



Recommended Format and Content for Archaeological Survey Reports

The purpose of this document is to (1) provide basic information regarding the highly recommended content and format for archaeological survey reports, and (2) to provide a guideline for planners, developers, private landowners, and archaeologists to assess the accuracy and completeness of archaeological survey reports. The Mendocino Archaeological Commission has modeled this document largely on the Archaeological Resource Management Reports (ARMR) Recommended Contents and Format prepared by the California Office of Historic Preservation (1990).

I. Title Page

The title page should include the name and designation (Assessor's Parcel Number) of the property that was investigated. It should reference the Mendocino Archaeological Commission project case number. The title should refer to a local place name such as a city or town and cite the county in which the study took place. The title page should also include the name, title, and location of the person who prepared the report. If the report has multiple preparers, all should be listed. Provide the name, title, organization, and mailing address for which the report was prepared. The title page should list the month and year the report was completed. If cultural resource information is reported, a confidentiality statement should appear at the bottom of the title page. California Government Code 6245 and 6254.10 are the provisions that protect the confidentiality of archaeological resources.

II. Table of Contents

A Table of Contents that lists the major sections and subheadings, appendices, tables, and figures with page numbers is required.

III. Summary of Findings

The Summary of Findings is an abstract of intent, methods, scope, and results of the study. It should briefly describe the proposed undertaking, purpose of the survey, constraints to the survey effort, number, and type of cultural resources identified, and their relation to the project area. It should also identify the legislative context that the study is intended to address (e.g. California Environmental Quality Act Public Resources Code 5097, 21082, and 21093.2, and/or Mendocino County Ordinance 3657).

IV. Introduction

The introduction should provide the date(s), location of the survey, and reference any Project Location Map, Survey Coverage Map, and Cultural Resources Location Map included with the report. The introduction should provide the names and general qualification of the surveyors and author (i.e. educational background, number of years field experience, and any certifications or relevant professional affiliations).

V. Project Location and Description

This section is intended to provide the reader with a sense of the project area setting and scope of the project. This section should provide a narrative description of the project location with reference to its rural and urban setting and relation to major landmarks. The scope of the project should be described including the number of acres, proposed improvements, and location of any direct impacts.

VI. Sources Consulted

This section is intended to summarize the scope of archival, historical, and/or agency sources consulted as part of the identification effort. Indicate if any National Register of Historic Places, California Inventory of Historic Resources, or California Historical Landmarks are present within the project area. Indicate the date, reference number, who performed search, and results from the records search conducted at the California Historical Resource Information System (CHRIS) Northwest Information Center. Identify any institutions, agencies, or individuals that were consulted for additional information. Define the area for which the search was conducted (e.g., "within a one-mile radius of the study area). Report any previous archaeological investigations within the search area describing their methods and findings. The Mendocino County Archaeological Commission strongly encourages consultation with tribes to: (1) inform them regarding a project within their traditional area, and (2) to solicit any concerns they may have regarding the undertaking. Contact the Native American Heritage Commission at 916-373-3710 for a list of tribe contacts in your area.

VII. Background

Provide succinct and pertinent information to demonstrate the familiarity with the region under study and as context for the archaeological and/or cultural resources identified. This section should only focus on relevant background information to the study area. It need not be an exhaustive treatment but instead outline relevant local themes. The four background sections are Environment, Ethnography, Prehistory, and History.

(1) ENVIRONMENT

Present a concise description of the local environment emphasizing the factors that may have affected use of the area by historic and prehistoric occupants, such as topography, proximity to water or other natural resources. Discuss how environmental factors such as alluviation, or erosion, or modern disturbances may have preserved, destroyed, or obscured the visibility of archaeological remains.

(2) ETHNOGRAPHY

Identify the ethnographic inhabitants of the study area. Cite the major sources of ethnographic information for the area. Briefly describe the way of life of Native inhabitants such as subsistence orientation, settlement strategy, social organization, and material culture.

(3) PREHISTORY

Describe the history of archaeological investigations in the region, with reference to studies close to the study area. Outline the standard prehistoric chronology for the region citing primary references and original works. The scope of this section should be appropriate for the amount and type of resources encountered during the study to situate them within the body of existing knowledge.

(4) HISTORY

Briefly outline the historic chronology for the region with reference to events close to the study area. Emphasize themes that may be related to historical resource types identified in the study.

VIII. Field Methods

This section should describe the survey strategy, transect type, spacing, size of crew, and techniques implemented in the survey to ensure proper coverage, and frequency of mineral soil observations (see map requirements pg.4). In sensitive areas, mineral soil observations must be accomplished every 5 meters with a minimum of a 25 cm x 25 cm cleared observation area.

Describe area of coverage and identify any areas that did not receive coverage. Include explanation for any areas were not covered. Reference the Survey Coverage Map.

Discuss any factors that affected ground surface mineral soil visibility (i.e. duff, vegetation, or modern disturbances) and any methods used to identify subsurface or near surface archaeological resources (i.e. probing, examination of rodent burrows, cut bank exposures). Describe the techniques used to record site and the methods used to define site boundaries. Describe method for accessing visual obstruction of mineral soils and all associated equipment and techniques (trowel or shovel; scraping, open-spacing, etc.)

****No more than five (5) meter transects shall be used in sensitive areas and no more than twenty (20) meter transect in non-sensitive areas.**

IX. Findings and Conclusions

Briefly identify and describe all archaeological sites and/or isolated finds that were previously recorded or newly identified. If any resources that were previously reported or anticipated were not found, discuss the probable factors that may account for those resources. Information appropriate to this section includes:

- Location of resources with reference to the project;
- Horizontal extent of resource and criteria used to determine site limits;
- Estimate the density of cultural material (e.g., number of artifacts per square meters);
- Type, distribution, and estimated quantities of cultural materials with special attention directed at time sensitive artifacts (e.g., projectile points, beads, bottles);
- Estimate the depth of the deposit, and the basis for the estimate (e.g., rodent holes, probe, previous excavations);
- Type and disturbance of features;
- Nature and extend of disturbances;
- Chronological and functional interpretations of the site;
- Existing status of the site with respect to National Register or California Register listings;
- Will project have an adverse effect on eligible or potentially eligible properties;

X. Mandatory Finding (include the following statement):

- "Any person who in the preparation for or in the process of excavating or otherwise disturbing earth, discovers any archaeological site shall take the following actions: Cease and desist from all further excavation and disturbances within one hundred (100) feet of the discovery and make notification of the discovery to the Director of Planning and Building Services within 24 hours of the discovery."

XI. References Cited

Include only those references cited within the body of the report. The bibliographic format may follow the most recent style guide for American Antiquity.

XII. Maps

All maps should include a scale, north arrow; identify the map name, type of map (e.g., USGS 7.5 minute), and the date of latest revision. At a minimum, all reports are required to have a Project Location Map. If the project area was not completely surveyed or different levels of coverage were used in the study, then the report must include a Survey Coverage Map. If any cultural resources are present within the project area, a Cultural Resources Location Map must be included in the report.

Project Location Map should be on the portion of the appropriate USGS topographic map. This map should show the full extent of the project boundary.

Survey Coverage Map should be on the portion of the appropriate USGS topographic map. This map should show the full extent of the property boundary and indicate mineral soil observations points along transects, unless fully described in Section V. Project Location and Description.

Cultural Resources Location Map: If cultural, archaeological, or historical resources are identified during the study, a Cultural Resources Location Map should be included in the report. The Cultural Resources Location Map should be on the portion of the appropriate USGS topographic map. This map should show the locations and identifier for all cultural resources and isolated finds encountered in the study. Sites that are less than two (2) acres in extent should be depicted as points. Sites that are greater than two (2) acres should depict the site boundary as a polygon.

XIII. Other Figures

Photographs may be useful to document site locations and relation to other major features. Historic maps (e.g., Sanborn, General Land Office, or other) or ethnographic maps that include the project area can be informative and useful data and are encouraged to be included in the report.

IX. Site Records

All cultural resources should be recorded on appropriate Department of Parks and Recreation forms. All archaeological sites will be recorded with a Primary Record form (DPR 523 A), Archaeological Site Record form (DPR 523 B), a Location Map (DPR 523J), Site Sketch Map (DPR 523K), and/or additional forms as appropriate. All isolated finds should have individual Primary Record forms and Location Maps. If the site was previously recorded, a copy of the original record should be included in the report.

The Mendocino Archaeological Commission strongly encourages that an updated site record be completed for all previously recorded archaeological sites that meet any of the following criteria:

- Are different in nature, extent or dimensions than previously recorded;
- Have been altered, modified, or impacted since the previous recordation;
- Were recorded prior to January 1, 1991.

Reviewers Check List
Archaeological Survey Report
Content and Format Guidelines

Title Page

Name and location of project
Name, title affiliation, and address of author
Name, title, affiliation, and address of person who requested study Date

Table of Contents

Provided if appropriate

Summary of Findings

Described proposed undertaking Legislative context
Methods of study
Number, nature, and extent of cultural resources identified Confidentiality statement

Introduction

Date and location of survey
Name and qualifications of surveyors and author Meet minimum qualifications:

- Work abides by the explicit code of conduct and standards set by the Society of Professional Archaeologists (SOPA)
- Shall be listed by the Northwest Information Center (N.I.C.) as a qualified professional archaeologist.

Project Location and Description

Size of project (e.g. number of acres) Proposed improvements
Direct impacts

Sources Consulted

National Register, California Register, and other listings
Records search date, reference number, who performed search, and results
Define search area

Background

Environment (description adequate)
Ethnography (description adequate)
Prehistory (description adequate)
History (description adequate)

Field Methods

Survey Strategy

Sensitivity Strategy

Transect spacing

- Sensitive area: five (5) meter transects
- Non-sensitive areas: No more than 20 meter transects

Identifies areas of coverage and non-coverage on USGS 7.5 Quad Map

Findings and Conclusions

Locations of resources described

Nature, extent, distribution of resources present

Status of site with regard to National Register and California Register

Adverse effects on significant or potentially significant resources

Unanticipated Discovery Plan

References Cited

All references included

Maps

Project Location Map on 7.5' USGS (required)

Area of Potential Effects (APE) depicted Survey

Coverage Map

Cultural Resources Location Map

Site Records

Sites

Primary Record

Archaeological Record

Location Map

Site Sketch Map

Isolated Finds

Primary Record

Location Map

Accepted by Mendocino Archaeological Commission 1/11/2019

Updated by Mark Cliser 1/11/2023