

**Placer County Water Agency  
Middle Fork American River Project  
(FERC No. 2079)**

**2006 CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY  
STUDY REPORT**



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report documents the results of Placer County Water Agency's (PCWA's) Cultural Resources Inventory Study, Phase 2. Information presented in this report was developed during 2006 field surveys and modified in response to information provided by the United States Department of Agriculture - Forest Service (USDA-FS) in 2007. This new information augments the information presented in PCWA's Final 2005 Cultural Resources Inventory Study Report dated August 23, 2006. Phase 1 of the cultural resources inventory study focused on retrieving, compiling and reviewing existing cultural resources information relevant to the Middle Fork American River Project (MFP or Project). Phase 2 focuses on verifying the location and conditions of known cultural resources and identifying new sites and/or unreported sites within the study area. The Phase 2 survey work conducted in 2006 was focused around French Meadows and Hell Hole reservoirs. Surveys to complete the cultural resources inventory in the study area will continue in 2007.

Some information in this report is considered confidential according to the National Historic Preservation Act and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) regulations contained in Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR) § 800.11 (c)(1), and in 18 CFR § 5.6(d)(3)(x), respectively. Confidential information includes maps depicting actual locations of archaeological sites and documentation of archaeological sites that includes location information. Confidential information for this report is presented in Appendix A. This information will not be circulated as part of this report but will be provided to appropriate persons on a need-to-know basis. Persons given access to confidential information must sign a confidentiality agreement. The text of this report is not considered confidential and will be circulated consistent with the communications protocol for the Middle Fork Project relicensing.

Archaeological investigations conducted on lands administered by the Eldorado National Forest (ENF) and Tahoe National Forest (TNF) were authorized under a Permit for Archaeological Investigation ARD100304. The permit was issued by the USDA-Forest Service per the Organic Act of 1897.

## 2.0 STUDY AREA

Phase 2 of the Cultural Resources Inventory Study involved conducting an inventory of the cultural resources in the areas immediately adjacent to or near the primary facilities associated with the MFP. For the purposes of this study, the study area is defined as follows:

**Study Area** - All of the area that lies within the FERC Project boundary and a 200-foot area surrounding any existing Project related facility or feature, or proposed betterment, that may lie outside the FERC Project boundary. These include, for example, recreation facilities, radio towers, spoil piles, adit entrances, sediment storage areas, and Project roads and trails. The study area does not include the land areas that overlie subsurface features such as tunnels.

The 2006 inventory effort focused on the areas surrounding Hell Hole and French Meadows reservoirs as shown on Maps 1 and 2. Other parts of the study area will be investigated in 2007.

### **3.0 STUDY PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES**

Information developed as part of the 2005 and 2006 Cultural Resources Inventory Study will serve the following purposes:

- Form a basis for future technical studies conducted as part of the formal relicensing process;
- Support discussions with the resource agencies and the Tribes regarding the Area of Potential Effects (APE);
- Support permit applications required from the United States Department of Agriculture-Forest Service (USDA-FS);
- Help ensure timely completion of other regulatory processes, for example Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA);
- Help facilitate early consultation efforts with the Tribes; and
- Help determine if there are any known cultural resource management issues associated with the MFP.

The specific objectives associated with Phase 2 of the Cultural Resources Inventory Study are:

- Determine the extent and adequacy of archaeological field surveys previously conducted in the study area;
- Verify the presence/absence and nature of cultural resources previously known to exist in the study area and immediate vicinity; and
- Identify any previously unknown cultural resources within the study area.

### **4.0 STUDY METHODS**

For Phase 2 of the Cultural Resources Inventory Study, archaeologists conducted a pedestrian field survey around French Meadows Reservoir and Hell Hole Reservoir over an eight day period extending from November 14, 2006 - November 21, 2006. The survey areas are shown on Maps 1 and 2. All of the personnel conducting the field survey met the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Archaeology and Historic Preservation investigations.

Access to the study area was achieved by boat, which was used on the reservoirs to access starting points of transects within the study area. A team of four archaeologists surveyed the majority of the study area using transects 15–25 meters wide. The spacing between transects varied slightly depending on terrain and vegetation. Areas that were exceptionally steep with talus were visually scanned with binoculars and coded on survey maps as visual reconnaissance.

Generally, ground visibility was poor. Most of the study area was covered with recent leaf litter as well as dense duff. Throughout the study area, various outcrops were scraped of duff to expose possible bedrock mortars or grinding slicks.

Representative views of the study area were photographed with a digital camera. Overview photographs were taken from various locations and from different directions within the study area to show the area's environmental and physiographic setting, as well as ground visibility at the time of survey.

Previously recorded sites within the study area were relocated and site records were updated. Newly identified sites were recorded following current professional standards and regulatory requirements. Newly identified sites are assigned temporary identification numbers that will be replaced by permanent USDA-FS and California Historical Resources Inventory numbers.

## **5.0 RESULTS**

One new archaeological site (PL-01) was recorded and two isolated cultural resources (ISO 1 and ISO 2) were noted during field surveys conducted in 2006. In addition, three previously recorded resources (TNF Isolated Find 1633-2, FS 05-03-55-201 and FS 05-17-54-228) located within the study area were relocated and the records updated (Table 1). One "site" previously recorded (FS 05-17-54-228) is determined, after re-examination to be naturally formed depressions in bedrock rather than cultural features (i.e., bedrock mortars) as had been originally recorded. This resource is now deleted from the TNF heritage resources inventory.

The type and description of these sites and resources are summarized in Table 1, and briefly described in the following.

### **Site PL-01**

Site PL-01 is on a high granite knoll above Hell Hole Reservoir (Figure 1). This is a multi-component site comprising a sparse lithic scatter and a historic tobacco tin. The lithic scatter is comprised of a single basalt biface fragment and 3 basalt flakes (Figure 2) at a density of less than one per square meter. One tobacco tin was observed on the southern boundary of the site. On-site vegetation is juniper, incense cedar, scrub oak, and Ponderosa pine with an understory of manzanita and seasonal grasses. Site soils are a tan-brown loam with decomposing granite and large cobbles.

### **Isolated Artifacts**

Two isolated artifacts were noted during survey. Isolate 1 is a large basalt core on a bench near the upper end of Hell Hole Reservoir. Isolate 2 is a crude basalt uniface located on the north side of the main Rubicon tributary in the extreme eastern portion of the study area.

### **Historic Gold Mining Ditch**

A segment of a historic gold mining ditch along a north facing slope above the south side of French Meadows Reservoir was identified by Pacific Legacy surveyors. The ditch is near FS Road 96 and continues east outside of the study area. The feature runs roughly northeast to southwest through the French Meadows campground. As documented to-date in the study area it measures 10 feet wide, 20 inches deep, and 590 feet long. In some areas the ditch is bermed on both sides; in other areas it has been breached. Flagging was noted along a portion of the feature suggesting that the TNF may have identified and/or recorded it. On-site vegetation includes Douglas fir, incense cedar, sugar pine, white thorn, and wild rose.

Discussions with TNF archaeologist Nolan Smith and further research by him determined that the ditch had been identified by the TNF and recorded as Isolated Find 1633-2. Further research has determined that the ditch segment is part of the Ralston Ditch. With this identification the TNF has assigned the ditch the number 05-17-54-0476. Historically the ditch extended from the Middle Fork American River to Pennsylvania Flat on what is now the Eldorado National Forest. Segments of the Ralston Ditch on the ENF are documented as site 05-03-53-067. Pacific Legacy will document the ditch segments in the study area as part of fieldwork in 2007.

### **Previously Recorded Sites**

Two previously recorded sites (FS 05-03-55-201 and FS 05-17-54-228) were relocated. The site record for FS 05-03-55-201 has been updated. Following discussions with the TNF "site" FS 05-17-54-228 is agreed to be a natural feature and is removed from the cultural resources inventory of the Forest.

Site FS-05-03-55-201 is near Hell Hole Reservoir. At this site the original datum tree was found and the "sensitive area" tag was still attached. The four pestles previously recorded in the original site record were relocated at the same location as previously recorded (Figure 3). All of the pestles appear to be natural cobbles used with little or no modification. Spalling from battering was noted on two of the pestles. One pestle has a polished and shouldered side suggesting it was used like a handstone. Leaf litter was very dense, making ground visibility near zero. The bedrock mortar cups were relocated and photographed. No apparent impacts to the site were noted, although there is a slight amount of erosion in the trail that bisects the site. Overall site condition is good.

**TABLES**

**Table 1. Summary of Identified Cultural Resources.**

Identifier	Type	Description
PL-01	Prehistoric and Historic	Sparse lithic scatter and a tobacco tin
ISO-01	Prehistoric artifact	Basalt core
ISO-02	Prehistoric artifact	Basalt uniface
TNF ISO 1633-2; FS 05-17-54-476; FS 05-03-53-067	Historic gold mining ditch	Segment of Ralston Ditch
FS 05-03-55-201	Prehistoric bedrock mortar	Bedrock milling features with pestles
FS 05-17-54-228	Determined not to be a cultural resource	Natural depressions in rock originally mistaken for bedrock mortars



**MAPS**

**FIGURES**



**Figure 1. Overview of PL-01, view to the east-northeast**



**Figure 2. Close-up of basalt flakes at PL-01**



**Figure 3. Bedrock Mortar and pestles at FS 05-03-55-201**

**APPENDIX A**  
**Confidential Site Documentation**

**Placeholder for**  
**Appendix A**  
**Confidential Site Documentation**

**Privileged Information**

Appendix A has been removed from this document because it contains confidential cultural resources information (archeological site descriptions), and is considered "Privileged" information. This type of information may not be made available to the public pursuant to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC's) regulations contained in 18 CFR Section 5.2(c) and 18 CFR Section 388.112. The confidential site documentation referred to in this report is contained in Supporting Document J (SD J).