

**ORDER NO. 0513-20-02**

**SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST  
KERN RIVER RANGER DISTRICT  
BIG BLUE MILL SITE AREA CLOSURE**

Pursuant to 16 USC 551 and 36 CFR 261.50(b), and to provide for public safety, the following acts are prohibited within the Big Blue Mill Site Closure Area within the Kern River Ranger District of the Sequoia National Forest. This Order is effective from February 28, 2020, through February 27, 2022.

Going into or being upon National Forest System lands within the Big Blue Mill Site Closure Area. The Big Blue Mill Site Closure Area boundary begins at a point approximately 750 feet from the southwest corner of the northwest quarter of Section 27, Township 23 South, Range 32 East, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian, then continues north approximately 2,300 feet along the boundary of the Sequoia National Forest to a point 250 feet east of the intersection of the Forest boundary and Burlando Road, then continues due east approximately 1,200 feet to the west bank of the Kern River, then continues south approximately 2,500 feet along the Kern River to a point 650 feet from where the Forest boundary intersects with Burlando Road, then continues due west approximately 220 feet back to the starting point, as shown on the attached map. 36 CFR 261.53(e).

Pursuant to 36 CFR 261.50(e), the following persons are exempt from this Order:

1. Any Federal, State or local officer, or member of an organized rescue or fire-fighting force in the performance of an official duty with explicit approval from the Forest Service Regional On-Scene Coordinator.
2. Persons with a contract from the Forest Service specifically authorizing work within the Big Blue Mill Site Closure Area and their employees, subcontractors or agents, to the extent authorized by the contract.
3. Persons, who have explicit approval from the Forest Service Regional On-Scene Coordinator, with a Permit for Use of Roads, Trails, or Areas Restricted by Regulation or Order (Form FS-7700-48) from the Forest Service specifically authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission.

These prohibitions are in addition to the general prohibitions in 36 CFR Part 261, Subpart A. A violation of these prohibitions is punishable by a fine of not more than \$5,000 for an individual or \$10,000 for an organization, or imprisonment for not more than six months, or both. 16 USC 551 and 18 USC 3559, 3571, and 3581.

Executed in Porterville, California this 27th day of February, 2020.



TERESA BENSON  
Forest Supervisor,  
Sequoia National Forest



**Big Blue Mill Site Area Closure (Order No. 0513-20-02)**  
**Administrative Record**

I have decided to issue a Forest Order authorizing the closure of a portion of the Kern River Ranger District, Sequoia National Forest. This closure is necessary to ensure public safety, protect natural resources, and provide time for cleanup in a response action pursuant to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act ("CERCLA"), 42 U.S.C. § 9604, Federal Executive Order 12580 as amended, and 7 C.F.R. § 2.60(a)(40). The Area affected is shown on the attached map. This closure will be in effect from February 28, 2020, through February 27, 2022. This closure is based on the Time Critical Action Memorandum and the additional analysis and documentation in the project record.

The Site is approximately 4.1 acres in size located on the western shoreline of the Kern River. The only physical evidence remaining at the Site of the former mill structures are concrete foundations and dilapidated retaining walls.

Along the shoreline there is clear evidence of tailings and mineral processing wastes from the former mill operations. There is evidence of iron oxide suspected from roasting operations associated with former mineral processing activities at the Site.

The concentration of arsenic, lead, and mercury present in the tailings are at the ground surface throughout the former mill site and pose an exposure threat to site visitors. Prohibiting public access to the Big Blue Mill Site area will prevent human exposure to elevated concentrations of arsenic, lead, and mercury. Site exposure pathways of concern due to the presence of arsenic, mercury and lead are through inhalation, dermal exposure and ingestion.

Mill waste and tailings are present in surface deposits and soils and are susceptible to migration because of water- and wind-borne influences. There is a high likelihood of transferring contamination to clothing, equipment and vehicles that would result in contaminated material being transported and deposited at off-site locations such as residences and offices.

The current assessment of the extent of elevated heavy metals present in the soil-like tailings is based on a preliminary field screening. There is a need for additional sampling to establish the vertical and lateral extent of the contamination present at the Site. The results of this additional investigation will determine future CERCLA response actions at the Site.

The closure order and related actions address the immediate human health exposure concerns arising from the presence of hazardous substances in the tailings present at the ground surface at the former Big Blue Mill Site.

The Area Closure is the most immediate and effective method to protect public health and safety and the environment within the Area. This closure is necessary because it addresses the immediate human health exposure concerns arising from the presence of hazardous substances in the tailings present at the ground surface at the former Big Blue Mill Site.

I have also considered all relevant and required resource conditions in determining whether there were any extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed actions that warranted further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment and found no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action.

The Area Closure is the most immediate and effective method to protect public health and safety and the environment and resources, within the Area.

**Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Noelle Graham-Wakoski, email: [noelle.graham@usda.gov](mailto:noelle.graham@usda.gov), On-Scene Coordinator, Cleveland National Forest, 10845 Rancho Bernardo Road, Ste 200, San Diego, CA 92127

Dated this 27<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2020.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Teresa Benson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

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TERESA BENSON  
Forest Supervisor  
Sequoia National Forest