



San Joaquin Geological Society

January 9, 2007

Fine Scale 3D Architectural Model of a Submarine Slope Channel Complex Projected onto a High-Resolution Seismic Image

by
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ABSTRACT

Gold was first discovered in Kern County in 1851 in Greenhorn Gulch approximately 30 miles up the Kern River Canyon from Bakersfield. Though far outweighed by Kern County's petroleum wealth, gold has been an important Kern County commodity. Records show most of the commercially-mined gold in Kern County has come from two eastern Kern County mining districts: Rand and Mojave. Also, an unknown amount of gold was taken from Kern River drainage mining areas before production recording commenced in 1880. A reasonable estimate of gold mined to date in Kern County is three million ounces. Though the last commercial mining of "new ore" occurred in 2003 near Randsberg, plans exist for a large new mine to open before 2010 near Mojave. In addition to commercial ventures, Kern gold continues to be popular among "recreational" miners. Gold, emplaced by hydrothermal mechanisms, has been recovered from a variety of igneous (both plutonic and volcanic) and metamorphic rocks in the county. Thus, virtually all of Kern County's gold ore has been extracted via hard-rock mining techniques. This presentation is not highly technical. Rather, it is more of a photographic history. It traces mining in Kern County, from "49'er" age panning and sluicing to today's extraction of gold from large, low-grade ore deposits. The more important locations are documented and discussed. Included are quotes and stories about the colorful characters that perennially occur around gold camps.

BIOGRAPHY

Tim Elam is a staff geologist with Chevron in Bakersfield, and a member of SJGS. He received a B.S. in Environmental Science from Georgetown (Kentucky) College, and an M.S. in Geology from the University of Kentucky. He has worked a variety of petroleum exploration and production assignments since joining Chevron in 1981, including offshore Alaska, offshore Louisiana, east Texas, and the San Joaquin Valley. He moved to Bakersfield in 1990, and since 1996 has been doing mostly development/production work in Cymric and McKittrick fields. He is a volunteer and docent with the Buena Vista Museum of Natural History in Bakersfield.