

# Eureka! 9-pound nugget tip of the iceberg?

*Landowner's discovery could bring millions*

**Dave Moller, Grass Valley Union, 4-30-10**

Gold fever can hit anyone, but when you find a 9-pound nugget like Jim Sanders did on his Nevada County land, the thermometer climbs quickly.

“What's exciting is the potential,” Sanders said recently while standing on the mountain property his family has owned for years. “If I get a mining operation going, we'd have an industry here.”

For security reasons, Sanders and The Union agreed to not divulge the exact location of his land. In addition, he asked that photos for this story did not show his face.

Sanders always thought there might be gold on his property because of the site and its geology. He knew the rocks were from the hydraulic era, and it seemed logical that placer gold might be beneath them.

But Sanders wanted to know for sure, so he had the land assayed for gold by experts using ground radar and metal detectors.

“We did some test pits, and they estimated there was about 3,800 ounces in the first few feet,” Sanders said. “That should increase as we go deeper.”

The San Francisco Bay Area businessman said he was reluctant at first to inform The Union about his find, though the land is remote. But when he thought about the tough economy here and the possible economic impact of a new gold mine, he decided to share the news.

He will offer more information when he starts the permit process for gold mining, he said. The land is filled with stones washed downstream from the hydraulic mining days of the 19th century, and he figures he has a fortune just in decorative rock.

Family ‘patiently excited’

On the day they discovered the 9-pound chunk, “the metal detector went off the charts,” Sanders said. He dug down about 10 feet with a backhoe to find the glowing monster.

“It's one solid mass with a little bit of quartz in it,” Sanders said. “We found another (nugget) at 10 ounces and another at 8 ounces.”

A nice gold nugget can bring \$1,200 per troy ounce, according to Terry Mohr of California Gold - Custom Gold Jewelry in Nevada City. A troy pound is 12 ounces instead of the normal 16 ounces, he added.

“A 9-pound nugget is huge,” Mohr said, estimating it could bring up \$115,000.

After the discovery, things changed for Sanders, who sees the find — and possibilities of more — as the last great quest in his life.

“My kids are really excited about it,” he said.

One of those children is Patrick Sanders, a corporal in the U.S. Army at Ft. Bliss, Texas.

“He's found small amounts of gold in the past, but nothing like this,” the younger Sanders said. “We're patiently excited for the future of the family, because we know it will take time.”

With a host of local environmentalists currently fighting the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland and Blue Lead gold mines, Sanders is under no illusions.

“The permit process will start in a few months, and I'm sure we'll run into a lot of red lights,” Sanders said. “I think we can mitigate things, and there are tradeoffs.”

That would be the removal of mercury and other chemicals that remain in the area, he said.

“I voluntarily made a covenant to not log this property, but this is a time bomb,” Sanders said. “This is an artificial containment of bad stuff. If we truck it out of here, we can get rid of it, but I'll have to show the benefit.”