

# THE HISTORY OF THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM) CULTURAL RESOURCE PROGRAM IN CALIFORNIA: A PERSPECTIVE FROM NEAR THE BEGINNING

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## ABSTRACT

BLM's cultural resources program grew out of necessity. It was the result of the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act in 1969 and the increasing use of the California Desert by recreationists. This paper traces the roots of the Bureau's program in California from 1972 to the present and suggests renewed integration with ecosystems approaches to resource management and stronger ties to heritage management and education.

### The 1960s and Before

As archaeology developed into a legitimate academic pursuit during the early days of the twentieth century the greater institutions of higher learning sought sites to excavate and collections to house in their museum departments. With the passage of the American Antiquities Act of 1906 and its Uniform Rules and Regulations of 1907, permits were required for the pursuit of research on public lands. Permitting authority for such academic enterprises was delegated to the Secretary of the Interior, with peer review by the Smithsonian Institution until 1960. The Office of the Undersecretary of the Interior then issued permits until the Office of the Departmental Consulting Archaeologist began issuing permits for all Interior and Defense agencies in 1968.

The earliest known permit in California was issued to A. L. Kroeber in 1910 to excavate a site in Kern County. Permits were also issued to Mark R. Harrington for work in the California and Nevada Deserts, Elizabeth Crozier Campbell for work with the Southwest Museum in the California Desert, and to Malcolm Rogers of the San Diego Museum of Man for work in the Mojave and Colorado Deserts.

Until the passage of the National

Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) archaeology legitimately conducted on public lands focused on research or student training. For a short time after the passage of NEPA the National Park Service served as staff to the various Interior agencies. Archaeologists from the Park Service inventoried and gathered data for project specific tasks. The two archaeologists who did most work for the BLM were Lloyd Pierson in Denver and Charles McKinney in Washington, D.C. In 1969 Pierson moved from the Park Service to the BLM and became BLM's first archaeologist. Archaeological input focused not on research but on identification of resources which would be impacted by specific governmental actions. At the same time recreational use patterns on the California Desert were changing; motorcycles and four-wheel drive vehicles became increasingly available and popular in the late 1950s. By the late 1960s there was a public demand for the Bureau to become more active in the management of the public lands because, among other things, archaeological and historic sites were being damaged.

### The 1970s

The 1970s saw a continuation of concern for resources in the desert. It also saw an increase in recreational use as well as demand for

additional infrastructure to feed a growing population in southern California. Power plants were proposed for and sited on public lands, along with hundreds of miles of roads, towers, cables, substations and proposed corridors. Many of these projects impacted previously unknown archaeological resources. Archaeological contractors began preparing cultural resource reports under the auspices of NEPA as well as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In 1972 the BLM had no professional cultural resources staff to conduct surveys for project specific purposes, to review submitted professional documents, or to manage the important resources on public lands.

The first attempt at local archaeological clearances and review came with the establishment of the California Desert Ranger program in 1972. Between 1972 and 1975 twenty-six rangers were hired to patrol the expansive California Desert. Among those original rangers were four with an archaeological background. These folks were called Ranger/Archaeologists or just referred to as Ranger Slashes. Of the four, Roc Indermill and Helen Clough were assigned to Barstow Resource Area, Joanne MacGregor Hanifan was assigned to Ridgecrest Resource Area, and Stanton Rolf was assigned to Cima Resource Area (now Needles). Their job was to spend the majority of their time patrolling for resource protection. Some of their time, though, was spent conducting archaeological surveys, primarily for off-highway vehicle events, and reviewing contractors' reports on proposed power lines.

Because of increasing workload and a realization that the archaeology was something that the Bureau was responsible for, the first archaeologist was hired in 1972 and began work in early 1973. The new position was designated as the Riverside District Archaeologist. (The Riverside District later became the California Desert District.) Rick Hanks, who had been doing contract work out of the University of California, Riverside on behalf of the Bureau, made history. As the first District Archaeologist in California he was responsible for developing the program, inventory, review, selling the discipline to managers, outreach, site protection,

and interpreting the new regulations and executive orders that required agencies to do archaeology. Rick saw that archaeology was a lifetime job in the bureaucracy since there was no simple way to conclusively know where all of the sites were located (despite what Executive Order 11593 said) except by a long-term programmed approach. By placing archaeologists in each administrative unit and developing strategies to be used on the ground, one could provide good evidentiary approaches to cultural resource management. It took a few more years for this to happen.

Eric Ritter was hired in early 1974 when Rick transferred to the California Desert Plan Staff to conduct archaeological inventory for the California Desert Plan. Hanks developed a sampling strategy to attempt to predict the presence/absence of cultural resources on the desert. Ritter became the second archaeologist hired full time in California. Ritter was responsible for the daily survey and review of projects throughout the desert.

Program guidance and coordination with other agencies was needed. A uniform approach throughout the state was necessary. BLM began to search for a program leader in California. The search turned up Bill Olsen, who had been working with the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation as a State Parks Archaeologist since 1958. The Bureau hired him in 1974 to develop the statewide cultural resources program. The task was just too enormous to do alone or with the services of part time ranger staff. Finally, in late 1975, Boma Johnson became the first Resource Area Archaeologist in California.

Gradually, the other positions were filled and some Ranger Slashes were converted to archaeologists. Helen Clough left Barstow and became the first District Archaeologist in Bakersfield District. Stanton Rolf left Cima in 1976 and became the Las Vegas, Nevada District Archaeologist. Joanne MacGregor-Hannifan was Caliente's first Area Archaeologist. This author left a Ranger/ position and became Barstow's first archaeologist and California's second Area Archaeologist in 1977. By 1978 District positions had been filled in Ukiah,

Redding, and Susanville as well. Dan Larson was in Ukiah, Christopher (Corson) Raven was in Susanville, and Clark Brott was in Redding. In the northern resource areas Bruce Crespian was in Hollister, Richard Weaver was in Bishop, Garth Portillo was in Cedarville, and Don Manuel was in Folsom. Most resource areas had resource area staff archaeologists by 1980.

The late 1970s saw a surge in planning. Rick Hanks, who originally led the California Desert Conservation Area planning effort, had moved on to become the first cultural resources program lead in Washington, D.C. Ritter was left with the task of completing the planning effort and contracting for overviews of the Desert. Ritter did this with a crew of archaeologists, many of whom were graduate students at the University of California, Riverside. As a result of the effort, the BLM's first ethnographer was also hired. Today, Bob Laidlaw is still the Bureau's ethnographer.

Early contracts to inventory the desert were awarded to the Archaeological Research Unit at the University of California, Riverside. From 1974 until 1980 over 15 overviews of cultural resources, Native American resources, and historic sites were conducted and published in a BLM series. The first overview was Background to Prehistory of the Yuha Desert Region (1974), authored by Margaret L. Weide and James P. Barker. The overviews covered the entire southern California region, from the Saline Valley area to McCain Valley in southern San Diego County.

As the Desert Plan Staff was disbanded, the staff had planned to completely write up the result of the survey of several thousand acres of the Desert District. Overviews of several planning units had been left to be written in-house. Unfortunately, many of the tasks which were left to be completed in-house were never completed. Priorities changed after the Desert Plan was signed in 1980 and positioned to be implemented. A fiscal conservative was in the White House and money to do all of the wonderful things proposed in the Desert Plan never materialized.

The Desert Plan Staff was dispersed to other

parts of the state or country. The Desert District Archaeologist and Resource Area staff slowly began to implement the planning effort in the Desert and in other parts of the state. The Susanville and Bakersfield Districts also had planning efforts accomplished which gave them broad overviews of the cultural resources of their management areas. Sampling designs were prepared which would help guide management decisions concerning the location of sites and research questions which should be asked.

The northern districts produced a number of overviews. Among the noteworthy ones were A Cultural Resource Overview for the Mendocino National Forest and the East Lake Planning Unit, BLM, California by California Archaeological Consultants, Inc. (1982); The Archaeology of the North Coast Range and Northwestern California (Tamez 1978); Cultural Resources Overview of the Southern Sierra Nevada by Theodoratus Cultural Research, Inc. and Archaeological Consulting and Research Services, Inc. (1984); and A Cultural Resource Overview of the Bureau of Land Management Coleville, Bodie, Benton, and Owens Valley Planning Units (1979).

Academically oriented research took a back seat to cultural resource management during the 1970s and 1980s since most archaeologists were applying their trade to the compliance industry. A few dissertations and masters theses came from research on the public lands in California, but not many.

### **The 1980s**

During the 1980s archaeologists were in nearly every resource area. Most overviews with their accompanying recommendations were completed. The staff archaeologists' tasks remained identification of resources, planning for the use and protection of the resource, monitoring long term trends and being on the resource management team. Archaeologists were given a voice in the management of the resource. A new task was to implement the recommendations contained in the overviews and to develop cultural resource management plans for a variety of important cultural resources. Sites were fenced and interpreted for the

public. They were also hidden from public view as a method of protection.

Secretarial Order 3104, transferring the cultural resources permitting authority to the Director of the Bureau of Land Management, became effective on October 1, 1984. This order gave the BLM a nod of recognition that its program was professional. Anyone wanting to conduct research or consultation services on public lands could get their permit from BLM without the Bureau having to get final approval from the National Park Service.

The 1980s foresaw the era of limited money for resource management, which opened the way for developing partnerships with universities, non-profit organizations and educators. Volunteers assisted resource areas in doing everything from patrolling/monitoring archaeological resources to conducting guided research. Sites were located, fenced and stabilized under the auspices of cooperative management agreements and volunteer agreements. These years saw a level of general contentment with the program. Bill Olsen provided strong guidance from the State Office and developed numerous workshops to encourage a California archaeological team. Some National Register of Historic Places nominations were completed and resources listed as an acknowledgement of the importance of cultural resources to the Bureau's overall program.

The 1980s also saw the maturation of the program as one generally accepted by the agency on a level with other resources. Archaeologists also began to age. Opportunities within the agency opened up to change jobs and to bring their anthropological background to solid use in other jobs. Job shifts included those who went into realty work, supervision as branch chiefs of resources, planning, Native American coordination, budget, and line management. As Rick Hanks was the first BLM archaeologist in California, the Desert, and the Washington Office, he was also the first archaeologist to become a line manager as a Resource Area Manager in New Mexico. Rick was also the first archaeologist to become a District Manager.

Staff turnover plagued California BLM's cultural resources program during the 1980s. From 1978 to 1988 the Barstow Resource Area had six different area archaeologists, Palm Springs had four, El Centro had six, and Needles had four; the Bakersfield District went through five District Archaeologists. The only employee-stable district was Susanville, which has seen only two District Archaeologists and three Area Archaeologists.

### **The 1990s**

As we are nearing the middle of the 1990s, I see a continuation of a 1980s approach. Archaeologists are primarily concentrating on purposive surveys and compliance. Section 110 obligations, site enhancement, and research are limited to what can be squeezed out of tight budgets. We are fulfilling our obligation under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) by hiring Bill Olsen to once again lead the program in this area. We are continuing to seek information on the location and condition of collections. Vacancies are high. We have been unable to fill positions in Alturas and Bishop. The Arcata position is filled by a summer cooperative education student and the Hollister Resource Area position is filled by a cooperative education Masters Degree candidate. This puts extra strain on the existing staff. Some research is being accomplished by cooperative management with universities.

### **The Future**

The cultural resources program is not fully involved in ecosystem management. If it is to move into the 21st century as an active program it has to take its place along side wildlife, minerals, recreation, and the other scientifically based resources and work towards understanding the processes of ecological change. We all took cultural ecology in graduate school. Archaeology has been collecting data for at least 100 years on past climatic conditions. We can utilize our data and derive desired future conditions for the landscape, for wildlife, and botanical and other resources if we step back and realize that we are not simply a commodity but a resource full of information useful to others. Salesmanship will have an ever

increasing place in the cultural resources program of the future.

We also need to become more involved in preserving the past. The Forest Service uses the term heritage resources to their advantage. We need to perceive our discipline as one which has the advantage of saving and promoting the heritage of America. We need to challenge ourselves to promote the discipline within the agency and not simply to do inventory after inventory, giving up on trying to promote research. Perhaps all of us are not professionally equipped to conduct research on our own, but we can enter into agreements with universities and other scholars to promote research into the heritage of our public lands.

Heritage education needs increased visibility. California is a diverse state with a huge population. Preparing an education supplement for grade school kids is tough. We need to reach folks when they are young and impressionable, but we are few and the message has to be meaningful. Our Anasazi Heritage Center has produced a magnificent educational package for Utah. Oregon has produced a workbook and manual. Legacy has just funded an effort for Alaska, but in this huge state money and time will be a problem. We can help but our offices are small and our staff few. We will need to participate, but I would think leadership should be in the state government and not at the federal offices.

Lastly, I honor with great respect those folks who have worked so hard to make cultural resources a viable program within the BLM. While I greatly honor Rick Hanks and Eric Ritter for their leadership, I would like to especially honor Bill Olsen, without whose leadership and mentorship the program would not have developed into the capable program it is. Bill persevered through some stormy times and he rightly deserves his place as an outstanding pioneer in the Bureau of Land Management's cultural resources program in California.

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## APPENDIX

### **STATE OFFICE ARCHAEOLOGISTS**

William H. Olsen 1974-1992  
Russell L. Kaldenberg 1993-present

### **STATE OFFICE ETHNOGRAPHERS**

Robert Laidlaw 1980-present

### **CALIFORNIA DESERT DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGISTS**

H. Herrick Hanks 1973-1975  
Eric Ritter 1975-1977  
John Hansen, Assistant 1975-1977  
Ann Loose 1977-1978  
Gary Stumpf, Assistant 1978-1980  
Russell L. Kaldenberg 1978-1982  
Judyth Reed (Acting) 1981-1983  
Garth Portillo 1983-1993  
Rolla Queen 1995-present

### **BARSTOW RESOURCE AREA**

Roc Indermill 1973-1974 (Ranger/Archaeologist)  
Helen Clough 1973-1976  
(Ranger/Archaeologist)  
Russell L. Kaldenberg 1976  
(Ranger/Archaeologist)  
Russell L. Kaldenberg 1977-1978  
Mark Q. Sutton 1978-1981  
James Chase 1981-1984  
Pat Barker 1984-1988  
Johnny R. Murray 1988-1993  
Sarah Sally Cunkleman 1993-present

### **EL CENTRO RESOURCE AREA**

Boma Johnson 1975-1979  
Gail Egolf 1979-1981  
Mike McIntyre 1981  
Alex Kirkish 1981-1982  
Patrick Welch 1981-1991  
Pat Weller 1993-present

### **NEEDLES (CIMA) RESOURCE AREA**

Stanton Rolf 1973-1976 (Ranger/Archaeologist)  
Richard Weaver 1978-1980

Ruth Musser 1980-1986  
George MackFessel 1986-1993  
Thomas Holcomb 1993-1995  
Vacant

### **PALM SPRINGS (INDIO) RESOURCE AREA**

Doug Romoli 1976-1978  
Gerrit Fenenga 1978 (T)  
Judyth Reed 1979-1985  
James Swenson 1986-1987  
Michael Mitchell 1987-present

### **RIDGECREST RESOURCE AREA**

Joanne McGregor-Hannifan 1974-1976  
(Ranger/Archaeologist)  
John St. Croix 1977 (Ranger/Archaeologist)  
Wendell Strahan 1978-1979 (T)  
Jan Moore 1980-1982  
Elva Yonkin 1982-1983  
Joan Oxendine 1984-1993  
Dan Fowler 1994-1996  
Vacant

### **BAKERSFIELD DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGISTS**

Helen Clough 1976-1979  
Sally Saltzman, Assistant 1977-1978  
Eric Montezambert 1979-1983  
George Rubleman 1983-1985  
Marian Rivette 1987-1990  
Duane Christian 1992-present

### **BISHOP RESOURCE AREA**

Richard Weaver 1978-1980  
Garth Portillo 1980-1982  
Eric Levi 1983-1989  
Vacant

### **FOLSOM RESOURCE AREA**

Bruce Crespin 1980-1982  
Don Manuel 1980-1982  
Andy Yatsco 1982-1983  
Dean Decker 1984-present

### **CALIENTE RESOURCE AREA**

Joanne MacGregor-Hannifan 1980-1983

Wendell Strahan (T)  
Duane Christian 1984  
David Kayser 1991-present

**HOLLISTER RESOURCE AREA**

Don Manuel 1980  
Bruce Crespín 1981-1985  
Don Lipp 1985-1987  
Linda Hylkema 1989-present

**SUSANVILLE DISTRICT  
ARCHAEOLOGISTS** (No longer a District)

Christopher (Corson) Raven 1978-1981  
Don Manuel 1982-1993

**ALTURAS RESOURCE AREA**

Vacant

**EAGLE LAKE RESOURCE AREA**

Don Manuel 1993-present

**SURPRISE RESOURCE AREA**

Garth Portillo 1979-1981  
Christopher Raven 1981-1983  
Hugh Bunton 1983-present

**UKIAH DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGISTS**  
(No longer a District)

Dan Larson 1979-1983  
Francis Berg 1983-1988  
Marlene Greenway 1990-present

**REDDING DISTRICT/RESOURCE AREA**  
(No longer a District)

Ken Wilson (T)  
Dennis Quillan 1976-1978  
D. P. Miller 1978-1982  
Clark Brott 1978-1983  
Eric Ritter 1982-present

**ARCATA RESOURCE AREA**

Julie (Pfilf) Goodwin 1994-1996

**DESERT PLAN STAFF**

H. Herrick Hanks 1975-1976  
Eric Ritter 1976-1981

Francis Berg  
Richard Brook  
Suzanne Crowley  
Nancy Farrell  
Dennis Gallegos  
Ruth Musser  
Garth Portillo  
Judyth Reed  
Richard Weaver  
Patrick Welch

Native American Program  
Robert Laidlaw  
Nancy Evans