

4.11 CULTURAL RESOURCES

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This section summarizes the cultural resources of Kings County. Information reviewed for the summary includes the Kings County General Plan, published reports on archaeological research in the Tulare Lake Basin, and data from the the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) (Appendix E), Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center in Bakersfield. The records at CHRIS include known and recorded archaeological and historic sites, inventory, and excavation reports filed with the center, and properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the California Historical Landmarks, the California Inventory of Historic Resources, and the California Points of Historic Interest. The records at the Native American Heritage Commission include a database of sacred lands.

SETTING

PREHISTORY

The project site is located in the southern San Joaquin Valley in an area known to have been the home of the Tachi tribe of the Yokuts. The Tachi Yokuts lived north of Tulare Lake and westward to the hills near Coalinga. Archaeological evidence indicates that the historic Native American people were “the last in a series of hunting or hunting-gathering populations” to live in the Tulare Lake region (Wallace, 1991). Artifacts collected from archaeological sites in the vicinity of the lake, primarily along a former (lower) lake shoreline, include over 325 Clovis-type lithic projectile points (Stepp, 1997). Clovis points are typically considered index fossils of an early North American stone tool technology developed 11,000 to 13,000 years ago. Therefore, human occupation of the Tulare Lake margin probably began more than 10,000 years ago.

Significant Tulare Lake archaeological sites include the Witt site in southern Kings County (near Dudley Ridge) and the Creighton Ranch site in western Tulare County. Fossilized human bone from the Witt site has been radiometrically dated as being 11,380 to 15,800 years old. The bones of Pleistocene mammals from that site are similarly dated. Several sites have also been identified south and west of Hanford (including three mound sites that were leveled in the 1940s). Other sites have been recorded in the area of Stratford, the area south and west of Lemoore, and in the area surrounding Alpaugh in southwest Tulare County and southeastern Kings County (Wallace, 1993). The CHRIS records indicate that 90 recorded cultural resource sites have been identified in Kings County.

Most of the archaeological resources are located in the upper three feet of the subsurface. Throughout most of the valley floor portion of the County, intensive agricultural production has disturbed surface soils to below this depth. Therefore, it is likely that

agricultural activities have disturbed most of the archaeological resources. In addition, ardent collection of artifacts by local residents and other collectors has complicated systematic, scientific evaluation of the Tulare Lake archaeological resources.

HISTORIC PERIOD

The Kings County General Plan identifies four sites in the County that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and three additional sites that have been designated as California Historical Landmarks. Three of the sites on the National Register are in Hanford: the Taoist Temple; the old County Courthouse; and the Carnegie Library. The fourth site is the Witt archaeological site near Dudley Ridge. The three California Historical Landmarks are the Mussel Slough Tragedy site south of Hardwick; the Kingston Town site north of Hardwick; and the El Adobe de los Robles Rancho west of Lemoore.

The County General Plan also identifies thirteen historic sites of local importance. The sites include seven cemeteries and two churches located in Corcoran, Lemoore, Grangeville, and other rural areas in the northern County. Additional sites include the original site of Lemoore; the Avenal Ranch; Kettleman Hills fossil beds; and First High School on the Kings River.

RELEVANT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Objective DE 3.1 of the Draft Dairy Element (Element) (Appendix A) requires that potential environmental effects be considered during the review and evaluation of applications for new or expanded dairies. **Policy DE 3.1d** specifically requires that known cultural and archaeological resources be considered for general dairy siting criteria during the dairy development review process. **Policy DE 3.1e** addresses the potential for disturbance of unknown cultural and paleontological resources during construction of individual dairy projects.

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

The following criteria have been established for determining the significance of potential impacts on cultural resources, based on the CEQA Guidelines environmental checklist. A significant impact would occur if the proposed project would:

- cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of historical resources;
- cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of archaeological resources;
- directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontology resource or site or geologic feature;

- disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries.

Impact 4.11-1

Disturbance or destruction of cultural (historical and archaeological) resources. This would be a significant impact if archaeological resources were to be identified at dairy development sites. This is a less-than-significant impact.

Portions of the County identified in the Element as suitable for dairy development could potentially contain significant archaeological resources. The large number of recorded archaeological sites that have been identified in the County indicate that the Tulare Lake Basin may contain other unidentified sites. Pleistocene animal fossils have been identified in association with many archaeological sites in the Tulare Lake Basin. Most of these areas with DDOZs have been disturbed by agricultural activities, which may have disturbed or displaced artifacts at or near the ground surface. As the precise sites of future dairy facilities are not known, it is possible that dairy development could also result in disturbance of known archaeological sites. It is also possible that excavation for dairy structures and manure management facilities could encounter as-yet undetected (i.e., buried) resources. Such finds may meet the definition of a “unique archaeological resource” as specified in Section 21083.2 of the Public Resources Code. It is also possible that human remains could be encountered.

In addition to archaeological resources, the DDOZs may contain significant historical resources. The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15064.5(a)) define a “historical resource” as a resource that: 1) is on or eligible for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources, 2) is included in a local register of historical resources, 3) determined by a lead agency to be “historically significant,” or 4) could be a historic resource as defined in Public Resources Code sections 5020.1(j) or 5024.1. Some of the recognized historical resources in Kings County that would apparently meet these criteria may be located, wholly or partly, within DDOZs. These resources include the Indian Cemetery, Kings River Cemetery, Kings River Church, First High School, Kingston Town, and Mussel Slough Tragedy sites.

The protection of cultural resources is addressed in **Policies DE 3.1d** and **3.1e** of the Element. Under **Policy DE 3.1d**, documentation of a CHRIS records review and a Sacred Lands file check is required to be submitted with all dairy applications. If the search indicates the presence of known or suspected cultural resources, a site-specific evaluation by a qualified archaeologist is required. The provisions of **Policy DE 3.1e** require that, if archaeological or paleontological resources are encountered during dairy development, work is to be suspended pending evaluation of the resources by a qualified archaeologist. The evaluation must be conducted in accordance with State and Federal guidelines

(including Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines). Implementation of **Policy DE 3.1d** will ensure that known cultural resources are identified and managed during consideration of dairy development applications. The potential for disturbance of unknown (i.e., buried) cultural and paleontological resources is mitigated in conformance with CEQA requirements by **Policy DE 3.1e**.

Implementation of **Policies DE 3.1d** and **3.1e** would minimize the potential for disturbance or destruction of cultural resources during dairy development and reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure 4.11-1

None required.