

5.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES

5.5.1 Setting

5.5.1.1 Prehistoric Overview

The project area lies within the traditional territory of the Chumash cultural family. The Chumash occupied the region from San Luis Obispo County to Malibu Canyon on the coast, and inland as far as the western edge of the San Joaquin Valley, and the four northern Channel Islands (Grant 1978). The Chumash are subdivided into six linguistic groups: Barbareño, Ventureño, Purisimeño, Ynezeño, Obispeño, and Island. The general project area is located near the traditional borders of the Obispeño and the Purisimeño (Greenwood, 1978; Gibson 2003; Bertrando 1994; Glassow 1996). Because these borders were fluid through time, it is impossible to assign one group to this location.

Central coast prehistory is divided into four broadly defined periods – Millingstone, Early, Middle and Late. There is little evidence of occupation during the Paleoindian period (11,000 – 8,500 years before present (B.P.) on the central coast. The Cross Creek site (CA-SLO-1797) is the only known representation of the period in the region.

The Millingstone Period (8,500-5,500 B.P.), according to Glassow (1996), is characterized along the Santa Barbara channel by thick rectangular *Olivella* beads, and a high density of handstones and millingstones. Two sites excavated by Greenwood (1972) at Diablo Canyon have been fundamental to our understanding of the Millingstone period on the central coast.

The Early Period (5,500-3,000 B.P.) exhibits similar artifact assemblages to the Millingstone period, however major changes in subsistence technology occurred. Mammals and fish became increasingly important in the diet, while shellfish consumption became increasingly less important. The introduction of mortar and pestle technology also reflects a more intensive use of plant resources (Joslin 2000).

The Middle Period (3,000-1,000 B.P.) is characterized by artifact assemblages that include contracting-stemmed projectile points, and a wide array of shell beads and ornaments. While many subsistence-settlement trends remained constant from pre-3,000 B.P., there was an intensification in the use of small schooling fish and an even further decline in the reliance on shellfish (Joslin 2000).

The Late Period (700 B.P.-Historic) settlements, according to Jones (1995), maintained a terrestrial orientation, focusing on the procurement of acorns and a variety of other interior plants and animal foods. At CA-SLO-1303, a site located at the original extent of the Morro Bay estuary, the artifact assemblage illustrates a high frequency of Franciscan chert, a material more common inland. The prevalence of this material suggests that people were coming to the coast from an inland residential base (Joslin 2000).

The Historic Period began with Spanish contact, and subsequent missionization. These missions had a direct impact on the native people of the region, as they were forced to convert and live within the mission grounds. The combined effects of forced acculturation, disease, and outright conflict rapidly reduced the Obispeño and Purisimeño populations (Berg and Hildebrandt).

5.5.1.2 Historic Overview

The Mission Period began with the expedition of Gaspar de Portolá and Father Junipero Serra in 1769. This expedition began in San Diego, and continued northward towards Monterey, establishing five missions along the way. They passed through Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties in the same year. The two closest missions to the Nipomo area are La Purisima Concepcion and San Luis Obispo de Tolosa founded in 1787 and 1772 respectively.

In 1822 Mexico gained its independence from Spain, and in 1834 the Missions were secularized and their lands granted as rewards for loyal service or in response to an individual's petition. During Mexican rule, missions declined in influence and large cattle ranches (called ranchos) dominated the San Luis Obispo area. The project site is located within the historic boundaries of the 37,888 acre Nipomo Rancho, one of the first and largest of the Mexican land grants in San Luis Obispo County. Captain William Goodwin Dana applied for the property in 1835, and the grant was confirmed by Governor Juan B. Alvarado in 1837 (Norton 1956). Captain Dana's first house on the Nipomo Rancho was known as the Casa de Adobe and was built about 1840 (Norton 1956). The Mexican Period ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which transferred control of California, New Mexico, Texas, and other western properties to the United States. Captain Dana was patented 37,888 acres in 1868 (Cowan 1977), much of which was later subdivided and sold by his heirs. Settlers were attracted to the general project area by good weather, water and fertile soils. Agriculture became and remains the principal land use in the general project area, with some sand and gravel mining occurring along the Santa Maria River.

Historic maps of the area show that the Pacific Coast Railroad (PCRR) formerly ran through the eastern edge of the project site. Built in the early 1880's by the Pacific Coast S.S. Company, the PCRR ran from Port San Luis through San Luis Obispo, past Arroyo Grande and Santa Maria to its termination at Los Olivos (Best 1997). The PCRR helped fuel San Luis Obispo County's economic development for 60 years, but the completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1901, followed by ever increasing automobile and truck traffic and the completion of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad ultimately resulted in the PCRR being sold for scrap in 1942.

Phase 1 Archaeological Survey

A Phase 1 Archaeological investigation was conducted by Conejo Archaeological Consultants (Conejo) for the proposed LUO/LUE amendment and the CUP. A copy of this report is maintained by the County of San Luis Obispo. The study was prepared in accordance with CEQA and the County of San Luis Obispo's cultural resource guidelines. The goal of the investigation was to determine if the proposed LUO/LUE amendment and CUP would impact any potentially significant archaeological resources, and if so, present recommendations to reduce any such impacts to a less than significant level.

An archaeological survey of approximately 33 acres of the project site was conducted on July 27, 2004. No prehistoric resources were identified. Conejo did not survey the 11.3 acres within the Biorn CUP site that were surveyed by archaeologist Robert Gibson in 2003, nor was the northern area (parcels 090-302-34 and 090-302-35) of the project site surveyed due to denial of access by property owners. This section of the project area was surveyed by Dills in 1989, who did not identified any cultural resources.

The record search identified no archaeological sites within or adjacent to the asphalt plant site. In addition, a sacred lands file check with the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) did not identify any sacred lands within the plant site. Mr. Gibson's survey of this site did not identify any prehistoric or historic resources; Conejo concurs with these findings.

In addition, Conejo identified no prehistoric cultural resources within the LUO/LUE amendment area. However, a historic farm complex was recorded by Conejo. This complex is located near the middle of the LUO/LUE amendment area, west of Cuyama Lane. The historic structures on the project site include a barn and a farmhouse, built by Geraldine Biorn's grandparents, Ole and Margaret Nelson in the late 1890s when they immigrated to the area from Denmark. The Nelsons dry farmed the surrounding land for beans, grains and alfalfa. The existing farmhouse replaces an earlier home the Nelsons had built on the property. Both the farmhouse and barn were extensively damaged by a Nipomo Creek flood in 1992 and were abandoned at that time.

5.5.2 Impact Analysis

5.5.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

For the purposes of this EIR, a significant impact to cultural resources is assumed to occur if the proposed project results in any of the following conditions:

- 1) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in §15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines;
- 2) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines;
- 3) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature; or
- 4) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries.

5.5.2.2 Asphalt Plant Impacts

The Archaeological Survey Report indicated that no archaeological sites within or adjacent to the CUP project site were identified. It concluded that the grading and subsequent construction on the site for the asphalt plant would not have an adverse impact on any known cultural resources. No additional archaeological work within the Biorn CUP project site is warranted.

5.5.2.3 LUO/LUE Amendment Impacts

Impact CUL-1: Future industrial development associated with the LUO/LUE Amendment could have a potentially significant impact on historic cultural resources.

Discussion: There were no prehistoric cultural resources identified within the LUO/LUE Amendment project area; however, a historic farm complex was recorded consisting of a wooden frame farmhouse and a wooden barn, both of which are over 100 years old. Both buildings were extensively damaged during the 1992 flooding of the Nipomo Creek. Historic privies and trash pits are often associated with historic complexes such as this; however, the old farmhouse privy location fell within the area excavated by scrappers for fill during construction of Highway 101. As the probable location for trash pits also falls within this borrowed area, the likelihood of significant buried historic features being associated with this farm complex site is low. Until further evaluation of the Nelson farm,

it is assumed to be potentially significant under Criteria A & C of the California Register at a local level. Therefore, if the proposed land use changes result in industrial development of the farm property, the project could have a potentially significant impact on cultural resources.

Impact Category: Significant but Mitigable

Thresholds of Significance Criteria: 1

Mitigation Measure CUL-1:

- A. Prior to development, a qualified cultural resource professional as approved by the County (historian/architectural historian) shall be retained to conduct a historical evaluation of the Nelson farmhouse and barn, and any associated outbuildings, animal pens, and farm equipment. The historic structure evaluation should include the history of the property, and the farm complex should be recorded on appropriate California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) forms. Any important/significant historic resources identified shall be mitigated as specified by the historical evaluation prior to its demolition or relocation; and,
- B. Prior to construction permit issuance, a Phase I archaeological survey shall be conducted for parcels 090-302-34 and 090-302-35. All recommended measures shall be required of new development to reduce impacts to less than significant levels.

Residual Impacts: With the incorporation of mitigation, impacts would be less than significant.

Impact CUL-2: Development of the LUO/LUE amendment area may have a significant impact on unknown/buried cultural resources.

Discussion: Because buried cultural resources cannot be located with surface surveys, the potential for buried cultural resources exists. Ground disturbance due to construction could potentially impact unknown or buried cultural resources.

Impact Category: Significant but Mitigable

Thresholds of Significance Criteria: 2

Mitigation Measure: The County's LUO (Sec. 22.10.040) requires the following in the event archaeological resources are unearthed or discovered during any construction activity:

- A. Construction activities shall cease, and the Department shall be notified so that the extent and location of discovered materials may be recorded by a qualified archaeologist, and disposition of artifacts may be accomplished in accordance with state and federal laws; and,
- B. In the event archaeological resources are found to include human remains, or in any other case when human remains are discovered during construction,

the County Coroner shall be notified in addition to the Department so proper disposition may be accomplished.

Residual Impacts: With the incorporation of mitigation, impacts would be less than significant.

5.5.2.4 Cumulative Impacts

No prehistoric cultural resources identified within the LUO/LUE Amendment project area. However, because buried cultural resources cannot be located with surface surveys, the potential for buried cultural resources exists. Ground disturbance due to construction of the projects described in Section 8.2 could potentially affect unknown or buried cultural resources and cause cumulative impacts. Measures contained in Sec. 22.10.040 of the LUO would minimize impacts.

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