

Release May 10, 1961

PRESS RELEASE

2810

A field survey and examination of mining claims is under way in the Mission-Swakane area of the Wenatchee National Forest, Supervisor J. K. Blair announced today.

This examination by the U. S. Forest Service is the first step in the procedure authorized by the Multiple Use Mining Law of July 23, 1955. The purpose of the examination is to locate claims within the area which were in possession of, or worked by, the claimant before the date of the law (July 23, 1955), and to determine whether a claim to surface rights on such claims is valid and effective.

Supervisor Blair explained that the determination of surface rights on old claims in the Mission-Swakane area will in no way interfere with the claimant's rights to prospect, mine and develop minerals, use the surface and timber on a claim for mining purposes, or to patent his claim in accordance with the law. After a claim is patented, both surface and mineral resources become the property of the claim owner. The Department of Agriculture has always favored the development of the mineral resources of the national forests and will continue to cooperate with legitimate miners.

Formal public notice regarding the determination of surface rights on mining claims in the Mission-Swakane area will appear in local newspapers for nine consecutive weeks. In addition, a copy of such notice will be delivered to persons whose names and addresses are determined as provided in the law. The owner of a mining claim located prior to July 23, 1955, will have 150 days after the first publication to assert surface rights if he chooses to do so.

A claimant has two options under the law. He may ignore the notices, thereby waiving rights to the surface until the claim goes to patent yet maintaining his original mining rights. The claimant may file a verified statement asserting his rights to the surface. In that case his claim will be examined by mineral examiners.

Claims of questionable validity will be considered before a hearing officer of the Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, who will make the final decision. Both the claimant and the Forest Service will present their testimony at the hearing. Whatever the decision, the claimant will retain his mineral rights. If the decision is in the claimant's favor, he also retains all surface rights.

Maps of the Mission-Swakane area now being examined, and copies of the Multiple Use Mining Law of July 23, 1955, and of the procedure for the determination of surface rights set up by law are available for inspection at the Forest Supervisor's office, Post Office Building, Wenatchee, Washington.