

Drywasher's Gazette

March 2026

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Next Meeting – Tuesday, March 3rd – Details Inside

Mission and Code of Ethics

Valley Prospectors Inc. is a non-profit educational organization dedicated *To promote Gold Prospecting as a healthy family activity.*

A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

General Membership Meeting is held first Tuesday of each month at 6:00 pm at the Elks Lodge in San Bernardino, CA.

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Impact of Temporary Mojave OHV Trail Closures *Closures planned to be in effect from March to June 2026*

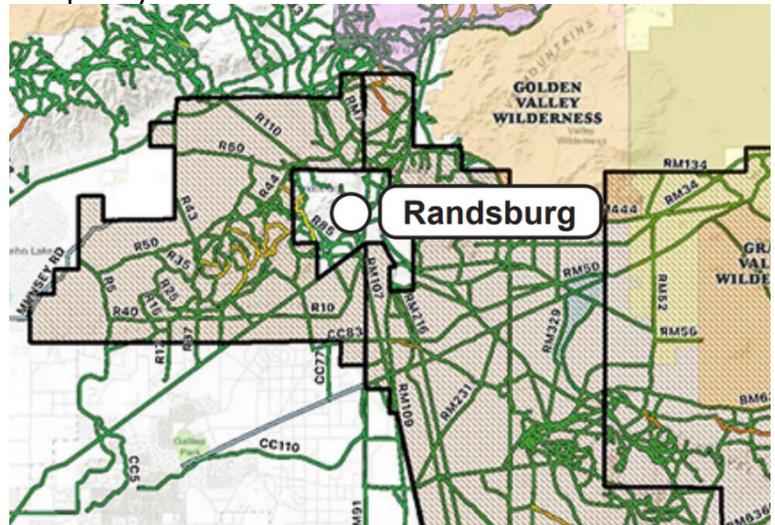
In early February 2026, a Federal Judge ordered the temporary closures of a small portion of trails located in the Western Mojave region of BLM lands. Despite much public uproar, the scope of the closures is both temporary and limited to a few of the many trails available to OHV vehicles. The closures stem from the Bureau of Land Management's failure to include required environmental impact mitigation strategies when it created the travel management plan that oversees the OHV trail system for the region and evidence of substantial damage from OHV use in key habitat for desert tortoise populations. The closures are expected to start sometime in March 2026.

Most importantly, the judgement explicitly states that there will be continued access to the public for the other 271,661 acres in the Western Mojave trail system and that the closures are only in effect until BLM completes the inadequate environmental plan with a deadline of *June 1, 2026*, for reimplementation. The revised plan is expected to change or limit some areas of the OHV trails currently under the order, but the goal is to modify current routes and not close the zones completely.

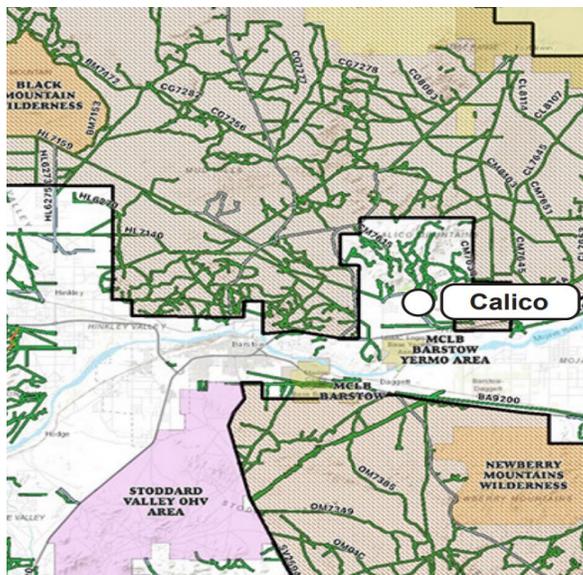


There is an express carve out in the court order that BLM shall keep open "any and all routes needed to provide

access for established easements, administrative access, emergency access, and other permitted uses (but not public OHV recreational use)." It is unclear how this applies to mining claim access with street legal vehicles. The only limitation on this timeline is the severe budget cuts imposed by the current federal administration to BLM staffing for these matters.



Impacted areas include the Jawbone region OHV routes in the Rand Mountains, Red Mountain area, Cuddeback Lake, and Kramer Hills and designated Barstow region OHV routes north of Harper Valley and Hinkley, north of I-15 to the Cronese Lakes, and in the Ord, Newberry and Rodman Mountains. Access to the Club's Coolgardie and Randsburg claims may be effected during this time period. These areas will generally still be accessible on foot only. BLM is responsible for enforcing the closures and placing signage or fencing as needed during the time the plan is being revised.



Full map and copy of the Court's order can be found at these links. Map excerpts are taken from main map linked below.
[Link to Court Order re OHV Trial Closure](#)
[Link to Map of Closure Regions](#)

Upcoming Events & Notices

Early March we are working the Ventura Gem Show doing panning demonstrations. This is a very popular event and we always need additional help to man the booth. Please reach out to Steve Schubert for more information if you are available on the weekend of March 7-8.

Did you miss out on the February 21st Club Outing to the Oro Rico Claim in the Coolgardie Mining District outside of Barstow, CA? Well, you have a second chance. This time there will be a chance to show off your metal detecting skills to win a gold nugget!



Oro RICO Claim Outing Coolgardie
March 21st
Special
METAL DETECTING HUNT
FREE
Gold Nugget Prizes – to enter



Meet at Starlight Donuts in Barstow, CA to Caravan to Claim Location
Caravan Leaves 8:00AM

Visiting or Working on a Club Claim or on a Claim the Club has Permission to Work?

****Please Read the Following****

This Applies to ALL Club Members and Their Guests.

Hold Harmless Agreement: Valley Prospectors and its members are not responsible or are to be held liable for injury, illness or death occurring at any club claim, function, or outing by any member or guest. Each member and their guests are responsible for properly being informed of potential hazards or risks that may occur while engaged in any activities while on club claims. **"ENTER CLAIMS AT YOUR OWN RISK"**. By requesting to be a new member or by renewing my Valley Prospector's membership I have read and understood this agreement and agree to the above statements.



VENTURA GEM SHOW
March 7-8
VP will have a Gold Panning Booth
Volunteers Needed

February General Meeting Minutes

February 3rd, 2026

President Albert Naki called the meeting to order. The meeting started at 6:04 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Joe Chavez

Approval of Minutes: President Albert Naki asked for the approval of the January general meeting minutes. Andrea Frost made the motion to accept January 6th, 2026, general meeting minutes as published in the Drywasher's Gazette. David Tamulevich seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Lorraine Frost gave the treasurer's report.

Outing Report: Lorraine Frost said the Summit Sunday outing was a success. She spoke about rebuilding the road into the claim. There were 17 members who attended the outing.

Valley Prospectors will participate in the Ventura Gem and Mineral Show to be held on March 7th and 8th, 2026. Volunteers will be needed to help set up the panning demonstration booth and help with the panning demonstration booth on both days.

Claims Committee Report: Lorraine Frost said she is going to put together a claims committee for the club,

Lady Luck Report: Bural LaRue gave the Lady Luck report.

Membership Report: Lorraine Frost gave her report. There are currently 218 Family Memberships and 7 Lifetime Memberships and 1 Honorary Membership. Lorraine is currently working on membership renewals and there are 58 members who need to renew their club memberships.

Finds of the Month Report: Everett Miller gave his report, and he also explained how the Finds of the Month worked.

Editor Report: Articles must be submitted to the newsletter by February 10th, 2026, according to Michelle O'Brien. Members are requested to submit articles for the newsletter.

Refreshments Report: Stacey and Joe Dixon brought the refreshments to the meeting and President Albert Naki thanked them.

Courtesy Report: Susan Birrell gave an update on Mindy Ryan who is still in the hospital recovering from surgery. Lorraine Frost fell at the Summit Claim and fractured her right wrist.

Membership Appreciation Lunch: Lorraine Frost gave the report. The club will hold its 50th Anniversary Party at the Big Bear Museum. There'll be a chuckwagon lunch served.

Schools Report: Steve and Mary Schubert spoke about doing the gold panning demonstrations for the schools. Steve Schubert said the club was going to do a panning demonstration for the Rialto School District. There'll be three classrooms participating. The date of the gold panning demonstration will be February 13th, 2026.

Club Apparel: Mary Schubert gave the report, and the club is selling sweatshirts for \$15.00.

Guests: President Albert Naki recognized the guests who were attending the meeting.

Program Report: Lorraine Frost said the program for tonight's meeting is the BLM and MLRS system online website.

Budget Report: Lorraine Frost presented the 2026 Valley Prospectors operating budget at the general meeting. Michelle O'Brien made the motion to approve the 2026 Valley Prospectors operating budget. Dave Tamulevich seconded the motion and the motion carries.

Susan Birrell gave a short report on showing the different containers that can be used for storing gold.

Program: The program for the meeting tonight is the BLM and MLRS system online website.

President Albert Naki called for a break in the meeting and the time was 6:43 p.m. and the meeting resumed at 7:10 p.m.

Door Prize Winner: Katherine Naki **Treasure Finds of the Month Winners:** 1st: Joe Chavez. 2nd: Fred Borad, 3rd: Bill Vest **Gold Finds of the Month Winners:** 1st: Brian Teeling, 2nd: Don Snyder 3rd: Joe Chavez. President Albert Naki called for the meeting to be adjourned. Susan Birrell made the motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Mary Schubert seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.



Gold Plated Humor

Collected by Evan O'Brien

"I went for a job as a gold prospector, but it didn't pan out."



"I told my friend a mining joke, but it was too deep for him."

**Why did the prospector get kicked out of the Saloon?
It's illegal to sell alcohol to miners**

**Why did they build a castle for the pile of gold?
Because it's a noble metal**

**What did the iron say to the gold when found him trespassing?
AU, get out of here!**

**Why were they called gold miners?
Because when they found gold, they said, 'Mine! Mine!
Mine!**

A promotional banner with a green and yellow color scheme. The left side is dark green with white text and floral icons. The right side is light green with dark green text and butterfly icons. A yellow wavy line separates the two sections.

APPAREL MARCH DEALS

Magnetic Car Signs, Window Clings, Hats, and other swag also available

CONTACT MARY SHUBERT FOR DETAILS OR E-MAIL
valleyprospectors49@gmail.com

CLUB LOGO POLO SHIRT \$5.00

CREW NECK PULLOVER SWEATSHIRT \$15.00

The Art of Puddling

A Time-Honored Technique for Dealing with Clay Laden Diggings

Clay, the devilish gold thief that absorbs and sticks to fine placer gold locking it into cement like layers or a sticky obstructionist that gets in the way of riffles working properly. Savvy desert miners often crush the dry material to help unlock the gold, but it is not a perfect solution. Even wet processing methods like the sluice struggle with clay balls that resist being dissolved to release the paydirt and at worst could stick to gold already recovered before tumbling out of the box and down river. Wet clay can also quickly clog recirculating sluices and muck up gold recovery efforts by clogging the riffles. It's tenacious stuff and many a swear words have been uttered over it.

Add high clay content to a dry claim and gold recovery can severely suffer. Puddling is a simple solution that conserves water resources. In its simplest form, a tub like a ½ barrel that is filled with water and the clay heavy material added. Soaking and agitation allows the fine clay to be suspended into the water like a murky soup. The method of what comes next is as varied as the landscapes in which we find gold. Some would siphon off the clay suspension to settling ponds or buckets so the water could be reused the leftover sand and gravel then processed separately. Others simply put the whole mixture through a sluice or direct to the gold pan. It all depended on the miner's resources and patience.



Source: <https://www.detectorprospector.com/>

Historical accounts indicated that this method seems to naturally arise in arid mining conditions. Australian miners in the later 1800's scaled up and mechanized this method to include engine or animal powered mixers and giant settling ponds. The Puddling Machine developed by the Australians looked and worked similar to an araster for crushing hard rock ore. Modern small miners have been known to use the iconic orange Home Depot bucket as an improvised puddling tub.



Puddling Machine meant for a draft animal to walk in the depressed ring trailing a rake through the water and dirt.
Source: <https://www.goldfieldsguide.com.au/>

From The Metallurgy of Gold by Sir Thomas Kirke Rose (1898):

"The Puddling-tub. - When water is scarce, as was the case in many places in Australia where rich gravels were found, the long-tom is inadmissible, and the puddling-tub is resorted to. This is particularly well adapted for washing clays, and is still used to disintegrate lumps of clay encountered in sluicing operations. It consists of one half of a barrel which has been sawn in two; into this the dirt is dumped and stirred up with water by means of a rake, until all the clay is held in suspension in the water, when a plug a few inches from the bottom is removed, and the slime run off. The operation is repeated until the tub is filled with gravel and sand to the level of the plug-hole, and this residue is then shoveled out and washed by the pan, the cradle, or by sluicing."

Tips & Tricks for Winning Against the Clay

Clay is often the reason why so much fine gold remains in the tailing of older workings. In addition to the puddling method, there are many other things a miner can use to win against clay. Some are based on science and others were probably born by the campfire in stories told by the Oldtimers.

- ✓ Soap. – Use a drop of Dawn dish soap to break surface tension. Tried and true this stops fine gold from floating off and allows the clay to liquify easier. Some prefer a dishwasher rinse aid for the same reason.
- ✓ Boil it. – Add extra water to make it a slurry and boil it. As water turns to steam in the clay mixture it is supposed to break the bond between the clay and the other material. After boiling it is supposedly easier to pan out.
- ✓ Concrete mixers and paint mixers. – Good old fashioned agitation to get that clay suspended and separated. A strong hose can have the same effect on churning things up.
- ✓ Water Additives. - Chemicals to break the ionic bond with the minerals allow the clay to drop out of the water quickly in recirculating systems. One brand is called Clay Gone.
- ✓ Vinegar – increasing the acidity of the water with vinegar can help break down clay and remove calcium carbonate (limestone) crusts from gold nuggets.

AS OF WEDNESDAY,

FEBRUARY 11, 2026

GOLD IS

\$5,112.60 PER OUNCE.

\$163.55 PER GRAM.

<https://pricegold.net/>

When the Clay is Your Friend

In many rivers and creeks clays can create a false bedrock layer that will trap gold the same way bedrock does in placer deposits. Many new prospectors will follow the deeper is better advise knowing that gold is heavy. The compacted clay layers stops the gold in its tracks making some deposits only a few inches deep. The false bedrock effect is especially important when dealing with desert flood gold where there may not be any bedrock accessible in the water way. This is similar to another type of false bedrock called Caliche. It is a hardened, whitish-gray, or cream-colored layer of soil, gravel, or sand cemented together by calcium carbonate or magnesium, commonly found in arid and semiarid regions that is almost like a natural cement.



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Calendar of Events

| DATE | DESCRIPTION | NOTES |
|-----------|---|---|
| FEB 21 | Coolgardie -Oro Rico | Meet at Starlight Donuts 8am in Barstow, CA Will caravan to site together |
| MAR 7-8 | Ventura Gem Show – @ Ventura Fair Grounds | -Need Volunteers- Setup - Friday, March 6 th Panning Demos - Sat-Sun |
| MAR 21 | Coolgardie -Oro Rico Special Event - Metal Detecting Hunt | Meet at Starlight Donuts 8am in Barstow, CA Will caravan to site together |
| APR 24-26 | First Class Miners Ord Mtn Event | VP invited to FCM outing |
| MAY 9 | Victor Valley Museum – 10 – 3 pm | Panning Demonstration |
| MAY 16 | Hungry Man claims outing | Meet at Camp Cajon 8 am |
| MAY 27 | May 27 -School Program - Big Bear Museum | Contact Steve Schubert |
| JUN 6-7 | Randsburg – 2 Burros Claim Outing - Sat-Sun | Meet at claim – See Members Only section of website for claim directions |
| JUL 11-12 | July 11-12 – Mountaineer Days – Wrightwood - Sat-Sun | Setup at 9 am Saturday |
| JUL 17-19 | Miners Folly – 50th Anniversary Membership Appreciation Picnic on the 19 th Sat-Sun | Held at Big Bear Historical Museum \$15 RSVP |
| AUG 7-9 | Invite from FCM to Ranger Steve Outing at Big Bear Special Event - Metal Detecting Hunt on Saturday, Aug 8 th Fri-Sun | Camp Miners Folly |
| AUG 15-23 | Pickett III and Gold Venture – Union Flats | Northern Claims Event |
| SEP 12-13 | Indian Gulch/Jackass 1 – Camp at Miners Folly – Sat-Sun | Meet at Miners Folly |
| OCT 23-25 | VP Rendezvous 2026 – Ord Mtn | |
| NOV 14 | Coolgardie – Oro Rico | Meet at Starlight Donuts 8am |
| DEC 5 | Holiday Party & Awards Event | Pinon Hills Community Center |

** As always events are subject to last-minute change due to weather or availability. Please make sure to check the Facebook group for any last-minute updates. If you are not on Facebook, please e-mail or text another member who has access.

GENERAL MEETING REMINDER

You're invited to be our guest at the General membership meetings that are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:00 pm at the Elks Lodge at

2055 Elks Dr, San Bernardino, CA. **Can't make it in person? Join in via Zoom meeting.**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83026668634?pwd=ZUlyUlplLk1ZOQ1R1aTJmVndJQ0tNdz09>

Meeting ID: 830 2666 8634 Passcode: 661754 One Tap Mobile

+16694449171,,83026668634#,,,,*661754# US+16699006833,,83026668634#,,,,*661754# US (San Jose)By Audio Only: • +1 669 444 9171 US

Want to Contact the Newsletter Crew or any other Committee Member? Check out the Directory on the Club website or e-mail valleyprospectors49@gmail.com