

EXPLANATION OF "LOCATION"

Mining Claims and Sites

Lode Claims

Placer Claims

Mill Sites

Tunnel Sites

Anyone who is a citizen of the United States or has declared an intention to become a citizen may locate a mining claim. A corporation organized under State laws may also locate a mining claim. The Government considers corporations to have the same standing as a citizen. A claim held by an alien is voidable only by the U.S. Government, not another individual. There is no limit to the number of claims and sites that may be held by a claimant.

A mining claim is a particular parcel of Federal land, valuable for a specific mineral deposit or deposits. It is a parcel for which an individual has asserted a right of possession. The right is restricted to the extraction and development of a mineral deposit. The rights granted by a mining claim are valid against a challenge by the United States and other claimants only after the discovery of a valuable mineral deposit. There are two types of mining claims, lode and placer. There are two other types of mineral entries, mill sites and tunnel sites.

Lode Claims: Deposits subject to lode claims include classic veins or lodes having well-defined boundaries. They also include other rock in-place bearing valuable minerals and may be broad zones of mineralized rock. Examples include quartz or other veins bearing gold or other metallic minerals and large volume but low-grade disseminated metallic deposits. Lode claims are usually described as parallelograms with the longer side lines parallel to the vein or lode (see Figure 1). Descriptions are by metes and bounds surveys (giving length and direction of each boundary line). Federal statute limits their size to a maximum of 1,500 feet in length along the vein or lode. Their width is a maximum of 600 feet, 300 feet on either side of the centerline of the vein or lode. The end lines of the lode claim must be parallel to qualify for underground extralateral rights. Extralateral rights involve the rights to minerals that extend at depth beyond the vertical boundaries of the claim.

Placer Claims: Mineral deposits subject to placer claims include all those deposits not subject to lode claims. Originally, these included only deposits of unconsolidated materials, such as sand and gravel, containing free gold or other minerals. By Congressional acts and judicial interpretations, many nonmetallic bedded or layered deposits, such as gypsum and high calcium limestone, are also considered placer deposits.

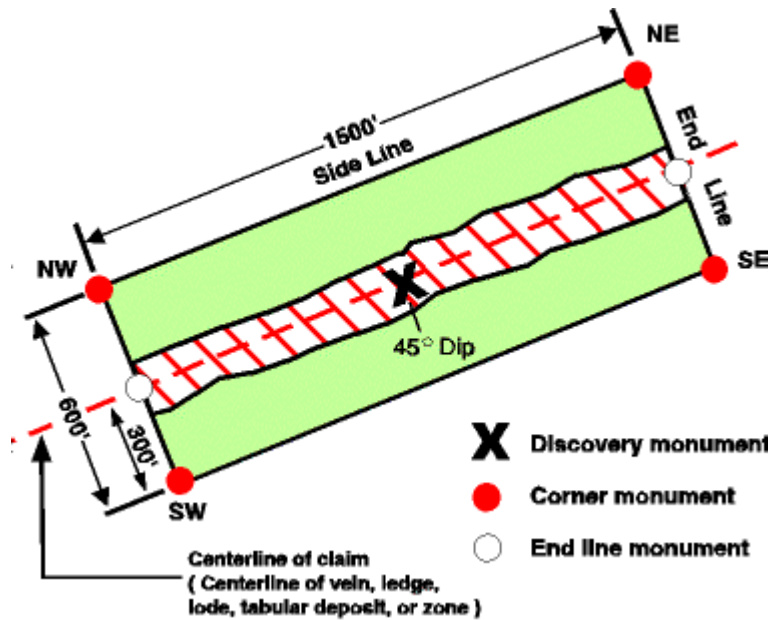
Placer claims, where practicable, are located by legal subdivision (for example: the E 1/2 NE 1/3 NE 1/4, Section 2, Township 10 South, Range 21 East, Mount Diablo Meridian). The maximum size of a placer claim is 20 acres per locator (see Figure 2). An association of two locators may locate 40 acres, and three may locate 60 acres, etc. The maximum area of an association placer claim is 160 acres for eight or more persons.

However, the maximum size of an association placer claim in Alaska is limited to 40 acres under State law.

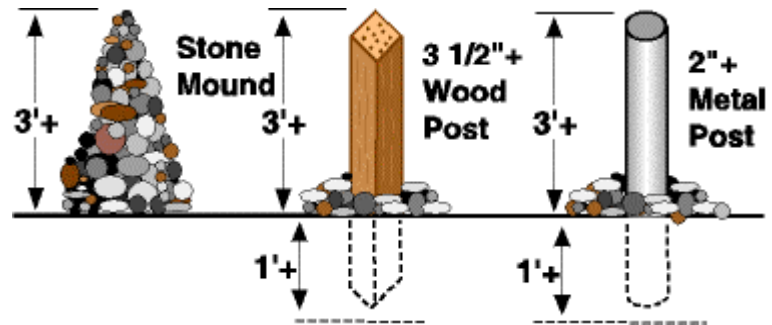
The maximum size of a placer claim for corporations is 20 acres per claim. Corporations may not locate association placer claims unless they are in association with other private individuals or other corporations as co-locators.

Figure 1. Example of Methods of Monumenting Mining Claims in California

Drawing of an ideal lode mining claim (Metes and Bound survey method) in California (Cal. Pub. Res. Code, Chapt. 4, Sec. 2316).



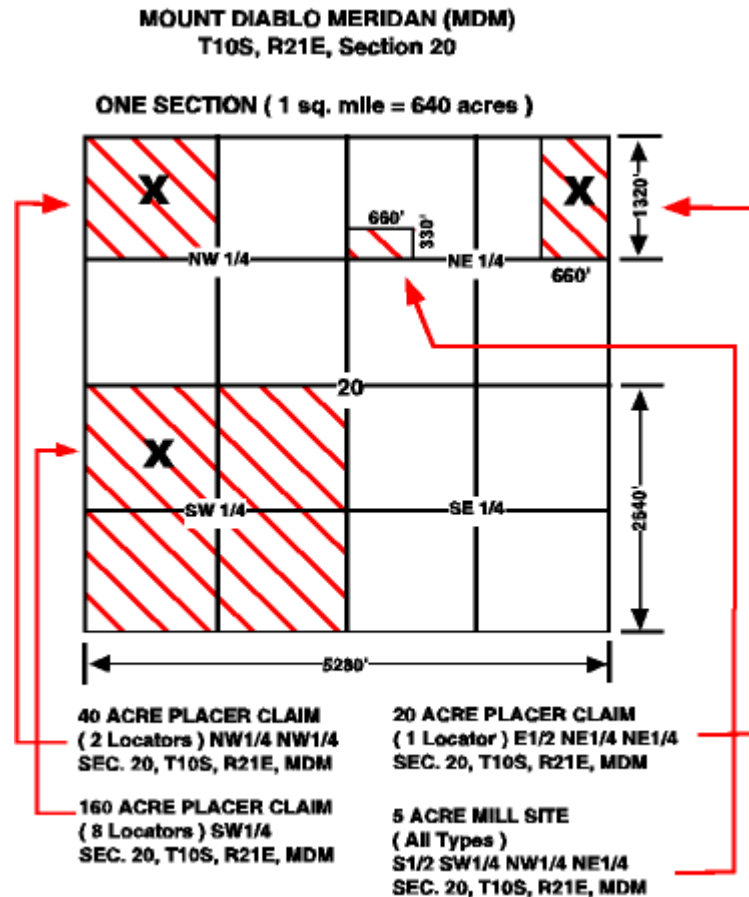
Most State laws require conspicuous and substantial monuments for all types of claims and sites.



NOTE: Other states have other requirements for monuments. Other monuments can be used in California as long as they are conspicuous and substantial. However, it is BLM policy to not use perforated or uncapped pipe as a monument.

Figure 2. Methods of Describing Placer Mining Claims and Mill Sites

Drawing of a section of land showing types of placer mining claims (PMC) and a mill site (MS). The legal description method is based on the U.S. Public Land Survey.



Mill Sites: A mill site must be located on nonmineral land. Its purpose is to either (1) support a lode or placer mining claim operation or (2) support itself independent of any particular claim. A mill site must include the erection of a mill or reduction works and/or may include other uses reasonably incident to the support of a mining operation. Descriptions of mill sites are by metes and bounds surveys or legal subdivision. The maximum size of a mill site is 5 acres (see Figure 2).

Tunnel Sites: A tunnel site is where a tunnel is run to develop a vein or lode. It may also be used for the discovery of unknown veins or lodes. To stake a tunnel site, two stakes are placed up to 3,000 feet apart on the line of the proposed tunnel. Recordation is the same as a lode claim. Some States require additional centerline stakes (for example, in Nevada centerline stakes must be placed at 300-foot intervals).

An individual may locate lode claims to cover any or all blind (not known to exist) veins or lodes intersected by the tunnel. The maximum distance these lode claims may exist is 1,500 feet on either side of the centerline of the tunnel. This, in essence, gives the mining claimant the right to prospect an area 3,000 feet wide and 3,000 feet long. Any mining claim located for a blind lode discovered while driving a tunnel relates back in time to the date of the location of the tunnel site.

For information on the following topics, see Explanation of Mining Claims Continued in the document list.

- Federal Lands open to mining
 - Staking a mining claim or site
 - Claimant's Rights
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The above information was taken from the BLM Website on June 28, 2002. If there have been changes to BLM policy or regulations since then, some of the information above may be outdated. You may want to visit the [BLM site](#) to see if there have been any changes.