

10/20/09 Westside Board meeting minutes

Stu opened the meeting at 7:30pm

Kathy gave the treasurer's report

Old business:

Stu said that if there are any problems with the lock at Walker Valley that he should be contacted. The DNR is keen to keep access to the area open

If there are to be any updates to the map booklets, Ed will need help with compiling any new site location information.

New business:

Ed reported that there is a BLM Claim Finder program. It's very handy for checking out the status of mining claims. The URL is <http://www.geocommunicator.gov/NILS-PARCEL2/map.jsp?MAP=MC>

Christina reported that there is a free program for cataloging mineral collections. You can find it at: www.sasklithic.com

Features:

Collection table with 27 fields and unlimited specimen photographs to record specimen related data.

Mineral table with 10 fields to provide mineral property related data (populated with 4,300+ minerals).

Locality table with 8 fields and unlimited locality photographs to record mineral locality (place) related data.

Nations subtable with 7 fields to provide nation related data (currently populated with 200+ nations).

States subtable with 6 fields to provide state related data.

Contacts table with 10 fields and unlimited contacts photographs to record dealer and collector contact information.

Import / export (CSV).

Reporting and labeling.

Christina introduced Rod Cook who spoke about Lucas Creek and some other collecting areas. Rod stated that as of last weekend, he had been made aware that Weyerhaeuser had closed off access to Lucas Creek and Adna areas to all rockhounds. The areas, in particular Lucas Creek, are a mess, and Weyerhaeuser is very upset. They are evidently now using video and surveillance security to determine the worse of the offenders and are considering prosecuting.

At the last Mineral Council field trip to Salmon Creek this last summer, hosted by the Longview club, it was reported that one of their members went up to Lucas Creek right after a hard rain when there was a land slide on the river. Over the course of several days, he trucked out many hundreds of pounds of carnelian. This member is evidently not in good standing with the club and is now specifically forbidden from any club field trips.

There was a long discussion about how to go about creating a set of rules for collecting agate and other material. Would it be possible to work with entities like Weyerhaeuser and the DNR to come up with a set of guidelines that would satisfy the landowners and collectors?

Bob Pattie reported that the DNR has lost about 90% of their funding and that they are looking into ways of replacing the lost funds. User fees and the lottery were among some of the ideas discussed.

Tim Fisher from Oregon sent out an announcement that Richardson's Ranch will no longer allow overnight camping at the shop.

"Fellow rockhounds: I received this I just received a call from Bonnie Richardson, and sad to say it wasn't good news. Seems that some people have to ruin it for the rest of us just about everywhere these days, and Richardson's Rock Ranch is no exception. Because of problems this summer with theft and destruction of property by some individuals (she assured me that they were NOT the people that they know who camp there year after year), Richardson's is no longer allowing overnight camping at the shop. Please pass this on to anyone you think might head there since they will not make exceptions for those who show up next year expecting to camp as usual. "

Tim also reported that there may be a resolution to the obsidian claims at Glass Butte.

"Fellow rockhounds: I received this letter from Emory Coons today. Emory is a friend to rockhounds and an obsidian fanatic who was partners with Bob Mitchell in the 1960s & 70s at his claims at the BLM's Glass Buttes rockhound area and elsewhere. For those of you who don't know of Bob, he worked the large rainbow obsidian mine just past the reservoir on the left side of the road (now filled in) for many

years. Emory still has hopes to reopen the famous Burns Green claim that the BLM had decided was not a valid claim when another miner vacated it a few years ago (I hope I have this right!). Anyway for those of you who don't know the history behind the BLM's decision, it is summed up very well in the first few paragraphs of the letter. Basically, the Carey's under the name of Dryfire Obsidian have for years been claiming that the "fire pits" above the cattle pond at Glass Buttes, among other popular pits near the pond, were on their mining claims that they had inherited from Mitchell. I have personally been there when they have tried to kick people out of the pit, and have had countless emails from and discussions with folks telling me of their behavior at this popular digging site.

Finally, the BLM has decided, because of the protests by Emory and others, that the Carey's have in fact been mining well off their claims all along, and to my knowledge have never done any significant mining on the claims themselves. Emory has provided a nice map of the actual claim locations. The yellow squares around Musser Reservoir are the pits they have been digging all along, and as you can see they are nowhere near Mitchell's (now their) legal claims. Hopefully their harassment of legitimate rockhound digging at these pits will now stop. I am glad that we finally have had some action against their false claims and harassment, and some support from the BLM, in this matter. Just a reminder, the limits set by the BLM are 250 lbs. per person per year at Glass Buttes. "

The Yakima club has proposed that Howard Walter and Dale Geer to be considered as nominees for the East Side Board of Trustees.

Opals Set To Shine With New Grading Technology

ScienceDaily (Oct. 13, 2009) — CSIRO and a consortium of Australian Opal miners (Opal Producers Australia Limited) have unveiled the world's first automated device to grade opals using image analysis, at the 2009 National Council of Jewellery Valuers forum in Sydney. CSIRO Mathematical and Information Sciences image analyst Leanne Bischof helped develop the Gemmological Digital Analyser (GDA). Ms Bischof said that opals have a unique range of colour characteristics that makes them by far the most difficult gemstone to appraise.

"Qualities such as 'flash', the way an opal reflects light and colour as it is rotated, can vary with human eyesight and lighting conditions," Ms Bischof said.

"A person's judgment of an opal's colours, the brightness of those colours and the area each of them covers is a really difficult task, even for a skilled opal assessor. You really need objective image analysis and automation to assist with that."

Incorporating the expert knowledge of over 60 opal industry professionals, CSIRO designed a GDA prototype with Australian company Applied Robotics. CSIRO then developed the complex mathematical algorithms to drive the image analysis system behind the GDA. A small camera inside the GDA takes 871 images of the stone as it rotates on a stage which moves 360 degrees horizontally and tilts 90 degrees vertically. High powered computers linked to the GDA analyse the images and quantify the opal's gemmological characteristics, providing a classification grade based on colour, clarity, carat, cut and character and a summary graph showing proportions of the opal's colours. A database of information on the GDA graded opals will allow participating jewellers and industry organisations to accurately assign a dollar value to a particular grade of stone depending on the daily market price.

Director of Opal Producers Australia Limited and Lightning Ridge Opal miner Peter Sutton said the value of the Australian opal industry is estimated to be worth around \$50 million a year, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

"We suspect this figure is grossly underestimated because valuations for a single stone can sometimes vary by thousands of dollars," Mr Sutton said.

The demand and trade for other Australian commodities like wheat, coal and gold have benefited from the introduction of an independent grading system, ensuring fair prices for producers and the supply of a consistent quality product to customers.

"We wanted to create an objective grading system that would improve the demand for and value of the Australian Opal industry, giving miners a fair price and consumer's confidence to trade with grade quality assurance," Mr Sutton said.

"This will be an independently-graded Australian opal product, which we will brand as Opallia."

Calcite – Our Rock of the Month

Calcite crystals are trigonal rhombohedral, though actual calcite rhombohedra are rare as natural crystals. However, they show a remarkable variety of habits including acute to obtuse rhombohedra, tabular forms, prisms, or various scalenohedra. Calcite exhibits several twinning types adding to the variety of observed forms. It may occur as fibrous, granular, lamellar, or compact. Cleavage is usually in three directions parallel to the rhombohedron form. Its fracture is conchoidal, but difficult to obtain.

It has a Mohs hardness of 3, a specific gravity of 2.71, and its luster is vitreous in crystallized varieties. Color is white or none, though shades

of gray, red, yellow, green, blue, violet, brown, or even black can occur when the mineral is charged with impurities.

Calcite is transparent to opaque and may occasionally show phosphorescence or fluorescence. A transparent variety called Iceland spar is used for optical purposes. Acute scalenohedral crystals are sometimes referred to as "dogtooth spar". Single calcite crystals display an optical property called birefringence (double refraction). This strong birefringence causes objects viewed through a clear piece of calcite to appear doubled.

Calcite, like most carbonates, will dissolve with most forms of acid. Calcite can be either dissolved by groundwater or precipitated by groundwater, depending on several factors including the water temperature, pH, and dissolved ion concentrations. Although calcite is fairly insoluble in cold water, acidity can cause dissolution of calcite and release of carbon dioxide gas. Calcite exhibits an unusual characteristic called retrograde solubility in which it becomes less soluble in water as the temperature increases. When conditions are right for precipitation, calcite forms mineral coatings that cement the existing rock grains together or it can fill fractures. When conditions are right for dissolution, the removal of calcite can dramatically increase the porosity and permeability of the rock, and if it continues for a long period of time may result in the formation of caverns, most notably the Snowy River Cave in Lincoln County, New Mexico.

The largest documented single crystals of calcite originated from Iceland, measured 7x7x2 m and 6x6x3 m and weighed about 250 tons.

Calcite is a common constituent of sedimentary rocks, limestone in particular, much of which is formed from the shells of dead marine organisms. Calcite is the primary mineral in metamorphic marble. It also occurs as a vein mineral in deposits from hot springs, and it occurs in caverns as stalactites and stalagmites. Calcite may also be found in volcanic or mantle-derived rocks such as carbonatites, kimberlites, or rarely in peridotites.

Lubinite is a fibrous, efflorescent form of calcite. Calcite is often the primary constituent of the shells of marine organisms, e.g., plankton (such as coccoliths and planktic foraminifera), the hard parts of red algae, some sponges, brachiopoda, echinoderms, most bryozoa, and parts of the shells of some bivalves, such as oysters and rudists). Calcite is found in spectacular form in the Snowy River Cave of New Mexico as mentioned above, where microorganisms are credited with natural formations. Trilobites, which are now extinct, had unique compound eyes. They used clear calcite crystals to form the lenses of their eyes.

Calcite seas existed in Earth history when the primary inorganic precipitate of calcium carbonate in marine waters was low-magnesium calcite (lmc), as opposed to the aragonite and high-magnesium calcite (hmc) precipitated today. Calcite seas alternated with aragonite seas over the Phanerozoic, being most prominent in the Ordovician and Jurassic. Lineages evolved to use whichever morph of calcium carbonate was favourable in the ocean at the time they became mineralised, and retained this mineralogy for the remainder of their evolutionary history. Petrographic evidence for these calcite sea conditions consists of calcitic ooids, lmc cements, hardgrounds, and rapid early seafloor aragonite dissolution. The evolution of marine organisms with calcium carbonate shells may have been affected by the calcite and aragonite sea cycle.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calcite>
From Pebbles 10/09