

Kanaka Valley Management Plan & Decision Record



Bureau of Land Management Mother Lode Field Office

5152 Hillside Circle
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762

www.blm.gov/ca/motherlode

February 2013

Mother Lode Field Office



BLM/CA/GI-2013-012+1793

Kanaka Valley Management Plan

Description of the Area

The Kanaka Valley planning area is located in western El Dorado County near the city of Rescue, California. It is a mixture of chaparral, woodland, and riparian vegetation types with two intermittent creeks running through the valley. Varied terrain ranges from flats dominated by blue oak trees to steep slopes covered by chamise and whiteleaf manzanita. Although the grasslands have sizeable populations of non-native plants (i.e., barbed goatgrass, medusahead, rush skeleton weed, yellow starthistle), native grasses and forbs are also found throughout the area. Wildlife such as deer, turkey, and songbirds are commonly sighted, and there is evidence of bear and mountain lion as well. The previous owners did not allow public use on Kanaka Valley nor was there active natural resource management.

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 in 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 supplementary 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.

Planning Process

The Kanaka Valley Management Plan was developed through a community-based planning process. In a series of 16 community-based planning meetings, recreationists, local residents, and other members of the public (over 230 in total) 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 Kanaka Valley Management Plan was developed by the BLM Mother Lode Field Office, and it draws heavily on management recommendations developed by community planning meeting attendees. The Draft Kanaka Valley Management Plan and Environmental Assessment was released for five weeks of public comment in April 2012.

Vision Statement

A vision statement is a declaration of the BLM's and community members' intent. Early in the community-based planning process, the 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.

Management Actions

Items and issues not covered in this plan will be guided by the Sierra RMP, and by appropriate policies, federal law, and BLM guidelines. If the management actions are implemented and through time monitoring shows that they are having unintended consequences, the BLM will take action necessary to correct the situation which may include further analysis under NEPA and/or BLM's land use planning process.

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

- The BLM will 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 will implement best management practices (BMPs) to manage the special status species and their habitat. Where possible, the BLM will educate the public about the rare plant species.

Vegetation: Habitat Management

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

Cultural Resources

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

Scenic Values

- Scenic values will be recommended to be classified as visual resource management (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

- Within one year of the DR signing, the BLM will complete a fuels management plan with emphasis on protecting Kanaka Valley Road and areas near residences.
- Within two years of the DR signing, the BLM will implement a fuels reduction project along Kanaka Valley road consisting of a fuel break, understory thin and, if necessary, pile burning.
- Fuel breaks on BLM land bordering residences will be a priority.
- Controlled use of goats, sheep, and similar-sized grazers will be allowed only for vegetation management.
- Campfires will not be allowed.

Access to the Planning Area, Kanaka Valley Road

- The BLM will cooperate with El Dorado County on any necessary improvements to Kanaka Valley Road.
- The BLM will 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 will work with El Dorado County to study turn-around area potential, and creating and maintaining turn-outs.

Private Property

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

General Recreation

A wide variety of recreation opportunities will be available. BLM will allow new recreational activities not addressed in this plan if they are consistent with the intent of the acquisition, vision statement for the planning area, and protection of significant resources.

- Hiking will be allowed.
- Horse and mountain bike riding on trails will be allowed.
- The BLM will explore ADA accessible trail options that do not adversely affect the environment.
- Overnight camping will 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.
- Trail signs and kiosks will include GIS coordinate information for use in emergency situations.
- Users will be encouraged to follow Leave No Trace principles and “Pack It In, Pack It Out” outdoor ethics.
- School group or other educational group use will require Special Recreation Use Permits (SRUP) or, if appropriate, Free Use Permits (FUP).
- The BLM will encourage recreationists with dogs to follow the county Leash Law (El Dorado Ord. 9.46.600).

- The BLM will allow activities if they are consistent with the intent of the acquisition, vision statement for the planning area, and protection of significant resources.

Trail Based Recreation

The BLM will:

- Construct trails.
- Provide safe, multi-use trails for non-motorized activities.
- Establish longer distance loop trails.
- Explore, where possible, connections from Kanaka Valley to other trails and public lands.
- Build trails to scenic overlooks or other “destinations” on public land where appropriate.
- Provide trail maps on kiosks, at the BLM office, or on the BLM website.
- 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).
- Avoid building trails which may lead to trespass on private property.
- Design trails to avoid user conflict.
- Develop signs to alert recreationists of multiple uses such as hunting.
- Avoid significant or potentially significant cultural resources and Native American resources when building trails and other facilities.
- Develop trails only if consistent with the intent of the acquisition, vision statement for the planning area, and protection of significant resources.

Hunting Recreation

- “Hunting” and “No Hunting” zones will be established (see map).
- Hunting will be restricted to deer and turkey during the fall season, deer during the summer archery-only season, quail, and mourning doves in season. Additionally, spring turkey hunting will be allowed through a limited hunting program, see below. Information on hunting seasons will be posted on the information kiosk in the staging area of the parking lot.
- Methods of take will be limited to the use of bow and arrows, smoothbore shotguns, muzzleloaders after fire season is declared over, and air guns of .22 caliber or less that are allowed as a method of take for game species pursuant to California Department of Fish and Game regulations.
- The BLM will partner with a local group or agency and offer lottery, limited entry spring turkey hunts on specific dates during the spring turkey hunt season. Parties of hunters will be drawn for the general hunt by the partner group or agency. The BLM will monitor the check-in and include a brief safety orientation with the hunters. Per day, approximately five parties will hunt in the hunting zone; hunters will 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 will run and other logistics would be outlined in a Kanaka Valley spring turkey hunt plan which will require a separate plan and NEPA analysis; the plan will be consistent with CDFG regulations.

Facilities

- The BLM will encourage a “Pack It In, Pack It Out” policy, but if trash becomes a problem, BLM may install a trash receptacle or undertake other adaptive management measures.
- The BLM will install a vault toilet at the Kanaka Valley parking lot.

Facilities: Parking Lot

- A parking lot has been designed that will follow BLM guidelines and will provide parking for up to six cars or trucks, including one handicap space. The parking lots will also include one bus space and two equestrian trailer spaces.

Roads and Motorized Use

- Existing motorized vehicle access via the Kanaka Valley Road to parking lots and trailheads will be maintained. However, new motorized routes will not be established due to the small size of the planning area.

Shooting Recreation

- Target shooting, plinking, and similar activities will not be allowed.

Mining Claims, Mineral Development, and Recreational Gold Seeking

- For recreational gold seeking, only hands and pans will be allowed.
- By policy, lands acquired by BLM are not open to mineral entry.

Firewood Permits

- Firewood permits will 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

- Right-of-ways, Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP) leases, and other land use authorizations will be approved only if consistent with the intent of the acquisition, vision statement for the planning area, and protection of significant resources.
- The BLM will retain the planning area in federal ownership.
- The BLM will 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 will be managed like similar, nearby public lands until site-specific guidance is crafted through NEPA analysis. All land acquisitions will be made on a willing seller, willing buyer basis.

Special Recreation Use Permits

- Special Recreation Use Permits (SRUP) will 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. SRUPs will be required for commercial gathering of natural materials (i.e., mushrooms, plant materials) except uses in accordance with the Traditional Gathering Policy.

ACEC Designation

- Kanaka Valley is recommended for designation as a standalone Area of Critical Environmental Concern (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. Designation will require an amendment to the BLM's Sierra Resource Management Plan.

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

Decision Record

February 2013

1.0 Introduction and Background

The BLM has decided to adopt a management plan for the Kanaka Valley parcel, located in western El Dorado County, CA. This management plan was developed using a community-based planning approach. This means that the participating public provided extensive input into the plan during a series of 16 public meetings held between June 2010 and July 2011. To the extent possible, the meeting participants crafted the elements of the management plan described as the proposed action and analyzed in the associated environmental assessment (EA). Based on information in the EA, the project record, and recommendations from BLM specialists and the public, the following constitutes my decision.

2.0 Decision

2.1 Alternatives Considered but not Selected

The BLM considered five alternatives that were not selected.

No action alternative

Under the no action alternative, the BLM would not adopt the management plan described in the EA. The planning area would be managed solely in accordance with the 2008 Sierra Resource Management Plan (RMP). The area's special values, including the rare gabbro soils and associated vegetation, would not receive the special management consideration that they require. The BLM would not amend the RMP to designate Kanaka Valley an area of critical environmental concern, which would highlight the rare soils, associated vegetation, and other special values. Target shooting, camping/campfires, and other high-impact non-motorized recreational uses would be allowed in accordance with BLM's policies for extended recreation management areas, stated in the RMP. Visitor parking along Kanaka Valley Road may go unregulated for years, leading to traffic conditions that are undesirable and unsafe to both the visiting public and local residents. Under the no action alternative, hunting would be allowed, without additional BLM-imposed restrictions, in accordance with the CDFG's rules and regulations.

Alternatives 3-6

Other alternatives not selected (including alternatives 3, 4, 5 and 6) examined various “tweaks” to the no action alternative. These alternatives look at the possibility of allowing some camping/campfire opportunities, hunting (with less additional BLM-imposed restrictions), restricting equestrian use, and designating a smaller ACEC. It is clear that none of these management scenarios are consistent with the vision statement developed by majority of public participants during the planning process. It is also clear that the rejected alternatives are inconsistent with the reasons behind the Kanaka Valley acquisition, which was accomplished through the efforts of various BLM partners. The no action and other rejected alternatives do not sufficiently ensure the conservation of the planning area’s significant environmental resources, nor do they provide for an adequate level of safety for adjacent residents.

2.2 Decision

Based on information in the EA, the project record, written comments, and consultation with my staff, I have decided to adopt the management plan with the following modifications from the Draft plan. This is the management plan developed using the community-based approach, with a few notable exceptions.

- The fuels management plan will be completed within one year of the DR signing; the first fuels project will be completed within two years of the DR signing.
- The BLM commits to cooperating with El Dorado County on any necessary improvements to Kanaka Valley Road.
- Under the hunting decisions, methods of take have been clarified. The intent of the draft plan was to allow the use of firearms excepting the use of rifles due to their long range and the presence of nearby houses. During the public review, commentors pointed out that some shotguns are rifled, and some air guns are more powerful than those typically used by hunters to take the turkeys, quail and mourning doves allowed by this plan, thereby posing the same potential public safety hazard as rifles. To clarify this matter, take will be limited to the use of bow and arrows, smoothbore shotguns, muzzleloaders and some types of air guns. Muzzleloaders are allowed only after fire season is declared over by the BLM. Air guns must be .22 caliber or less and allowed as a method of take for game species by California Department of Fish and Game regulations.
- Trail signs and kiosks at Kanaka Valley will include GIS coordinate information to facilitate Emergency Medical Staff (EMS) responses.

The Kanaka Valley Management Plan has been modified to reflect these changes and provide greater clarification on some issues. The following summary table shows a synthesis of management actions with modifications indicated in bold type.

Resource	Final Management Actions
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. Within one year, complete a fuels management plan. Within two years, complete first fuels project along Kanaka Valley Road.
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 (see map). Hunting will be restricted to deer and turkey during the fall season, deer during the summer archery-only season, quail, and mourning doves in season. Additionally, spring turkey hunting will be allowed through a limited hunting program. Methods of take will be limited to the use of bow and arrows, smoothbore shotguns, air guns, and to muzzleloaders after fire season is declared over. Air guns must be .22 caliber or less and allowed as a method of take for games species by California Department of Fish and Game regulations.
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.

The actions in the management plan (i.e., development of a trail system, etc.) will require full environmental review (pursuant to NEPA, etc.) and authorization by the BLM before they can be implemented with the exception of the parking lot action which can be implemented without further delay. It has been fully analyzed under the associated environmental document.

The BLM will amend the 2008 Sierra Resource Management Plan to designate the Kanaka Valley ACEC and the VRM classification.

The BLM will establish the following Kanaka Valley ACEC use restrictions as codified through supplementary rules:

Motorized use is not allowed outside of county-maintained roads or BLM-designated areas (i.e., parking lot) without first obtaining written BLM authorization (i.e., right of way). Motorized use is allowed by BLM and its contractors for administrative purposes.

Target shooting is not allowed.

Camping is not allowed.

Campfires are not allowed.

Riding horses, mountain bikes, and other non-motorized conveyances is allowed only on designated trails.

Only hands and pans may be used to recover gold or any other mineral resources.

Hunting is allowed only with the following types of firearms: bow and arrows, smoothbore shotguns, muzzleloaders and air guns of .22 caliber or less that are allowed as a method of take for game species pursuant to California Department of Fish and Game regulations. Muzzleloaders are allowed only after fire season is declared over by the BLM.

Hunting for bear, squirrels, rabbits, jackrabbits, waterfowl, furbearers, or non-game species is not allowed.

Hunting is restricted to deer and turkey in the fall season, deer during the summer archery-only season, quail and dove.

In the spring, turkey may be hunted through a special hunt; participants will be selected through a lottery process.

Definitions:

Camping: Erecting a tent or a shelter of natural or synthetic material, preparing a sleeping bag or other bedding material, or parking of a motor vehicle, motor home, or trailer for the purpose or apparent purpose of overnight occupancy.

Campfire: A controlled fire occurring out of doors, used for cooking, branding, personal warmth, lighting, ceremonial or aesthetic purposes. Campfires include wood fires, charcoal fires, and portable gas stoves using gas, jellied petroleum or pressurized liquid fuel.

Designated trail: A trail developed, maintained, and explicitly identified by the BLM for public non-motorized use. All designated trails will be identified by a combination of maps and signing.

Firearm: A device that expels a projectile such as a bullet, dart, or pellet by combustion, air pressure, gas pressure, or other means.

Hunt: Taking or attempting to take wildlife by any means, except by trapping or fishing.

Motorized vehicle: Any motorized transportation conveyance designed and licensed for use on roadways, such as an automobile, bus, or truck, and any motorized conveyance originally equipped with safety belts.

Target shoot: Discharging a firearm for any purpose other than hunting or self defense.

2.3 Rationale

Comments on the draft plan primarily were directed towards hunting recreation, Kanaka Valley Road, and fuels management. The following rationale summarizes the reasoning behind my decision regarding these issues in Kanaka Valley. More detailed responses to public comments on these topics and other can be found the attached document, [BLM Responses to Public Comments on the Draft Kanaka Valley Management Plan](#).

Hunting

When BLM acquired the planning area, it did not have a history of public use such as hunting, camping, or trail use. The parcel is very near homes of concerned members of the public, and also has high quality habitat for wildlife and hunting recreation. Because comment letters responding to the Draft Kanaka Valley Management Plan expressed confusion about the regulations and concern about rifled firearms, I clarified the allowed methods of hunting from Alternative 1. The hunting zone outlined in the Draft Kanaka Valley Management Plan will buffer residences and the public from hunting accidents. The lottery spring turkey hunt will provide turkey hunters will a high quality hunt opportunity during the spring season when this kind of hunting opportunity is in highest demand.

Kanaka Valley Road

Kanaka Valley Road is a public road maintained by El Dorado County. It is not a through road, but it provides access to the planning area and dozens of residences. Kanaka Valley is a narrow road which will need periodic maintenance; the BLM will work with the El Dorado County on any necessary improvements to Kanaka Valley Road.

Fuels Management

The management of wildland fuels is an increasingly important aspect of wildland management. Appropriate fuels management facilitates the safety of the public and Emergency Medical Staff (EMS) personnel (including firefighters) who will use Kanaka Valley Road as an ingress and egress. Appropriate fuels management will minimize loss of resources from fires and limit potential damage. Because of the concern expressed in public comments, I have decided to prioritize the completion of a fuels management plan and completion of the first fuels management project. The fuels management plan for Kanaka Valley will be completed a year from when I sign this decision record; the first fuels management plan will be completed no later than two years from the date that I sign this decision record.

Signage

Written comments on the Draft Kanaka Valley Management Plan included a suggestion to include GIS coordinates on trail signs and kiosks for use in emergency situations. The coordinates will help EMS personnel efficiently locate the locations of emergency situations after they have been reported.

3.0 Consultation and Coordination

Endangered Species Act

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) requires federal agencies to complete formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for any action that “may affect” federally listed species or critical habitat. The ESA also requires federal agencies to use their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species. No special status animal or plant species or their habitat will be impacted by the plan adoption or the parking lot; therefore, consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service is not necessary.

Coordination

Throughout the planning process, the BLM informally communicated and coordinated with the Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, Rescue Fire Department, El Dorado County, and California Department of Fish and Game. Various staff came to public meetings, gave presentations on their areas of expertise, answered planning participants’ questions, and offered suggestions.

SHPO Consultation

Through informal consultation with SHPO, the BLM determined that it will meet its Section 106 National Historic Preservation Act requirements through the BLM’s statewide Protocol Agreement.

Tribal Consultation

Through letters, phone calls, email correspondence, and meetings, the BLM attempted to consult with seven Native American tribes thought to have ancestral connections to Kanaka Valley. Three tribes responded. Members of Shingles Springs Rancheria attended public meetings and reviewed the draft

management plan. The BLM had one face-to-face meeting with tribal members at Kanaka Valley in April 2011 to discuss the planning process and possible planning related actions. No issues were identified. Members of Nashville-Eldorado Miwok also attended the public meetings and reviewed the draft management plan. No issues were identified. United Auburn Indian Community expressed an interest in the planning process through mail and email correspondence. They also reviewed the draft management plan and were interested to know whether the planning area had been entirely inventoried for cultural resources. They were interested in learning more about the planning area's cultural resources and how they might be affected by adoption of a management plan. Ultimately no issues were identified.

4.0 Public Involvement

Public involvement has been integral part of this project through community-based planning meetings. Over a year and a half, 16 community-based planning meetings were held in and around Rescue, California. Two-hundred thirty people participated in at least one community-based planning meeting. During the community-based planning process, the Kanaka Valley Management Plan was crafted, to the extent possible given the confines of law and BLM regulations, by the vision and suggestions of the public. In addition, the BLM held a public meeting on April 26, 2012 in Cameron Park to explain the draft management plan and associated NEPA process. Detailed responses to all substantive comments received are included in the attached document, [BLM Responses to Public Comments on the Draft Kanaka Valley Management Plan](#).

The EA was posted on the Mother Lode Field Office's webpage and made available for a formal five week public comment period in April and May 2012. Sixteen comment letters were received.

5.0 Plan Consistency

Based on information in the EA, the project record, and recommendations from BLM specialists, I conclude that this decision is consistent with the Sierra Resource Management Plan Record of Decision, approved in February 2008. The exceptions to this are the decision to designate Kanaka Valley as its own ACEC (Kanaka Valley ACEC) and the decision to assign the planning area to the Class II visual resource management (VRM) standard. Neither of these decisions can be implemented without amendment of the Sierra Resource Management Plan. The BLM will therefore amend the Sierra Resource Management Plan and take all other necessary steps to designate the ACEC and to assign the Class II VRM standard.

6.0 Administrative Remedies

Administrative remedies may be available to those who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. Appeals may be made to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior, Board of Land Appeals (Board) in strict compliance with the regulations in 43 CFR Part 4. Notices of appeal must be filed with the Field Manager, Mother Lode Field Office, within 30 days after publication of this decision pursuant to 43 CFR Part 4, Subpart E.

The notice of appeal and any statement of reasons, written arguments, or briefs must also be served upon the Regional Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region, U.S. Department of Interior, 2800 Cottage Way, E-1712, Sacramento, CA 95825. Please consult the appropriate regulations (43 CFR Part 4 Subpart E) for further appeal requirements.

The effective date of this decision (and the date initiating the appeal period) will be the date this decision is posted on BLM Mother Lode Field Office's internet website.

/s/ William Haigh

Feb. 20, 2013

William S. Haigh
Field Manager,
Mother Lode Field Office

Date



United States Department of the Interior

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

Finding of No Significant Impact

February 2013

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, because the terrain is not amendable to high-impact activities (no natural backstops for shooting or length challenging terrain for OHV use) and there is a high fire risk. Opportunities for camping exist elsewhere on public lands in the region.

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. None of the cultural properties thus far identified within the planning area have formally evaluated to determine whether they are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Based on a preliminary review, some of the properties appear to have potentially significant values including scientific values. The BLM has completed its obligations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and has determined that implementation of the decisions in this Decision Record would not cause direct, indirect or cumulative negative effects to cultural properties. Construction of the parking area will not affect cultural properties. Other decisions such as no target shooting, overnight camping or motorized recreational use tend to be beneficial to long-term management of cultural properties. Other decisions such as the recommended ACEC designation VRM class II designations and proactive decisions to preserve soils, biological, and cultural resources also have beneficial long-term effects on cultural properties. Implementation of decisions, aside from constructing the parking lot, will require further Section 106 compliance, with the goal of avoiding adverse effects.

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.

/s/ William Haigh

Feb. 20, 2013per

William S. Haigh

Date

Field Manager,
Mother Lode Field Office
Bureau of Land Management

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Kanaka Valley Management Plan BLM Responses to Public Comments

Hunting

The hunting program should balance fair access to public lands for hunters and other recreational users with the concerns of neighboring residents.

The current management plan is a compromise solution which will allow for public safety and some hunting opportunities. The spring limited entry lottery hunt will provide selected individuals the opportunity to hunt turkey in the spring, while providing safety for other users who may be attracted to Kanaka Valley by the wildflower display in the same season. In addition to hunting, trail based recreation and other low impact recreation like bird watching will be allowed at Kanaka Valley. The BLM is required by law and policy to promote multiple-use public lands.

In the Kanaka Valley Management Plan, hunting will be allowed 24/7 for 10 months a year.

This is not a correct statement. The final Kanaka Valley Management Plan allows the entire fall season for hunting of quail (for example, in 2011-2012 dates were October 16-January 30), dove (in 2011, dates were September 1-15 & November 13-December 27), turkey (2nd Saturday in November and 16 consecutive days), deer (4th Saturday in September and 37 consecutive days), deer archery (3rd Saturday in August and 23 consecutive days). Hunting during these seasons must follow California Department of Fish and Game regulations including shooting hours. For example, for spring wild turkey, shooting is limited to one-half hour before sunrise to 4:00pm. Other game birds can be hunted from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. Hunting recreation methods of take are outlined in the final plan.

Spring turkey season begins the last Saturday in March and extends for 37 days; however, turkey hunting will only be allowed during select days by successful applicants. The relatively few days will be selected through detailed analysis associated with a Kanaka Valley Spring Turkey Hunting Plan.

The “No Hunting” zone should be increased, especially around the parking lot area.

The BLM crafted the “No Hunting” zone to provide a buffer to the public Kanaka Valley Road and residential buildings; the BLM feels that the zone provides appropriate safety for residences and road users while balancing recreational uses. The California Department of Fish and Game sets the hunting regulations (discharging firearms within 150 yards from residential buildings is prohibited) and the BLM restrictions increase these requirements.

The “No Hunting” zone” is too large and should be limited to the east side of Kanaka Valley Road.

The “No Hunting” zone follows natural barriers and creates a buffer area where hunting activities are not allowed around residences and Kanaka Valley Road. The natural barriers will provide a clear delineation for hunters to follow and will increase public safety for road users and residents.

The BLM did not consider public safety in the Kanaka Valley Management Plan and EA.

This is an incorrect statement. The Kanaka Valley Management Plan environmental assessment took a hard look at public safety concerns, especially concerns associated with adjacent residential buildings. After examining four different hunting recreation alternatives, the BLM decided to implement “Hunting” and “No Hunting” zones to buffer the public road and residences from possible incidents. Additionally, the BLM limited methods of take to address the public safety concerns. Fuels management and recreation management (i.e., no campfires) activities have also been designed to improve public safety. The BLM also addresses road congestion and associated risks by proposing a parking lot and other measures.

The BLM did not consider an alternative where hunting would be allowed only with bow and arrow.

This is correct; however, the BLM did carefully considered two very similar alternatives. In the Kanaka Valley environmental assessment, the BLM analyzed two alternatives which took a hard look at restrictions on hunting recreation. Alternative 3 would not have allowed any hunting in the planning area; and alternative 4 would have restricted methods of take to archery, falconry, and shotgun (no slug use).

The BLM should allow turkey hunting in the spring season because there is a need for more public turkey hunting options.

The BLM will partner with a local group or agency and offer a limited spring turkey hunt. After being selected via a lottery, selected participants will be able to safely enjoy a high quality hunt.

Dove and quail hunting create too much noise pollution and should be prohibited.

Dove and quail hunting are usually considered relatively low impact, because shot used is typically smaller (7 ½ or 8 gauge) and with a lower velocity. Shooting associated with hunting dove and quail is dependent on the availability of the game; and the nature of the species (doves are migratory; quail coveys are scattered) means that the game will be intermittently available at Kanaka Valley, and groups quickly disperse. The BLM considers the intermittent noise associated with dove and quail hunting to be acceptable.

The property should be open to all legal hunting activities like other BLM managed lands.

Given the close proximity of the public lands to residential buildings and other infrastructure the BLM carefully considered the safety concerns (relatively small size, public Kanaka Valley Road which runs through the public lands, and nearness of rural dwellings) and recreational opportunities and decided to allow hunting deer, wild turkey, quail and mourning dove. Hunting recreation as outlined in the Kanaka Valley Management Plan balances public safety concerns with access to public lands for hunting recreation. It is also consistent with the Cronan Ranch hunting restrictions.

The BLM should permit all legal hunting activities at Kanaka Valley, because all of the different regulations on BLM land create confusion.

In the final Kanaka Valley Management Plan, the BLM altered the hunting restrictions for Kanaka Valley to match the Cronan Ranch hunting restrictions with one modification: the allowance of some types of air guns. This change will help simplify the complex hunting restrictions on public land in western El Dorado County. The BLM understands that the patchwork of ownership and hunting restrictions are confusing, and will continue to provide accurate maps and other information through the website, onsite, at the BLM office, and by request. The special spring turkey hunt at Kanaka Valley will be available to successful applicants to the lottery. The “No Hunting” safety zone will still be in place to provide a buffer between the public road and residences.

Rifles should be allowed because they are a humane method of take for deer.

Due to safety concerns, including the small size of the parcel, the BLM found that not all legal hunting activities are appropriate at Kanaka Valley. Some firearms, such as deer rifles, used to take legal species have a range which is larger than the entire parcel. Following other California Department of Fish and Game hunting regulations, deer hunting at Kanaka Valley will be able to take place with shotguns and archery.

Muzzleloader use should not be allowed because of fire danger.

Light fuels, such as grass, can easily catch fire when dry; this fuel type is found in several areas in Kanaka Valley. Since muzzleloaders have the inherent potential to start fires, their use will only be permitted after fall rains begin and the BLM declares fire season over.

Rifles and other rifled projectiles should not be allowed because the BLM property is relatively small. Commenter was concerned that some air gun ballistics report that pellets with good aerodynamics can travel up to 500 yards.

Because of their long range, the use of rifles and other rifled technology is potentially unsafe in Kanaka Valley. This is why the Kanaka Valley Management Plan has a modified hunting program. The BLM revised the final management plan so that hunting restrictions at Kanaka Valley are similar to those at the Cronan Ranch. Only those air guns that are appropriate for hunting game at short range can be used: air guns must be .22 caliber or less and allowed as a method of take for game species by California Department of Fish and Game regulations.

The BLM should permit all legal hunting because limitation on species take may become problematic, if for example, feral pigs become an issue

If management actions, such as the modified hunting plan, are implemented and through time monitoring shows that they are having unintended consequences, the BLM will take action necessary to correct the situation. At this time, there is no evidence of feral pigs in Kanaka Valley.

A commenter proposed to reduce the number of days hunting is allowed at Kanaka Valley.

The BLM has decided to have limited methods of take for deer, fall turkey, dove, and quail. The hunting season for these species is limited to the fall. We will also collaborate on a limited spring turkey hunt. Details of the hunt will be worked out in a specific plan; however, spring hunting will probably take place only on a few select days during the spring hunting season.

Fire and Fuel Management

The BLM should include detailed fuels management plan/prescriptions including dates which should be implemented prior to making the project area available to the public.

The BLM is committed to completing a fuels management plan within one year of the signing of the DR. Within two years of the signing of the DR, the BLM will implement the first fuels reduction project along Kanaka Valley road consisting of a fuel break, understory thin, and, if necessary, pile burning.

Signage

The BLM should include the language “no open flames” on signs.

The Kanaka Valley Management Plan prohibits campfires. For the BLM, “Campfires” are defined as “a controlled fire or open flame occurring out of doors, use for cooking, branding, personal warmth, lighting, ceremonial or aesthetic purposes.”

The draft Kanaka Valley Management Plan and EA does not address the potential increase in “foot traffic” and impact it will have on EMS.

Any potential development could have potential impacts on EMS; however, the limited proposed trail system would focus use to the trail, and allow for better emergency access. Including global positioning system (GPS) coordinates on appropriate signage for use in emergency situations will also facilitate response to potentially difficult situations.

The BLM will work with emergency providers to give them appropriate vehicular access. For instance, the BLM may place an El Dorado County low security Knox key at access gates. Experience at another high recreational use area, Cronan Ranch, gives the BLM reason to conclude that there will not likely be a large increase in calls. Even as a very high recreational use site (with a dozen miles of trail), the BLM is only aware of a handful of calls that EMS responds to annually at Cronan Ranch.

The commenters have various suggestions on signage. The location and size of the signage is critical to the commenters. Clearly spelling out what activities are not allowed is also critical.

The BLM appreciates the commenters’ recommendations and will take them into account when it is time to design and install signage for the parking lot and other areas of Kanaka Valley. The BLM will be open to suggestions on the signage after it is installed.

Recreation

The parking lot site plan does not show gates closing the parking lot to Kanaka Valley Road.

The BLM may have gates installed between the parking lot and the public road; however, the parking lot is intended to remain open to the public for use from the public Kanaka Valley Road.

Roads/Access

The BLM should build a road for public vehicle access to Kanaka Valley via the Salmon Falls Unit of the PHP. The road would tie into Salmon Falls Road. This is preferable to using Kanaka Valley Road as the sole access route because Kanaka Valley Road is unsuited for increased vehicle traffic.

The BLM has looked at the possibility of building a vehicle road from Salmon Falls Road to Kanaka Valley. This would require building road through California Department of Fish and Game-managed land and possibly private land. We've ruled this idea out because the potential negative impacts to the rare plants and other ACEC values would be too severe. The public vehicle road would fragment rare plant habitat. Also, it could become a vector for invasive weed spread, become a wildfire ignition hazard, lead to illegal garbage dumping, facilitate off-highway vehicle use (also increasing wildfire risk), create additional maintenance and upkeep costs, etc.

The BLM should create public hiking trails to Kanaka Valley via the Salmon Falls Unit of the PHP. A trailhead/parking lot could be located within the Salmon Falls Unit, likely right off of Salmon Falls Road. The trailhead and trails would meet a stated goal of the 2008 PHP Management Plan (pages 37-38) and reduce potential use on Kanaka Valley Road, which the commenter feels cannot handle the strain of increased vehicle traffic.

The BLM has looked at potential trailhead/parking area locations within the Salmon Falls Unit of the PHP, off of Salmon Falls Road, south of the South Fork of the American River. The location of the trailhead/parking area must meet the following criteria to be considered viable: it avoids negative impacts to rare plants and other significant environmental resources; the terrain is relatively flat and suitably sized for a parking area; and it provides safe access for motorists. In other words, the turn-in/turn-out for the parking area must not create a hazard for motorists on windy narrow Salmon Falls Road. While more planning is necessary, the BLM, so far, has not been able to identify a location that meets all of the criteria. Development of a trailhead/parking area off of Salmon Falls Road may take planning, engineering, and construction costs far beyond BLM's current capacity. In fact, at the time that the PHP Management Plan was completed in 2008 the BLM thought (page 38) that the best way to improve public access to the Salmon Falls Unit was via Kanaka Valley Road, pending acquisition of the Kanaka Valley parcel. Now that the BLM has acquired this parcel, our thinking is unchanged.

El Dorado County's Department of Transportation and the BLM should work together to review and install appropriate signage along Kanaka Valley Road.

The BLM intends to work cooperatively with the County on issues of concern, including appropriate signage and other transportation issues.

The BLM and the County should place signs saying "Residents Only Beyond this Point" on Kanaka Valley Road just past the proposed parking lot/trailhead. This will help prevent wildfire.

The BLM is pledging to coordinate with the County to ensure that Kanaka Valley Road is maintained and managed for the safety of motorists and pedestrians. Kanaka Valley Road is county-maintained public road and it is not practical for the BLM to discourage or prohibit lawful public use of this road.

Horses and mountain bikes should not be allowed in the “Hunting” zone, the BLM is creating a potential unsafe situation.

The BLM has successfully managed multiple-use areas in many other areas, we are confident that these are compatible activities.

By allowing both hunting and educational programs for schoolchildren, the BLM is creating a potential unsafe situation.

A school bus full of children and teachers is not allowed to simply show up at Kanaka Valley. This is considered an organized educational group use, allowed only under a Special Recreation Use Permit issued by the BLM. In other words, this is a regulated use of public lands. Every permittee is required to follow BLM stipulations, carry the appropriate level of insurance, and meet other requirements. During the permitting process, the BLM closely coordinates with the applicant (i.e., school districts, etc.), including discussing any special conditions, hazardous situations, etc. To reduce the potential for conflict at Kanaka Valley, the BLM may avoid issuing permits during periods of expected higher than normal hunting use (i.e., the first day of the fall deer hunting season, etc.) and may direct the permittee away from the designated hunting zone. Of note, the BLM has been permitting the Boy Scouts of America to conduct various overnight camping/educational outings in the BLM-administered Cronan Ranch Trails Park where year-round hunting (with restrictions similar to what is proposed for Kanaka Valley) is allowed. No conflicts have occurred.

Area of Critical Environmental Concern

The Kanaka Valley ACEC as proposed in Alternative 1 is not warranted. Only the 119 acres should be designated.

The BLM believes that the Kanaka Valley ACEC as proposed in Alternative 1 is warranted. It would help to preserve the rare Rescue series soils which occur throughout the entire proposed ACEC. Other environmental values include blue oak and valley oak woodland, both of which are endemic to California. The range of both vegetation types has been greatly reduced in California over the last 160 years due to urban growth, agriculture, and other land uses. Of note, ACEC designation is not reserved strictly for unique or rare environmental values such as rare plants specific to particular soil formations. ACECs have been designated elsewhere in California to help protect coast live oak woodlands, watersheds, and natural processes that are considered “ordinary” but are increasingly becoming uncommon.

General

The BLM should not allow any public use of Kanaka Valley, beyond what is already in place, until the plan is fully funded, the proposed actions in the plan have been fully analyzed pursuant to NEPA, and the work is complete.

The BLM is committed to managing the area and implementing the plan. As soon as the plan is finalized, the BLM will move forward with building the core infrastructure and management actions: the parking lot, trails, signage, fuel break along Kanaka Valley Road, and coordination with the County on road safety.

Mountain lions have been seen on Kanaka Valley and are a protected species; they should be addressed by the BLM as a special status species.

The BLM gives special management consideration to special status species which are “(1) species listed or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act, (2) species designated as sensitive by the BLM State Director, all federal candidate species, and delisted species in the 5 years following delisting.” Mountain lions, although protected under State law as a specially protected mammal (Fish and G. Code §4800), are not considered a special status species by BLM.

As federally managed land, Kanaka Valley is nontaxable; this has reduced the local tax revenue.

It is recognized that the inability to collect revenue on nontaxable federal lands can create a financial impact on the local government and the local government’s ability to carry out vital services like police protection, construction of public schools and roads, and search-and-rescue operations. Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) are federal payments to local governments that help offset losses in property taxes due to nontaxable federal lands within their boundaries. The Department of the Interior calculates these payments according to formulas established by law and distribute the funds as appropriated by Congress. In 2012, El Dorado County received a PILT payment of \$194,570 (<http://www.doi.gov/pilt>).

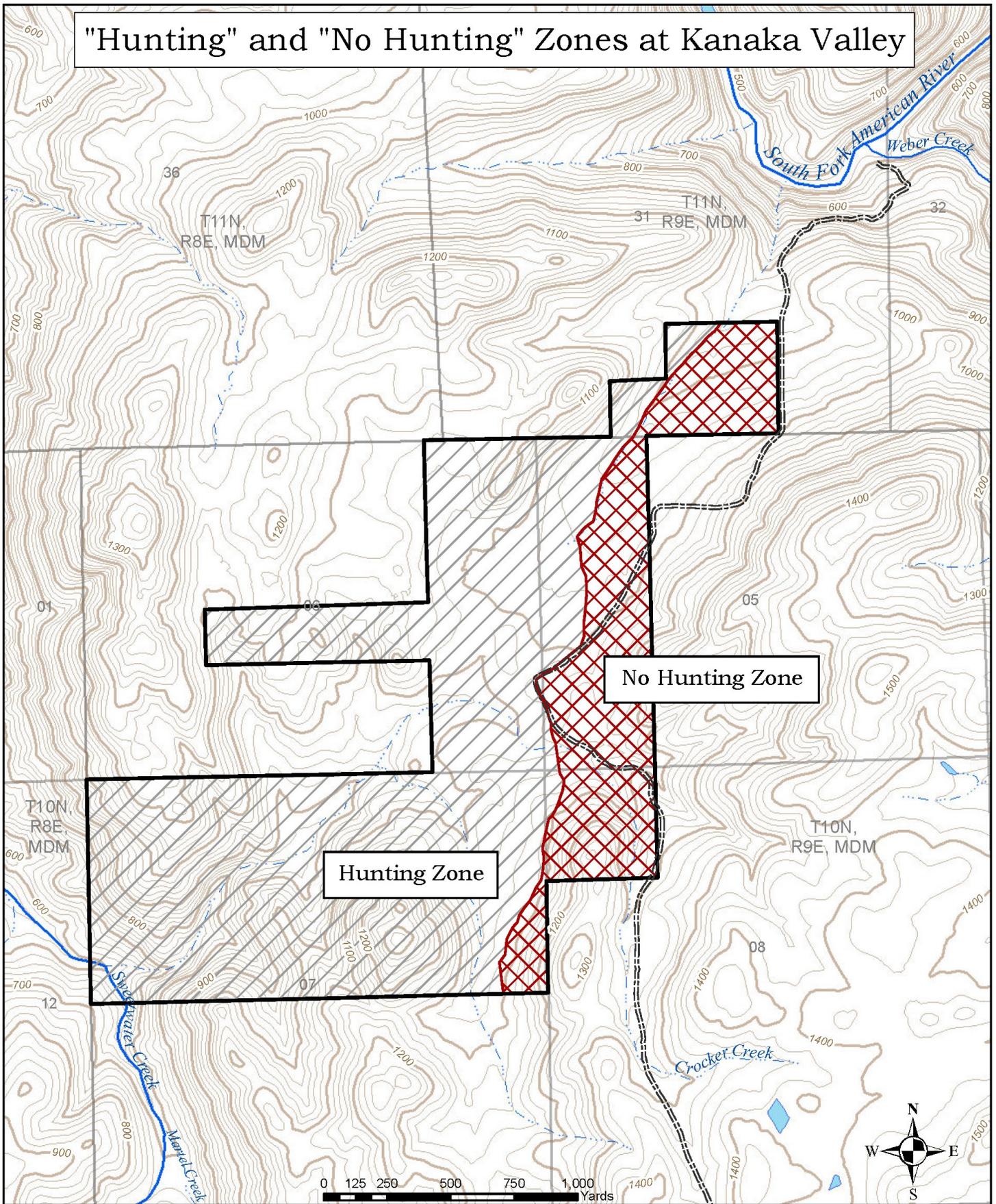
A full-time, paid BLM manager should be immediately assigned to oversee the Kanaka Valley parcel

The BLM will continue to manage the Kanaka Valley as a joint effort between resource specialists through adaptive management. In the future there may be designated staff for Kanaka Valley; however, BLM resource specialists generally work together to provide specific site and resource care (i.e., BLM archeologist manages cultural resources, BLM fuels manager designs fuel breaks, etc).

A commenter expressed concern regarding public safety hazards associated with illegal activities such as marijuana cultivation on BLM lands.

The draft Kanaka Valley Management Plan and EA found low impact activities to be compatible with the vision statement and the intent of the acquisition. Illegal activities such as marijuana cultivation are not permitted and degrade natural and cultural resources; these activities will be responded to by BLM law enforcement specialists when the BLM becomes aware of them.

"Hunting" and "No Hunting" Zones at Kanaka Valley



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 Date Prepared: 2/5/2013
 Project: KV_HuntingZonesDR2013

- ==== Kanaka Valley Road
- ▭ Kanaka Valley Planning Area
- ▨ No Hunting Zone
- ▧ Hunting Zone