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# MEMORANDUM

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**DATE:** January 27, 2009

**TO:** Ken Shelor, Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department

**FROM:** Loy Neff, Office of Cultural Resources & Historic Preservation

**SUBJECT:** **Conditional Archaeological Clearance for the Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department Sweetwater Reclamation Campus Facility Replacement Project.**

Ken,

Tierra Right of Way Services, Inc. (Tierra), has completed Class III cultural resources survey of the preferred site location selected for the Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department's (RWRD) Sweetwater Reclamation Campus facility replacement project. The project area is within portions of two parcels owned by Pima County RWRD, between Interstate 10 Highway and North Silverbell Road, just north of West Sweetwater Drive (parcel tax code #103-04-001F and 103-06-092F). The proposed Sweetwater Reclamation Campus is north of the existing treatment facility, in Pima County, Township 13 South, Range 13 East, Sections 20 and 21.

The proposed facility location consists of Stage I and II areas measuring approximately 40 acres. An additional 10 acres has been added to the northwest end of the site location to account for a proposed solar power facility to be constructed as part of the County's sustainability initiative. The preferred location is within an area exhibiting evidence of extensive previous disturbance, including excavated areas and other areas that have received large quantities of fill. The entire 50-acre area was surveyed for cultural resources during the Tierra project.

### **Archaeological Background**

A review of County cultural resources records before the Tierra survey indicated that the selected project area had not been previously surveyed for cultural resources, and that two recorded archaeological sites partially or wholly extend into the project area, including AZ AA:12:103(ASM) and AZ AA:12:790(ASM). In addition, at least five previously recorded sites are within 0.5 to 1 mile of the location. These sites include large, important villages like Los Pozos (AZ AA:12:91[ASM]), Hodges Ruin (AZ AA:12:18[ASM]), and Rabid Ruin (AZ AA:12:46[ASM]), and the recently investigated Early Agricultural Period sites in the Columbus Park area (AZ AA:12:96 and 105[ASM]). Finally, the selected site location is within an archaeologically sensitive area. The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP) assigns high archaeological sensitivity to the area because of the proximity of the Santa Cruz River and the previously mentioned sites, which form the SDCP-identified River Confluence Priority Archaeological Site Complex. Los Pozos, Rabid Ruin, and the Hodges Ruin are listed as Priority Archaeological Sites within this complex. The Tierra survey was conducted because of the possibility that intact subsurface cultural remains were present within the RWRD site location in spite of the extensive zones of disturbance in the vicinity.

The results of the Tierra cultural resources survey are documented in the report, entitled *Cultural Resources Inventory: Pima County Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department Sweetwater*

*Reclamation Campus* (Tierra Archaeological Report No. 2008-114, dated December 22, 2008). The survey included an archaeological assessment of the proposed facility location and cultural resources recommendations regarding the new facility construction. Much of the RWRD project area is extensively disturbed by historic and modern land use and development, including large areas now occupied by abandoned settling basins that were used during the 1950s and 1960s. These features are composed of deep excavations separated by artificial berms to create a series of parallel settling basins formerly used for wastewater treatment. Tierra documented that the settling basins are excavated to more than nine feet below the current ground surface. Geomorphological and archaeological examinations at nearby sites have shown that all known cultural deposits are contained within the stratigraphic sequence of sediments deposited between ground surface and nine feet below ground surface. Therefore, the construction of the settling basins in this location resulted in the removal of all sediments containing cultural materials.

The Tierra archaeologists determined that intact subsurface remains could only exist in a narrow zone along the eastern margin of the project area, east of the paved road along the east side of the project area. Other portions of the selected project area are extensively disturbed as well, including the area north and northwest of the settling basins. The area south of the settling basins has received extensive disturbance in addition to fill introduced in the late 1990s from the RWRD Ina Road facility. The result is that most of the surveyed project area, including all the areas to the west of the eastern boundary road mentioned earlier, is extensively disturbed. Any ground-disturbing action associated with the RWRD facility project in the disturbed areas is unlikely to have a negative impact on intact cultural resources. The limits of the disturbed area are depicted in Figure 1 (see attached).

#### **Proposed RWRD Action**

The proposed construction of the new RWRD facility will include both direct and indirect impacts, and both types of impacts must take into account potential effects on cultural and/or historic resources. Direct impacts are the ground-disturbing effects of construction, and indirect effects are secondary impacts of the construction, such as borrow and stockpiling areas, vehicle parking and equipment storage areas, access routes, or roads, into the construction site, and any other related activity with a ground-disturbing impact. The typical cultural resources compliance track begins with design drawings used to identify the project area's direct and indirect impacts, which then guides the compliance process. In the case of the new RWRD Ina Road facility project, design drawings are currently unavailable. In order to facilitate the RWRD design-build contracting process, this conditional clearance is being issued to define the cultural resources status of the selected project area, and to outline the necessary cultural resources compliance process to assist interested firms in identifying design parameters within the project area.

#### **Conditional Archaeological Clearance**

It is important to note that although the County RWRD ROMP projects as currently designed are subject to and are meeting state and county cultural resources requirements, the compliance process in place for all County ROMP projects also meets federal requirements, under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, in the event of any future federal involvement. Future involvement by a federal agency would automatically invoke federal standards and requirements.

The Pima County Office of Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation (OCRHP) has the responsibility to ensure that all County, state, and federal cultural resources compliance requirements are met for the RWRD ROMP program. As far as Pima County is concerned within the project area, as defined in Figure 1, cultural resources requirements have been met and archaeological clearance is recommended for construction of the new RWRD facility; however, this clearance is subject to the following conditions:

1. This archaeological clearance is limited to construction and related ground-disturbing activities within the selected project area, as surveyed and assessed by Tierra and defined in attached Figure 1.

2. Any additional proposed construction that encroaches onto areas outside the defined project area in Figure 1 will be subject to cultural resources compliance requirements and must undergo separate cultural resources inventory and assessment to determine recommendations regarding cultural resources that may be present and compliance actions that may be necessary to meet federal, state, and county requirements.
3. Any construction needed for completion of the Sweetwater Reclamation Campus, such as connecting the Plant Interconnect sewer line to the new facility's headworks, that is outside the area covered in this conditional clearance and depicted in Figure 1 will be subject to cultural resources compliance requirements. Such construction must undergo separate cultural resources inventory and assessment to determine recommendations regarding cultural resources that may be present and compliance actions that may be necessary to meet federal, state, and county requirements.
4. A caution must be noted concerning human burials. Archaeological clearance recommendations do not exempt the construction from compliance with state burial protection laws. In the event that human remains, including human skeletal remains, cremations, and/or ceremonial objects and funerary objects are found during ground-disturbing actions, activities must cease in the immediate vicinity of the discovery. State laws ARS 41-865 and ARS 41-844, require that the Arizona State Museum be notified of the discovery at (520) 621-4795 so that cultural groups who claim cultural or religious affinity to them can make appropriate arrangements for the repatriation and reburial of the remains. The human remains will be removed from the site by a professional archaeologist pending consultation and review by the Arizona State Museum and the concerned cultural groups.

#### **Full Archaeological Clearance**

Full archaeological clearance for construction to proceed will be issued by OCRHP after review of design drawings that accurately depict all construction disturbances and impacts. Final OCRHO review will be to ensure that the final design does not encroach onto, or otherwise extend outside the selected project area defined in Figure 1, and/or that any additional cultural resources compliance requirements have been met.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 520-740-6858.

Sincerely,



Loy Neff

Program Manager, Cultural Resources Office



Figure 1. Orthophotograph (from Pima County MapGuide) depicting the preferred site location selected for the RWRD Sweetwater Reclamation Campus facility replacement project. The red line depicts the boundary of the area covered by the Conditional Archaeological Clearance.