weed control. The BLM would not make the planning area available for grazing pursuant to the BLM's grazing regulations (43 CFR 4100). This action is expected to have long-term beneficial effects on fuels management and weed control. The impacts to grazing as an economic pursuit would be negative over the long-term. However, the demand for grazing leases on BLM-administered land in El Dorado County has not been high, and the socioeconomic impacts are expected to be minimal. The BLM allows grazing on public lands elsewhere in the South Fork American River watershed. Kanaka Valley appears to have a history of intermittent grazing use dating back to at least the early twentieth century, but the proposed management plan would not break a long-standing family ranching tradition or create an economic hardship for the local economy.

Alternative 2: no action

Under the no action alternative, the planning area could be made available for a grazing lease under the BLM's grazing regulations; however, it is highly unlikely because it is not consistent with the intent of the acquisition or the Sierra RMP. Grazing leases could have a beneficial impact on fuels reduction but would likely have negative impacts on management of weeds and native vegetative resources. The impacts to grazing as an economic pursuit would be positive and long-term, but the economic impacts

are not expected to be more than minimal given the small amount of suitable land and that grazing is no longer important to the local economy.

Alternative 3 and Alternative 4

Grazing management would be identical to that discussed under the proposed management plan because primitive camping or modified hunting would not change the resource consideration of grazing leases.

Alternative 5

Under alternative 5, grazing would be managed in a way that is consistent with the intent of the acquisition, the vision statement, and the protection of significant resources for the eastern 578 acres. This portion of the planning lease would not be designated as an ACEC, but would be managed under the proposed management plan. A grazing program that had negative impacts on rare soils and oak woodlands would be more likely to occur under alternative 5 than alternative 1, because these values would not be ACEC values; however, the grazing program would still be designed to benefit fuels management and weed control.

Alternative 6

The impacts for the eastern 578 acres under alternative 6 would be identical to the impacts under the proposed alternative. Under alternative 6, the planning area would be under two ACEC designations. The 117 acre rare plant area would become part of the PHP ACEC and managed under the PHP Management Plan. Currently, there are not grazing leases at the existing PHP ACEC but grazing management would be considered for purposes of plant community restoration.

Mining Claims, Mineral Development, and Recreational Gold Seeking

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

By policy, lands acquired by the BLM are not open to mining claim use pursuant to the BLM's mining regulations (43 CFR 3809). Under the proposed management plan, Kanaka Valley lands would not be opened to mineral entry because that would not be consistent with the intent of the acquisition or BLM policy. For recreational gold seeking, only hands and pans would be allowed. A hands-and-pans-only rule would be consistent with the vision statement and the intent of the acquisition. Since gold mining with hand tools (either conducted pursuant to 43 CFR 3809 or recreationally with digging tools) usually involves ground disturbance, the proposed hands-and-pans rule is expected to have long-term beneficial impacts on soils, water, and vegetation because activities such as soil disturbance would be of a lower intensity. Cultural resources would also benefit from lower levels of soil disturbance.

The planning area does not appear to contain economically viable gold deposits capable of sustaining a for-profit operation, and therefore, impacts on the gold mining industry are not expected. Kanaka Valley does not afford a particularly good recreational gold seeking venue, although there is probably some potential. A hands-and-pans rule would have negative but minimal long-term impacts on recreational gold seeking, which is still a popular pursuit in El Dorado County and elsewhere in California.

Alternative 2: no action

Under the no action alternative, the planning area could be opened to mining claim use pursuant to the BLM's regulations. However, opening the planning area to mineral entry is highly unlikely because it is inconsistent with the intent of the acquisition and BLM policy which does not open acquisitions to mineral entry. Kanaka Valley does not seem to have economically viable deposits of gold capable of sustaining a commercial operation, and thus impacts to the gold mining industry are not expected. Recreational gold seeking involving the use of hands and pans as well as digging tools, metal detectors, and the like would be allowed. Since gold mining and recreational gold seeking often involve ground disturbance, recreational gold mining could have long-term negative impacts on soils, water, vegetation, and cultural resources. Alternative 2 would have long-term beneficial impacts on recreational gold mining. These impacts are considered minimal since the planning area does not appear to offer good recreational mining opportunities due to a lack of flowing water and low geologic potential; the planning area was likely "cleaned out" during the Gold Rush.

Alternative 3 and Alternative 4

Minerals management would be identical to the discussion under the proposed management plan. Low density primitive camping or hunting as presented in alternatives 3 and 4 would not change resource considerations.

Alternative 5

Under alternative 5, the planning area would not be opened to mineral development. Gold seeking would be allowed only with hands and pans for the eastern 578 acres. This portion of the planning area would not be designated as an ACEC and therefore impacts from gold seeking on the rare Rescue soils or other ACEC values would be less likely to be managed. The 117 acre rare plant area would be designated as part of the PHP ACEC; the PHP Management Plan does not have restrictions on mining; however, gold seeking must comply with applicable law and policy, including the Endangered Species Act.

Alternative 6

Under alternative 6, the impacts to the eastern 578 acres would be similar to the impacts to that area under the proposed management plan; only hands and pans would be allowed for gold seeking in Kanaka Valley. Under alternative 6, for the 117 acres that would become part of the PHP ACEC, soil disturbance using hand tools could take place for recreational mining activities; however, all mining activities must comply with applicable law and policy, including the Endangered Species Act.

ACEC Designation

Designation of an area of critical environmental concern (ACEC) is an important BLM responsibility. ACEC designation is one of the only special designations for public lands that BLM can complete internally without an act of Congress or executive order. The BLM's authority to designate an ACEC derives from FLPMA. Under FLPMA, the BLM can use the ACEC designation to highlight areas of public lands that have "relevant and important" values. These values can range from exceptional biological resources to

geologic resources, or cultural heritage resources. The BLM is required to protect ACEC values; therefore, ACECs receive special management consideration not necessarily given to public lands without this special designation. The ACEC designation process requires the BLM to take proactive steps, including preparing or amending a Resource Management Plan in accordance with FLPMA, BLM's planning regulations (43 CFR 1600), and other policies. The BLM acquired Kanaka Valley from donors and partners with the understanding that this parcel had relevant and important values, values that were worthy of ACEC designation or other conservation measures. Adjacent and nearby BLM-administered lands have virtually the same values (rare plants and their habitat, and rare Rescue series soils). These adjacent lands were designated as the PHP ACEC in 2008 under the Sierra RMP.

Alternative 1: the proposed management plan

Under alternative 1, the BLM would take proactive steps, including amending the Sierra RMP, to designate the planning area as a standalone ACEC called the Kanaka Valley ACEC. The relevant and important values would be special status plants and their habitat, and rare Rescue series soils, the same as the PHP ACEC, but would also include blue oak and valley oak woodland. Both the plant communities of the valley oak and blue oak woodland as well as their namesake species are endemic to California and require conservation due to their widespread decline.

Alternative 1 protects Kanaka Valley's outstanding plant, ecosystem, and soil resources. This alternative is consistent with the vision statement and has generated community support. Through consensus at the community-based planning meetings, participants recommended that the BLM create a standalone ACEC designation for the planning area. Alternative 1 honors the intent of the land donors. The potential negative impacts include limitations that the designation and associated use restrictions might have on recreational and other uses. The BLM would not allow motorized or other high impact recreation. Equestrian and mountain bike users would only be allowed on designated trails. The BLM would be less likely to approve commercial or other organized uses that threaten the ACEC values or other significant resources. Permit approval may come with more conservation measures to protect these values and resources.

Alternative 2: no action

Under alternative 2, the no action alternative, the BLM would not adopt the proposed management plan and no portion of the planning area would be designated an ACEC. The no action alterative would have a negative effect on the BLM's relationship with its partners. The Kanaka Valley parcel was acquired with the understanding that the BLM would protect its exceptional plant and soil resources through an ACEC designation or some other way. Under alternative 2, the BLM would not honor this agreement. Additionally, the planning area's exceptional values may suffer. All applicable environmental laws, regulations, and policies as well as the provisions of the Sierra RMP would still apply. Proposed projects in the planning area would be subject to environmental review and other requirements which requires compliance with the Endangered Species Act as well as the BLM's special status species policies. Without a formal ACEC designation, the relevant and important values would not be highlighted and they may not receive the full management attention they deserve. The BLM would be less likely to look

at the parcel's exceptional resources comprehensively when uses of the land are approved. None of the use restrictions would apply. The BLM would be more likely to approve proposed uses, including right-of-ways, commercial uses, etc., that have some impacts on environmental resources.

Alternative 3 and Alternative 4

The impacts would be identical to the impacts of proposed management plan (alternative 1) because ACEC designation would not impact primitive camping or modified hunting.

Alternative 5

Under alternative 5, only those portions of the planning area that contain habitat virtually identical to that in the PHP ACEC would be designated as an ACEC. Under this alternative, the BLM would amend the Sierra RMP to expand the PHP ACEC to include these portions of the planning area which total 117 acres. This area would be managed in accordance with the PHP Management Plan and the appropriate ACEC use restrictions in the Sierra RMP. The rest of the planning area would not be designated an ACEC; however, the 578 acres would be subject to the Kanaka Valley Management Plan.

Alternative 5 would incorporate an 117 acre portion of the planning area into the existing PHP ACEC. The small ACEC designation would have long-term benefits to special status plants and rare soils. The BLM would honor its agreement with its partners. Under this alternative there may be more consistent management of PHP values. There is a lesser chance that the portions of the planning area with rare plant habitat would not receive appropriate management; however, the blue oak and valley oak woodlands and rare gabbro soils not designated as an ACEC would not benefit from this level of management attention. Compared to alternative 1, the BLM may be more likely to authorize right-of-ways or other uses for the undesignated area that might otherwise be rejected or carry additional stipulations to protect blue and valley oak woodland, rare soils, rare plants and their habitat, and other significant resources. Degradation of the blue and valley oak woodlands, rare soils, and other resources is possible. Additionally, this scenario would not be consistent with the recommendation from the participants in the community-based planning process.

Alternative 6

Under alternative 6, the portions of the planning area that contain rare plant habitat within the boundaries of a federally designated area for the recovery of the gabbro soil rare plants, would become part of the PHP ACEC (appendix 4). Under alternative 6, the BLM would amend the Sierra RMP to expand the PHP ACEC to include this portion of the planning area which totals 117 acres. This area would be managed in accordance with the PHP Management Plan and the PHP ACEC use restrictions in the Sierra RMP. Including the rare plant area in the existing PHP ACEC is consistent with the mission outlined in the PHP Management Plan to protect the gabbro soil rare plants and their habitat in perpetuity, and would have long-term benefits for special status plants and rare soils. The BLM would honor the intent of the acquisition. Under this alternative, the shared PHP Management Plan would increase the consistency of management of PHP system of lands.

Under alternative 6, the rest of the planning area (578 acres) would be designated as Kanaka Valley ACEC and would be subject to the Kanaka Valley Management Plan under development in this document. The 578 acres contains unique blue oak and valley oak woodlands, rare plants and their habitat, and rare Rescue soils which would benefit from the management attention that an ACEC designation would provide. The BLM would be able to place restrictions on right-of-ways or other uses to protect blue oak and valley oak woodland and other significant resources. Degradation of the blue oak and valley oak woodlands, rare soils and their habitat, and other resources would be less likely under the ACEC designation than without the designation as in alternative 5.

Under alternative 6, important and relevant ACEC values for the two portions of the planning area overlap, but are not identical. The PHP ACEC important and relevant values do not include blue oak and valley oak woodlands; however, these communities are not known to occur in the western 117 acres. There would be no greater ACEC protection for rare plants or other PHP ACEC values under alternative 6 than under the proposed management plan (alternative 1).

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Under NEPA, the BLM must consider the full range of environmental effects of the proposed management plan and the alternatives (including the no action alternative). The full range of effects includes "cumulative effects." The NEPA regulations define cumulative effects as the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such actions (40 CFR 1508.7). This means that the BLM is required to assess the bigger picture. This analysis attempts to consider the consequences of adopting a management plan for Kanaka Valley on the surrounding area over the long run. Critical to cumulative effects analysis, therefore, is defining geographic scope; timeframe; and past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions.

Geographical scope for cumulative effects analysis is usually much larger than the project area. In some cases it has been defined as the entire watershed in which the proposed management plan would occur. For Kanaka Valley, the appropriate geographical scope is the lower South Fork American River and associated tributaries, from Salmon Falls Bridge/Road at the head of Folsom Lake to the Eldorado National Forest boundary near Placerville. This area also includes the gabbro and pyroxenite derived Rescue soils area of western El Dorado County (extending from the Salmon Falls Bridge area to Cameron Park/Highway 50 corridor). Extensive tributaries like Weber Creek are included but the focus is on the river corridor and the rare soils area; these areas have been the focus of conservation and stewardship efforts by the BLM, its partners, and others. It is reasonable to predict that this effort will continue in the future.

The timeframe is the next 25 years. This is slightly longer than the life expectancy of the BLM's 2008 Sierra RMP, the master plan that directs the BLM's management of public lands along the South Fork American River as well as tens of thousands of acres elsewhere under the BLM's jurisdiction. The Sierra RMP incorporates plans for the South Fork American River, Cronan Ranch, and PHP. Though an RMP can be subject to the amendment process at any time to keep pace with changing management conditions, the Sierra RMP will likely be entirely reconsidered in 20 to 25 years through a large-scale public process. At that time, it is expected that a new RMP or other form of overarching management plan will be approved by the BLM. In it, the BLM may decide, in consultation with the pubic and others, to continue the current management direction for the South Fork American River public lands under existing plans such as the Cronan Ranch Management Plan or change direction altogether.

FIGURE 9: LARKSPUR

The 25-year timeframe for cumulative impact analysis of the Kanaka Valley Management Plan is appropriate because it allows the BLM to predict reasonably foreseeable actions. The Sierra RMP and associated plans (the South Fork American River, Cronan Ranch, and PHP plans), indicate that the BLM and its partners intend to continue to manage public lands along the lower South Fork American River and in the rare plant area as special places with special values. These plans emphasize low-impact forms of recreation, conservation of rare plants and their habitat, and the river corridor's outstanding environmental values such as cultural resources. These plans also indicate that the BLM and its partners may look for additional opportunities to bring lands associated with the river and the rare soil formation into public ownership to be managed for conservation.

It is also important for the BLM to assess what the BLM and its partners have already done in terms of conservation in the lower South Fork American River corridor and gabbro soils area (past actions). Thousands of acres have been acquired by the BLM through efforts of donors and federal agencies like the Bureau of Reclamation. Many parcels have been brought into the public domain including Greenwood Creek/Magnolia Ranch, Cronan Ranch, and the Cameron Park unit of the PHP; Kanaka Valley is the latest acquisition.

The proposed management plan, alternative 1, would have positive cumulative effects on air, water, and soil resources as well as biological, cultural, and scenic resources in the lower South Fork American River corridor and rare soil area over the next 25 years. Under alternative 1, the BLM would continue to carefully consider and manage the special values of the river corridor and rare plants. The approach under alternative 1 is consistent with the BLM's long-term approach under the Sierra RMP and associated plans for managing other public lands along the lower South Fork American River. In particular, rare plants and their habitat, rare soils, and oak woodlands, in the planning area would be protected under a newly designated Kanaka Valley ACEC. This designation would have the same effect as the PHP ACEC designation made in 2008 under the Sierra RMP. This alternative would also have positive long-term cumulative effects on non-motorized, low impact, and low density forms of recreation such as hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and wildlife viewing. The BLM's management direction for Kanaka Valley would be consistent with other BLM-administered lands along the South Fork American River, including the PHP and Cronan Ranch, where activities like motorized recreation, target shooting, and camping are either prohibited or restricted under the Sierra RMP and associated plans.

The proposed management plan would have negative cumulative effects on hunting and overnight camping/campfires over the next 25 years. Hunting and camping have become more restrictive on BLM-administered land along the lower South Fork since the development of the South Fork American River plan, Cronan Ranch plan, and PHP Management Plan. Alternative 1, which imposes additional restrictions hunting recreation and prohibits camping/campfires, continues this trend for the lower South Fork American River area. The same can be said for motorized recreation. The proposed alternative may also have negative cumulative effects on economic development projects such as mining, grazing, and right-of-ways. Under alternative 1, the BLM would not allow mineral entry or grazing leases under BLM regulations and would be less likely to grant right-of-ways, especially those that potentially threaten ACEC values and other significant environmental resources. Right-of-ways may

be granted but may carry stipulations to protect the environment. It is reasonable to predict that, in the next 25 years, the BLM could acquire, through donation and help from partners, additional parcels along the lower South Fork American River and then proceed to manage these parcels similarly to other BLM-administered lands along this river, with negative cumulative effects to economic pursuits such as mining, grazing, and residential house construction. Offsetting these negative effects somewhat would be economic activity generated by the public visiting these lands for recreation and, in the process, patronizing local businesses (i.e., gas stations, restaurants, whitewater guides, etc.). Land values may also increase as a result of the "green belt" created by public lands along the river corridor.

The no action alternative (alternative 2) and other alternatives (3-5) would have different cumulative effects than the proposed management plan over the next 25 years. These alternatives would, to a small extent, slow the trend toward more restriction on public uses, such as hunting and camping. Alternative 2 also leaves the door open to the possibility that the BLM would take proactive steps toward opening Kanaka Valley to mining claim use and grazing leases. These alternatives might also reverse the trend in the lower South Fork American River watershed with respect to right-of-ways, leases, and other kinds of land use proposals. Under alternative 2, these proposals would stand a better chance of being approved by the BLM. However, the no action alternative is inconsistent with the BLM's approach for managing public lands along the South Fork American River and gabbro soils area of western El Dorado County. Alternative 6 would have similar positive cumulative effects as the proposed management plan over the next 25 years. Overall negative cumulative effects of alternative 6 on hunting and overnight camping/campfires over the next 25 years would be identical to those described on the proposed management plan alternative.

VIII. FONSI

The finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is a document that briefly describes why an action would not have a significant effect on the human environment and, why, therefore, an environmental impact statement (EIS) will not be required (40 CFR 1508.13). It is important to note that, none of the six alternatives examined in the EA for the Kanaka Valley Management Plan would result in a significant effect on the environment although a FONSI is only prepared for the proposed alternative. The FONSI is currently unsigned. It will be signed by the BLM Field Manager after the public review period is completed and any necessary changes are made to the EA.

Kanaka Valley Management Plan (CA-180-12-03)

Finding of No Significant Impact

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 by the Sierra Resource Management Plan (RMP). Thus, the proposed action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement (EIS) 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 proposed action:

1) Impacts can be both beneficial and adverse and a significant effect may exist regardless of the perceived balance of effects.

Adopting the Kanaka Valley Management Plan will result in some positive and some negative impacts. Impacts to the rare Rescue series soils and associated vegetation would be beneficial over the long term, so would effects on cultural and visual resources. Recreationists who prefer low-impact forms of recreation, including modified hunting, would also benefit.

Impacts to overnight camping/campfire use, target shooting, and other high-impact forms of recreation would be negative and permanent. Economic development projects are less likely to be approved without stipulations to protect significant environmental resources. These impacts are not expected to be significant.

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 adversely impact public health or safety. In fact, the proposed action contains provisions for wildfire prevention (i.e., no overnight camping/campfires allowed) and modification for use of hunting/firearms use that would be beneficial to the protection of lives and property.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area.

The planning area contains extraordinary characteristics, including rare Rescue series soils and associated rare plants and their habitat, which would benefit from the proposed action. The planning area's characteristics would be highlighted by the creation of a Kanaka Valley ACEC which the BLM would take proactive steps to designate.

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 CFR 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 shows that the proposed action would not involve any highly uncertain, unique, or unknown effects on the human environment. The BLM has prepared similar land use plans, using community-based planning, for other public lands in the Sierra Nevada foothills. These plans have enjoyed a high degree of public support and have been highly successful in assisting the BLM in managing these public lands. The BLM expects a similar outcome for the planning area.

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 proposed action is not precedent setting.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The proposed action is consistent with the BLM's management direction for public lands along the South Fork American River, between Folsom Lake and Chili Bar. This management direction is laid out in the Sierra RMP (including various activity-level plans like the Cronan Ranch Management Plan). The BLM's acquisition of the Kanaka Valley parcel continues the long-term effort of the BLM and its many partners to acquire lands along the South Fork American River and the rare plant area of western El Dorado County for conservation. This effort is expected to continue in the future, with a cumulatively beneficial impact on the ecological health of the South Fork American River corridor and nearby rare plant area.

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 properties listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.

9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat.

ESA-listed species (and their habitat) occur within the planning area. The proposed action is expected to have a long-term beneficial impact on these species and habitat. The proposed action calls for an ACEC designation for conservation of the rare Rescue series soils, the rare plants and their habitat. The proposed action also contains other actions that direct the BLM to carefully conserve these values. Without the proposed action, ESA-listed plants would still be protected under the ESA; however, their habitat is more likely to be degraded over time.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of environmental protection law or requirements.

There is no indication that the proposed action would result in actions that will threaten such a violation.

_____ _____

William S. Haigh Date

Field Manager,
Mother Lode Field Office
Bureau of Land Management