

SITE PRESERVATION, COMMUNITY ACTIVISM, AND A FUTURE FOR CALIFORNIA ARCHAEOLOGY

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The archaeological community must become actively involved in land-use decision making at the local and state levels to further the preservation of cultural resources before we lose much more. A voice for historic preservation helps counter the intensive lobbying for development and increased recreational opportunities. We must ensure that archaeological and biological resources receive equal priority for preservation; this is not currently the case, and cultural resources are being neglected. Involvement with community-based and statewide conservation groups by archaeologists will greatly enhance site preservation efforts. Training for this real world of historic preservation in California today should begin in our colleges. We recommend several critical adjustments in archaeology training, including a de-emphasis on consumptive research and increased interaction with stakeholders.

There is an important reason why we are writing this paper. We are very concerned about the future of the archaeological record in California, indeed, its very existence in a viable condition. We are strongly advocating for a new *ethos of conservation*, that is, a working and pervasive attitude promoting the conservation of archaeological sites and other cultural properties, among the professional and student communities in California. We are further advocating for a spirit of community activism and involvement on behalf of California's cultural heritage. This is a call for action for archaeologists, students, and avocationalists to promote site conservation and actively participate in effecting this new ethos, so that, we hope, there will be a future for California's past. Let us remember: a state that has lost its past is a pitiful as a person who has lost their memory (paraphrased from McGimsey 1970:24).

A report published by the Society for California Archaeology in 1973 stated that an estimated 1,400 archaeological sites were then being lost to development within California every year. The report also estimated 50 percent of all sites in California had already been destroyed (Moratto 1973:2, 10). Those are very troubling figures. If we project the former site-loss figure up to 2005, we find potentially as many as 44,800 archaeological sites have been lost in the intervening years within California, if not more.

The U.S. Census Bureau tells us that the population of California in 1970 was 19,953,134, while in 2000 the population was 33,871,648 (data from the U.S. Census Bureau website). That is an increase of around 14 million people! In State fiscal year 2003-2004 alone, the population of California increased by 559,000 according to the California Department of Finance. The Department of Finance is estimating that the population of California will reach 54 million in 2025, that is, 20 years from now (data from the California Department of Finance website). So, the population data indicate many additional Californians will soon be occupying and recreating within what are today our rapidly disappearing open spaces (along with the cultural and natural resources contained therein). Archaeological sites, traditional

cultural places (TCPs), sacred sites, cultural landscapes, historic structures, and other cultural properties are all in the way of this inevitable "progress." Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties account for over half of the growth in California.

The open space in California that does remain, in particular, public lands dedicated to recreation and public use, will face ever-increasing pressures to provide greater access and greater flexibility in allowable uses. Today, active recreation, such as off-road vehicle use, horseback riding, rock climbing, mountain biking, and others, represent legitimate uses of public lands. However, these same recreational activities have a high potential to significantly impact cultural and natural resources, and this is difficult to control effectively on public lands (e.g., Lyneis et al. 1980; Wilshire and Webb 1983; and others). Organizations representing and lobbying on behalf of active recreational pursuits are single-minded and highly vocal in articulating their concerns in the political arena and in public hearings, which they do effectively. Historic preservation is *not* their concern. The ever-increasing demands for additional lands open to active recreation are a rather subtle yet potentially profound force eating away at the integrity of archaeological sites, TCPs, other cultural properties, landscapes, wildlife and plant habitat, geologic structures, etc.

We suspect that members of our professional community are too quick to assume our state's cultural heritage is well preserved and well maintained on public lands. However, the reality of inadequate funding, staff shortages, staff poorly trained in the maintenance of archaeological sites and historic buildings, an agency mission counter to site preservation, and politics makes it very difficult for any agency to fulfill its obligation to successfully preserve and maintain cultural resources. External forces often view park lands, national and state forests, and other open space preserves as convenient locations for new utility corridors, new highways, fire breaks, barriers against undocumented immigration, cell phone towers, military training grounds, and other uses.

The time for action is now, to counter threats to the continued viability of archaeology in California! Environmental protection is under full-fledged attack from many sides, including the laws and jurisdictional regulations we count on to protect cultural resources. Consider the recent initiatives from the building industry in California and those of Governor Schwarzenegger, which seek to weaken CEQA, the bedrock environmental law of our state. Consider the proposed changes to the National Historic Preservation Act (in particular, Section 106). Consider that Section 4f of the federal Transportation Act, a section designed to protect park lands and preserves, has been overridden by legislative authority on occasion to the detriment of cultural and natural resources and the overall quality of life. Consider that the federal Department of Homeland Security can now use a hypothetical threat of terrorism to justify creating projects with highly significant environmental damage along our international borders. Consider that the State of California will need 200,000 new housing units each year for the next 20 years to keep up with the projected demand. Consider that various public agencies and local jurisdictions perform their own environmental documentation and regulation without benefit of cultural expertise on their staffs. And the list goes on....

We are also very concerned that the training students of anthropology receive to become the next generation of archaeologists, planners, land managers, consultants, historic preservation advocates, parents, etc., is not adequate for the challenges of saving and properly managing a dwindling resource base. We wonder if the cultural resource preservation needs of the real world of California today are reflected in college curricula. There are gender studies courses today and many other informative and important subjects; we strongly support broad-based and innovative academic programs. But where are the courses that cover the subjects of cultural resource management (and its many complex issues), techniques of archaeological site stabilization, site conservation, archaeological ethics, public outreach, and consultation with California Indians, local community groups, and other stakeholder groups? A check of anthropology department websites for major California colleges shows that these important issues are either not offered at all or offered on an irregular basis.

In 1993, Brian Fagan wrote an article in *Archaeology* magazine that he significantly entitled "The Arrogant Archaeologist," which argued that university archaeology programs, particularly those with doctoral programs, were too narrowly focused upon basic research. These programs, he said, merely paid "lip service" to issues of site conservation, resource management, public outreach, and administration of the archaeological record. Dr. Fagan advocated more emphasis on research into prevention of site vandalism (pothunting), the effects of tourism upon archaeological sites, and the conservation of archaeological sites (Fagan 1993). We agree!

Where is the next generation of professionals learning about how to manage archaeological sites, TCPs, cultural landscapes, and historic buildings? What college has a program that instills a *conservation ethos*? We see that consumptive research continues to reign supreme in academia, including field schools, graduate student research projects, and faculty programs. The reality of our rapidly disappearing resource

base simply cannot justify the excavation of an archaeological site because it is conveniently located or represents a nice fit for research goals. It is just not ethical for archaeologists today to be performing consumptive research on protected sites, i.e., those set aside in protected public lands and preserves (Hester 1991; Thorne 1991:15-16). Of course, work conducted to meet an agency's management objectives should be encouraged, such as sites threatened by natural erosion, recreational impacts, and similar issues, and, indeed, demands to be a focus of our attention. We concur with Thorne's (1991:15-16) recommendation: a college archaeology field school could test a threatened archaeological site, and then use the students to implement practical site stabilization measures. We also find it unfortunate and disturbing to hear of academic colleagues who have abandoned California to work in a foreign country. There is *so much* to be done here in California!

How about helping out the many public agencies with little to no funds to inventory their lands? Or provide assistance to agencies by surveying public lands affected by wildfires, flooding, ongoing natural erosion, or impacts brought on by active recreational public uses. Think about the hundreds of thousands of acres affected by the Cedar Fire alone. None of the public agencies with burned lands have sufficient resources, including staff and funding, to conduct comprehensive archaeological surveys. Spending one's time with archaeological investigations in Baja California, the Middle East, Mesoamerica, or other distant lands is not getting it done for an endangered archaeological record in California.

The mission statements of both the Society for American Archaeology and the Society for California Archaeology place site conservation and stewardship of cultural resources as a critical goal for all members. Principle No. 1 of the *SAA Principles of Archaeological Ethics* addresses the stewardship of the archaeological record. This principle states: "It is the responsibility of all archaeologists to work for long-term conservation and protection of the archaeological record by practicing and promoting stewardship of the archaeological record. Stewards are both caretakers of and advocates for the archaeological record for the benefit of all people...." We see nothing in the *SAA Principles* about advocating "mitigation," or only saving those sites deemed eligible for the National Register by bureaucrats in Sacramento and Washington, or nothing that advocates the exploitation of intact archaeological sites to further one's career and publication record. Rather, it challenges all of us to practice and promote sound stewardship of the entirety of California's cultural heritage.

How do we begin to effect and promote conservation and stewardship of our cultural heritage? The archaeological community in California must become more involved in land-use planning and land acquisition. We must ensure that archaeological sites, TCPs, and other cultural properties are given equal priority in land management decisions. We encourage all of you to get involved in local and statewide planning matters. Management plans and other environmental documents must give appropriate voice to and actively promote site preservation and management needs. The archaeological community should be seeking collaborative relationships with various conservation

organizations, conservancies, and land trusts operating in California, including the Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Trust for Public Land, Nature Conservancy, Coastal Conservancy, and many others, to encourage the acquisition and protection of cultural properties. A grant sponsored by Save Our Heritage Organization has been obtained that will allow Ann Van Leer and Susan Hector to develop tools needed to acquire and protect archaeological sites and other cultural properties. This grant program will result in the formulation of procedures to protect cultural resources after land acquisition, specifically, creating language for acquisition documents to assure preservation. This information will soon become available on the Internet.

Archaeologists should be consulting with California Indians and other stakeholders in local land use, and use an open and an honest dialog. Then, follow through with their recommendations. They and the groups cited above should be our partners in furthering site conservation.

Let us all work together, and in partnership with others outside our scientific community, to further site conservation, promote sound stewardship of our heritage, advocate for enlightened management of cultural resources, promote ethical work attitudes and actions, promote teaching "real world" issues in the classroom, and take on a new spirit of community activism. A popular statement of the activists in the 1960s comes to mind as appropriate to this discussion: "if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem." So, you must make up your mind to help save our disappearing cultural heritage and give it a future, or remain part of "the problem."

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