

SALTON SEA TEST BASE

SOUTHWEST DIVISION NAVAL FACILITIES ENGINEERING COMMAND



FACT SHEET

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

INTRODUCTION

This is the sixth monthly fact sheet produced by the U.S. Navy to provide current information on activities relating to the environmental cleanup at the Salton Sea Test Base (SSTB). Previous fact sheets have discussed the federal requirements which mandate the cleanup that must take place before the Navy may transfer the property. This fact sheet provides an overview of the cultural resources and the associated requirements the Navy must follow as it completes the cleanup at the base. Cultural resources include both historic properties and archaeological, or prehistoric, sites. Protection of these resources is provided by two federal statutes: the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979. These statutes set the stage for the current activities underway at SSTB.



Cultural Resources Requirements

In order to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), all federal facilities must compile a full inventory and evaluation of cultural resources within their boundaries. This is currently underway at SSTB, and will be completed before the property is available for transfer, lease, or sale.

The Installation Restoration Program at SSTB includes the removal of ordnance and associated debris. Areas where ordnance is expected to be found are considered dangerous and cannot be evaluated by archaeologists until they have been cleared of this potential danger. However, the ordnance team cannot conduct any ground-disturbing activities until these areas have been cleared by archaeologists. In order to allow the ordnance work to continue and, at the same time, provide protection for cultural resource sites, a Memorandum of Agreement among the Navy, California State Historic Preservation Officer, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and Bureau of Reclamation has been developed. This agreement will allow the ordnance team to conduct its clearance with oversight by an archaeologist.

In order to lawfully excavate or remove cultural resources from federal lands, an Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) permit must be obtained. Such a permit has been granted for the work at SSTB. To comply with ARPA, the Navy has also notified local Native American tribes of the planned work. These tribes will be kept informed as the work progresses. A Native American representative will monitor the work conducted by the ordnance and archaeology teams.

The Archaeological Site Documentation Process

According to the NHPA, site documentation for federal properties includes conducting a visual survey and an evaluation of subsurface materials to record and evaluate the significance of any historic and/or prehistoric sites present at SSTB. This process is as follows:

1. Qualified archaeologists walk and visually examine the entire 7,000 land acres of SSTB.
2. Each site is recorded, mapped, and described on designated site record forms.
3. Each site is tested (excavated) to examine the cultural materials present in the ground. This provides the information needed to determine whether sites are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. This information is added to the site record forms.
4. Site records are sent to the Imperial Valley clearinghouse which maintains a catalogue of all recorded sites in the region. The clearinghouse assigns a number to each site.
5. A final report is produced. The final cultural resources report will provide an overview of cultural resources located at SSTB and their eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places.

Prohibited Acts and Penalties

In the past, archaeological sites have been looted and vandalized. Part of the intent of the NHPA and ARPA is to protect cultural resources. Therefore, locations of sites at SSTB are considered proprietary information and are confidential. The purpose is not to deprive the public of information, but to protect important resources. The goal of the NHPA and ARPA is to find a balance between protecting cultural resources and educating the public about the past.

There are, however, activities punishable by fines and imprisonment according to Section 6 of ARPA. It states, "No person may excavate, remove, damage, or otherwise alter or deface or attempt to excavate, remove, damage, or otherwise alter or deface any archaeological resources located on public lands or Indian lands unless such activity is pursuant to a permit or exemption under ARPA or the Antiquities Act of 1906." It also prohibits the sale, purchase, exchange, transport, receipt, or offer to sell, purchase, or exchange any archaeological resource excavated or removed from federal or Indian lands.

Cultural Resources at SSTB

As discussed in Fact Sheet No. 11 (August 1996), SSTB is made up of Navy-owned parcels and Navy-leased parcels. Site documentation has been completed through step 4 on Navy-owned parcels where ordnance was not expected to be found; and through step 2 on Navy-owned parcels with ordnance concerns and on Navy-leased parcels. Subsurface testing at sites within these parcels will be completed as soon as it becomes possible.

A final cultural resources report is expected to be completed by early 1997. Those sections of the report that may be released to the public while protecting the integrity of the sites will be made available at the information repositories listed on the back of this fact sheet.

RAB Update

At the RAB's request, a workshop providing an in-depth review of the Removal Site Evaluation (RSE) Report and the recently released draft addendum to the same report was scheduled. This workshop will be held on 23 October 1996, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m., at the Salton City Spa and RV Park. Any individuals interested in an understanding of this technically difficult document are welcome to attend. The RSE Report and its draft addendum are available for review at the information repository locations listed below. A time will be set for the next RAB meeting during the workshop.

Information Repositories for the SSTB cleanup project have been established at two locations in the area so that the local community has the opportunity to review project documents and reports:

Salton City Library

2098 Frontage Road (Hwy 86)
Salton City, CA (619) 394-4446

Hours: Mon-Wed-Fri
8:00 AM - NOON
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Spencer Library Media Center

Imperial Valley College, Aten Road/Hwy 111
Imperial, CA (619) 355-6377

Hours: Mon-Thur: 8:00 AM - 9:00 PM
Fri: 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Sat: 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
(except holidays)

In addition, documents, reports, and Restoration Advisory Board meeting minutes and agendas are available at the reading room of the Salton City Spa and RV Park in Salton City. Please contact Ms. Shirley Lee Palmer at (619) 394-4333 for hours.

For More Information

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INSIDE:

Cultural Resources at SSTB