

Chapter 19: Cultural Resources

Introduction and Setting

Traditionally the term "cultural resources" has been used rather narrowly to refer to archaeological remains and to historical structures. Archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, architects, sociologists, folklorists, geographers, planners, and others have in recent years expanded the term to include all forms of past cultural expression found within the archaeological, historical and cultural landscape. Nevada County's contemporary landscape does not reflect the continued occupancy of a single culture, but instead is a composite landscape affected by many contrasting cultural systems over a period of thousands of years. The contemporary landscape therefore, the one with which the land-use planner must deal, is the accumulation of layer upon layer of values and uses imposed on the land by past cultural events.

Nevada County contains 978 square miles or approximately 625,920 acres. About 172,260 acres, or 28 percent of the county is contained on Tahoe and Toiyabe National Forest lands and an additional 19,011 acres, or three percent, are managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Approximately 52,069 acres, or about eight percent of Nevada County has been subjected to archaeological survey with relatively "complete" systematic coverage. Complete coverage implies the implementation of a systematic survey at 30-meter transect intervals or less. About 29,300 acres have been surveyed on private lands, 22,769 acres on forest service lands and 482 acres on BLM lands. Within this total area approximately 1,490 prehistoric and historic archaeological sites have been recorded to date (see Appendix E of the Nevada County Master Environmental Inventory).

Considering the total number of sites recorded in the County and given the amount of acreage that has been surveyed, it can be estimated that the potential number of sites expected within Nevada County number about 17,900, leaving about 16,400 potential archaeological sites yet undiscovered. On the average, one site is expected per every 35 acres surveyed within Nevada County. This figure accounts for a relatively high site density, especially when considering that nearly half of the total prior archaeological coverage within the County falls on forested and mountainous public lands which are, overall, less likely to contain cultural resources.

Chapter 19: Cultural Resources Element

The varied environmental zones, the geological characteristics, and the geographical position of Nevada County account for a cultural resource base which is exceedingly rich and exceptionally complex. This explains the relatively large number of recorded prehistoric and historic sites and the wide array of types. Prehistoric site types which have been inventoried include villages and associated cemeteries, multi-task camps, single task-specific locales (such as bedrock mortar milling features), and special use sites (hunting blinds, petroglyphs and quarries). Historic themes within Nevada County are manifest archaeologically by site types related to mining, water management, logging, transportation, emigrant travel, ranching and agriculture, grazing, and the ice industry.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation. It was established to help preserve the diversity of our cultural heritage by highlighting the best remaining examples of all site types. Within Nevada County, 39 sites are either listed on, or have been determined eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. Another 22 historic properties have been nominated to the National Register, but their eligibility remains to be determined. An additional 19 sites are listed as California Historic Landmarks, 27 properties have been established as Points of Historical Interest, and another three sites are on the State Inventory of Historic Places.

Cultural resource sensitivity predictions for Nevada County indicate that cultural resource sites do not appear to be randomly located. Rather, it is apparent that the prehistoric and historic inhabitants of an area selected specific areas in which to occupy or work because of the presence of particular environmental conditions. In general, correlations with specific environmental variables are better for prehistoric site types than for historic sites. This is consistent with the idea that historic activities, particularly mining, involved intensive use of specific locations with little reliance or dependence on local resources for subsistence or other nonindustrial needs.

Further discussion of the cultural resources of the county is contained in Section 4: Open Space/Conservation Inventory, of Volume 2 of the Nevada County General Plan; and in Section 12 of the Nevada County Master Environmental Inventory, which is part of Volume 3 of the Nevada County General Plan.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Cultural resources in Nevada County include pre-historic sites such as camp and village sites, quarries, petroglyphs, and special use sites, as well as more recent historic sites and buildings related to emigrant travel, mining, logging, agricultural commerce, and transportation. Preservation of these cultural resources is an important part of the County's legacy to future generations.

Additional goals, policies and objectives generally related to cultural resources are located in Chapter 1: Land Use; Chapter 6: Open Space; and Chapter 18: Aesthetics.

Goal 19.1

Identify and protect and where economically feasible restore significant archaeological and historic resources.

Objective 19.1

Encourage the inventory, protection and interpretation of the cultural heritage of Nevada County, including historical and archaeological landscapes, sites, buildings, features, artifacts.

Action Policy

Policy 19.1

Enact a Cultural Resources Ordinance to ensure effective preservation, protection and management of cultural resources. Such an ordinance might include the identification and preservation of historical, cultural, and architecturally significant sites and resources within Nevada County. The establishment of a county listing of significant cultural resources may be part of a Cultural Resources Ordinance. The identified cultural resources could be evaluated as to their potential significance in relation to the criteria used for both the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historic Places. These four criteria for evaluation are the same for both registers. The resource must either be:

- a. associated with events that made a significant contribution to local, state, or national history;
- b. associated with the lives of persons significant in our past (local, state, or national);
- c. embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose component may lack individual distinction; or
- d. yields, or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

In addition, the identified cultural resource should be evaluated as to its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association. All of these same criteria may be used to designate significant resources for a local, county-wide listing of significant sites and/or resources.

The Cultural Resources Ordinance could also specify the mitigation procedures to be followed once a resource has been identified and

determined to be significant. The preferred measure would be avoidance and/or protection of a site by project redesign or fencing, etc. If the resource is or will be impacted, a professional archaeologist/historian/ architectural historian should be contacted to set up a research design to deal with the resource.

Directive Policies

Policy 19.2 Encourage the inclusion of significant sites or districts in the Federal or State Historical Register based on the recommendation of local historical societies.

Policy 19.3 Encourage and cooperate with the private sector in the implementation of innovative techniques intended to preserve archaeological and historic sites by gift, private conservancies and easements.

Objective 19.2

Implement development standards, including the preservation of open space, to protect identified significant cultural sites.

Directive Policies

Policy 19.4 Incorporate cultural and historic resource management standards in the Comprehensive Site Development Standards, for use in project review of all discretionary project permits. These standards shall provide for the use of clustering and restricted building sites as techniques for the preservation of significant cultural resources.

See: Policy 1.18; Policy 18.1

Policy 19.5 In order to maintain a definition of community character and enhance local economies and tourism through adaptive reuse, include guidelines for preservation, maintenance and enhancement of the exterior design elements of structures and districts of local historic or architectural interest, as part of the Nevada County Community Design Guidelines.

These guidelines shall encourage and provide for the adaptive reuse of historic buildings in order to preserve such buildings and to enhance local economies. The guidelines shall be advisory in nature and integrated with the Comprehensive Site Development Standards in the project review process.

See: Policy 18.1

Directive Policy

Policy 19.6

Require all applications for discretionary project permits, and all applications for ministerial project permits except single family residences on individual lots shall be accompanied by a Site Sensitivity Literature Review, prepared by a qualified archaeologist or entity such as the North Central Information Center, Department of Anthropology, California State University at Sacramento.

Where review indicates significant archaeological or historical sites or artifacts are, or are likely, present, on-site field review shall be required. If a site or artifacts are discovered, the find shall be evaluated and potential significance determined. If significant cultural resources may be directly or indirectly impacted by proposed development, appropriate mitigation shall be developed and implemented in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act standards, including Appendix K, prior to onset of ground disturbance. Avoidance of significant cultural resources shall be considered the mitigation priority. Excavation of such resources shall be considered only as a last resort when sufficient planning flexibility does not permit avoidance. On-site field review, evaluation of site significance, and development of mitigation measures, as identified above, shall be performed by a qualified professional archaeologist.

Objective 19.3

Include in the development review process consideration of historic, cultural, and Native American concerns and values.

Directive Policy

Policy 19.7

Cooperate with local historical societies and the Native American Indian community to protect significant historical, cultural and archaeological artifacts, improve access to and interpretation of unrestricted resources and archaeological history by involving them in the development review process.