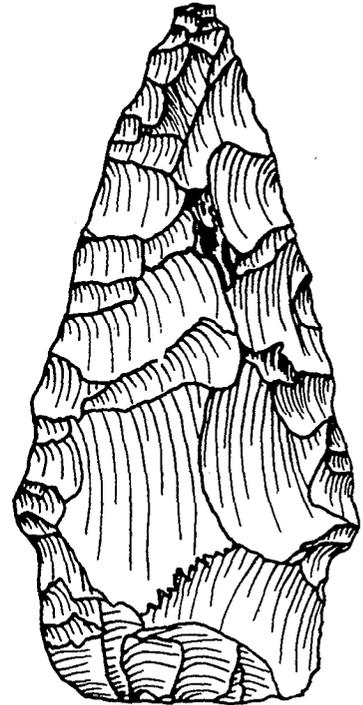


**CULTURAL RESOURCES
OVERVIEW**

and

**MANAGEMENT
PLAN**



SAN LUIS, MERCED, AND KESTERSON

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

MERCED COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Prepared by

Trudy Haversat and Gary S. Breschini

March 1985

**A CULTURAL RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND MANAGEMENT PLAN
FOR THE
SAN LUIS, MERCED, AND KESTERSON NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES
MERCED COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

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ABSTRACT

This report is a cultural resources overview and management plan for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's San Luis, Kesterson, and Merced National Wildlife Refuges, Merced County, California.

The cultural resources overview is designed to provide the data for the Master Plan for the refuges, and the management plan is designed to insure that the Fish and Wildlife Service is in compliance with federal cultural resource management laws and regulations.

The cultural resources overview contains a general description of the environment, along with overviews of study area prehistory, ethnography (including ethnohistory), and history. Field work for this project included locating and updating the documentation on known cultural resources within the three refuges. Missing information was supplied, and erroneous information was corrected. Each cultural resource was evaluated to determine its eligibility for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Primary field research was conducted to determine if there are any surviving Native Americans who claim expertise in the traditional beliefs, values, and practices of the tribal groups within the study area.

The findings of this project, summarized in the management plan, show that the prehistoric cultural resources within San Luis and Kesterson Refuges constitute extremely significant archaeological preserves, and possibly are unique within an area of California characterized by massive destruction of cultural resources. The cultural resources within these two refuges potentially are eligible for inclusion on the National Register as districts. Finally, this project has documented that there are no surviving Native Americans whose ancestors lived within the study area.

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

This report presents a cultural resources overview, the results of primary field research, and a recommended Cultural Resources Management Plan for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's San Luis, Merced, and Kesterson National Wildlife Refuges, located in western Merced County, California.

The cultural resources overview is designed to provide the data for the land use planning document known as the Master Plan for these three refuges. The primary archaeological research was conducted to locate and document all of the known cultural resources within the study area. Also, we conducted a preliminary evaluation of each cultural resource to determine its eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Primary ethnographic research was conducted in an attempt to locate Native Americans with cultural or biological ties to the study area. The recommendations presented in the Cultural Resources Management Plan are based on the information contained in the cultural resources overview and on the primary field work which we conducted. These are designed to insure that the Fish and Wildlife Service is in compliance with federal cultural resource management laws and regulations. The management plan discusses management policies, and presents both short and long term management objectives and goals designed to comply with federal laws and regulations.

The cultural resources overview contains a general description of the environment, along with more detailed overviews, in narrative form and supported by illustrations, of study area prehistory, ethnography (including ethnohistory) and history.

The overview of study area prehistory presents a synthesis of the existing archaeological data base for the western San Joaquin Valley, concentrating, where possible, on western Merced County. This includes a discussion of the cultural sequences which have been documented, or which may be expected to occur, in western Merced County. Also included are discussions of previous archaeological research within western Merced County and within the study area. This section includes numerous illustrations of archaeological materials found in western Merced County.

The overview of ethnography and ethnohistory details what we know (or what we can extrapolate) concerning the Yokuts groups which inhabited the study area before the arrival of the Spanish. This includes discussions of social and political organization, religious beliefs and practices, architecture, medicines and healing practices, settlement and subsistence patterns, and other aspects of Yokuts life. The overview of Yokuts ethnohistory documents the catastrophic changes which have taken place over the past 200 years, and which have led to the total extinction of the groups which once inhabited the study area.

The overview of study area history presents in narrative form a discussion of the historical trends and major events in central California history from 1769 to the present, concentrating on the historical development of the study area. Also included are discussions of the participation of the federal government in study area history, and a history of each of the three National Wildlife Refuges which constitute the study area.

Finally, the cultural resources overview includes an evaluation of the quality and reliability of the data sources. This discusses biases in the data and interpretation of the data, as well as deficiencies or data gaps which have been identified.

Primary field work for this project included locating and documenting all known cultural resources within the three refuges. Erroneous data were corrected, and missing data were supplied. Each cultural resource was also subjected to a preliminary evalua-

tion to determine its eligibility for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Finally, primary field research was conducted to determine if there are any surviving Native Americans who claim expertise in the traditional beliefs, values, and practices of the tribal groups within the study area.

The findings of this project, as they pertain to archaeological cultural resources, show that the prehistoric resources within San Luis and Kesterson Refuges constitute extremely significant archaeological preserves, and are possibly unique within an area of California characterized by massive destruction of cultural resources. These cultural resources appear to be primarily base camps or villages, and probably were occupied either seasonally, or for most of the year, over a period of thousands of years. These resources have been damaged through the years by a variety of causes, but this damage appears to have been less, by an order of magnitude, than the damage which characterized surrounding areas.

There are no extant historical structures which retain their integrity — all have been burned, torn down, or heavily modified. There is a high potential, however, for historical archaeological resources within some portions of the project area. These should be able to fill some of the data gaps which exist in the historical record.

This project has documented that there are no surviving Native Americans whose ancestors lived within the study area. Interviews with over 50 Native Californians failed to locate a single individual, or even hints of any individuals, who claim direct descent from the Native Americans of the study area.

The management plan begins with a progress report which discusses the cultural resources within the project area, deficiencies in the data base, the importance of the cultural resources, management policies and procedures, and the impacts which have taken place.

Finally the management plan presents recommended short range, long range, and immediate goals, objectives, and procedures whereby the Fish and Wildlife Service can fulfill, through the effective management of the cultural resources within their jurisdiction, their federally mandated responsibilities. These include a mixture of protection, preservation, and additional documentation. Included are recommendations that the prehistoric cultural resources within the San Luis and Kesterson Refuges be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as districts, and that the Dickenson Ferry and Bridge be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as an individual site significant in Merced County history.

The above sections are supported by a comprehensive bibliography, an annotated bibliography, and appendices. The appendices include a glossary of technical terms, a glossary of place names, an inventory of artifact collections from the project area, a list of historical maps, additional data on the individuals and facilities consulted, and the organization of the project. Finally, numerous plates are included to illustrate further the findings of the document.

This study has been designed and funded by the Fish and Wildlife Service in an effort to correct deficiencies in the inventory and evaluation of cultural resources and to guide future actions within the study area. To these ends, the report contains both a cultural resources overview and a recommended cultural resources management plan. The preparation of this document represents a significant step forward.

Lastly, the Refuge staff and Master Plan staff have shown a considerable interest in, and support for, this project. As these are the people charged with actually protecting the cultural resources, their interest and cooperation is a significant indication that progress is being made.

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