



CAL FIRE

Archaeology Program

Cultural Resources such as Native American village or ceremonial locations, or historic properties are among the most fragile and vulnerable types of resources. These are found throughout the state and reflect thousands of years of human use of forests and other environments. Unlike renewable Natural Resources such as trees or wildlife, cultural resources are irreplaceable, and when damaged or destroyed, are lost forever.

The purpose of the CAL FIRE Archaeology Program is to identify and manage archaeological and historical resources located within project areas under CAL FIRE jurisdiction and to develop methods to protect these resources from project related impacts. This is accomplished through regulations and policies requiring archaeological surveys of project areas, evaluation of potential impacts, and the incorporation of protection measures before project approval. The program provides archaeological surveys, technical assistance, project review, and archaeological training to CAL FIRE staff and resource professionals working in the private sector. Legal mandates that require CAL FIRE to protect archaeological and historical resources are found in the California Environmental Quality Act, the Forest Practice Regulations, California Executive Order W-26-92, and the California Register of Historic Resources.



Wildland fires and the suppression methods used in fire fighting are potentially some of the greatest threats to cultural resources in forest settings. CAL FIRE has implemented a set of procedures designed to minimize such threats during major wild fires, when these can be accomplished without compromising fire suppression efforts, and archaeologists are routinely assigned to these incidents.



The CAL FIRE Archaeology Program has grown and evolved considerably since it began in the early 1970's. Originally, CAL FIRE had to borrow archaeologists from the Department of Parks and Recreation to review timber harvests or for other needs. In 1981, CAL FIRE hired its first full-time staff archaeologist and today has eight full-time professional archaeologists, and a large cadre of archaeologically-trained foresters, on-call professional contract archaeologists, and other resource professionals involved in the program. As a consequence, more than 1000 archaeological sites are discovered, protected, and recorded each year and incorporated into the California Historical Resource Information System maintained by the Office of Historic Preservation.



CAL FIRE works in conjunction with the California Department of Fish and Game, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the California Geological Survey when reviewing THPs.