



Heritage Resources

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October 9, 2006

Dr. Glenn Russell
County of San Diego
Department of Planning and Land Use
5201 Ruffin Road, Suite B
San Diego, CA 92123-1666

Reference: Desert Diamond TPM 21017 (APN-141-030-40): cultural resource survey

Dear Dr. Russell:

This letter describes the research and field survey performed for the Desert Diamond (APN-141-030-40) 169.84-acre property (Figures 1 and 2). The property is located in the County of San Diego, U.S.G.S. Clark Lake Quadrangle Map, Township 10S, Range 6E, Section 29 (UTM 11S 558595E/3682575N at central point near northern property line). The archaeological tasks completed are those required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Sections 21083.2 of the Statutes and 15064.5 of the Guidelines, and by the County's Draft CEQA Process Guidance for Cultural Resources and the County Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO). Completed tasks included record searches, archival research, a review of historic maps of the property, a field survey, and preparation of this letter report on the findings. The record searches and historic documents identified no previously known prehistoric or historic resources on the property and few recorded within a one-mile radius. The field survey encountered generally good surface visibility across a property heavily affected by decades of agricultural use. No archaeological resources were discovered. The following negative survey letter details the results of the research, methods of the field survey, and findings.

Natural and Cultural Background

The Desert Diamond property lies between Borrego Springs Road (County Road S3) and DiGiorgio Road approximately one mile north of Christmas Circle in the community of Borrego Springs. The property lies on an alluvial plain formed by Henderson, Borrego Palm, and Hellhole Canyons on the west and Coyote Canyon on the north. The property is essentially flat, lying at the 600 foot above-

mean-sea-level contour. The Borrego Sink and Borrego Badlands lie to the east, rugged desert lowlands extending to the Salton Sea nearly nine miles further east. To the west, Palm Canyon leads to the upland areas in Los Coyotes Indian Reservation.

Vegetation on the property is non-native due to past disturbances from crops and livestock development. Remnants of tamarisk windbreaks dissect the property and sparse to moderately dense weeds are scattered across the open sandy flats. Soils are loose alluvial sands.

Record searches were completed at the San Diego State University-South Coastal Information Center (SCIC) and San Diego Museum of Man (SDMM). Copies are included with this letter. Little recorded archaeological information is recorded for the area immediately surrounding the community of Borrego Springs. Although three surveys have been completed to the south of the project property (Apple 1984, Graves Eng. 1985, and Pigniolo 2000), only four minor sites have been recorded. These include three sherd scatters (described as likely redeposited by surface sheet washing) and one possible camp site containing sherds, lithic debris, fire affected rock, and mammal bone fragments. The campsite, SDI-15,928, was recorded on the Boys and Girls Club property about three-quarters of a mile southwest of the project property in a reportedly undisturbed area. The Museum of Man has record of a large campsite in Section 20, approximately one-half mile northwest of the project property, identified by Malcolm Rogers in the 1930s. No further information is available and since the 1930s that area has been developed in housing and agriculture.

The results of the record searches reflect the sparse archaeological information available for the area surrounding the project property. However, within the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park to the north and west, some of the densest occupation documented in the Park exists in mountain-to-desert canyons such as Hellhole, Borrego Palm, and Coyote Canyons (California State Parks 1970-2005). While deep midden deposits have been discovered in these canyons, attesting to the intense prehistoric use of the canyon corridors, only dissected terraces containing site remnants have been left by the flash flood waters that frequently flow through the canyons to the desert. Investigations were conducted in remnant dune areas in the Borrego Springs town area by Bill Seidel in the 1970s. These surveys confirmed that, in addition to the canyons, sporadic archaeological remains are to be found on the alluvial plains where undisturbed areas are present (California State Parks 1970-1975).

Historic maps (M. C. Wheeler County Map 1872 and U.S.G.S. Borrego and Clark Lake Quadrangles 1:24,00 1959 and 1960 editions), on file at the San Diego State University-South Coastal Information Center and Heritage Resources, were reviewed. For most of the historic period, use of the Colorado Desert region surrounding the Borrego Valley focused on the travel corridor from Mexican Sonora and the American Southwest to the Alta California coast. Other than Anza's expeditions in the 1770s,

however, this travel turned west well before reaching the Borrego Valley. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the area was used by cattlemen who brought herds to graze the winter desert pastures via rugged canyon routes such as Hellhole Canyon and Coyote Canyon (Reed 1986). Some hardy “desert rats” lived in the Borrego area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but not until the first wells were drilled in the 1920s was the agricultural potential of the valley realized. The first residential subdivision in the 1940s, De Anza Country Club, focused on resort development of the valley. This subdivision lies at the mouth of Henderson Canyon, northwest of the project property. After completion of County Road S22 (Montezuma Road) in the mid-1960s, the community of Borrego Springs began to grow to its current configuration (Lindsey and Lindsey 1985, Lindsey 1985).

The agricultural fields surrounding and likely including the project property were developed by Joseph DiGiorgio who purchased 2000 acres and brought electricity to the valley in 1945 (Lindsey and Lindsey 1985). By the late 1950s, much of this land, including the project property, was physically divided into 40 and 80-acre sections by stands of tamarisk trees planted as windbreaks (maps 1959 and 1960). In recent decades, the property was part of a 600-acre racehorse-breeding farm and the project property was used to grow alfalfa and to pasture horses (Charles White pers. comm. 9/4/06).

In summary, the project property lies in an alluvial plain area that was likely subjected to many episodes of flash flooding. Few prehistoric resources have been recorded in the vicinity, likely due to the agricultural and residential development that took place in the 1940s and 1950s. The sites that have been recorded indicate that scant evidence of prehistoric occupation does remain; however, likely only in areas that have not been disturbed by agricultural and residential uses.

Survey Methods and Results

The survey was completed over several days from September 10 through 20 by Heather Thomson and Sue Wade. The survey was completed in the late afternoons to avoid the 105-plus heat of mid-day. The property consists of several sections of flat sandy fields dissected by several rows of tamarisk trees and old fences. The southern property boundary is lined with tamarisk trees and additional east/west rows of tamarisk trees are located just south of the northern property line and across the approximate middle of the property. Fences include T-post and 4-foot field fence, T-post and 4 strands of barbed wire, and tree limb posts with 4 strands of barbed wire. The entire property has been cultivated in the past and grasses and weeds yielded surface visibility from 60 percent to as low as 10 percent in a few places.

Sections defined by tree rows or other man-made demarcations were surveyed in parallel transects of approximately 15 meters separation. Surface soils are primarily sands with very few rocks present.

No bedrock exposures or cobble deposits are present. No native topography or vegetation stands were observed.

The property contains remains of recent agricultural uses related both to crop and livestock raising. Observed across the property were remnants of concrete drinkers, concrete pipes, sprinkler systems, concrete-encased upright water valves, metal pipe pens, a water tank, brush piles, and fences. One stand of tamarisk forms an oval in the southwest corner of the property and likely functioned as a windbreak. No material remains are present to suggest the area's function. The partial remains of an oval track are located in the southeast portion of the property, a remnant of the former horse activities on the property.

In summary, the past disturbances on the property have eradicated all natural topography and vegetation. Because of the alluvial nature of the location, it is questionable if substantial remains of prehistoric use would have been preserved prior to the historic uses. However, the extent of the land modification that has occurred in the past decades has eliminated the possibility of any such remains being preserved. Although the DiGiorgios began agriculture in this area in the mid-twentieth century, no agricultural remnants, with the possible exception of some of the larger tamarisk trees, are present that date to this period. All of the irrigation systems, pipe pens, and other features date to recent decades. No potentially significant historic resources such as foundations, trash deposits, or intact landscape features are located on the property.

Conclusions

The development project is subject to requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the County of San Diego's Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO). Because no significant cultural resources are located on the property, future disturbances from the proposed project will not result in significant impacts to cultural resources as defined by CEQA and County RPO.

Please call me if you have any questions regarding the work completed, our findings, or recommendations.

Sincerely,

Sue A. Wade
Archaeologist-Historian

cc: Mr. Jim Engelke, Architect
Mr. Charles White, Owner

References Cited

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