

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT, FONSI AND DECISION RECORD

**BLM, Bishop Field Office
351 Pacu, Suite 100
Bishop, CA 93514**

EA Number: CA-170-06-39

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: Cultural Resources File #: CA-170-06-19

Proposed Action Title/Type: University of California Davis Field School

Location of Proposed Action: Four Survey Blocks

Block 1: 647 acres located in, T16S, R36E Sections 34, 35

Block 2: 2104 acres located in, T17S, R36E, Sections 24, 25, 26
T17S, R37E Section 30

Block 3: 1634 acres located in, T18S, R36E, Section 12
T18S, R37E, Section 7

Block 4: 336 acres located in, T18S, R36E, Section 25

Applicant (if any): Dr. Jelmer Eerkens, University of California Davis

Plan Conformance: The proposed action is subject to the Bishop Resource Management Plan, approved March 25, 1993 (Bishop RMP). The proposed action has been reviewed and is in conformance with the plan.

Need for Proposed Action: The proposed action implements Bishop RMP direction to comply with the provisions of Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA) and to conduct consultations with local Indian communities. As identified in the general policies of the Bishop RMP the proposed action would;

1. "...protect the quality of scientific...and archaeological values..." (p. 8 (4)) through scientific, archaeological research in the proposed study area.
2. "...comply with the provisions of Section 110 of the NHPA..." (p. 9 (12)) in conducting proactive inventory, evaluation and nomination of historic properties to the National Register of Historic Places.
3. "The Bureau will consult with local Indian communities to identify their concerns when projects might affect them. These concerns will be considered in the decision making process" (p. 9 (13)).

Description of Proposed Action: Under the direction of Dr. Jelmer W. Eerkens and graduate students Nichole Reich and Gina Jorgenson, the University of California at Davis is interested in holding the 2006 Archaeology Field School in southern Owens Valley. The 6-week field school usually includes about 20 university undergraduate students, who receive intensive training in site excavation and field survey, and learn about prehistoric Native lifeways in the particular region the field school is held. At the same time, archaeological materials from the field school would form the basis of doctoral dissertations by university graduate students.

During the June 26th to August 4th field school the proposal is to conduct surface inventory and limited subsurface testing on four blocks of BLM administered lands (Figure 1), totaling up to 4,721 acres. The inventory will meet BLM standards for a Class III, complete inventory. The goal is to locate a prehistoric archaeological site that would yield community level data concerning shifting subsistence strategies in the late Holocene (ca. 600 to 150 years ago) as further detailed in the research design for the proposed study. The sites would be fully recorded and records submitted to BLM and the Eastern Information Center at the University of California Riverside. The intent is to locate a Marana period habitation site (ca. 600 to 150 years ago) where domestic products and subsistence remains occur. A small sample of candidate sites (2-5) recorded during the survey would be subjected to limited subsurface testing to find a site that contains intact subsurface deposits and that lends itself to addressing the research questions. At the 2-5 sites that would be tested, it is proposed that six to eight 1x1 meter or smaller excavation units be opened to determine each site's depositional history.

The site chosen for further analyses would be more fully excavated and analyzed in 2007 and the data compared to that from CA-INY-3806, a nearby archaeological site located on Los Angeles Department of Water and Power lands, which is proposed to be excavated by the field school this summer. CA-INY-3806 dates to the Haiwee period (ca. 1,350 to 600 years ago) and contains substantial domestic features and subsistence remains important to analyzing the research questions.

Environmental Consequences:

Table 1. Critical Element Table. Table applies to resources or elements affected by any of the alternatives described in this Environmental Assessment.

Critical Element	No Impact	May Impact	Not Present	Rationale
Air Quality	X			The proposed action is not within a federal air quality non-attainment area. The actions would not result in the emission of PM ₁₀ .
Cultural		X		Any identified archaeological resources would be identified and properly treated pursuant to the Secretary of Interior's Standards and Guidelines and BLM policy.
Environmental Justice	X			No minority or low income groups would be affected by disproportionately high & adverse human health or environmental effects because the proposed action would not cause adverse health or environmental impacts nor would the action take place in the vicinity of any such groups.
Farmlands, Prime or Unique			X	Resource is not present as per Bishop RMP (BLM, 1993).
Invasive, Non-native Weed Species	X			Addressed in the Description of Mitigation Measures and Residual Impacts.
Native American	X			Native American consultation has occurred and the Tribe expressed no concern if a monitor is on site.
T&E Fauna/Flora	X			Any identified T&E plant or animal species would be surveyed and avoided prior to project implementation.
Waste – Hazardous/Solid			X	Resource is not known to be present nor will it be created by the proposed action or alternative.
Water Quality/surface/ground water	X			No surface of ground water will be affected by the proposed project.
Wetlands/Riparian	X			The proposed project will not occur within wetland/riparian zones.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	X			No Wild and Scenic rivers in the proposed project area.
Wilderness/Wilderness Study Areas	X			No Wilderness or WSAs in the proposed project area
ACEC's	X			No ACECs within the proposed project area.

Cultural resources: The proposed action would be conducted pursuant to Section 110 of the NHPA and would have a positive benefit to understanding prehistoric hunter-gatherer behavior in the western Great Basin. The proposed action would also augment BLM's cultural resources database facilitating future management actions and decisions. All investigations will meet BLM and the Secretary of Interior's Standards and Guidelines for conducting archaeological investigations.

Consultation was carried out with the Lone Pine Band of the Owens Valley Paiute-Shoshone Indians in accordance with Section 4(c) of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 470cc) and Section 43 CFR 7.7(a) of the regulations that implement the Act and under provisions of Section 43 CFR 7.7(b). In a meeting with the tribe no concerns were expressed, but it was requested that a Native American monitor accompany the field school. Documentation is located in the case file.

Visual resources: The proposed field classes are in areas where the Visual Resource Management (VRM) objective standard is to conform to VRM Class IV - West of Owens Lake (Bishop Resource Management Plan -1993, Page 51, Owens Lake Management Area). The VRM Class IV Objective is to provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change of the characteristic of the landscape can be high and management activities may dominate the view from key observation points and be the major focus of viewer attention. Field class activities would be minimally noticeable as compared to what is allowed in the Visual Resource Management class assigned to the area and thus have no impact on Visual Resources.

Vegetation: The dominant vegetation community within the proposed project area is shadscale scrub, with plant densities being moderate to low. Test excavation units can be placed to avoid and minimize impacts to vegetation.

Wildlife habitat: No Impact.

Minerals: No Impact

Economic Impacts: No negative impact. The field school would have a positive impact on the local economy through the purchase of materials and goods and would support a Native American monitor.

Land Uses / Realty / Rights-of-way: No Impact.

Cumulative effects

This project is not expected to contribute to negative cumulative effects, because the proposed action is small scale and dispersed. All test units will be backfilled and re-contoured. In fact, the cumulative effects are expected to be positive fulfilling BLM cultural resource protection and evaluation mandates under Section 110 of the NHPA and Executive Order 11593 which tasks BLM with inventorying, recording and

evaluating cultural resources on its lands. Future projects in the area would benefit from the cumulative knowledge of cultural resources gained from the proposed project.

Description of Mitigation Measures and Residual Impacts:

The following protective measures will be incorporated in the proposed project to reduce the probability of residual impacts and the need for subsequent mitigation:

1. All vehicular access to the proposed project area would occur on existing roads. All survey would be conducted on foot.
2. All vehicles, tools and material used pre and post project implementation would be pressure-washed prior to transport to the project sites to avoid the spread of noxious weeds.
3. A Native American monitor would be present during excavation activities.

Implementation Monitoring:

The Bishop Field Office archaeologist and a tribal monitor from the Lone Pine Tribe would monitor the proposed action.

Public Input:

The project has been posted on our Field Office web site and consultation has been carried out with the Lone Pine Tribe.

Persons/Agencies Consulted:

Lone Pine Band of the Owens Valley Paiute-Shoshone Indians
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

Preparer(s):

Kirk Halford, Archaeologist
Anne Halford, Botanist
Steve Nelson, Biologist
Diana Pietrasanta, Recreation and Wilderness

Date: 5/23/2006

Reviewed By: _____ **Date:** _____
Environmental Coordinator

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/DECISION RECORD

[Note: this is the minimum FONSI wording for a very minor project. Please also tell briefly *why the project is being approved*. Also tell what is being approved.]

I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined that the proposed action with the mitigation measures described below will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required.

There will be no effect on threatened or endangered species as a result of the action.

I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the Bishop Resource Management Plan, which was approved March 25, 1993. This plan has been reviewed, and the proposed action conforms with the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5. The project will enhance the public's understanding of prehistoric lifeways in the Owens Valley and will further efforts to study and conserve our Nation's cultural heritage.

It is my decision to implement the project with the mitigation measures identified below.

Mitigation Measures/Remarks:

1. All vehicular access to the proposed project area will occur on existing roads. All survey will be conducted on foot.
2. All vehicles, tools and material used pre and post project implementation will be pressure-washed prior to transport to the project sites to avoid the spread of noxious weeds.
3. A Native American monitor will be present during excavation activities.

Authorized Official: _____
Field Office Manager

Date: _____

University of California Davis Field School
Proposed Survey Blocks
CA-170-06-19

USGS 100k Quads: Three Rivers, Darwin
1:100 000

N

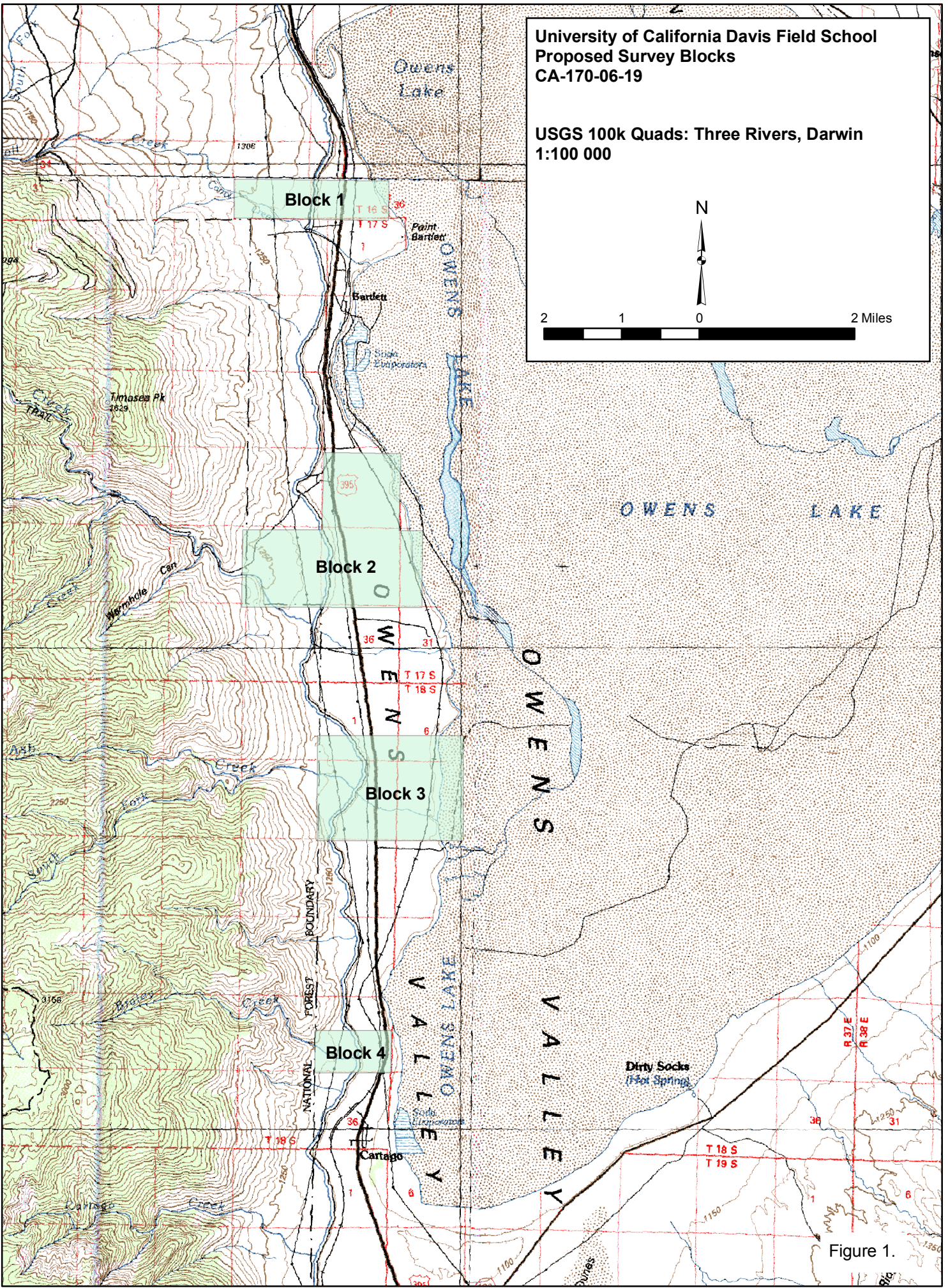


Figure 1.