Clear Creek Management Area Field Trip

May 18-19, 2024

Meet 8:30am, Depart: 9:00am

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Hobby gem and mineral collectors are drawn to the Clear Creek areas by the presence of over 150 semi-precious mineral and gemstones. This is one of the most highly mineralized areas in California. The serpentine mass contains two superfund sites, Atlas Mine and Johns-Mansville. Both were associated with the mining and processing of chrysotile asbestos. Other minerals mined from the serpentine mass included cinnabar, chromite, magnesite, and jadeite. The Gem mine (private: https://benitoitemining.com/) located within the serpentine mass is the only source of gem-grade benitoite in the world. They have a fee dig in the tailings on the road up to our camping area if you are interested, but we will not be going on that trip. The rare minerals neptunite and joaquinite have also been found there. Other cool things to hound are jaspers, uvarovite, and plasma agate. We’ll do a combination of digging for plasma agate and scouring the stream beds for interesting finds. You can’t be disappointed in such a geologically diverse place! Please RSVP if you plan to attend, so we can try and get campsites for all.

Permits Needed!!

Get your permits ahead of time by visiting the following site, each car needs a general access permit to CCMA AND a special permit for the Serpentine Area (ACEC). https://www.recreation.gov/vehiclepermits/250848

$11.00 for the two permits plus a fee of $6.00

We will also need a gate code; we will send that information out before the trip.

Directions:

I recommend using the “download offline maps” feature for Google Maps or your own selection of GPS App which allows off grid maps. There isn’t much for cell service in the area.

From the I-5 Freeway: Take exit 325 for Jayne Ave (Rt33) and go west toward Coalinga (top up fuel here as there are no more stations). Continue on Jayne Ave, which is renamed Polk St. inside the town of Coalinga, then back into Jayne Ave after passing thru town. Continue on Jayne Ave and it makes a big right (north) sweeping turn, becoming S. Derrick Ave and you are in the middle of the Chevron Oil Field, go ~4 miles.

Turn left onto Los Gatos Creek Rd. Follow for 21.5 miles, turns into Coalinga Rd at the Condon Peak Recreation Area. Continue another 8.6 miles and turn right on to Clear Creek Rd (LOOK FOR SEARCHERS SIGN). Pass over the shallow ford in the San Benito River. Travel about 2.3 miles, turn left just before the locked gate to head up to Jade Mill Campground (36.368356, -120.754140), SEARCHERS signs will be posted.

Camp is approximately 6 hrs from Orange County. The camp is a dry camp with a pit toilet, bring everything you need. The campsites in Jade Mill are under mature oak trees and suitable for RV, trailers and tents.

Tools:

You may want heavy tools for the Plasma Agate, as some of it is in boulders you will need to break up if you want to take some. For the stream collecting, a rock pick and spray bottle will suffice. There are trace amounts of mercury, asbestos and arsenic as you read to get your permits. Having a filter mask is not a bad idea.

Vehicles: Although we will be on dirt roads, a high clearance vehicle or 4x4 is still recommended. If you come to camp in a car, we will have you carpool with someone for the collecting.

Potluck: On Saturday night we will have our standard potluck, bring something to share if you wish to participate. If campfires are allowed in May please bring some firewood if you are able.

NOTE:

The latest road report from Clear Creek indicates that the road to the Jade Mill campground had been graded by the BLM, and should be passable for all vehicles including RVs. The creek is also passable and should be lower still by the trip. So for now the trip is again a GO! If things change, we will let you know.