

**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA# OR-010-2006-05)
AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**

PITCHER LANE GRAVEL PIT EXPANSION

The Lakeview Resource Area, Lakeview District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared an EA addressing a proposal and several alternatives authorizing the Lake County Road Department to expand the Pitcher Lane gravel pit. The existing pit is nearly depleted of rock material. Expanding the pit is needed to meet the anticipated future needs for County road maintenance in the surrounding area. The site is located in north Lake County adjacent to County Road 5-13 approximately five miles south of Fort Rock, Oregon.

The EA and FONSI document the potential effects of each alternative. Copies are available for review by writing to the BLM, Lakeview District Office, 1301 South G Street, Lakeview, Oregon 97630, or by calling Ken Tillman at (541) 947-2177. An electronic copy is also available at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/lakeview/plans/index.php>. If you wish to comment on the proposal, you must do so in writing at the address above by November 8, 2007.

FINDING OF NO SIGNICANT IMPACT

PITCHER LANE GRAVEL PIT EXPANSION

EA# OR-010-2006-05

The Bureau of Land Management, Lakeview Resource Area, has analyzed a proposal and several alternatives to authorize expansion of the existing Pitcher Lane gravel pit to give the Lake County Road Department continued availability of a sustainable gravel source for road maintenance and improvement work in north Lake County. The site is located on BLM-administered lands adjacent to County Road 5-13 approximately five miles south of Fort Rock, Oregon.

The proposed action is consistent with multiple use directives in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA; Section 102), the Minerals Leasing Act of 1920, and the Mining and Materials Policy Act of 1970. More specifically, the proposed pit expansion is consistent with energy and mineral management goal 3 of the Lakeview Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision (RMP/ROD; BLM 2003b). In addition, the area is open to salable mineral development under the management direction of the RMP/ROD. The action would be carried out in a manner described in the Guidelines for Development of Salable Minerals (Attachment 2, Appendix N, of the Lakeview RMP/ROD (BLM 2003b). The proposed action is also consistent with the direction in the Integrated Noxious Weed Control Program EA (BLM 2004).

There are no ACECs, RNAs, WSAs, designated wilderness areas, or other areas with wilderness characteristics, wild and scenic rivers, prime and unique farmlands, floodplains, special status plant or animal species, water quality, wetlands, riparian areas, fisheries or aquatic habitats, wild horses, or paleontological resources in the project area. None of the alternatives would have any impacts to low income or minority populations. Impacts to other resource values (soils, air quality, vegetation, wildlife, livestock grazing, visual quality, recreation, and historic resources) are minor and have been mitigated to extent practical. These impacts are described further in the attached EA.

On the basis of the analysis contained in the attached EA (#OR-010-2006-05) and all other available information, my determination is that none of the alternatives analyzed would constitute a major federal action which would adversely impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is unnecessary and will not be prepared.



Thomas E. Rasmussen, Manager
Lakeview Resource Area



Date

EA Number: OR-010-2006-05

PROJECT NAME: Pitcher Lane Rock Pit Expansion

PROJECT LOCATION: The project is located on the west toe slope of the Connley Hills formation in T26S, R14E, Sections 33 and 34 SW approximately 5 miles south of the town of Fort Rock, Oregon along County Road 5-13 (see Maps 1 and 2).

BLM OFFICE: Lakeview Resource Area, Lakeview District, 1301 South G Street, Lakeview, OR 97630.

LEASE/SERIAL/CASE FILE #: OR#63126.

APPLICANT: Lake County Road Department (LCRD).

Purpose and Need for Action: The purpose of the proposed action is to provide the Lake County Road Department (LCRD) with a reliable source of mineral materials for use in routine road maintenance and construction work in the north portion of Lake County. LCRD has many existing material sites within the northern portion of the County that have been depleted in recent years. LCRD continues to look for new material sites in close proximity to existing County roads. Suitable mineral material sites are limited within the northern portion of the County. The current Pitcher Lane Gravel Pit is authorized on approximately 40 acres (only 18 acres have actually been disturbed) on the west side of County Road 5-13, but it has been depleted of useable rock for road maintenance work.

This proposed action would expand the existing pit to the north and east by approximately 65 acres (approximately 10 acres to the north of the existing pit and 55 acres on the east side of County Road 5-13 (Map 2). This would provide LCRD with up to 640,000 cubic yards of mineral material for future County road work in the surrounding area.

CONFORMANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAND USE PLANS AND POLICIES: The proposed action and associated EA has been prepared in accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA; Section 102), the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA, 40 CFR 1500-1508), the Minerals Leasing Act of 1920, and the Mining and Materials Policy Act of 1970.

The proposal to provide mineral material for County road needs is consistent with the energy and mineral management goal 3 from the Lakeview Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision (BLM 2003b) which provides for meeting the demands for salable mineral materials by local, state, and Federal agencies and the public (page 91). In addition, the project area is designated as open to salable mineral material disposal (Map M-8). The proposed road improvements, weed monitoring, and site rehabilitation actions are also consistent with the road management direction (page 99), best management practices (namely those associated with road maintenance, surface disturbing activities, and mining; see Appendix D, pages A-2 to A-6), noxious weed management (pages 37-38; Appendix D, page A-6; and Appendix G, page A-165) and site rehabilitation direction (Table L2-1, pages A-170 to A-171) of the RMP/ROD (BLM 2003b). Making juniper removed from the site available for public firewood collection would also be consistent with the forest and woodland management goal 2 (pages 33-35).

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL

Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative #1): Under this alternative, the pit would be expanded in stages over time (sub-units 1 through 6). The new excavation areas would be opened on as needed basis in the numerical order shown on Map 2. Prior to development, the LCRD would be required to submit a site development and reclamation plan to the BLM for approval.

To minimize visual impacts, a 50-foot set-back buffer from Lake County Road 5-13 would be established. There would no mining within 50 feet of the County road. Once a sub-unit is depleted of rock, the next sub-unit would be opened. The depleted sub-unit would be rehabilitated by re-contouring, re-spreading of topsoil, and re-seeding with an appropriate native seed mix recommended by the BLM (see Table L2-1 in

the Lakeview RMP/ROD (BLM 2003b) for a list of potential seed mixes). The total area covered by the new material site would be approximately 65 acres. LCRD would use the existing 40-acre disturbed pit area west of County Road 5-13 for stockpiling and processing of material from the proposed expansion area.

To access the expansion area east of the County road, the LCRD would improve the existing road to the south and east of the material site (Map 2). The road improvement could include placement of gravel, widening, ditching, and new culverts as needed. A short portion of the road would be relocated to avoid an existing historic homestead site. The existing road in this location would be closed by fencing it off and rehabilitating the surface. A new cattle guard would be installed at the intersection of the existing fence line and the access road to eliminate the possibility of cattle getting out onto County Road 5-13 from an open gate.

As each sub-unit is developed, the LCRD would clear existing trees on the sub-unit. The trees would be piled on-site and made available for fuel wood to meet public demand for firewood.

All equipment would be cleaned prior to entering the pit expansion area. The project area would be monitored and treated for noxious weeds by the County in the future, if needed, in accordance with the existing programmatic weed treatment plan (BLM 2004).

Alternative #2 (No Action): Under this alternative, the existing pit would not be expanded or further developed. No additional mineral material would be provided from the site.

Alternative #3 (Smaller Site Development): Under this alternative, an additional material source would be established by expanding the existing pit, but areas with existing tree cover would not be cleared or have mineral material removed. The new material source would cover approximately 30 acres (Map 3).

Alternative #4 (Deferred Site Development): Under this alternative, the material site would not be expanded until all other existing material site sources in northern Lake County have been exhausted. Site development could be deferred from 3 to 10 years, but once it starts it would occur in a similar fashion as described for Alternative #1.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT DROPPED FROM DETAILED ANALYSIS

Alternative #5 (Alternate Access Road): One additional alternative considered was expanding the material site similar to Alternative #1, but upgrading the existing road south of the proposed pit expansion on its existing alignment and construction of access into the sub-unit #3 portion of the new pit area. This alternative was eliminated from detailed study because it would increase the total acreage of disturbance and would not avoid disturbance of an existing historic homestead site near the County road.

Alternative #6 (Larger Pit Expansion): Another alternative considered was a much larger pit expansion area as initially proposed by the Lake County Road Department. This proposal included an additional 33 acres northwest of the sub-unit #1 pit expansion area. This alternative was dropped from detailed analysis after an initial site visit revealed the ridge on the north side of the proposed pit expansion would provide visual screening of pit operations when viewed from the north. The screening provided by this ridge was considered to be a mitigation measure for the six unit pit expansion proposal (ie Alternatives 1, 3, and 4).

Description of Mitigation Measures COMMON TO ALL DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES (1, 3, and 4):

Hazardous Materials:

The pit expansion would include the use of vehicles that could potentially spill or leak hazardous substances (oil, gasoline, diesel, etc.). To minimize this potential impact, the contractor or Lake County (as the site operator) would be responsible for the development and submission of a Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan (SPCC) to the Authorized BLM Officer, prior to beginning the expansion

project. Should a spill or release of hazardous material occur, the contractor/operator would follow the contingency plan. Any release of a hazardous substance or a petroleum product that exceeds the reportable quantities would require a notification to the National Response Center and/or the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. If contamination occurs, RCRA compliance would be required. Coordination would be required with the BLM's Hazardous Materials Specialist.

Livestock grazing/off-highway vehicles:

If needed for safety reasons, the proposed pit area would be fenced and livestock and off-highway vehicle use would be excluded during the life of pit operations. Following the closure and successful reclamation activities, the fence could be removed.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT: The site is located adjacent to County Road 5-13 and is on the south side of a south sloping bench that extends westward below the Connley Hills formation. The site is located adjacent to the existing Pitcher Lane Pit (Map 2).

Geologically, the site lies along the boundary of an ancient lake basin. Historically, the Fort Rock Basin experienced the tumultuous effects of numerous volcanic eruptions of low volcanic cones. The Fort Rock Basin has no external drainage and until the end of the Pleistocene age (11,000 to 10,000 years ago) periodically contained a fresh water lake at least 50 feet deep. Alternating periods of moist and dry climate conditions caused the ancient lake to fill or retreat, or to disappear completely. More recently, dry conditions have persisted leaving the old lakeshore strandline sediments exposed at this site. Remnant ash material from Mount Mazama (Crater Lake caldera) and ash deposit material from other recent volcanoes such as Newberry Crater are not immediately identifiable at this site, however the sediments may contain small amounts of ash mixed with the lakeshore deposits.

Soils covering the majority of the site are described as a Lapham gravelly, ashy, sandy loam on slopes varying from 0 to 8 percent. A small portion of the area is covered by a Kuncneider ashy, loamy sand on slopes varying from 1 to 8 percent (North Lake County Ecological Site Inventory unpublished soil survey data). Underlying these soils are lakeshore strandline sediments consisting of graded, unconsolidated minor silt, coarse sand and gravel, pebbles, and boulders up to twelve inches in diameter. The sand and gravel at this site are considered by the BLM geologist to be a medium quality sand and gravel or common borrow material. The boulders are considered waste material, but could be used as coarse fill (rip rap), or could be crushed to provide additional gravel if it became economically feasible to do so at a future date.

Air quality in the project area and surrounding northern Lake County generally meets air quality standards. The area is sparsely populated and has no major known point sources of air pollutants. However, air quality can be negatively affected seasonally due to smoke from wildfires in the region (in summer) and wood-burning stoves (in winter).

The site is located in the interface of two plant communities: sagebrush-steppe and western juniper-Ponderosa pine woodland. The sandy soil supports a rich diversity of bunch grasses, shrubs, and annual forbs. The botanical clearance did not find any special status plant species within the project area. No noxious weeds were found in the area and only a few locations of cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) were found.

Much of the project area contains western juniper, including thirteen scattered old-growth trees. Old growth juniper is defined as trees 130+ years of age. This juniper stand is an extension of a much larger area of both old-growth and multi-age classes of juniper woodland found in the Connley Hills Research Natural Area (RNA) located approximately one mile to the east. This stand of juniper is contiguous with the stand in the RNA.

In addition, Ponderosa pines approximately 20-30 years old and ranging from one to eight feet in height are found growing in a line from southwest to northeast in the area on the top of an old Pleistocene lakeshore strandline just north of the proposed pit expansion on the east side of the County Road 5-13 (Map 4). The pine stand extends into the Connley Hills RNA to the east. A few isolated Ponderosa pines exist to the west

of the County Road continuing along the shoreline. This pine stand represents a small, isolated or disjunct pine population. Three isolated Ponderosa pines have also been found in the hills two miles to the southwest of the proposed pit area. An isolated Ponderosa pine forest exists in the Lost Forest RNA in the extreme northeast corner of the Basin, thirty five miles from the closest pine forest located to the west on the Fremont National Forest. The entire pine population covers an area about 1 mile by ½ mile near the proposed pit site, mostly in Section 34. A few pines (less than 6%) occur within the southern part of the project area where the pit expansion would occur.

The site is used minimally by a variety of wildlife species common to the sagebrush-steppe and juniper woodland habitat types and may include: mule deer, pronghorn antelope, coyotes, bobcats, ground squirrels, jackrabbits, cottontail rabbits, badgers, marmots, meadowlarks, sparrows, mice, voles, raptors, and bats. However, no known Special Status wildlife species or their habitats have been identified within project area.

Cattle graze in the project area as part of the larger surrounding Oatman Flat (#0705) allotment. The allotment comprises approximately 34,580 acres with 2,082 animal unit months (AUMs) of forage allocated to livestock. An additional 908 AUMs of forage are allocated to wildlife (BLM 2003b).

The project area has been classified in visual resource management (VRM) class IV (see Map VRM-3; BLM 2003). Management objectives for class IV include providing for other management activities that may require major modification of the landscape. These management activities may dominate the view and become the focus of viewer attention. However, every effort should be made to minimize the impact of these projects by carefully locating activities, minimizing disturbances, and designing the projects to conform to the characteristic landscape (BLM 2001, page A-290). The project area is not located within any designated scenic corridors.

Due to the close proximity to County Road 5-13, the area falls within the “roaded natural” recreation opportunity spectrum class (Map R-3, BLM 2003b). This classification means that on-going management “provides for the use of conventional motorized vehicles.” Both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities may be available (Appendix M, page A-288, BLM 2001). However, off-highway vehicle use in the vicinity is restricted to existing roads and trails (Map R-7, BLM 2003b). There is currently no recreational use data available specifically for the project area. However, the site may be used in the fall for hunting along with surrounding BLM lands. The existing gravel pit may also be used occasionally for RV camping, particularly during the fall hunting season, as it provides an easily accessible level site to set up a camper near the Connley Hills.

A cultural survey has been completed in the project area. The survey found no cultural resources in the proposed pit expansion area. However, one historic homestead site is located near the existing access road.

There are no designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), Research Natural Areas (RNAs), wilderness areas, Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), or other areas with wilderness characteristics within the proposed project area. However, the Connley Hills RNA lies one mile east of the proposed pit expansion.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

The following resource values either are not present in the area (and would not be affected) or would not be significantly affected by any of the alternatives analyzed: ACECs, RNAs, WSAs, wilderness areas or other areas with wilderness characteristics, wild and scenic rivers, prime and unique farmlands, floodplains, special status species, water quality, wetlands, riparian areas, fisheries or aquatic habitats, wild horses, land status, or paleontology. None of the alternatives would have any impacts to low income or minority populations.

The potential environmental impacts resulting from each of the alternatives analyzed in detail are described in the following section.

ALTERNATIVE 1 (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE) –

Under Alternative 1, the proposed pit expansion would allow continued extraction of sand and gravel in close proximity to existing County roads which require periodic maintenance and would result in a substantial savings in terms of wear and tear on maintenance vehicles, as well as fuel and hauling costs for Lake County. It would also allow the County to respond more quickly to emergency road repair needs and improve public access and safety in the surrounding area. The pit would supply aggregate for other road projects in north Lake County for the Silver Lake area and areas west of Christmas Valley and south of the community of Fort Rock. This alternative would provide the LCRD with a rock source when they need it.

Quarry development and operation would have short-term negative effects on air quality in the immediate vicinity of the project area. Heavy equipment would produce particulates, dust, and hydrocarbons emissions during operation. However, this impact would be localized, occurring only when the pit is being actively utilized, and would not violate air quality standards.

Under this alternative, about 5-10 acres of vegetation would be removed from the project area at any point in time. Once the under-lying rock material has been removed from a given sub-unit, the area would be re-contoured, top-soiled, and re-seeded. Herbaceous vegetation is expected to re-establish following rehabilitation and would stabilize area soils. For this reason, impacts to vegetation communities are considered short-term. Over a longer period of time (20-30 years), juniper and Ponderosa pine seedlings may reestablish on the site from natural adjacent seed sources. Over the life of the pit, up to 13 old-growth western juniper would be removed within the project area. The juniper trees that are removed would be made available as fuel wood to meet public demand for firewood.

At any given point in time only 5-10 acres of vegetation/wildlife habitat would be actively disturbed. Following successful reclamation and re-vegetation of a sub-unit, some wildlife would again use or re-colonize the area. Therefore, no long-term or significant impacts to wildlife or wildlife habitat are anticipated.

Approximately 5-10 acres of grazed rangeland would be removed from livestock grazing at any given point in time. Once an active sub-unit is depleted rehabilitated, the sub-unit could be made available for grazing use. For this reason, this would represent a negligible and temporary loss livestock forage from the 34,578 acre allotment. If, however, it is determined that an enclosure fence is needed, up to 65 acres of forage would be temporarily lost during pit operations. Following site reclamation the fence would be removed and grazing would be allowed to resume in the area.

This alternative could negatively affect the limited, on-going recreational activities that may occur on or near the site. RV camping might still occur in the fall (associated with hunting) if the LCRD is not actively removing mineral material at that time. During times when the pit is actively being used, this camping use would likely shift to other locations in the surrounding area.

Under Alternative 1, there would be short-term impacts to visual quality while the site is actively used. Four measures have been incorporated into the pit development and operation design to reduce impacts to visual quality. These include: 1) the material site would be positioned on the south side of the south sloping bench crossed by County Road 5-13 to screen the pit from viewers to the north, 2) the pit would be set back fifty feet from the County road to further screen pit operations from the road, 3) pit operations would proceed in phases to reduce the total amount of open disturbance at any one point in time, beginning at the point farthest from the County road to further reduce pit visibility in the beginning phases of pit life, and 4) reclamation would proceed in phases with the final phase of the pit being reclaimed when the pit is permanently closed. These actions would minimize the visual impacts during the pit operations as well as, over the long-term, based on experience with other reclaimed pits in the area which have had a limited visual impact after reclamation.

ALTERNATIVE 2 (NO ACTION) –

Under this alternative, there are several possible impacts. Under one possible scenario, the LCRD would have to utilize other existing pits in north Lake County to supply mineral material for road maintenance needs in the immediate area, with an associated increase in road maintenance costs due to increased hauling distances. Eventually, other pits would become depleted making it more difficult to perform County road maintenance. Overall, road maintenance activities would decline and County road conditions would become sub-standard, resulting in a loss of public access and potentially becoming a public safety issue, as County roads deteriorate over time.

Under the other possible scenario, the LCRD would look elsewhere in the general vicinity for another potential source of road-quality rock. This would involve opening a new material pit somewhere else in the north Lake County. The impacts of pit development in another location are beyond the scope of this analysis, but would likely be similar to one or more of the other alternatives analyzed in this EA. Development of a different site would require a separate NEPA analysis. It is important to note that though the types of impacts described for the action alternatives (1, 3, and 4) would not occur at the Pitcher Lane site under this scenario, they would most likely be transferred to some other site in northern Lake County.

Under Alternative 2, there would no significant changes to existing vegetation communities, wildlife populations or habitat, recreational use, or visual quality in the project area. However, other natural changes such as vegetation succession and wildfire could occur in the future resulting in changed site conditions.

ALTERNATIVE 3 –

Under Alternative 3, the LCRD would reduce the overall size of the proposed pit expansion. The portion immediately north of the existing pit would not be developed. In addition, the 15-acre old-growth juniper stand east of the County road would be avoided. The total area of surface disturbance would be about 30 acres. All other impacts would be similar in nature, but involve less total acreage than Alternative 1.

ALTERNATIVE 4 (DEFERRED DEVELOPMENT) –

Under Alternative 4, the LCRD would defer development of the site into the future. In the interim, if a large quantity of material was needed for emergency repair it would not be available. This alternative would not allow the road department time to develop the site in anticipation of future needed maintenance or construction activities. This could negatively affect public access and safety in the surrounding area.

However, once development starts all other impacts would be similar in nature and total acreage to those associated with Alternative 1.

SECONDARY, INDIRECT, AND CUMULATIVE IMPACTS :

No secondary or indirect impacts are expected to occur as the result of any of the four alternatives analyzed in detail.

The current conditions on the land affected by the proposed action resulted from a multitude of natural and human actions that have taken place over many decades. A catalogue and analysis, comparison, or description of all individual past actions and their effects which have contributed to the current environmental conditions would be practically impossible to compile and unduly costly to obtain. Cataloguing the effects of each of these individual past actions would be a time consuming and expensive task which would not provide a clearer understanding of the existing environmental conditions. Instead of incurring these exorbitant costs (time and money), it is possible to implement easier, more accurate, and less costly ways to obtain the information concerning those past actions which are necessary for an analysis of the “impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.” (See definition of “cumulative impact” in 40 CFR § 1508.7).

A description of the current state of the affected environment inherently includes the effects of past actions and serves as a more accurate and useful starting point for a cumulative effects analysis, rather than attempting to establish such a starting point by “adding up” the described effects of all individual past actions. The importance of “past actions” is to set the context for understanding the incremental effects of the proposed action. This context is determined by combining the current conditions with available information on the expected effects of other present and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Here the cataloguing and analysis of the effects of other similar present and reasonably foreseeable actions is necessary and has been described below. By comparing the total effect of the no action alternative to the effects described when adding the proposed action or any action alternative, one can discern the incremental cumulative impact resulting from a given alternative.

Further, the information available on individual past actions is largely anecdotal and does not constitute a scientifically acceptable methodology capable of illuminating or predicting the direct or indirect effects of the proposed action and its alternatives. The basis for predicting the direct and indirect effects of the proposed action and its alternatives should be based on generally accepted scientific methodologies such as empirical research. That said, a brief discussion of the types of past mineral exploration and development activities that have occurred on the Lakeview Resource Area is included in the Lakeview Proposed RMP/Final EIS (BLM 2003), pages 2-90 to 2-95, and provides a broader context within which to consider the potential incremental cumulative impacts of the three action alternatives. Mining activity occurs in three distinct categories governed by different mining laws and regulations: salable, leasable, and locatable. The proposed mineral pit falls under the salable mineral category. A discussion of the cumulative impacts of all three mineral activities is included below.

Appendix N1 of the Draft Lakeview RMP/EIS (BLM 2001), pages A-292 and A-293, summarizes historic mineral activity within the resource area. In 1997 and 1998, 34 historic mining districts and two isolated prospect areas were inventoried to document historic, abandoned, or unreclaimed mining sites. A total of 491 small, individual abandoned workings were found, each generally under an acre in size. Abandoned mine workings are currently being reclaimed within the Lakeview Resource Area under the abandoned mine lands program at a rate of one or two sites each year based on site priority and funding. When new mineral development occurs in one of these old, abandoned sites, they are also reclaimed when the recent mineral development is done.

A detailed discussion of historic salable mineral activity is included in Appendix N1, pages A-292 to A-297, of the Draft Lakeview Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (BLM 2001). For salable minerals there are an estimated 50 to 100 existing sand, gravel, rock, and cinder pits scattered across the Lakeview Resource Area (Map M-3). These sites disturb an average of approximately 15 to 20 acres of land each, but may be as large as 40 acres. The Lakeview Proposed RMP/Final EIS (BLM 2003) estimated and analyzed opening 15 to 30 new salable mineral sites, up to 40 acres in size each, over the life of the plan. This represents 600 – 1,200 acres of potential additional mining disturbance, the impacts of which are discussed in the secondary, indirect, and cumulative impacts section of the Final EIS on page 4-139. Since the Lakeview Proposed RMP/Final EIS was completed, four new pits have been opened (Walnut Orchard, Rabbit Hills, West Gulch, and Winter Rim) and a fifth (Miners Draw) has been approved for development. These five new pits represent approximately 135 additional acres of disturbance.

A discussion of locatable and leasable mineral exploration and development and historical activity is also included in the Lakeview Proposed RMP/Final EIS (BLM 2003), pages 2-90 to 2-95, and in Appendix N2, pages A-209 to A-219. As of September 1999 (immediately prior to initiation of the Lakeview RMP), there were 368 active mining claims recorded in the resource area. Eighty percent of those claims were located in the Rabbit Basin sunstone area. The remaining claims were in the Tucker Hill perlite area and Christmas Valley diatomaceous earth area. The total number of claims has not changed from 1999 to 2006. In 1999, activity on these claims included 67 mining notices and two mining plans of operations. Disturbance for mining notices averages 2.3 acres per notice. Disturbance for mine development requiring mining plans of operation ranges from five to several hundred acres. The Lakeview Proposed RMP/Final EIS (BLM 2003) estimated an average of 67 mining notices and two mining plans would be open at any point in time during the life of the plan (with a total estimated disturbance ranging from 160 to 660 acres). In 2006, there were a total of 65 mining notices and two mining plans active. One of the mining plan areas

(diatomaceous earth) is very close to closure, having completed 90 percent of the final site reclamation and rehabilitation.

Leasable mineral activity includes all energy minerals and sodium. In 1999, there was no leasable mineral activity. The Lakeview Proposed RMP/Final EIS (BLM 2003), pages 2-90 to 2-95, and Appendix N2, pages A-215 to A-219, estimated that 2 to 4 oil and gas leases or geophysical activities would occur per year in the resource area disturbing up to 670 acres. Up to four geothermal exploration actions per year were expected with approximately 12 acres of disturbance. Currently, neither oil or gas, geothermal, nor sodium development activity has occurred since the RMP was completed in 2003.

The proposed Pitcher Lane Pit expansion would be the fifth new salable mineral pit to be opened since 2003 and represents an incremental cumulative effect of up to 65 additional acres of mining disturbance under Alternatives 1 and 4. The only difference in the cumulative effect of Alternatives 1 and 4 is that under Alternative 1 the impact would occur sooner than under Alternative 4. Under Alternative 3 an incremental cumulative effect of approximately 30 acres of additional mining disturbance would occur. Under the No Action Alternative (2), the 30- 65 acres of new disturbance associated with the proposed expansion of the existing Pitcher Lane Pit (under Alternatives 1, 3, and 4) would not occur. However, up to 1,065 acres (1,200-135) of additional mineral pit development would still be expected to occur in other parts of the Lakeview Resource Area, as identified in the Lakeview Proposed RMP/Final EIS (BLM 2003), in response to future needs. It is likely that some of this additional pit development would occur elsewhere in north Lake County.

This estimated 202 acres of total new salable mining disturbance resulting from the five new pits and the current proposed expansion of the existing Pitcher Lane Pit and the 115 acres of locatable mineral disturbance are well within the range of mineral development impacts anticipated and previously analyzed within the Lakeview Proposed RMP/Final EIS (BLM 2003; see Table 1). In addition, the total amount of new mining related disturbance (since completion of the RMP; see Table 1) expected from all mining categories (salable, locatable, and leasable) would be small when considered within the context of the 3.2 million acres of public lands potentially available for mineral development and other multiple uses within the Lakeview Resource Area.

Table 1. Total Acres of Mining-Related Disturbances in the Lakeview Resource Area

	Historic (pre-RMP)	Expected during Life of RMP	Actual to Date (post-RMP)
Abandoned Mine Lands	<500	0	0
Salable	750-2,000	600-1,200	
<u>New Pits</u>			
- Walnut Orchard			73
- Rabbit Hills			11
- Winter Rim			5
- West Gulch			1
- Miners Draw			45
Locatable	No estimate available	160-660	115
Leasable	0	682	0

In addition, surface disturbance can be further analyzed from the perspective of soil disturbance, loss of vegetation, loss of wildlife habitat, and impacts of scenic/visual quality. These types of impacts were also analyzed in Chapter 4 of the Lakeview RMP/Final EIS (BLM 2003). Since the total amount of mining related disturbance is well under that previously analyzed, the associated impacts on soils, vegetation, wildlife, and visual quality is also under or within the range of that analyzed in the Lakeview RMP/Final EIS.

Over the life of the pit, up to 60 acres of western juniper habitat, including 13 old-growth juniper trees, would be removed within the project area. The Lakeview RMP/Final EIS analyzed the cumulative impacts of treating up to 50% of the existing juniper habitat within the Lakeview Resource Area over a 15-20 year period (BLM 2003; pages 3-17 to 3-19). (Note: at the time of the RMP/EIS analysis, approximately 215,000 acres of juniper habitat were estimated to exist in the Lakeview Resource Area. This estimate has recently been revised to approximately 366,000 acres based on additional inventory work in 2005-2006). Since the RMP was completed in 2003, approximately 25,000 acres of juniper habitat have been treated using such treatment methods as mechanical, prescribed fire, and firewood cutting. Old-growth juniper habitat within these other treatment areas has been avoided or protected. The cumulative effects of the removal of an additional 60 acres of juniper habitat, when added to the 25,000 acres of other treatments is well under or within the range of impacts previously analyzed in the Lakeview RMP/Final EIS (BLM 2003; pages 4-23 to 4-25). At the proposed pit, juniper would likely reinvade from seed sources in the surrounding area within 20-30 years following reclamation. The loss of the old-growth juniper trees would be more long-term. However, the impacts of the removal of this juniper habitat, considered at the resource area scale, would not exceed those already addressed in the RMP/EIS.

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REFERENCES:

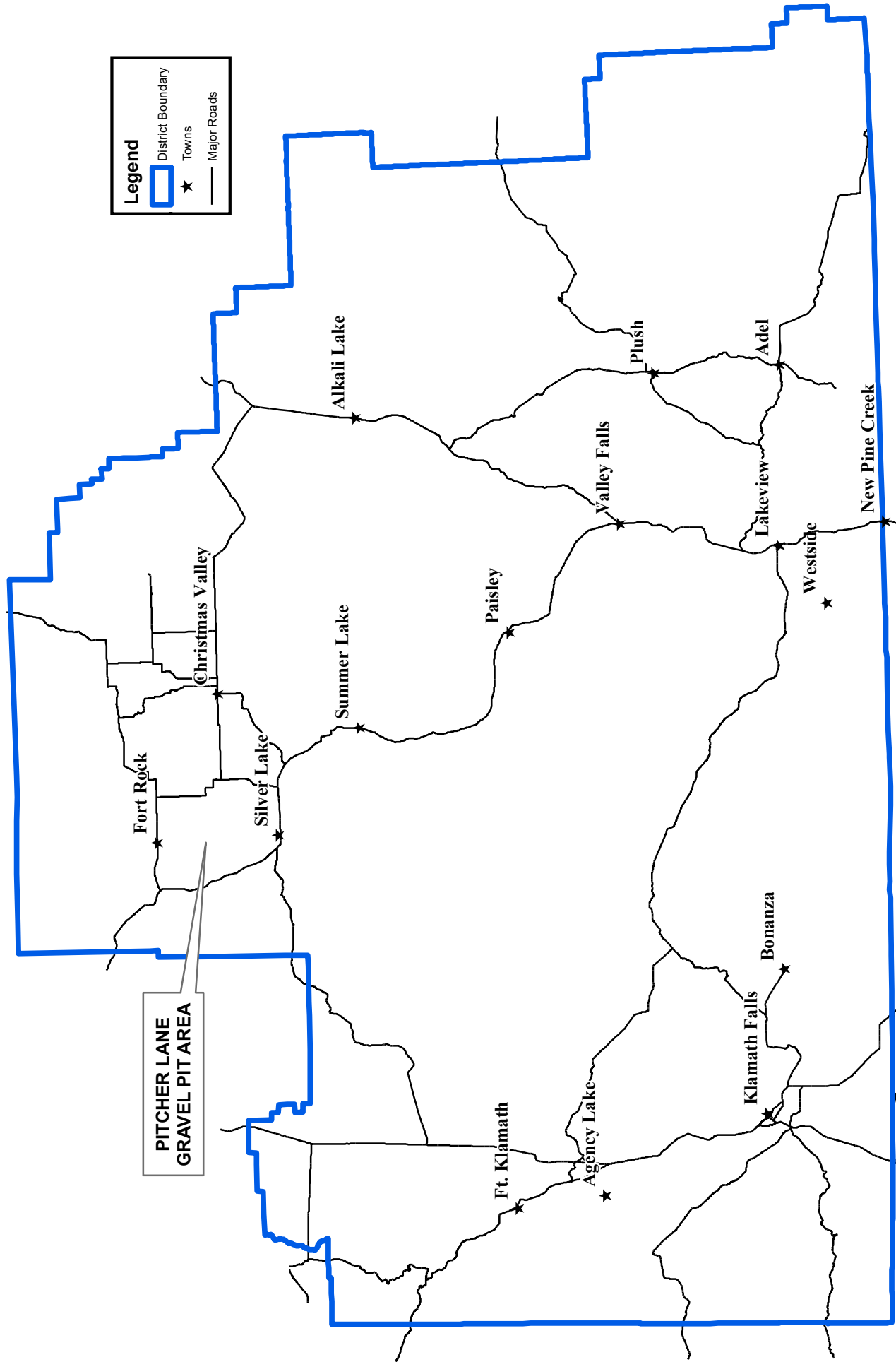
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BLM. 2003. Lakeview Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement. USDI, BLM, Lakeview District, Lakeview, OR. 4 volumes.

BLM. 2003b. Lakeview Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision. USDI, BLM, Lakeview District, Lakeview, OR. 2 volumes.

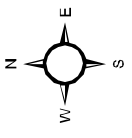
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MAP 1 - PROJECT LOCATION OF PITCHER LANE PROPOSED GRAVEL PIT EXPANSION



Legend

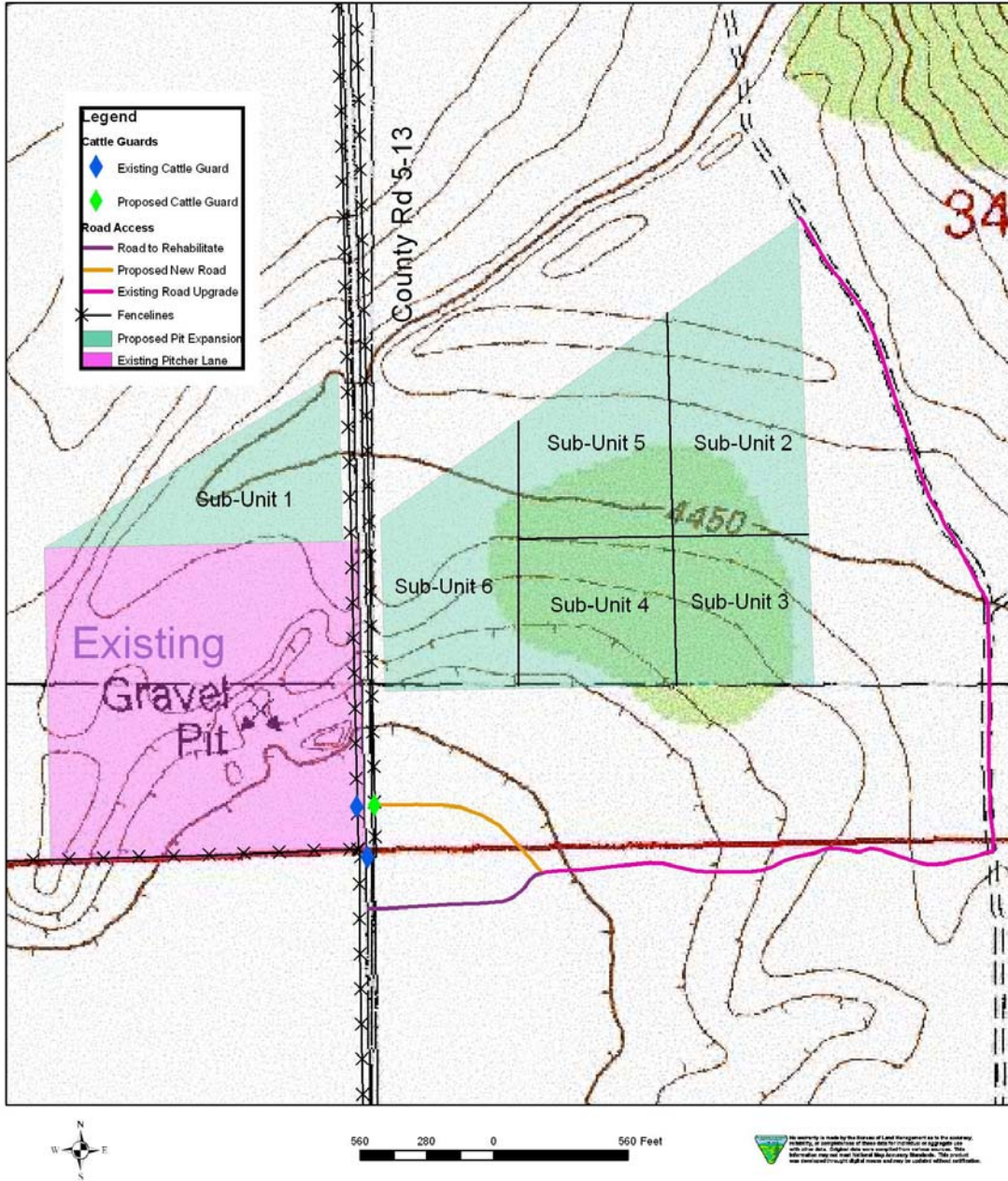
- District Boundary
- ★ Towns
- Major Roads



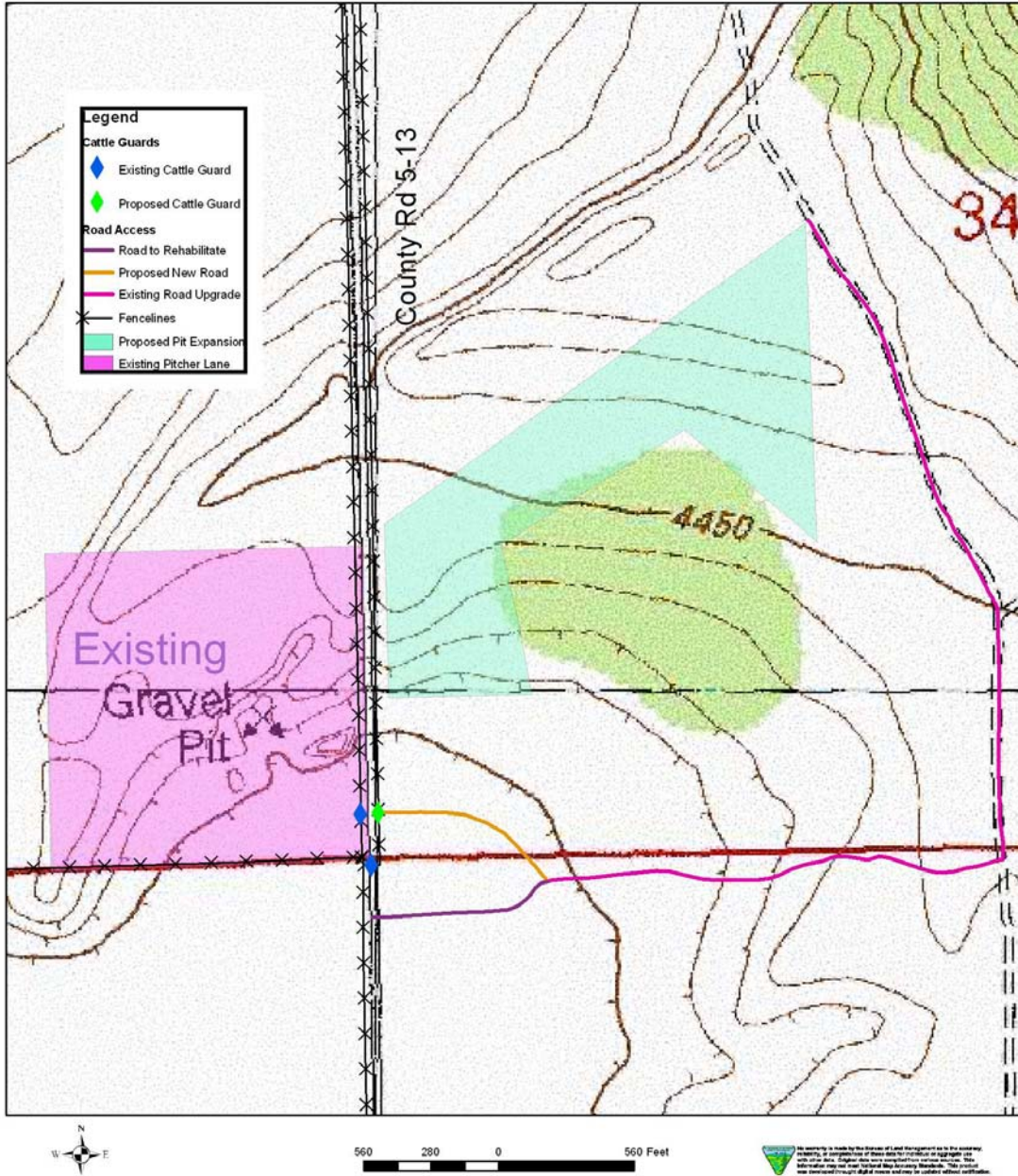
**PITCHER LANE
GRAVEL PIT AREA**

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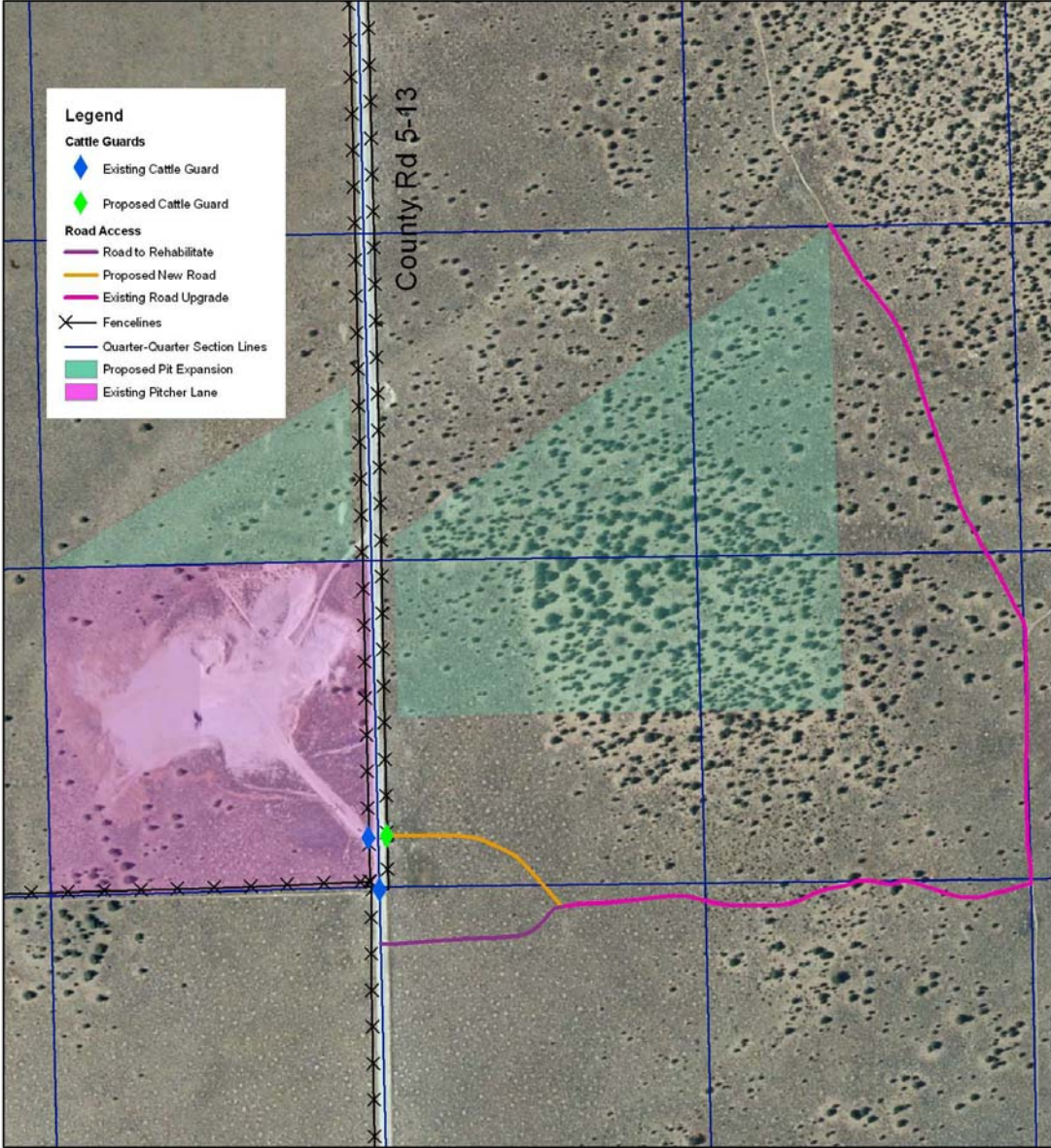
Map 2 - Proposed Pitcher Lane Gravel Pit Expansion Alternatives 1 and 4



Map 3 - Proposed Pitcher Lane Gravel Pit Expansion Alternative 3



Map 4 - Existing Vegetation at the Proposed Pitcher Lane Gravel Pit Expansion Area



This accuracy is based on the Department of Land Management as to the accuracy of the information of base data for this data and is not a warranty of accuracy or reliability. The user should verify the accuracy of the information and use the information at their own risk. This information may not meet the accuracy standards. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification.