

ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

SITE CONDITION ASSESSMENTS

2008 FIELD SEASON

WHISKEYTOWN NATIONAL RECREATION AREA



February, 2009

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National Park Service
Whiskeytown National Recreation Area
Shasta County, California

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

TYPE OF PROJECT: Archeological Site Condition Assessments and Data Management.

PROJECT PERSONNEL: Anna Yoder, Research Assistant, University of Nevada, Reno; Christine Martin, NPS Archeological Intern; Katherine McCullough, NPS Archeological Intern; Kelly McCauley, NPS Archeological Intern; Cody Mee, NPS Archeological Intern; Kimberly Watson, NPS Archeological Intern; Joe Svinarich, Fire Program Archeologist, National Park Service; Youth Conservation Corps 2008 Whiskeytown Crew.

SUMMARY: The National Park Service (NPS) maintains archeological site information in its Archeological Sites Management Information System (ASMIS). Site condition information is documented in the ASMIS database so that the NPS may identify needed site treatment and implement actions to prevent impairment of archeological sites. NPS policy regarding ASMIS site condition assessments requires monitoring archeological sites and completing condition assessments on a periodic basis. Whiskeytown NRA entered into a partnership with the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) for the purpose of collaboratively completing required ASMIS site condition assessments. Fieldwork was completed by Whiskeytown NRA archeological interns under the direction of a UNR researcher with guidance from NPS archeologists and UNR professor Dr. Donald Hardesty. All fieldwork for this project was completed in 2008 and consists of 41 archeological site condition assessments with shovel testing used at one site to check for subsurface cultural materials. The Whiskeytown ASMIS database was updated by NPS archeologists to reflect site condition assessment work completed in 2008.

ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED: CA-SHA-0174/H, 272, 514, 515, 516/H, 517, 518/H, 519/H, 1852, 2001H, 2002H, 2004, 2006, 2138H, 2139/H, 2140H, 2141H, 2142H, 2143H, 2145H, 2700H, 2701H, 2704H, 2705H, 2706H, 3276H, 3277H, 3278H, 3279H, 3275H, 3705H, 3789H, 3790H, 3791H, 3792H, 3632H, 4369H, 4370H, WHIS-2007-02, WHIS-2008-04 & 05.

ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES SHOVEL TESTED: CA-SHA-272.

FIELDWORK DATES: March 31 to June 20, 2008, August 25 to September 12, 2008, and February 9, 2009.

PERSON DAYS: 91 Person Days for fieldwork.

GREAT BASIN COOPERATIVE ECOSYSTEMS STUDIES UNIT

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT NUMBER: H8R07060001

TASK AGREEMENT NUMBER: J8R07080013

NPS PARK UNIT: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area.

CESU COOPERATING PARTNER: University of Nevada, Reno.

PROJECT TITLE: Conduct Archeological Site Condition Assessments - Whiskeytown National Recreation Area.

GREAT BASIN CESU COORDINATOR: Angela Evenden, NPS.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Donald Hardesty, University of Nevada, Reno.

AGREEMENT TECHNICAL REPRESENTATIVE: Joseph Svinarich, NPS.

ARCHEOLOGICAL FIELD DIRECTOR: Anna Yoder, University of Nevada, Reno.

REGIONAL ARCHEOLOGIST: Kirstie Haertel, NPS.

WHISKEYTOWN CHIEF OF RESOURCES: Barbara Alberti, NPS.

LASSEN NATIONAL PARK ARCHEOLOGISTS: Cari kreshak and Tandy Boseman, NPS.

TASK AGREEMENT ABSTRACT: This Task Agreement by and between the National Park Service, (NPS) and University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) is issued against the Great Basin Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit Cooperative (GB-CESU) and Joint Venture Agreement, H8R07060001, for the purpose of mutual assistance in conducting a project entitled “Conduct Archeological Site Condition Assessments at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area.” NPS policy regarding ASMIS site condition assessments requires monitoring archeological sites and completing condition assessments on a periodic basis. Needed archeological site condition assessments were completed at Whiskeytown NRA in 2008 through the partnership with UNR made possible by the CESU Task Agreement. Fieldwork was completed by NPS interns under the direction of a UNR researcher and ASMIS data management and data entry was completed by the Lassen NP archeologist. General project guidance and research design for the shovel tests at Oak Bottom were provided by the NPS ATR, UNR Principle Investigator, and Lassen NP archeologist. Management and updates to ASMIS were completed by NPS archeologists.

INTRODUCTION

Fundamental National Park Service (NPS) archeological responsibilities include identifying, studying, documenting, preserving, and protecting archeological sites ensuring that archeological site values are unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. With these objectives in mind, the NPS undertakes investigations to locate, identify, and document sites, record and maintain information about the sites in the NPS Archeological Sites Management Information System (ASMIS) database, and apply treatments and takes other actions to prevent impairment of sites.

Archeological site information for Whiskeytown NRA is maintained in the ASMIS database. Because Whiskeytown is a dynamic park undergoing constant change due to development or nature, these resources need to be assessed every five, ten, or fifteen years – depending on the specific site and degree of potential impact or disturbance. However before these periodic assessments can be initiated a baseline condition for each site needs to be established. This initial archeological site condition assessment consists of a site visit where professional evaluation of the site condition focuses on physical stability and degree of deterioration to establish the site baseline condition. After the baseline condition is established, a periodic monitoring schedule of five, ten or fifteen years is determined based on recent service-wide guidance.

Currently a national initiative to complete baseline archeological site condition assessments within NPS units is under way. The goal is to establish this baseline and implement periodic site assessments to monitor site condition. In some instances sites have not been relocated since they were initially discovered and recorded. More intensive fieldwork is warranted for these sites and may include efforts such as shovel testing at prehistoric artifact scatters where little or no evidence remains on the ground surface in the recorded site location. Due to a proposed campground expansion at Whiskeytown, shovel testing was conducted at site CA-SHA-272 in the vicinity of the Oak Bottom Campground during the course of this project.

Fieldwork was completed by Whiskeytown NRA archeological interns under the direction of a UNR Research Assistant with guidance from the UNR Principle Investigator (PI), NPS Agreement Technical Representative (ATR), and NPS Lassen Volcanic NP Archeologist. NPS staff manages the Whiskeytown ASMIS database and determines which sites need condition assessments. The ATR provided guidance regarding NPS policy and standards for ASMIS, coordinated logistics, and facilitated work efforts between NPS staff, interns and UNR researchers. This arrangement provides an educational opportunity for UNR graduate students and NPS archeological interns to conduct research in historic mining at Whiskeytown NRA under the guidance of Professor Donald Hardesty – an acknowledged expert in historic mining who has been involved in previous cultural resource studies at Whiskeytown NRA.

PROJECT SETTING

Whiskeytown NRA is located in Shasta County in the northern region of California. The park is approximately eight miles west of Redding (population 90,000) and California State Route 299 passes through the northern portion of the park.

The park is within the Klamath Mountain physiographic region. Because of the park's proximity to the Cascade and Coast Ranges, as well as Sacramento Valley, it is an area of significant diversity in topography, weather and vegetation. The elevation in the park ranges between 625 feet at the southern end of lower Clear Creek up to 6209 feet at the summit of Shasta Bally. The extreme range of elevation within the park also contributes to the rugged terrain and diverse soil types. During the months of May through September, the lower elevations experience hot dry summers, reaching temperatures over 100°. During the months of November through March sub-freezing temperatures occasionally occur. Overall, the park has a Mediterranean climate – hot and dry in the summer, moderate rainfall and cool temperatures in the winter. Because of the range in climate, elevation, and soil types, the vegetation is patchy as well as diverse. The plant communities within the park integrate with each other in such a way that boundaries are seldom observed. Due to the patchy vegetation, the history of natural and human disturbances is reflected (NPS 2001).

Many prehistoric and historic archaeological sites exist within the boundary of Whiskeytown NRA. Although actual prehistoric settlement preferences may be skewed to the limitation of survey coverage, the majority of the prehistoric sites seem to lie between 1000 and 2000 feet in elevation. The site locations also appear to be influenced by the occurrence of perennial and/or reliable intermittent water sources due to the fact that most sites were found within a close proximity to these water sources. The types of sites range from a more permanent habitation site with midden deposits, and in some cases housepits, to a more transient, seasonal camp site. Cultural resources at the various sites include flaked-stone artifact scatters, such as flaked-stone tools, debris, and occasionally ground-stones, reflecting resource procurement and human activities from one or more occupational episodes. Although local chert and igneous rock sources were also used, obsidian sources north and east of Whiskeytown account for the majority of the lithic material used in flaked-stone tool manufacturing (Bevill and Nilsson 2001).

Historic archaeological sites at Whiskeytown NRA are predominately remains from mining activity dating back to the early gold rush period. Various kinds of mining activity found in this historic period include placer, hydraulic, Chinese, and hard-rock. Other kinds of activity found in this historic period are settlement and logging. Types of sites that are associated with this historic activity consist of homesteads, trash dumps, and grave sites. Historic mining ditch systems and abandoned mines consist of prospects, exploratory ditches, mine shafts, adits, tailings piles, and old roads. There are also structural remnants, including stamp mill foundations and level terraces that have associated trash scatters. Occasionally, small earthen dams in seasonal drainages or stacked rock retaining walls along perennial creeks are also found and most likely reflect early placer mining activities (Bevill and Nilsson 2001; Hamusek et. al. 1999).

BACKGROUND

Recent review of the Whiskeytown ASMIS has revealed over seventy archeological sites that either need establishment of a baseline condition, or have exceeded the periodic monitoring schedule. To complete this needed work, Whiskeytown NRA entered into a collaborative

partnership with the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) to undertake the task of establishing needed baseline site condition assessments and revisiting sites that have exceeded the time limit on the monitoring schedule. Forty-one archeological sites were selected for assessment in 2008 based on need for a baseline condition assessment or elapsed time since the last site condition assessment, logistical concerns such as accessibility and clustering of sites needing assessments, and potential for management concerns related to proposed park projects.

Current condition assessments are critical for making decisions concerning treatments necessary for the long term preservation and protection of these prehistoric and historic sites. They also provide an opportunity to update or correct information concerning the revisited site by verifying the site location, documenting new features or artifacts, or updating the site sketch map. The site location (if relocated) is updated and verified with a GPS. New features or significant artifacts are noted during site assessments in a continuation form. The site record is then updated to document the new cultural materials or correct errors noted on the original site record. Significant site features or site disturbances contributing to the deterioration of the site are photographically documented. Taking photographs of the features or disturbances ensures an accurate site assessment over time due to the fact that long term disturbances are not necessarily observed after a solitary visit to the site.

One site was chosen for condition assessment during this project due to a proposed campground expansion currently in the planning phase. Whiskeytown NRA is proposing to expand the Oak Bottom Campground by developing the area west of the existing campground as described in the park's General Management Plan. This expansion may include development of one or both of the peninsulas west of the current campground to provide better spacing between campsites. A prehistoric site, CA-SHA-272, was previously recorded in the vicinity of the former fitness trail, and its' extent needs to be determined in order to avoid potential impacts related to the development of the peninsulas. CA-SHA-272 was initially recorded by Johnson in 1976 as;

Light lithic scatter which extends for 65 meters along an east-west trail (Photo m). The north-south limits of the site could not be determined due to duff and extremely dense manzanita. Two piles of boulders (Photo n) are located on the site just off the southern edge of the trail. Their purpose is unknown. Artifacts encountered at the locality include 4 obsidian projectile point fragments, numerous red and black obsidian flakes and a cobble chopper (Johnson 1977:10).

The site was revisited in 1986 and 1987 (Eidsness 1988; King-Smith and Eidsness 1987; King-Smith 1986) with a significant difference in reports of cultural materials noted at the site. During the 1987 (Eidsness 1988) site visit no artifacts were observed at the site, but flakes were noted along the fitness trails after spring rains in 1986 (King-Smith). During the three previous site visits archeological investigators reported poor surface visibility due to dense Manzanita off the trail and dusty conditions during the dry season with some speculation as to the depth and extent of the site.

METHODOLOGY

Pre-field record searches are necessary to determine existing documentation for archaeological sites selected for ASMIS condition assessments including: review of archeological site records, archeological inventory reports, NRHP (National Registry of Historic Places) nomination forms, ethnographic data, and various cultural resource and historical overviews available at Whiskeytown NRA. Because many of the sites at Whiskeytown reflect historical land-use and ownership emphasizing mining activity, abandoned mine records, historical maps, property assessments, and other data available at Whiskeytown were reviewed to determine historical locations for historic-period sites and features.

Field procedures for assessing site condition included a walkover of the entire site to relocate documented features and areas of artifact concentration. New features or artifact concentration areas were documented using State of California forms for recording historical resources (California Department of Parks and Recreation Form DPR 523). These forms include the continuation form for documenting minor site updates, and the primary and archeological forms when sites are completely re-recorded. When conducting ASMIS site condition assessments for this project, site observations were documented on a form collaboratively developed by UNR and NPS staff to include all condition assessment information required in the NPS ASMIS database. Changes to site boundaries and the extent of observed disturbances were updated on the site sketch map where needed. Site location information was verified using GPS, and site features were documented with digital photographs.

For the purpose of this project, the NPS provided field equipment needed to conduct the ASMIS site assessments. This equipment includes: pin flags, clipboards, compasses, GPS units, digital camera, etc. The NPS interns used NPS field vehicles to provide UNR staff with transportation to field work locations within the Whiskeytown NRA. Office workspace, that included access to an NPS computer with network connections allowed access to digital versions of all necessary files and forms needed to complete this project.

Every effort was made to relocate archeological sites selected for the ASMIS site condition assessments. This included a careful inspection of the reported site location from the original site record, taking into consideration available information such as data from subsequent site visits, and descriptions of site features and artifacts. Efforts to relocate a site included intensive pedestrian survey in and around the reported site locations for recorded features and surface artifacts; especially in areas with exposed soil, such as cut banks, foot paths and animal trails, areas affected by bioturbation, or other natural clearings in the vegetation. Variables that contributed to difficulty relocating the archeological sites included poor documentation for some sites recorded over twenty-five years ago and map plots that predate common use of GPS technology. Environmental variables that contribute to difficulty relocating the site are the effect of natural formation processes such as soil mechanics, or vegetation growth, or an accumulation of leaf litter that may significantly obscure site features and artifacts. Environmental conditions and natural or cultural formation processes may affect site visibility and whether a site was relocated with certainty or not. The potential for a given site to be relocated with additional fieldwork was taken into consideration during the field assessments. In some instances, additional site visits were made after further analysis of site records, air photos, and other

historical documentation was conducted. Further attempts to relocate sites included additional intensive pedestrian survey, and in the case of CA-SHA-272, use of shovel test pits.

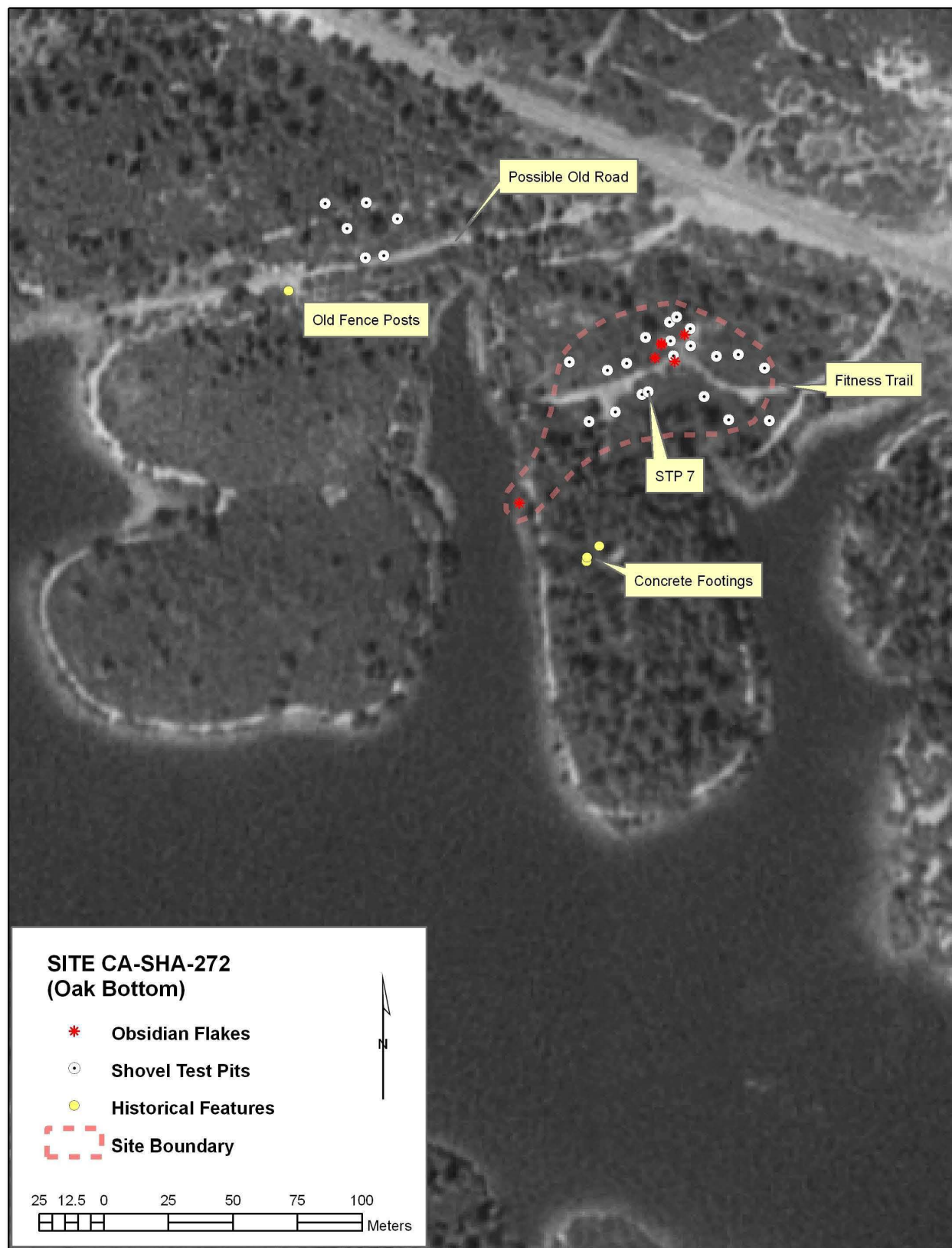
The reported location for prehistoric archeological site CA-SHA-272 is in the general vicinity of the Oak Bottom Campground. Whiskeytown intends to expand the campground in the future to provide greater spacing between campsites and the extent of site CA-SHA-272 needs to be determined to avoid potential impacts to the site's depositional integrity related to placement of new campsites. In addition to the standard intensive archeological survey methods employed during the course of this project, shovel testing was implemented at the site due to previous difficulty relocating and because of planned ground disturbing activities in the site vicinity. No surface artifacts were noted when the site was last revisited in 1987, and when the site was field checked in June 2008 for the purposes of this project.



Figure 1. Screening shovel tests at Oak Bottom

Shovel testing is an archeological survey methodological tool used to determine the spatial extent, and sometimes depth of archeological deposits (Figure 1). Shovel testing was first initiated at site CA-SHA-272 in June 2008, but was not completed until February 2009 due to various project delays including the large wildfires that burned in Whiskeytown during the summer of 2008. Shovel testing strategies included digging shovel test pits (STPs) approximately 20 centimeters in diameter and 40 centimeters deep, with approximately five to fifteen meter spacing between STPs along both sides of the Oak Bottom fitness trail in the vicinity of the site. Additional STPs were completed away from the trail in areas where dense vegetation was not a deterrent. Finally, seven STPs were completed in a grid pattern in the center of the adjacent peninsula to the north of the plotted site location as a precaution in the event that the site was incorrectly plotted on the original site record (Map 1).

Upon completion of fieldwork, site records and the final report was completed; the archeological site information was entered into the NPS Archeological Sites Management Information System (ASMIS) by the Lassen Volcanic NP archeologist, and all field notes, forms, sketches, photographs, project management documents, site records, and reports were organized for archiving by NPS archeological interns. Digital versions of all documents, including scanned versions of field notes, were provided for inclusion in the Whiskeytown NRA cultural resources digital archive. Due to the fact that Whiskeytown NRA does not promote a policy of artifact collection, artifacts were collected under the guidance of NPS staff and limited to unique and diagnostic artifacts in good condition. This ensured that the objects collected were consistent with the Whiskeytown Scope of Collection – has significant, scientifically diagnostic attributes worthy of retention in the NPS collections. Any artifacts collected over the course of this project were returned to Whiskeytown NRA, to be catalogued, and processed for inclusion in museum collections.



Map 1. Air photo with site boundary, obsidian flakes, and shovel test pit locations depicted.

RESULTS

A total of forty-one archeological site condition assessments were completed as part of this project. Roughly one-half of the site assessments were funded by a concurrent archeological survey project also being completed in partnership with UNR through the GB-CESU. Additional archeological fieldwork was completed in 2008 for the various wildfires that burned approximately 8000 acres within the park during the summer. Also, fifteen condition assessments for this project were completed for sites located within the burned area by NPS fire-line qualified archeologists. Currently, additional site condition assessments are being completed as part of a continuing archeological survey project and the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) assessment (Mee et al 2009). These results will be presented in the final archeological reconnaissance report by UNR for the survey project and the BAER accomplishments report by the NPS to be completed later this year.

Archeological site condition assessments were completed for sites located throughout the Whiskeytown Unit. Of the forty-one sites assessed seven are prehistoric-period, twenty-nine are historic-period, and five are multi-component sites. The prehistoric sites or components are primarily smaller flaked-stone artifact scatters with ground-stone occurring at some of the sites. The historical sites or components are primarily related to historic-period mining and include various mining features such as mine shafts, adits, and prospect pits or trenches. Trash scatters, mining ditches, structure flats or other structural remnants, and in some cases abandoned mining equipment or supplies may be present at these sites. A few historical sites are related to historic-period logging and include mill remnants and other structural remains, trash scatters, and other associated features.

Thirty-three of the assessed sites were found to be in good condition and the remaining eight sites in fair condition. Seven of the eight sites in fair condition were burned over during the Motion Fire and suffered impacts from the fire, but were found to be in a stable post-burn condition. One site in fair condition, CA-SHA-2004 was subject to fire suppression impacts when it was hit by a strike team of bull-dozers and excavators opening up old dirt roads as contingency fire control lines. An emergency damage assessment was completed and the site rehabilitated including full closure of the dirt road leading to the site. Although the site suffered from some significant impacts it is now in stable condition as a result of the emergency damage assessment and actions taken by the park to minimize potential for additional impacts (Svinarich 2008).

One site, CA-SHA-272 was subject to intensive pedestrian survey and shovel testing on three separate occasions due to difficulties encountered during attempts to relocate the site. During the first two attempts in 2008 no artifacts were noted. Seven STPs were placed in the center of the plotted site location just north of the fitness trail, and six STPs were placed in the center of the adjacent peninsula to the west once again just north of the trail that crosses the width of the peninsula. After a period of heavy winter rains, one final effort to relocate the site was attempted in February 2009 consisting of additional intensive pedestrian survey and digging thirteen more STPs along both sides of the fitness trail extending out in both directions from the area previously subject to shovel testing in 2008 (Map 1). The new STPs were placed within ten meters of the trail and spaced approximately ten to fifteen meters apart. Five obsidian flakes

were noted during the intensive pedestrian survey in the center of the area for the plotted site location. In addition, one obsidian flake was found during the shovel testing in STP #7 located just south of the fitness trail in the same area as the other five flakes. The flakes are clustered in a fifteen meter diameter area centered just to the north of the fitness trail in the middle of the peninsula. One additional flake was noted on the west shore of the peninsula approximately twenty-five meters south of the fitness trail. The only flake found associated with the shovel testing is the obsidian flake from STP #7 that was placed next to a piled rock feature adjacent to the fitness trail (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. STP #7

CONCLUSIONS

NPS policy requires completion of archeological site condition assessments on a periodic basis to meet, in part, agency cultural resource management responsibilities. Archeological site condition assessments provide information needed to determine appropriate management actions for preserving cultural resources that are threatened by, or are in a continuing state of deterioration caused by various human and natural impacts. Whiskeytown NRA completed necessary archeological site condition assessments with assistance from the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) through the Great Basin Cooperative Education Study Unit (GB-CESU) partnership. The park provided NPS Historic Preservation interns to assist with all phases of the project work and arranged ASMIS data management assistance from the Lassen Volcanic NP archeologist.

Archeological site CA-SHA-272 was relocated after three attempts during the course of this project and included use of shovel testing. Only one obsidian flake was found after digging a total of twenty-six STPs. Vegetation is still very dense in the site area as was reported during all the previous site visits since the site was originally recorded. Although surface artifacts were noted, determining the full extent of the site is problematic due to the dense vegetation. Results of the shovel tests suggest there is little depth to the site, but the STPs were placed solely along the fitness trail corridor. The main part of the site may be located in the dense vegetation away from the trail. A research design based on the “California Archeological Resource Identification and Data Acquisition Program: Sparse Lithic Scatters” publication (Jackson et al 1988) should be developed and implemented prior to completing a NRHP eligibility determination for the site.

Forty-one archeological site condition assessments were completed with eight sites found to be in fair condition and thirty-three in good condition. All the sites in fair condition were affected during the fires of 2008. Currently, all of the sites found to be in fair condition are considered to be stable in the post-burn condition; however only by completing future site condition assessments will it be possible to ascertain whether any long term impacts will result from the fires. These sites should continue to be monitored as part of the Whiskeytown periodic archeological site assessments. Additional archeological site condition assessments are needed for Whiskeytown NRA to complete the required baseline assessments. Also, some of the existing site condition assessments will exceed the established site monitoring schedule each year. Establishing and maintaining a robust and active periodic archeological site condition assessment program in conjunction with completing National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) evaluations is imperative for Whiskeytown NRA to meet service-wide cultural resource management responsibilities.

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