

Leavitt Meadows Private Campground History

In the 1940s, the Simpson's (Dawn Cooper's grandmother and step grandfather) owned 480 acres of land on Sonora Pass in Mono County, California. They ran a public campground on the 40 acres until the US Forest Service told them that they needed to make certain improvements, if they intended to charge for camping. It was prohibitively expensive to do so, so they closed the public campground and began allowing family and friends to camp there for free. Each family established and maintained their own campsites. The family maintained the small ditches that carried water to each camp for fire suppression. The water was from deeded water rights from the 1863 decree.

In 1971, several years after the death of Mr. Simpson, Mrs. Simpson sold the 440 acres to a lumber company and deeded the 40 acres to her daughter, Rachel Smith Tholke. Rachel continued the tradition of allowing family and friends to camp there. In the 1950s three cabins were permitted by Mono County and built. One of them burned down and two remain in use on the property today. The 440 acres was immediately traded to the US Forest Service for lumber rights elsewhere.

In the late 1980s Rachel realized that the small ditches running to the camps were not efficient, so the decision was made to put in a water system to each camp for fire suppression. Rachel was a part of the plan, but she passed away in late 1990 shortly before the water system was completed in the pines area of the camp. The water system of the aspen region of the camp was completed in 1994. The system is permitted by the State of California and carries water from the deeded water rights.

The fifth section of the FOURTH AMENDMENT TO RACHEL SMITH THOLKE 1982 TRUST, states:

FIFTH: The Settler's real property known as Leavitt Meadows, consisting of 40 acres, more or less, including water rights, off Highway 108 in Mono County, California, further described in Schedule A attached to this instrument, together with sufficient monies, in the sole and absolute discretion of the Trustee, to pay property taxes, assessments, and reasonable property maintenance and repair expenses, shall be retained in trust for the benefit, use and enjoyment of the Settler's issue until such time as the rule against perpetuities requires distribution or until all the living issue of the Settler are deceased, whichever event first occurs. In the event that, distribution is required by the rule against perpetuities, the beneficiaries shall be required to execute an agreement the effect of which is to maintain ownership of the real property in its unimproved state for the benefit of the Settler's lineal descendants.

Dawn Cooper, the current trustee, and her two siblings have spent 30 plus years trying to honor the request of their mother to leave the property in its unimproved state. There are a few small buildings for storage of the maintenance equipment. They have replaced the bridges and put in the water system for fire suppression. The family has made minimal improvements. They have also made some improvements to their personal camps, but their mission is to keep it as simple as possible. In this process, they have decided to remove several structures from their personal camp sites.

The "Leavitt Family" consists of people who appreciate nature in its simplest form. They have always pitched in to maintain the property by contributing labor, materials, and money, but contributions have never been required. Many of the families have been going to Leavitt for as many as four generations. They are willing to adjust their camps as necessary to obtain the specific plan.

Leavitt Meadows Private Campground Project Plan

As stated in the history, the mission for this property, for nearly 80 years, has been to share this area with families. In the 1940's it was considered important to spend time in the peace and solitude of nature. In 2023 it is even more important. It was clearly stated in FOURTH AMENDMENT TO RACHEL SMITH THOLKE 1982 TRUST:

“...to maintain ownership of the real property in its unimproved state for the benefit of the Settler's lineal descendants.”

Rachel made it clear that it was to be unimproved. The goal of the family has been to respect her wishes.

Last summer (2022), a Mono County employee, was in the area doing some mapping work, when he came up on the campground. He mentioned it to some colleagues, which started this entire process. There was never any desire by anyone to hide the campground from anyone. The ancestors of the current managers followed the rules from the 1940s and it has continued to this day. Mono County changed the land use designation of the property in the 1970's and never notified the family of this change. They have filed the annual reports to the State of California regarding the water system. There was never any intent to break any rules.

We met, at the property, with Louis Molina, Mono County Environmental Health Director. He told us that, since no fees are charged, we are complying with all environmental health requirements. If any outhouses fail, there will have to be an approved plan to replace it. Since many of the current campers have RVs, outhouses not as important as they have been in the past.

Considering these changes, we have spent a lot of time walking around the property, showing it to a variety of Mono County staff and analyzing what needs to happen. Over the past 80 years families have come and gone. There were varying ideas of what “unimproved” meant. Perhaps some people went a little too far in their improvements. Others left and did not clean up their sites. After the notification from Mono County, the “Leavitt Family” mobilized and a lot of stuff was removed. There is more that needs to be done.

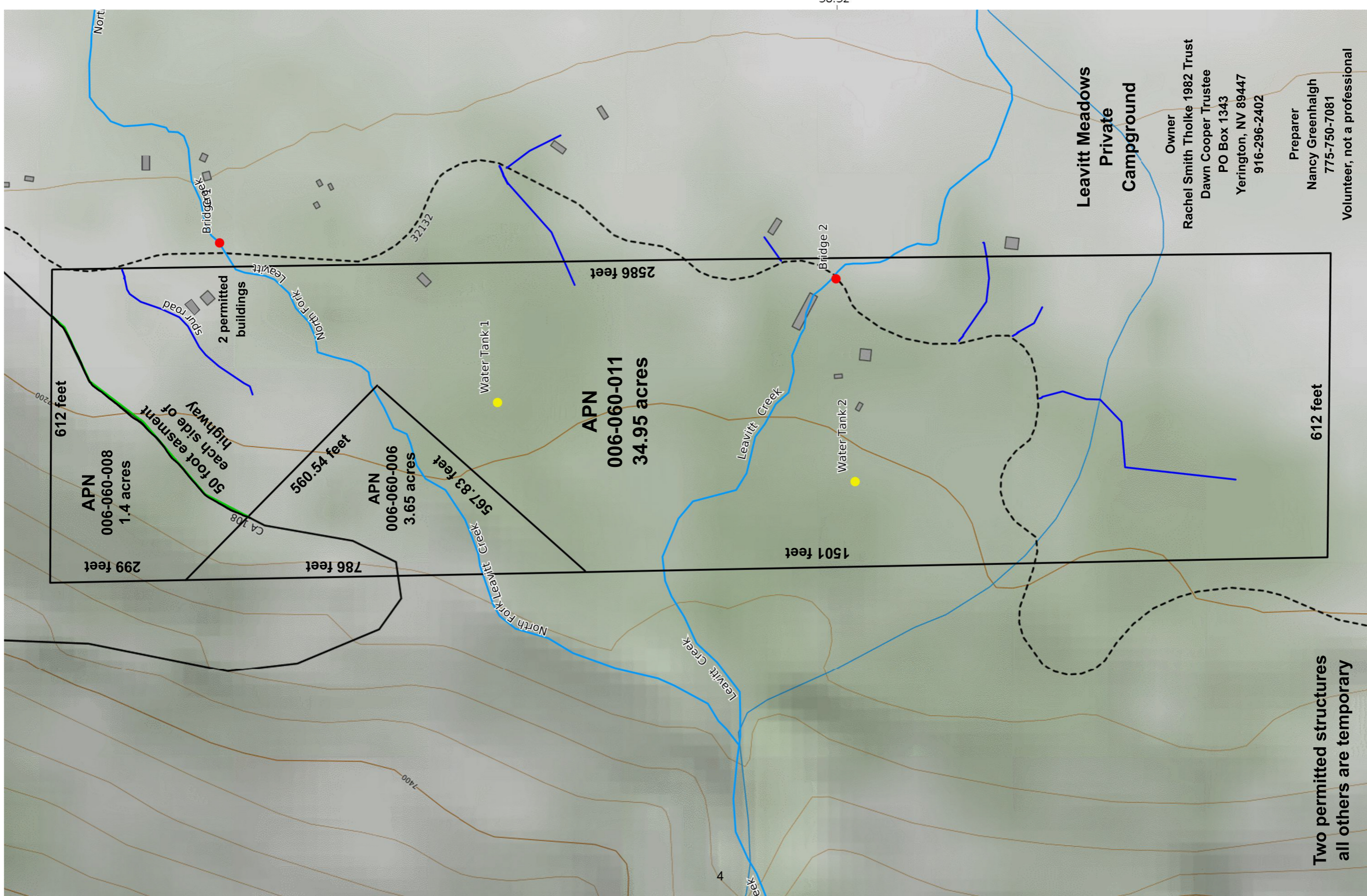
There are a few structures that we would like to get approved to remain on site. We would like guidance from the Mono County Planning Department on what can stay and what must go. We are planning a work weekend, for the entire “Leavitt Family” (as soon as the snow is gone). We will be supplying several large dumpsters and equipment to help remove the now abandoned improvements.

We are fully surrounded by US Forest Service land.

Our Plan is to Return the Campground to a More Natural State

- We are not adding any additional campsites, parking spaces, roads, additional fences, or landscaping.
- There will not be any additional traffic on the roads since we are not adding any additional campsites.
- The camp will still be locked at all times so there is not possible harm to public welfare.
- We will not move or change any of the dirt or vegetation on the property. We will take proper measures to protect the natural environment as we remove the abandoned improvements.
- We are not aware of any endangered plants or animals in the area.
- We are not changing any of the natural water drainages.

For the reasons listed above we believe that we are exempt from CEQA.



**Two permitted structures
all others are temporary**

**Leavitt Meadows
Private
Campground**









Owner
Rachel Smith Tholke 1982 Trust
Dawn Cooper Trustee
PO Box 1343
Yerington, NV 89447
916-296-2402

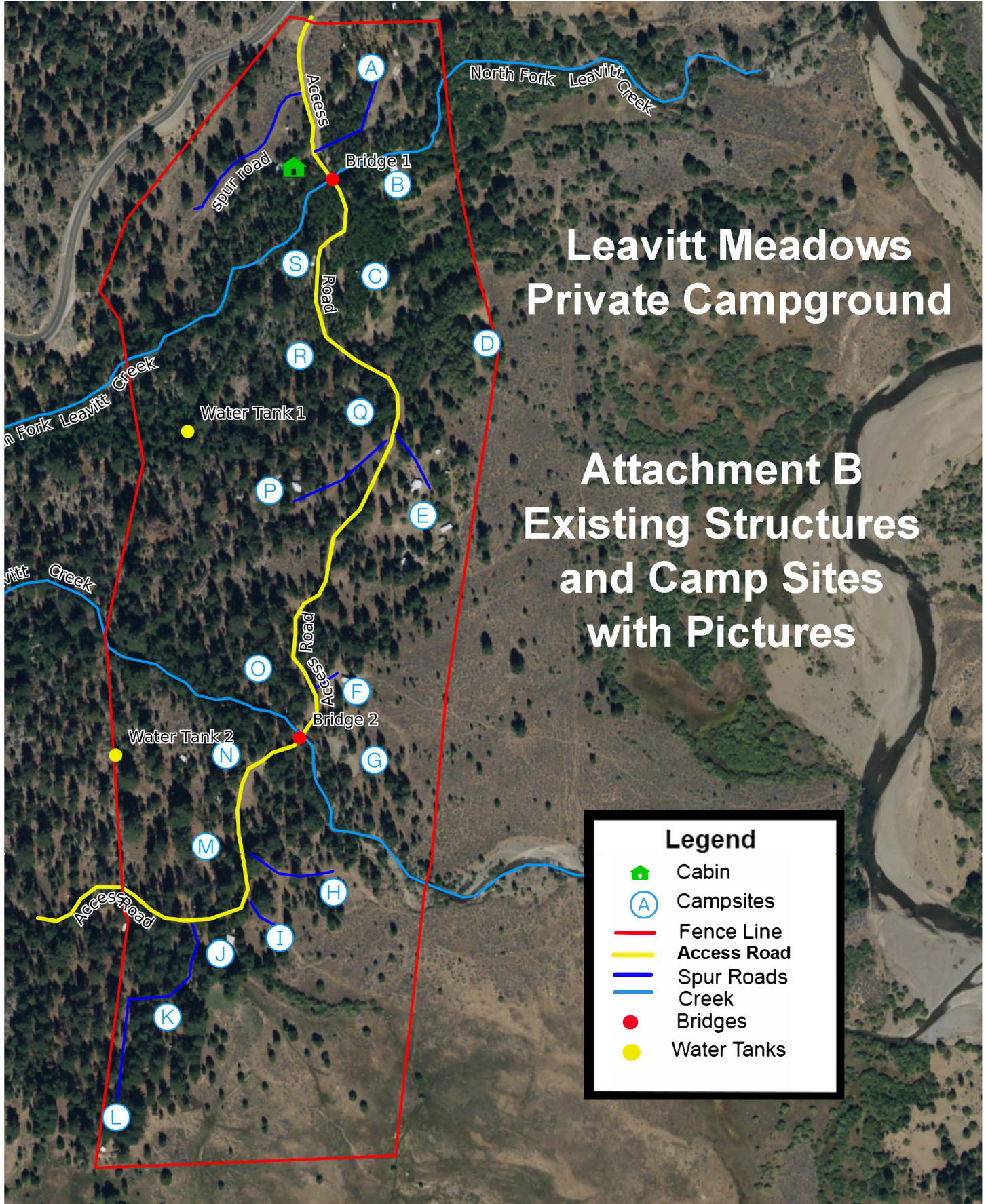
Preparer
Nancy Greenhalgh
775-750-7081
Volunteer, not a professional

Leavitt Meadows Private Campground

Attachment B Existing Structures and Camp Sites with Pictures

Legend

-  Cabin
-  Campsites
-  Fence Line
-  Access Road
-  Spur Roads
-  Creek
-  Bridges
-  Water Tanks



Mercator Projection
WGS84
UTM Zone 11S




The Cabin
Permitted Building 1
The Storage Shed
Permitted Building 2
Pictures taken 5/5/2023



Camp A

Pictures taken 5/5/2023
and 6/4/2023



Camp B

Pictures taken 5/5/2023



Camp C

Pictures taken 5/5/2023
and 6/4/2023



Camp D

Pictures taken 5/5/2023
and 6/4/2023



Camp E
Pictures taken 5/5/2023
and 6/4/2023



Camp F

Pictures taken 5/5/2023



Camp G

Pictures taken 5/5/2023
and 6/4/2023



Camp H

Pictures taken 5/5/2023



Camp I

Pictures taken 5/5/2023
and 6/4/2023



Camp J

Pictures taken 5/5/2023



Camp K

Pictures taken 5/5/2023



Camp L

Pictures taken 5/5/2023



Camp M

Pictures taken 5/5/2023



Camp N

Pictures taken 5/5/2023



Camp O

Pictures taken 5/5/2023



Camp P

Pictures taken 5/5/2023
and 6/4/2023



Camp Q

Pictures taken 5/5/2023
and 6/4/2023



Camp R

Pictures taken 5/5/2023



Camp S

Pictures taken 5/5/2023
and 6/4/2023



Water Tanks and Bridges

Pictures taken on 6/4/2023
Bridge 1 taken in 2010



Water Tank 1



Water Tank 2



Bridge 1



Bridge 2