

# **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLAN**

## **Siskon Mine CERCLA Removal Action and Reclamation Project , 2002-2003 Six Rivers National Forest, Siskiyou County, California**

**January 31, 2003**

**Revision Date: March 3, 2003**

### **Section 1. Overview**

The Siskon Mine Site is an abandoned gold and silver mine located on the Klamath National Forest, but administered by the Six Rivers National Forest, Orleans Ranger District, Siskiyou County, California. The effects of mining operations between 1953-1960 have resulted in the continued erosion of the mill tailings into Copper Creek, an anadromous fish stream. Contaminants from the tailing piles include copper, arsenic, and other metals.

This Community Involvement Plan identifies community concerns about the erosion and sedimentation from the Siskon Mine tailings, mill and mine area. The plan outlines opportunities for the public to be informed of and participate the cleanup activities being planned at the Site.

The USDA Forest Service is exercising its lead agency authority under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) and the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP) to conduct a Removal Action at the Site.

This plan was developed during the CERCLA Removal Action planning process and can be updated at any time. The Six Rivers and Klamath National Forests encourage meaningful community involvement. The goals of this plan are to:

- inform the public of planned and ongoing site activities;
- maintain open lines of communication about site cleanup, ensuring that questions are answered and concerns and conflicts are addressed as they occur;
- provide interested parties with useful information;

- provide citizens with opportunities to comment on and be involved in technical analysis;
- encourage and assist local citizens in providing input to the Forest Service regarding decisions that will have long-term effects at the site.

The USDA Forest Service will post this plan as well as other information on the mine site on the Klamath Forest Service internet page located at <http://www.r5.fed.us/klamath>. If you have questions about the internet page, this plan, or would like additional information, please call, write, or e-mail:

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The Siskon Mine Removal Action and Mine Reclamation Plan is anticipated to have a moderate public interest and concern. This is based on past experience with the Siskon Mine Cyanide Drum Removal Action, which was undertaken in 1999. For that project, there was one public inquiry about the project, and no comments on the project from any individuals, agencies, tribes or organizations.

The Siskon Mine Removal Action and Mine Reclamation is a project designed to restore the mine area within National Forest managed lands, and relieve a source of sedimentation to Copper Creek. Part of the mine road, mill site and former tailings pond are within Helkau Cultural Area, a land management area on the Klamath National Forest. Helkau is an area of significant historic, spiritual, and ceremonial values to the Karuk, Yurok, and Hoopa Tribes, and other traditional users which have ancestral lands in the project vicinity. Tribal issues and concerns with the Removal Action and Reclamation project are anticipated to be significant and resolvable.

## **Section 2. Site Description**

### **Location and Land Management Areas**

The Siskon Mine (Site) is located in Siskiyou County approximately 16 miles northwest of Somes Bar, California (Figure 1). The Siskon Mine Site is located in Copper Creek Watershed, which is a tributary to Dillon Creek and the Klamath River. The project area is located in T. 14 N., R. 5 E., Sections 20 and 29, Chimney Rock California, 7.5' Quadrangle, Humboldt Meridian (Figure 2). Land management areas within the project vicinity include the Helkau Cultural Area; Riparian Reserves, Late Successional Reserves, Partial Retention, Recreational River, and General Forest (Figure 3). Approximately 120 acres of private lands occur to the west of the project area. These lands were open pit mined in the 1950s. The mine area, though accessible by forest roads, is considered to be remote. The nearest development is the Dillon Creek Campground, which is located approximately 4 air miles away.

### **Mine History**

The Siskon Mine is an abandoned gold and silver mine. Mining and exploration for gold and silver began in the early 1900s and was most active from 1951 through 1960. Ultimately six patented claims, 56 unpatented claims, and one unpatented mill site claim were located at the Site. The unpatented claims were relinquished in 1992 and 1993 and are now abandoned. From 1951 through 1960, ore was removed from three open pits and trucked 2.5 miles down the hill to a mill located west of Copper Creek. Ore milling and disposal of mine tailings first began in 1953. Ore was milled and gold and silver were concentrated using a cyanide slime processing plant. Processed tailings were deposited in the tailings pond. A photograph from May 24, 1955, indicated that an earthen dam was constructed to impound the tailings, and Copper Creek was diverted around the dam. One written account of the mining operation indicates that at least from 1957 to 1960, after milling operations ceased in late November, a hole was punched into the tailings dam releasing tailings accumulated over the year's operations (Smith, 1993). A California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) memorandum from February 15, 1958, describes an event in the fall of 1957, during which the Siskon Mine tailings were released from the tailings impoundment, causing discoloration of the Klamath River (CDFG, 1958). When active mining operations ceased in 1960, maintenance activities were discontinued, resulting in the failure of the impoundment dam and erosion of the remaining tailings into Copper Creek. After 1960 no other mining or milling occurred at the site. The activities that took place at

the Site from 1960 to 1992 consisted of limited sampling and exploration on the patented lands. None of these activities were at, or on the mine tailings. The mill was dismantled and the salvageable mining equipment was removed in 1978.

## **Site Discovery and Investigations**

The Siskon Mine Site is listed in EPA's CERCLA Information System with ID Number CA0000878058. The site is not eligible for listing on the National Priorities List. The Site was discovered and evaluated for suspected environmental contamination as part of the U.S. Forest Service Abandoned/Inactive Mine Discovery and Assessment program in 1992 and 1993. Field investigations of the site were undertaken in 1994 and in 1996 – 1998 to assess conditions at the site. In 1994, the Forest Service completed a Preliminary Assessment (PA), which documented known and suspected contaminant sources at the site: mill tailings, empty cyanide drums with cyanide residue, and acidic drainage from the Scott Tunnel (USDA, Klamath National Forest, 1994). The second study investigated site conditions of the mill tailings, cyanide drums, and adit discharges, conducted sampling and testing, assessed threats posed to human health and the environment, and determined the need for further response actions at the site. The Forest Service is finalizing the results of this study in a report in preparation at the present time.

## **Agency Site Review**

Region IX of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed existing documentation of the site in 1995 (URS Consultants, 1995). In 1997 (EPA, 1997), EPA concurred with the Forest Service on the need for further actions at the Site.

Lists of applicable, relevant and appropriate requirements (ARARs) were obtained from state regulatory agencies in 1998. The regulatory agencies that were contacted include: North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (NCRWQCB), California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG); Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC); and the California Air Resources Board. Responses were obtained from the NCRWQCB, CDFG and DTSC.

The NCRWQCB has had regulatory involvement with the Site since the earliest operations of the mine and mill in 1953. A full tour of the entire mine area was made with a representative from the NCRWQCB in 1998. In 1997, a representative from the California Regional Water Quality Control

Board visited the site. CDFG has had regulatory involvement with Site since the earliest operation of the mine and mill in the 1950s. Though there is no current involvement by CDFG with the Site, various staff have visited the mine area and Copper Creek in the 1990s. The DTSC has not had any regulatory involvement with the site. A tour of the mine area was made with a representative of the DTSC in 1998.

From Site discovery to the present time, no cleanup or abatement orders for the mine Site have been issued.

### **Cyanide Drum Removal Action, 1999**

In 1999, a Removal Preliminary Assessment/Site Inspection Report on the Siskon Mine Cyanide Drum Removal was prepared (USFS, August, 1999a). This report focused solely on the characterization of the cyanide drums present at the site. Shortly following the completion of this report, an EE/CA and a Removal Action Memo was prepared as part of the Siskon Mine Cyanide Drum Removal Action (USFS, 1999b, 1999c). In September of 1999 all the cyanide drums were treated and removed from the site. A contract completion report documenting the removal action, was prepared by the contractor, AC Industrial Services, (AC Industrial Services, 1999).

### **CERCLA Removal Action**

The USDA Forest Service is exercising its lead agency authority under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) and the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP) to conduct a Removal Action at the Site. The Six Rivers and Klamath National Forests are in the process of preparing an Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) as required by CERCLA and the NCP for a non-time-critical Removal Action.

Under CERCLA and NCP, the following Removal Actions are generally appropriate for the situations encountered with hazardous substances at remote abandoned mine sites:

- Fences or other security/site control to prevent access to a release.
- Drainage controls where needed to reduce migration of hazardous substances or contaminants.
- Stabilization of berms, dikes, lagoons, etc., to maintain structural integrity.
- Capping of contaminated soils or sludges to reduce migration of contaminants.

- Using chemicals or other materials to retard the spread of the release or to mitigate its effects.
- Excavation, consolidation, or removal of highly contaminated soils to reduce the spread of or contact with contamination.
- Containment, treatment, disposal, or incineration of hazardous materials to reduce the likelihood of exposure.

An Environmental Analysis is not required as the National Environmental Policy Act regulations are not applicable under CERCLA and the NCP. Alternatives considered in the EE/CA to clean up the contaminant sources and rehabilitate the Site must be evaluated on how they meet the following criteria:

- Overall Protection of Human Health and the Environment
- Short- and Long-Term Effectiveness and Permanence
- Reduction of Toxicity, Mobility and Volume
- Implementability
- Cost

In the EE/CA, a Recommended Removal Action Alternative will be proposed by the Forest Service. The EE/CA is planned to be released for a 30 day public comment period in April of 2003. After the public comment period is completed, the Forest Service will issue a Removal Action Memorandum in which a decision will be made, and the final removal action alternative selected.

## **Nature of the Threats Posed to the Environment and Public Health**

### **Environmental Threats**

The principle environmental threat posed by the Site is the continued erosion of mill tailings into Copper Creek, an anadromous fish stream, that hosts steelhead and resident trout. The tailings are present over a small area, less than 2 acres. The estimated volume of tailings present in the tailings pond is 11,000 cubic yards. Approximately 500 cubic yards of tailings are present within the 100-year flood plain. The estimated annual erosion rate of unvegetated tailings soils in the tailings pond area is approximately 10 cubic yards per year, delivered into Copper Creek. This volume is roughly equivalent to one dump truck load of sediment. The current position of

these tailings in close proximity to Copper Creek poses a threatened release into the stream system during future large floods and high flow periods on Copper Creek.

The release of hazardous substances from the mill tailings consists of arsenic, copper, iron and other metals. The metals in the tailings erode from the relict tailings pond area and become deposited in stream sediments. The metal-loading in the stream sediment is elevated for approximately 500 feet downstream of the Site; downstream of this point, metal concentrations in the stream sediments are reduced to background levels. There are no leachates from the tailings, as the metals in the tailings do not easily go into solution. The tailings are not acid-generating, and have low sulfide contents.

Deer and bear apparently eat the tailings on site, which are high in salts as well as metals. Wildlife will continue to be exposed to the tailings by ingesting them where they are present in the former tailings pond and mill. Aquatic life in Copper Creek downstream of the Site may be exposed to the metals deposited in stream sediments. These metals may be toxic to aquatic life such as macroinvertebrates, and may bioaccumulate through the food chain. The metals in the tailings on Site may also be toxic to vegetation and soil organisms. This is evident by the patchy vegetation growth on the tailings piles.

Mine discharge occurs from the Scott Tunnel, an open mine adit. No CERCLA response action is planned at this time, as soluble metals from the discharge were not observed above background levels in the receiving stream (Rough Creek). The Scott Tunnel adit opening is located on the former Kentucky claim and its underground workings extend into private land. The Texas Tunnel is a collapsed mine adit located on private land. No surface water discharges flow out of the collapsed adit.

### **Threats to Public Health**

The Site poses a low threat to public health as exposures to the tailings soil are anticipated to be rare. The Site is located in a remote area. The 14N31 road that provides access to the Site, has a year-round closure. The gate on the road access is usually closed and locked and is more than 4.5 miles from the mine area. Because of a landslide on the mine road on the west side of Copper Creek, there is no vehicle access into the tailings pond or mill area.

Recreational visitors to the site could include hikers, hunters, recreational miners, mushroom gatherers, and fishing enthusiasts who enter the area on

foot or by vehicle if the gate on the 14N31 road is unlocked. The mine mill is signed with a placard that includes a warning about potential hazards at the mine such as metal debris and the tailings. Other visitors to the site include: Native Americans visiting the area to gather traditional materials or for spiritual reasons; contractors performing road work or stand management; and Forest Service employees. Human exposures to the tailings are anticipated to be minimal as long as boots are worn, skin is covered by clothing, protective gloves are worn during contact with the soil, and dust is abated.

## **Proposed Action**

The current project proposal is to conduct a CERCLA Removal Action in 2003 if implementation funding is received. The proposed project would begin in the summer of 2003 and would be implemented in phases over the following two to five years during the summer (June 1-October 15). The objectives are:

- Capping (covering with clean fill) the mill tailings on site.
- Re-vegetation of the mill tailings pond and mill site area (approximately 2 acres).
- Storm-proofing and stabilization of the mine road that is a sediment source (approximately 1.5 miles).

These objectives would achieve the goals of:

- Restoration of the riparian area and protection of water quality, aquatic, fish, and wildlife habitats.
- Reducing chronic surface erosion of mine tailings into Copper Creek and reducing the risk of delivery of large volumes of tailings during future large precipitation events.
- Containment and capping of the tailings contamination source, which contains heavy metals and other substances that are toxic to vegetation, soil organisms, wildlife, and aquatic life.
- Reducing chronic sedimentation from mine roads into the mill, tailings pond area, and Copper Creek.
- Eliminating or reducing road drainage problems that are accelerating active landsliding of the mine road system and contributing to sediment delivery into Copper Creek.

Other alternatives to this proposal will be analyzed depending on the scope of public issues and concerns.

### **Section 3. Community Profile**

The community of Somes Bar is approximately 16 air miles from the Siskon Mine Site. Somes Bar is located along Highway 96 between the towns of Orleans and Happy Camp, California. The community is situated around the mouth of the Salmon River where it enters the Klamath River. It is a small rural community surrounded by the Klamath National Forest. The community has a population of 225 people and is in Siskiyou County. The Junction Elementary School serves the community. It is a K-8 school with 32 students. The elementary school is one of the focal points of the community. Ancestral territory lands of the Karuk Tribe of California include the area near the mouth of the Salmon River that is named Katimin meaning “center of the world”.

The community of Orleans is approximately 20 air miles from the Siskon Mine Site. The town is located along Highway 96 approximately 10 miles from Somes Bar. The community is situated along the Klamath River and is surrounded by the Six Rivers National Forest. The community has an estimated population of 712 persons and is located in Humboldt County. One elementary school serves the community. Like Somes Bar, it is part of the ancestral territory of the Karuk Tribe.

Both communities support a small recreation and tourism industry and have several RV sites, campgrounds and hunting and fishing lodges. Recreational pursuits include access to the Trinity Alps and Marble Mountains wildernesses, guided drift boat fishing trips, white water rafting and kayaking, fishing, hunting, recreational gold mining, and wildlife watching.

The communities of Somes Bar and Orleans share similar economic and social characteristics. Approximately 20% of the population is Native American. Employment is in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, durable goods and government. Over half of the employment is in the government sector, with most workers federal employees. The communities have a high interest in forest management and in 1997 formed the Orleans/Somes Bar Community Action Group. Their Community Action Plan focuses on issues of Forest Health, Community Fire Protection, Economic Diversity, Recreation and Tourism, and Quality of Life.

## **4. Community Involvement Activities**

### **Statement of Proposed Actions, (SOPA)**

The Siskon Mine Removal Action Project has been listed in the Klamath National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) for all four quarters (Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall from Winter of 2000, to the present. The project was listed in the Six Rivers SOPA beginning in Fall of 2002. This schedule is posted on each Forests' internet site.

No requests for information about the project have been received by the project On-Scene Coordinator, from 2000 to the present time.

### **Tribal Community Relations**

In 1994, a 27,000-acre wildfire occurred in the Dillon Creek Watershed. The fire areas included the east side of the Copper Creek drainage and parts of Medicine Mountain. During tribal consultation for the Dillon fire Recovery Project, Siskon Mine was noted as a concern by both the Yurok and Karuk Tribes. The tribes noted that Siskon Mine is a major sediment source to Copper Creek, which has been unabated for 30 years. In a 1996 letter to the Happy Camp District Ranger, the Yurok Tribe offered support in any Forest Service efforts to eliminate the toxic sources linked to the abandoned Siskon Mine. On December 5, 1995, the Yurok Tribal Council approved a resolution stating the following:

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Yurok Tribe finds the existence of pollutants traced to the Siskon mines to be a direct detriment to the key sensitive watershed of Dillon creek and its fishery resources as well as an infringement on the spiritual characteristics of the Hel Kau Culture District. The Yurok Tribe will support Forest Service efforts to remedy this toxic situation”.

During Site investigations in 1996, formal letters were sent to the tribal chairs of the Karuk and the Yurok Tribes informing them of the site sampling and testing activities. Two separate site visits were held with representatives from both the Tribes' Natural Resource Departments in the fall of 1996 when site sampling and assessment was being carried out.

During 2002, while the project was in the planning stages, the Karuk Tribe was notified about the project during monthly tribal meetings (in June, July and October) with Klamath and Six Rivers National Forest representatives. Tribal members also had various discussions with the Ukonom/Orleans District Ranger during the spring and summer of 2002. The Project On-

Scene Coordinator presented information on the project, clean up options, and a proposed project schedule at the October 18, 2002, Karuk Tribe monthly meeting. This presentation had been delayed for two months as there were no tribal monthly meetings in August and September. Concerns presented at the October meeting included noise and equipment disturbance during ceremonial times of June and July, and whether the Tribe could bid on the contract to implement the project.

Formal letters informing local tribes about the proposed action and the project schedule, were sent to the tribal chairs of the Karuk Tribe, Hoopa Tribe, and Yurok Tribe. These letters were sent in late November, 2002.

The Klamath and Six Rivers Forest Supervisors discussed the project at the Karuk Tribe Summit Meeting on November 26, 2002. A field trip to Siskon Mine was held on November 18, 2002 with representatives of the Karuk Tribe. Eight members from the Karuk Tribe attended the field trip. Some of the concerns and issues stated included: being kept in the information loop regarding the project; opportunities for Tribal owned companies to implement the project; consideration of alternatives to completely remove tailings from the site; and concerns with the timing of the project during the summer ceremonial use of Helkau. At the completion of the site visit, the group was very supportive of the Forest Service plans to clean up the mine tailings site and stabilize the mine road.

On January 24, 2003, a presentation was made to the Yurok Tribe Cultural Committee representatives. Klamath National Forest tribal relations, heritage resources and engineering staff presented handouts and lead discussions on the mine Site, environmental problems, cultural concerns and the CERCLA Removal Action. Some of the concerns stated at the meeting were the long term success of capping the tailings to isolate them and stop their erosion, and the potential for successful revegetation on the cap.

Tribal Relations and Government to Government consultation is on-going as part of the compliance with the following federal Laws and executive Orders: the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA); American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA); Executive Order 13007 (Integrity of Sacred Sites); and Executive Order 13175 (Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments).

## **State and Local Agency Contacts**

Phone conversations and e-mail updates on the project were carried out in October, 2002, with agency representatives of the North Coast Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Fish and Game, Siskiyou County Department of Health and Environmental Services, Siskiyou County Air Pollution District, California EPA Department of Toxic Substances Control, and the Department of Conservation Abandoned Mine Lands Unit.

## **Community Notification and Legal Notices**

Information letters were sent to state and local agencies, members of the public and local environmental groups in January, 2003. The letters informed the public of the project, and requested input on the project by February 27, 2003. Information notices are also planned for publication in the Siskiyou Daily News and the Eureka Times Standard newspapers in early February.

If there is enough public interest, a public meeting in Orleans will be planned by the Forest Service in March to present information on the project.

The EE/CA is planned for completion sometime in April, 2003. The EE/CA document will be sent to tribes, interested agencies and the public. The EE/CA will be available for review on the Klamath National Forest internet site. A Legal Notice about the project, completion of the EE/CA, and availability of the Administrative Record will be published in the Siskiyou Daily News, and the Eureka Times Standard. A flyer containing the same information will be posted at the Ukonom/Orleans and Happy Camp Ranger District Offices, Somes Bar Store, and the Orleans Post Office, Klamath National Forest Supervisors Office, and the Six Rivers National Forest Supervisors Office. The public comment period for the EE/CA will occur for 30 days following the legal notice in the newspapers. During the public comment period, a public meeting will be held in Orleans.

Comments on the EE/CA will be summarized and responses incorporated into the Removal Action Memorandum (RAM). The Removal Action Memorandum is the decision document that will be signed by the Six Rivers Forest Supervisor and the Regional Engineer. Once the RAM is signed, the recommended alternative is approved and can then be implemented.

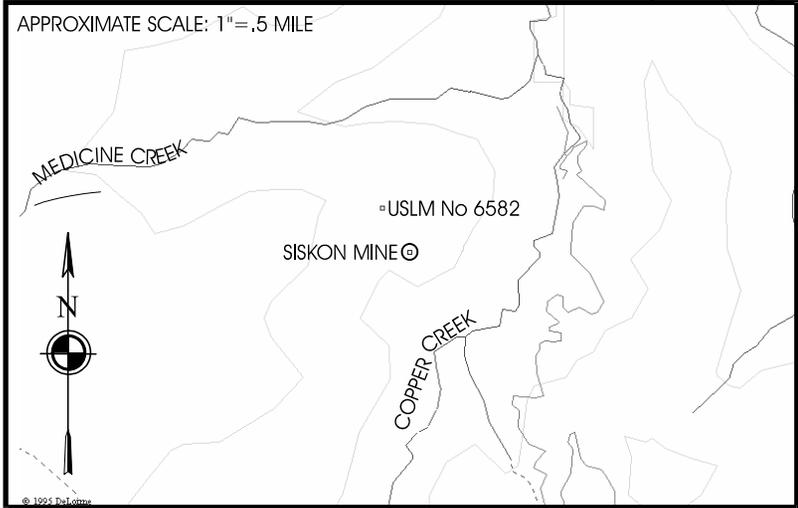
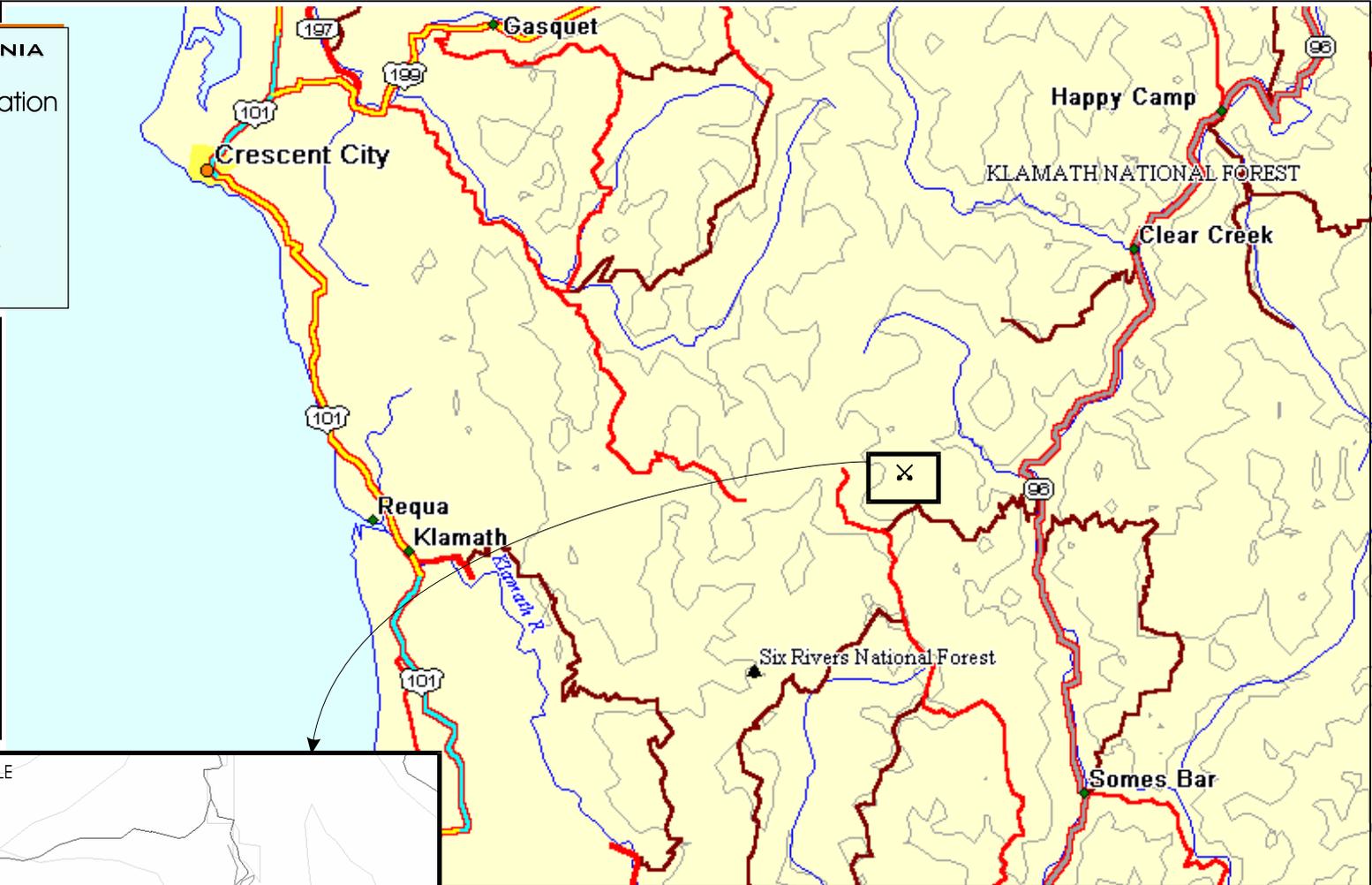
## Location of the Project Administrative Record File

The Administrative File Record, EE/CA, and RAM will be available for public review at the Supervisors Office of the Klamath National Forest in Yreka, CA and the Supervisors Office of the Six Rivers National Forest in Eureka, CA.

## 5. References Cited

- California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), 1958. *Memo from Millard Coots to Chester Woodhull, Regarding Siskon Mine.*
- Smith, Lauren, 1993. *Mining - Siskon Mine*, IN: Davies, Gilbert, W. and Frank, Florice M., eds. *Memories from the Land of the Siskiyou, Past Lives and Times in Siskiyou County*, History Inc. Books, Hat Creek, CA.
- URS Consultants, 1995, *Federal Facility PA Review, Siskon Mine*, Klamath National Forest, Siskiyou County, California, 20 pages.
- USDA, Klamath National Forest, 1994. *Preliminary Assessment Report, Siskon Mine*, Klamath National Forest.
- USDA, Klamath National Forest, August 10, 1999a. *Federal Facility Removal Preliminary Assessment/Site Inspection, Siskon Mine Cyanide Drum Removal*, 36 pages.
- USDA, Klamath National Forest, August 10, 1999b, *Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis for the Siskon Mine Cyanide Drum Removal*, 50 pages.
- USDA, Klamath National Forest, September 10, 1999c, *Removal Action Memorandum for the Siskon Mine Cyanide Drum Removal*, 14 pages.
- A/C Industrial Services Corp., November 4, 1999, *Siskon Mine Sodium Cyanide Container Removal Report*, 15 pages.
- U.S. EPA, 1997. *Letter from Betsy Curnow, Chief to Dave McCauley*, USDA Forest Service, 2 pages.

**FIGURE 1**



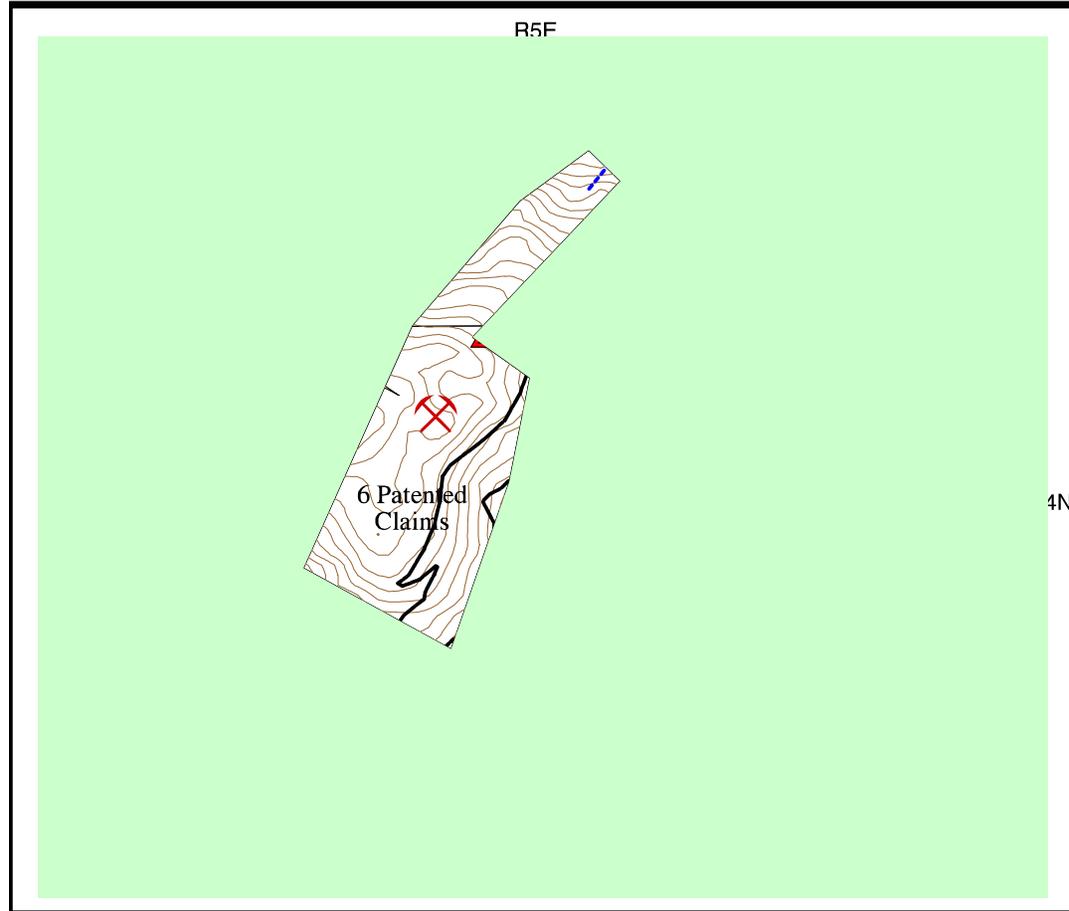
APPROXIMATE SCALE: 1" = 8 MILES

**SITE VICINITY MAP  
SISKON MINE SITE  
SIX RIVERS NATIONAL FOREST  
SISKIYOU COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

Siskon Mine Removal VCS 2007  
**Figure 2. Siskon Mine Site Location Map**

**Figure 3. Siskon Mine Location Map**

Ukonom/Orleans Ranger District  
Six Rivers National Forest

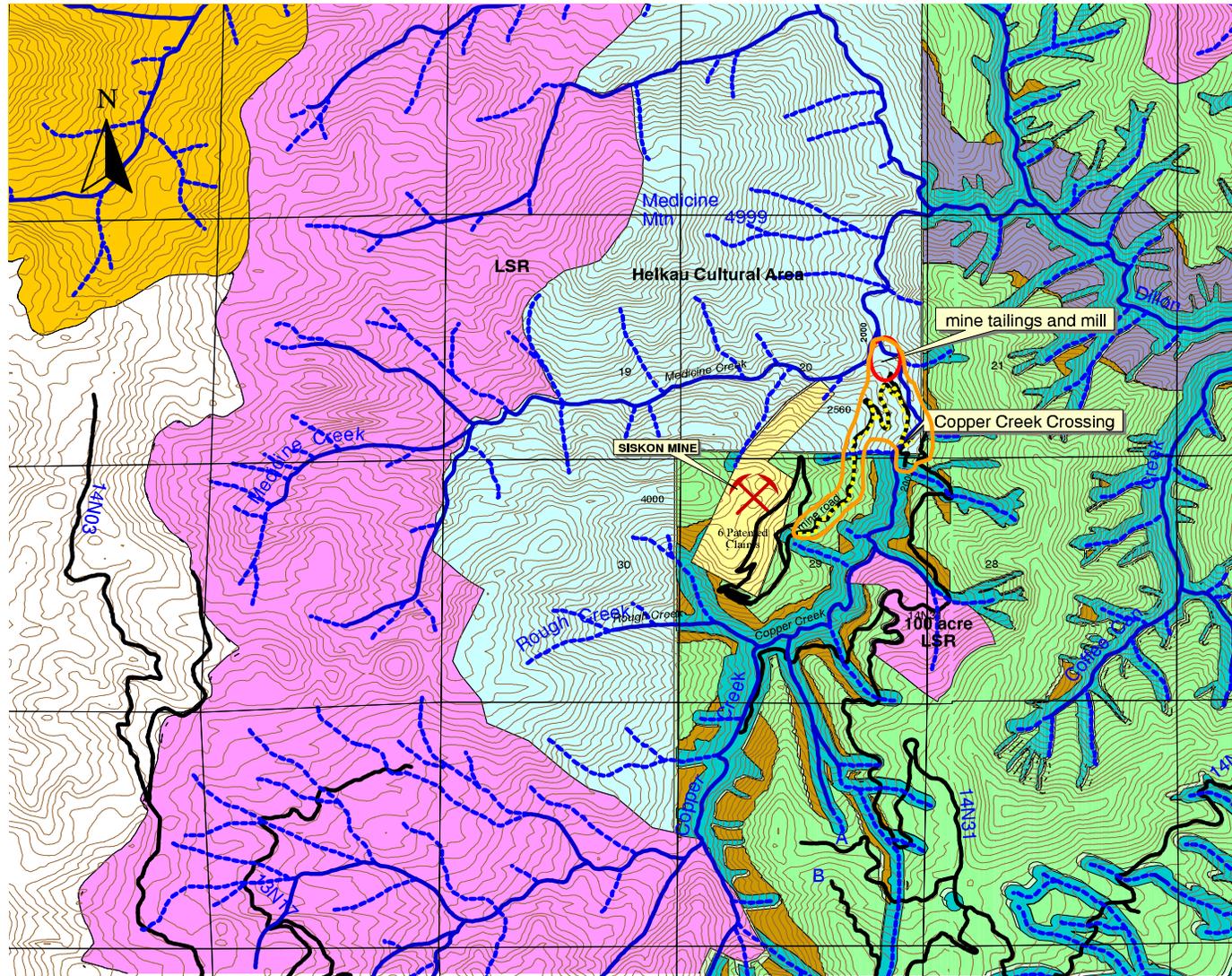


Chimney Rock, California, 7.5 Minute Quadrangle, Humboldt Meridian  
DEM Contours, 80' Interval,  
Scale: 1:15840



# Figure 3. Siskon Mine CERCLA Removal Action and Mine Reclamation Project

Ukonom/Orleans Ranger District  
Six Rivers National Forest

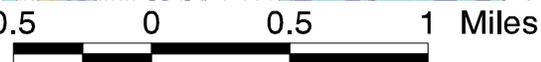


Orange polygon is approximate extent of Site and Area of Undertaking.

The light blue area is Helkau.

Chimney Rock CA 7.5' Quad.  
Humboldt Meridian  
DEM Contours, 80' interval  
Scale: 1: 40,000

Management Areas		
Private Land	Riparian Reserves	Partial Retention
100 Acre LSR	Recreational River	
Helkau Cultural Area	General Forest	



Notes: Yellow dashed mine road = proposed storm-proofing segment  
Site consists of the mill, mill tailings, creek crossing and mine road

