DEFENSE ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION ACCOUNT (DERA)
FINDINGS AND DETERMINATION OF DEPARTMENT
OF DEFENSE RESPONSIBILITY
HONEY LAKE, LASSEN COUNTY
PROJECT NO. J09CA004400

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. CATEGORY OF HAZARD - Ordnance and explosive wastes.

2. PROPOSED PROJECT - None.

3. SITE LOCATION - Honey Lake is located on the westside of Sierra Army Depot in Lassen County, California, approximately 55 miles northwest of Reno, Nevada. Enclosure 1 includes a location, vicinity, and site map of the Honey Lake area.

4. SITE DESCRIPTION - Honey Lake is an area consisting of 60,108 acres of shallow lake having a maximum depth of less than 15 feet. During normal years, inflow into Honey Lake nearly balances evaporation. During periods of prolonged drought, such as 1927-35 and 1976-77, the lake dries up.

5. SITE HISTORY - The Honey Lake area was acquired by the Army in 1933 by Legislative Act from the State of California. In February 1942, the Army acquired an additional 16,280 acres of land adjacent to Honey Lake from the State of California for the construction of Sierra Ordnance Depot, now called Sierra Army Depot.

The Honey Lake area is believed to have been used as an aerial bombing and strafing range prior to World War II. Due to the apparent lack of historical records, it is not known what locations in the lake area were impacted by the aerial training or what type of ordnance was used. From 1942 to the mid 1950's, the east side of the lake was used for demolition of ordnance and function testing of pyrotechnics and other types of ammunition. Since that time there has been no military use of the lakebed. Records of military use of Honey Lake after 1942 can be obtained from Sierra Army Depot.

Some areas of the lake are currently used by the State, as wildlife and waterfowl management areas. Access to Honey Lake is restricted; however, waterfowl hunters apparently have free access to certain areas of the shoreline of the lake. Also, cattle freely forage at various areas along the lake shoreline.

6. OWNERSHIP - The property was reported as excess by the Commander, Sierra Army Depot, in 1975, and was reported to General Services Administration (GSA) for disposal on November 26, 1975. The act of ceding the property to the United States required that the property would revert to the State of California when it was no longer needed by the U.S. Government. The GSA deeded the property to the State of California by Quitclaim Deed which was recorded on March 9, 1981, by Lassen County. A copy of the deed is attached as Enclosure 2. The deed was not accepted by the State. The State indicated

that they would not accept the deed until the property has been certified to be free of contamination. See Enclosure 3.

It is the opinion of the Real Estate Division, SPKRE-M, that the U.S. Government presently owns Honey Lake. This is because, in effect, it is still using the property, for possible storage of unexploded ordnance/explosive waste.

7. DECONTAMINATION CONSIDERATIONS - It is the opinion of SPK that the cost of an environmental restoration of the 60,000 acres of lakebed would exceed the value of the land. The area can be restricted to surface use only, perhaps as a wildlife refuge. A statement concerning decontamination feasibility and a cost estimate, in 1975 dollars, of cleaning up only the exposed lakebed between present water level and meander line is provided in Enclosure 4.

DETERMINATION OF DOD RESPONSIBILITY

On the basis of the foregoing findings of fact, the present condition of the site described above has been determined to be the result of a prior DOD use or activity therewith. Moreover, it is the opinion of SPK that DOD still owns the property. Therefore it is believed that an environmental restoration is not an appropriate undertaking within the DERA for formerly-used DOD sites established under Public Law 98-212, for the reasons stated above. This site should be considered under the Installation Restoration Program (IRP) for active DOD installations and accomplished under the direction of the Commander, Sierra Army Depot.

DEFENSE ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION ACCOUNT
FOR FORMERLY USED SITES
FINDINGS AND DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY
HONEY LAKE, LASSEN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
PROJECT NO. J09CA004400

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Honey Lake is located on the west side of the Sierra Army Depot in Lassen County, California, approximately 55 miles northwest of Reno, Nevada. It is a shallow lake having a maximum depth of less than 15 feet. During normal years, inflow to Honey Lake nearly balances evaporation. During periods of prolonged drought, it dries up.

2. Part of the Honey Lake area, 44,243 acres, was acquired by the Army in 1933 from the State of California. In February 1942, the Army acquired an additional 16,280 acres of land adjacent to Honey Lake from the State of California for the construction of Sierra Ordnance Depot, now called Sierra Army Depot. There are no provisions regarding restoration of the land in any of the acquisition documents.

3. The Honey Lake area is believed to have been used as an aerial bombing and strafing range prior to World War II. It is not known what locations in the lake area were affected by the aerial training or what type of ordnance was used. From 1942 to the mid-1950's, the east side of the lake was used for demolition of ordnance and function testing of pyrotechnics and other types of ammunition. Since that time there has been no military use of the lake bed. Some areas of the lake are currently used by the State as wildlife and waterfowl management areas. Access to Honey Lake is restricted; however, waterfowl hunters apparently have free access to certain areas of the shoreline of the lake. Also, cattle freely forage at various areas along the lake shoreline.

4. In 1975, 60,108 acres of the site were reported as excess by the Commander, Sierra Army Depot, and were reported to General Services Administration (GSA) for disposal on 26 November 1975. The 1933 act of ceding the property to the United States expressed that the property would revert to the State of California when it was no longer needed by the U.S. Government. GSA deeded the property to the State of California by quitclaim deed dated 1 April 1977. The deed stated that the property had been decontaminated to the extent the U.S. Government deemed necessary and recommended the property be restricted to surface use only. The deed also stated the State of California would assume all risk for any and all personal injuries and property damages that might arise, holding the U.S. Government harmless of same. The deed was not accepted by the State. The State indicated that they would not accept the deed unless the property was certified to be free of contamination. The Corps of Engineers advised GSA that there was no practical method to determine what the lake bed contains and that the Department of the Army could not certify that Honey Lake is completely free of explosive material. The State of California did not want to accept the land "as is." Because the State refused

the deed, GSA requested the Lassen County Clerk to record the deed anyway. The deed was recorded on 8 March 1981. Since certification was not forthcoming, the Department of Defense (DOD) still owns Honey Lake. The remaining 415 acres constitute the Sierra Army Depot, a permanent installation under the Headquarters of the Army Material Command, which is required for depot activities.

5. No project is proposed since the DOD still owns the property.

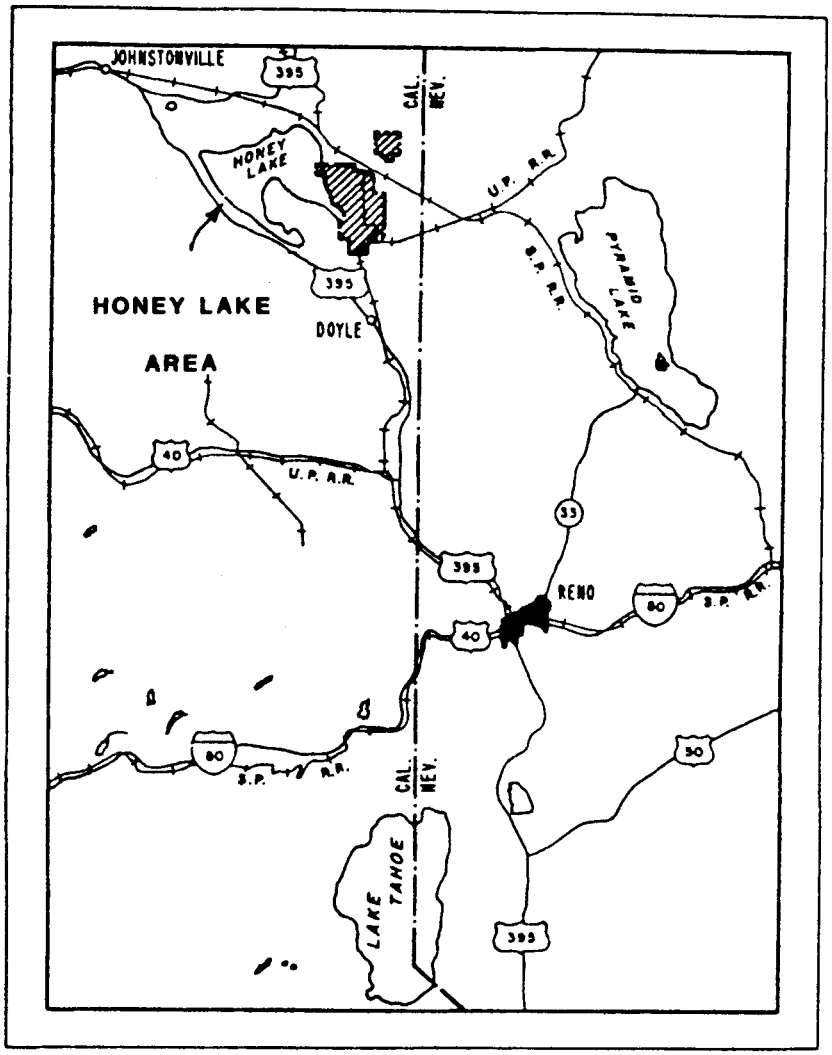
DETERMINATION

Based on the foregoing findings of fact, the site has been determined to be currently owned by DOD. Therefore, it is determined that an environmental restoration project is not an appropriate undertaking within the purview of the Defense Environmental Restoration Account, established under Public Law 99-190, for the reasons stated above.

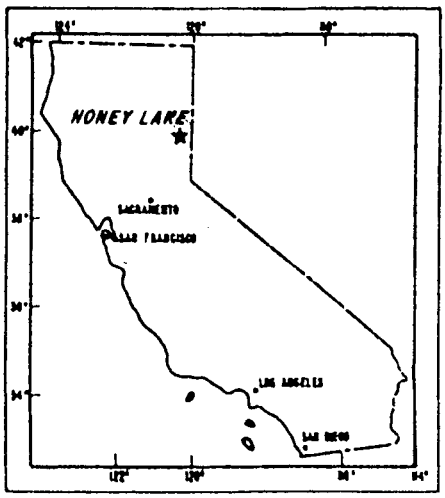
28 SEP 86
Date

R.E. ABBOTT
COL, CE
Commanding

ENCLOSURE 1
LOCATION, VICINITY AND SITE MAPS
HONEY LAKE, CALIFORNIA

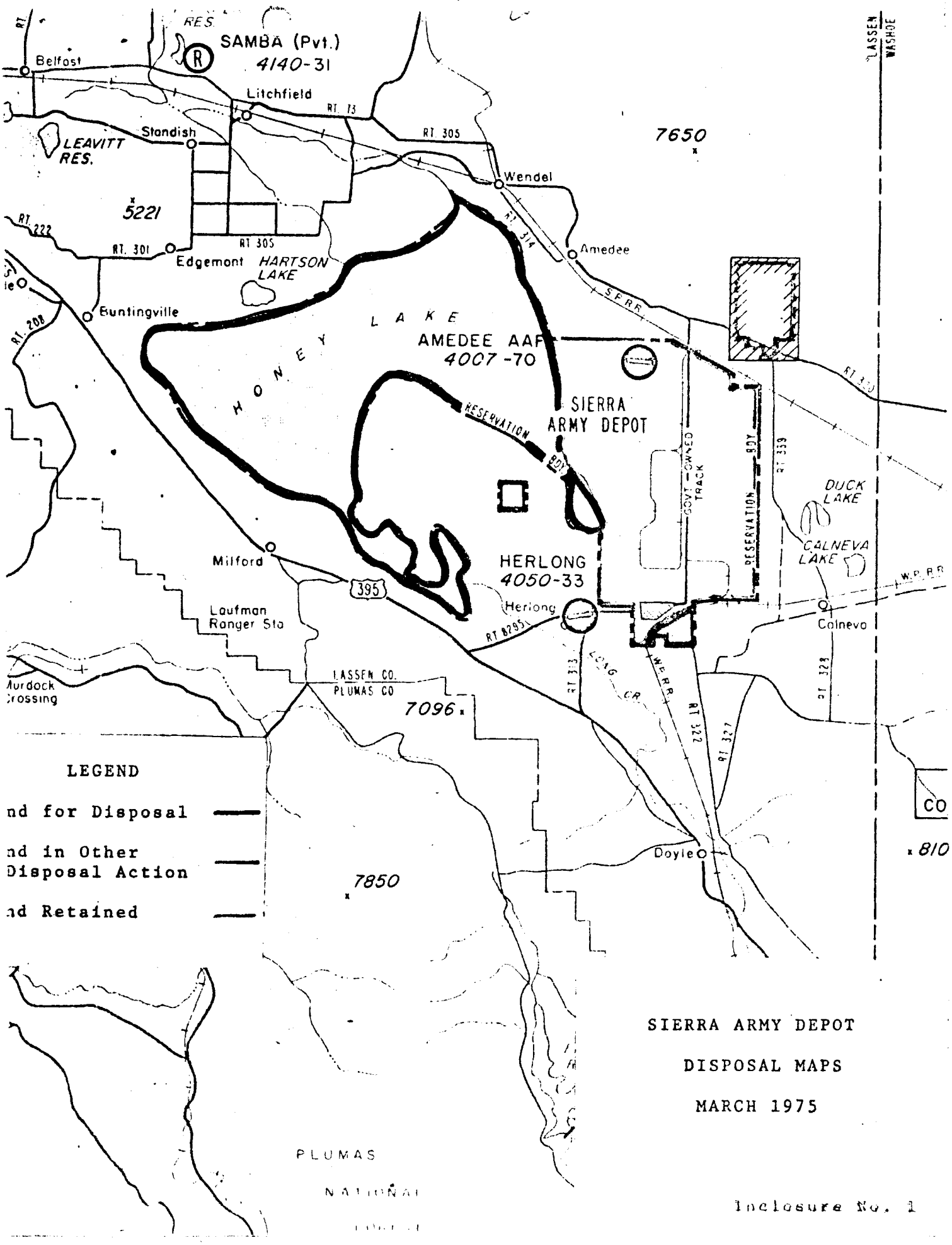


VICINITY MAP



LOCATION MAP

NOT TO SCALE



SIERRA ARMY DEPOT

DISPOSAL MAPS

MARCH 1975

Inclosure No. 1