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I am the President of the American Lands Access Assn. (ALAA). We are a national non-profit organization of rockhounds. We have a number of individual members and clubs within the boundaries of California. We currently number over 2700 members, but the count is growing. I also speak for those outside California who come here for rockhound activities.

I am writing to express our organization's displeasure with the provisions of the Proposed Clear Creek Resource Management Plan of March 2013. The proposal contains such harsh restrictions on access that field collecting of mineral specimens, (which includes the California State Gemstone, Benitoite) and lapidary materials would effectively be prohibited, despite provisions in the November 2009 Draft that there would be "negligible impact" on rock collecting in the ACEC [section 4.1.8.1]. In addition to the 5-day annual limit on activities in the ACEC, the proposal:

- Restricts all activities, including driving, hiking, collecting, return hiking and return driving, to the hours between sunrise and sunset of a single day.
- Embarkation points for hiking must be adjacent to the "Loop" comprised primarily of San Benito County roads, which are in most cases miles distant from collecting sites. The largely vertical terrain in Clear Creek makes hiking strenuous for folks my age, (80 years) and others with disabilities, at best.
- Most of the existing network of Roads and Trails previously accessible in Clear Creek are designated "closed" to vehicle traffic.

Together these restrictions make field collecting virtually impossible. We urge BLM to implement the language suggested in the Protest filed by William Spence on behalf of BAM and ALAA and to commit to permitting access on request to other portions of the Clear Creek road and trail network to enable a Record of Decision that truly has negligible impact on mineral collecting in this special area.

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Hobby collecting in the Clear Creek area dates back to at least the mid-1930s. Clear Creek has been a world-class mineral collecting area, known to collectors all over California and the U.S because the California State Gemstone, Benitoite, is found here. The extensive network of roads (suitable for high-clearance vehicles) that facilitated collecting has long been part of its appeal.

I believe you have failed in your economic impact to consider rockhounds in the evaluation, instead you chose to make motorcycles your chief concern. They come in on a daily basis, where many of the Rockhounds usually are not from the local area and bring campers and motor homes and stay a number of days – all this impacts the local businesses – gas, garages, groceries, restaurants/cafes, RV parks and state campgrounds.

Please keep Clear Creek accessible not only to hikers, but to rockhounds who are getting up in years or who have disabilities that necessitate the use of motorized vehicles to get us to these famous collecting sites. Please don't lock us out of an area that I have personally visited since the early 1970s. (other rockhounds go back to the 1930s)

Thanks for your consideration,

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