



RESOURCE MANAGEMENT Cultural Resource Management

Cultural Resources such as Native American villages or ceremonial locations and 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, cultural resources are irreplaceable, and when damaged or destroyed, are lost forever. The Deputy Director of Tribal Affairs, the Tribal Liaison, and the Cultural Resources Management Program staff all lead important coordination and consultation with California Native American Tribes about potential effects to tribal cultural sites.

The purpose of the CAL FIRE Cultural Resource Management Program is to identify and manage cultural 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 cultural resource training to CAL FIRE staff and resource professionals working in the private sector. Some of the legal mandates that require CAL FIRE to protect cultural resources are found in the California Environmental Quality Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Public Resources Code 5024, the Forest Practice Regulations, California Executive Orders W-26-92 and B-10-11, and the California Register of Historic Resources.



Wildland fires and the suppression methods used in firefighting are potentially some of the greatest threats to cultural resources in forest settings. CAL FIRE has implemented a set of policy and procedures designed to minimize such threats during major wildfires. Archaeologists are routinely assigned to these incidents to act as liaisons with local tribes to prevent cultural resource damage within the incident command structure. This enables wildland firefighting and protection of the cultural resources.

The CAL FIRE Cultural Resource Management Program has grown and evolved considerably since it began in the early 1970s. 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 multiple 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. Many 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 for the protection of the resources.

