
5.5 - Cultural Resources

The analysis in this section has been prepared in accordance with Section (§) 15064.5 of the State CEQA Guidelines, which considers potential impacts to prehistoric, historic and paleontological resources. References used in the preparation of this section include the Cultural Resources Survey for the Proposed Friant Development Project, a February 2005 report prepared by Sierra Valley Cultural Planning (Appendix D, Cultural Resources), and the Rio Mesa Area Plan (RMAP) and EIR.

5.5.1 - Introduction

An archaeological survey was performed of the project site in July 2004. Seven previously recorded cultural resources, including five prehistoric and two historic-period archaeological sites, were identified within the project study area; three of these were re-recorded during the July 2004 survey. Five previously unrecorded sites, all prehistoric, were also identified and documented. Two additional sites were noted in close proximity to the project area. Recommendations are offered for the protection of all resources identified within the project area.

Rio Mesa Area Plan and EIR

The RMAP included Open Space Element goals and policies designed to protect sensitive areas and natural features. The RMAP EIR identified potentially significant cumulative impacts to cultural resources in the vicinity of the San Joaquin River, resulting from buildout of the RMAP. Mitigation measures identified to reduce significant impacts included requirements for project archaeological surveys, preparation of cultural resource management plans, test excavations, and donation of recovered materials to an appropriate local institution.

5.5.2 - Existing Conditions

Natural Setting

The elevation of the project site varies from approximately 350 feet along Cottonwood Creek to approximately 1,400 feet on top of the hills just north of Millerton Lake State Recreation Area. Approximately 35 percent of property has slopes exceeding 25 percent. The majority of the project site is utilized for cattle ranching, with some existing facilities for the commercial production of chickens. Sensitive habitat areas have been identified on the project and have been mapped for reference. Numerous dirt roads cross through the project site. The railway bed of the former Minarets and Western Railroad bisect the western half of the project site. Portions of the project area were previously graded for use as a golf course; however, the course was never completed.

Historical Background

The San Joaquin River area was visited in the early 1800s by Spanish expeditions exploring the interior in search of potential mission sites. The Pico (1826) and Rodriguez (1828) expeditions may have passed through Wakichi and Dumna territory.

EuroAmerican settlement of the region began in 1851 with the establishment of Fort Miller on the San Joaquin River. Hostilities between native inhabitants and American settlers initially prevented

widespread settlement of the region; however, by 1860 such threats had been reduced and settlers began staking out large tracts of land in the region.

The Town of Millerton, located about one mile downstream of Fort Miller, served as the County seat of Fresno until 1874, when, following a general election, the County seat was moved to Fresno. Hay, wheat, and other grains were grown in the region during the latter half of the 1800s, both as feed for local livestock and for shipment to other markets. After 1890, fruit crops played a major role in the local economy. In 1892 a railroad was completed linking the Southern Pacific Line at Fresno with the town of Friant.

Cultural Resources Survey

A May 2004 archival records search was completed by staff of the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (SSJVIC) in Bakersfield, California. The record search included the project area and a one-mile radius outside the proposed project boundaries. The record search included current inventories of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the California Register (CR), the California Historical Landmarks list (CHL), and the California Points of Historical Interest list (CPHI). In addition, the California State Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) for Madera County was reviewed to determine the existence of previously documented local historical resources. The record search indicated that (3) three previous cultural resource studies have been conducted within the project boundary (MA-117, 234, and 410). There have been (2) two cultural resource surveys conducted immediately adjacent to the project area (MA-118 and 233) and none were conducted within 0.50 mile of the proposed project boundary. As a result, of these surveys, (12) twelve recorded cultural resources within the project area were identified.

There are 23 recorded cultural resources within a 0.50 to 1.0 mile radius of the project boundaries. There were no known cultural resources within the project area that are listed in the NRHP, the CR, HRI, CPHI, or the CHL.

In July 2004, Sierra Valley Cultural Planning conducted an archaeological survey of the project study area. Mapping of the area surveyed indicates the entire 2,238 acres of the project site were included (Appendix D, Cultural Resources, Figures 1a, 1b), although the survey report estimates the survey area encompassed 2,084 acres. The entire project study area was inspected using a “mixed strategy”; whereby steep slopes were cursorily inspected, and flat to moderately sloping terrain was inspected using 15-30 meter transect. All boulders and bedrock surfaces were inspected for milling surfaces and rock art. Seven cultural resources, including five prehistoric and two historic-period archaeological sites, were previously documented within the project study area. All seven were relocated; three of the previously identified sites were re-recorded during the present study (Table 5.5-1).

Table 5.5-1: Sites Previously Recorded within the Project Study Area

Site	Summary
CA-MAD-95	Prehistoric occupation, large Midden/sub-surface
CA-MAD-210	Prehistoric No Midden/sub-surface
CA-MAD-102	Prehistoric occupation, Some Midden/sub-surface
CA-MAD-96 (FR-2)	Prehistoric some Midden/sub-surface
CA-MAD-2083H	Historic 1922-1923 Railroad system
CA-MAD-2084	Prehistoric/Historic Bedrock mortars
CA-MAD-2085H	Historic Stone structure
Source: Archaeological Survey Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (SSJVIC), May 2004.	

Newly Identified Sites within the Project Study Area

Five previously unrecorded archaeological sites, all prehistoric, were identified and are documented in Table 5.5-2.

Table 5.5-2: Newly Identified Sites within the Project Study Area

Site	Summary
FR-1	Prehistoric occupation site, large Midden/sub-surface
FR-3	Prehistoric milling site,
FR-4	Prehistoric milling site,
FR-5	Prehistoric milling site,
FR-6	Prehistoric milling site, some Midden/sub-surface
FR = Temporary Designation Source: Archaeological Survey Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (SSJVIC), May 2004.	

Archaeological Sites Adjacent to the Project Study Area

Two previously recorded prehistoric archaeological sites were noted by the project archaeologist to be in close proximity to the project area boundaries (Table 5.5-3).

Table 5.5-3: Archaeological Sites Adjacent to the Project Study Area

Site	Summary
CA-MAD-100	Prehistoric occupation site, large Midden/sub-surface
CA-MAD-568	Prehistoric milling site,
Source: Archaeological Survey Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (SSJVIC), May 2004.	

Native American Consultation

Senate Bill 18 (SB 18-Burton), adopted by the state legislature in September 2004, addresses the protection of traditional tribal cultural places and requires that Lead Agencies undertake consultations with Native American tribal entities early in the planning process for projects that require General

Plan or Specific Plan adoption or amendment (Govt. Code 65352.3), or projects on lands designated or proposed to be designated as open space that contain a cultural place (Govt. Code 65562.5).

On October 22, 2004 Sierra Valley Cultural Planning received a record search response from the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) stating that a search of the NAHC Sacred Land File failed to indicate the presence of Native American cultural resources within the proposed project area or immediately adjacent.

Paleontological Resources

The RMAP EIR indicated that background and literature searches found no paleontological resources in the RMAP area, with the exception of trace fossil burrows from the Ione formation located in the southerly two-thirds of the RMAP area. These areas were recommended for monitoring by a qualified paleontologist during initial grading/excavation at the project development level. The NFV-1 project site is not known to be paleontologically sensitive, and no paleontological resources have been identified at the project site.

5.5.3 - Thresholds of Significance

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, a project will result in a significant impact upon cultural resources if it would:

- a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Guidelines Section 15064.5.
- b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a archaeological resource pursuant to Guidelines Section 15064.5.
- c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site, or unique geologic feature.
- d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries.

5.5.4 - Project Impacts

Implementation of the proposed project has the potential to damage and/or destroy identified cultural resources within the project area.

Impact 5.5-1: Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource or archaeological resource pursuant to Guidelines Section 15064.5. (Thresholds a and b.)

Two prehistoric sites that have experienced previous damage, CA-MAD-102 and CA-MAD-95, are located within or near proposed development areas in the northern portion of the project site. These sites may be further impacted as a result of project road construction or residential development.

Without measures to assure avoidance, potentially significant impacts to these archaeological resources would occur.

Two historic sites, CA-MAD-2083H and CA-MAD-2085H, may be impacted by proposed residential development. However, these sites have been adequately documented and neither possesses qualities that would provide for listing on either the National Register of Historic Places or California Register. *Further disturbance would not result in a significant effect under CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5, and no further investigations or mitigation measures are warranted.*

All of the remaining identified archaeological sites are located within natural drainages in the project site that are designated as Open Space in the NFV-1 Specific Plan. *However, without further measures to assure avoidance during project construction, potentially significant impacts to these resources could occur.*

The possibility exists that unanticipated buried archaeological deposits may be uncovered during earthmoving activities on the project site. *Without measures to assure proper assessment and treatment of any such resources encountered during project construction, potentially significant impacts could occur.*

Impact 5.5-2: Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site, or unique geological feature (Threshold c).

No paleontological resources or sites are known to occur on the project site. The project site is located outside the area of paleontological sensitivity identified for the RMAP area. No unique geological features are known to occur within the project site. *No impacts to paleontological resources or unique geological features will occur.*

Impact 5.5-3: Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries (Threshold d).

In eastern Madera County, there are both known and unknown archaeological sites of interest. As not all of these sites have been investigated, the potential for subsurface human remains exists. If human remains are encountered during earthmoving activities within the project area, all work in the adjacent area shall stop immediately and the County Coroner's office shall be notified. If the remains are determined to be Native American in origin, both the Native American Heritage Commission and any identified descendants shall be notified by the coroner, and recommendations for treatment and disposition of remains solicited (CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5; Health and Safety Code § 7050.5; Public Resources Code §§ 5097.94 and 5097.98). *Compliance with these codes and requirements will reduce possible impacts to human remains and burials to less than significant levels.*

5.5.5 - Cumulative Impacts

The incremental effects of the proposed project on cultural resources will be mitigated with implementation of the mitigation measures identified below. The proposed development of the project consistent with the NFV-1 Specific Plan is not anticipated to contribute to a potential cumulative impact on cultural resources within the RMAP or vicinity of the San Joaquin River.

5.5.6 - Mitigation Measures

Rio Mesa Area Plan EIR

RMAP EIR mitigation measures to reduce impacts to Cultural Resources are implemented with the project cultural survey report in Appendix D, Cultural Resources, and the NFV-1 Specific Plan:

1. Require archaeological surveys as a part of development submittals to identify potential archaeological sites.
2. Require subsurface surveys during construction. If subsurface resources are encountered, a qualified archaeologist shall be retained to monitor grading activities with the power to halt or redirect grading to allow evaluation and recovery time.
3. Any materials collected during project excavation will be donated to a local institution which has the proper facilities for curation, display and use by interested parties.
4. Detailed surveys shall be conducted at future design stages for each individual property deemed to be sensitive.
5. Appropriate resource management plans shall be prepared, which will either include recommendations for resource preservation/avoidance, or salvage/excavation, depending on results of detailed field reconnaissance.

Additional Project Mitigation Measures

The following measures are added to reduce the significant impacts of the proposed project.

- C-1** **Avoidance.** The Applicant/Developer shall submit to the County of Madera RMA-Planning Department an aerial topographic map of the NFV-1 project site depicting the location of all recorded cultural sites. The map shall be used in conjunction with review of subsequent Tentative Map submittals to assure avoidance of cultural resource sites, consistent with recommendations of the project cultural survey report (Appendix D).
- C-2** **Avoidance.** Cultural resource sites shall be plotted on project Tentative Map submittals to assure avoidance, consistent with recommendations of the project cultural survey report (Appendix D.)
- C-3** **Buried Archaeological Deposits.** In the unlikely event that buried archaeological deposits are encountered by construction staff during earthmoving activities, work in the immediate vicinity of the find should cease until the significance of the find can be evaluated by a qualified archaeologist, and appropriate treatment recommendations are implemented.
- C-4** **Human Remains.** If human remains are encountered during earthmoving activities within the project area, all work in the adjacent area shall stop immediately and the

County Coroner's office shall be notified. If the remains are determined to be Native American in origin, both the Native American Heritage Commission and any identified descendants shall be notified by the coroner, and recommendations for treatment and disposition of remains solicited (CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5; Health and Safety Code § 7050.5; Public Resources Code §§ 5097.94 and 5097.98).

5.5.7 - Level of Significance After Mitigation

After implementation of the above mitigation measures, impacts to cultural resources would be less than significant.

