

**FY2005 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ENFORONMENTAL AWARD**  
**Cultural Resources Management – Installation**  
**Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake, California**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Navy's largest landholding, Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS) China Lake encompasses 1.1 million acres of remote high desert in east-central California. With elevations ranging from 2,300' to 9,000', NAWS possesses a wide variability of terrain, ecosystems and climates, ideal for real-world Research, Development, Test and Evaluation of air-launched weapons systems. Over 800 military and 3500 civilian personnel make up the professional and supporting work force. The same aspects of terrain and ecosystems that make this land suited to its 21<sup>st</sup> Century military mission, made this land equally attractive to prehistoric peoples. Uninterrupted human occupation of the area has been documented from 12,000+ years B.P. to the historic present. Prehistoric resources include: vast arrays of rock art, obsidian quarries, village sites, ancient trails and hunting blinds, and pinyon nut harvesting and processing camps. An ancient sacred site, Coso Hot Springs, is still in use today by modern Native Americans under Memorandum of Agreement. Historic sites include: 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century gold, silver, mercury and pumice mines, charcoal camps, ranches, homesteads, and transportation routes, including portions of the historic 20 Mule Team Borax Road and the Remi Nadeau Freight Line.

**BACKGROUND**

The Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (ICRMP) was last revised in March 2003. The ICRMP provides guidance for establishing efficient and cost-effective compliance procedures, improving the Cultural Resources infrastructure, addressing data gaps in the Cultural Resources Inventory, and continuing to provide coordination and consultation for Public Relations-type efforts.

Major resource features at China Lake listed on the National Register of Historic Places consist of the Coso Hot Springs NRHP District and the Coso Rock Art National Historic Landmark. Properties declared eligible and nominated to the National Register include: Sugarloaf Obsidian Quarries NRHP District; Pothunter Springs Archaeological District; Cactus Flats Village NRHP District; Salt Wells Historic District;



Petroglyph panel at Coso Rock Art NHL

China Lake Pilot Plant Historic District; Michelson Laboratory; Supersonic Naval Ordnance Research Track; the B-4 High Speed Test Track; Headquarters Building; Randsburg Wash Test Towers (the tallest free-standing wooden towers in the world); Senior Officer Housing; and the Station Theater, Bennington Plaza. In the documentation process are: the Seep Springs Archaeological District; Hidden Springs Archaeological District; Lake China Paleo-Indian Archaeological District; and the Agnes Bierman Pictograph Caves Archaeological District.

The Cultural Resources Program operates under a number of Agreement Documents. These include:

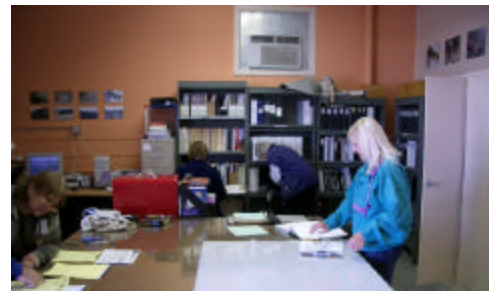
- Memorandum of Agreement for Access to Coso Hot Springs between NAWS and the Coso Ad Hoc Committee (Native Americans), June 1979 (this is the first MOA in the Nation negotiated under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act)
- Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement for Development of the Coso Known Geothermal Resources Area, between the Commander, Naval Weapons Center, China Lake, California State Historic Preservation Officer and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, November 1979
- Consultation Protocols for Government-to-Government Relations between NAWS and Ft. Independence Paiute Tribe, Big Pine Paiute Tribe, Bridgeport Indian Colony, and Timbisha Shoshone Tribe, February 2004.
- Data Sharing Agreements between NAWS, Bridgeport Indian Colony, Big Pine Paiute, Lone Pine Paiute, Timbisha Shoshone and Fort Independence Paiute Tribes, February 2004.
- Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan, China Lake NAWS, March 2003
- Memorandum of Agreement between Maturango Museum and China Lake, NAWS for Tours to Little Petroglyph Canyon, 2002
- Letter Agreement between BLM Ridgecrest and China Lake NAWS to promote Rock Art Site Visits adjacent to the Base, May 2003.

**Organization and Staffing:** The Head of the NAWS China Lake Environmental Department directs the Cultural Resources Program. The Program Manager is an archaeologist who meets the Secretary of Interior's Professional Standards and is certified by the Register of Professional Archaeologists. Many aspects of the program are carried out through contracting with professional archaeologists, historians, architect historians, and ethnographers. A strong volunteer program provides great assistance with the "up and down lifting" and day-to-day operations.

## **PROGRAM SUMMARY**

Outstanding program highlights for the FY04-05 period include:

- Winner of the 2005 California Governor's Award for Historic Preservation (this is the second time CL has received this prestigious award!)
- Dedication of the Coso Rock Art National Historic Landmark (36,000 acres on the North Range)—DoD's largest NHL and the largest and best preserved concentration of rock art in North America
- Operationalized the NAWS Curation Facility: housed in an historic ice house (this adaptive reuse made possible in large part by civil service, military and community members on their own time), staffed by volunteers; meets requirements of 36CFR79; saved in excess of \$800K in artifact curation fees
- Volunteer Program: 2,000 hours recording rock art; 4,000 hours developing, managing and maintaining the Curation Facility and Archaeological Laboratory; 320hours for Archaeology Month Project; 2,200 hours for petroglyph tours for public outreach



Volunteers at work in the Curation Facility

- Native American Relations—(1) Commanding Officer and Elected Tribal Officials from five Tribes meet to discuss mutual concerns; staff meets semi-annually to maintain communication; (2) Agreements established with five Tribes for Native American traditional land use on NAWS (pinyon nut harvesting, basketry material gathering, obsidian procurement); (3) Successful work with Tribes to facilitate their use of Coso Hot Springs Sacred Site (full compliance with American Indian Religious Freedom Act); (4) Developed Native American petroglyph access process; (5) Completed NAGPRA Inventory enabling repatriation of skeletal remains by winter.



Above: Indian Elder and grandchild gathering pine nuts on China Lake's North Range

Objectives of the Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan and degree of attainment in FY04-05:

- (1) Implement Efficient and Cost-effective Compliance Procedures. All ground-disturbing/project activities proposed at China Lake are screened through the NAWS Project Review Board (PRB). The Environmental Department NEPA manager is a member of the PRB and provides real time notification to the Cultural Resources Program Manager of projects. Assessing potential impacts to cultural resources is an integral part of the screening criteria such that any historic preservation issues are address “up front” in project planning and design. This saves time and money and ensures these issues don’t “fall through the cracks”.
- (2) Cultural Resources Infrastructure. The NAWS staff archaeologist is assisted by numerous volunteer assistants with operating the Curation Facility and Archaeological Laboratory, meeting the requirements of ARPA and 36 CFR 79. NHPA Section 110 responsibilities are carried out by professional contractor personnel, expert in Great Basin and desert Southwest prehistory and history. Several of the volunteers have advanced degrees in anthropology, computer and library sciences and apply these skills to lab and field efforts.
- (3) Address Data Gaps. Under Section 110: 8,000 acres were inventoried in areas of known cultural sensitivity-Coso pinyon zone, ancient lakeshore formations at Pleistocene Lake Searles and China; 3000 acres at spring locations on the South Range were inventoried and 15 archaeological sites in those localities evaluated for eligibility to the National Register; 400 acres of historic roads and trails were inventoried and evaluated for

Below: Cairns discovered at Lake Searles



NRHP eligibility. Under Section 106, 1500 acres were inventoried and evaluated for the proposed EOD combat training range at Darwin Wash on the North Range.

- (4) Consultations and Public Relations. During FY04-05, Consultation Protocols were signed between NAWS Command and four Tribal Governments formalizing our Government-to-Government relationships. These protocols provide mutually agreed upon processes for communicating about projects, resources and concerns. Also, Data Sharing Agreements were signed with five Tribes that provide a mechanism for two way sharing of archaeological and traditional data.

In FY05, a groundbreaking agreement was negotiated with the local non-profit Maturango Museum for them to publish NAWS generated cultural resources reports. Usually, reports generated by federal agencies remain in the “gray literature,” effectively unavailable for scholars and the public to use. This agreement allows these documents to be readily available at modest cost.

## **CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

(see also Program Summary above)

### **Overall Cultural Resources Management**

Managing the number and types of resources on China Lake’s 1.1 million acres remains a daunting task. With tightening budgets and limited manpower, ingenuity and creativity become the program drivers. With the June 2005 signature by NAWS Command and the BLM State Director of the China Lake Comprehensive Land Use Plan, cultural resources concerns have been formally integrated into the Station’s facilities planning and mission operating environment.

Available OMN funding had been “stretched” by partnering with the Society for California Archaeology, the Maturango Museum and Calif. State University Bakersfield and San Bernardino to accomplish archaeological site evaluations and extend public outreach.

### **Historic Buildings and Structures and Curation**

Adaptive Reuse of historic buildings is encouraged and is part of the Facilities Planning Process at NAWS China Lake. Reuse is the first option considered when new facilities needs arise.

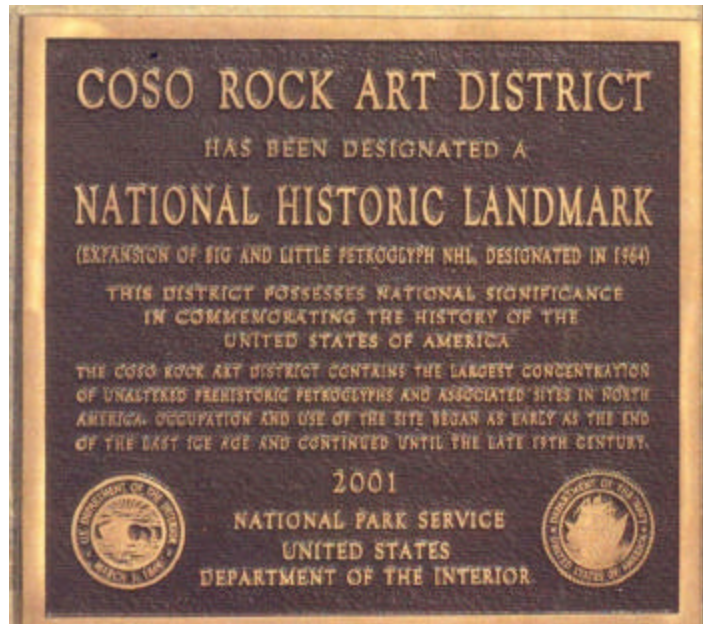
A joint effort between NAWS professional staff and its dedicated volunteers, the Friends of China Lake Archaeology, the premier use of historic structures was the completion of the NAWS Curation Facility housed in a 1944 Ice House. NAWS China Lake received the 2005 California Governor’s Historic Preservation Award for this accomplishment. The citation reads in part: “This award recognizes an unusual effort to marry curation of archaeological artifacts and preservation of historic buildings...For decades the station had limited curation facilities...Volunteers remodeled the building, organized materials and cataloged collections...This public-private partnership saved a historic building from demolition while providing for curation of important artifacts and establishing a research facility.”

### **Archaeological Resources**

Potential vandalism is a real concern for managing cultural resources located in back country 40+ miles from the Main Base area. In FY05 we obtained formal ARPA training for

members of the China Lake Police and several volunteers. They in turn have trained range operations personnel and other volunteers on what to look for. This capability is an important tool for site protection on hundreds of square miles of remote ranges.

NAWS hosted 250 dignitaries and guests at the May 2005 dedication ceremony for the Coso Rock Art National Historic Landmark. Speakers included Capt. Mark Storch, NAWS Commanding Officer and Wayne Donaldson, Calif. State Historic Preservation Officer; as well as representatives from the Office of the Keeper of the National Register; BLM State Director and Director of the National Park Service. A local Native American Elder opened the Ceremony with a traditional Blessing. This was the culmination of 8 years of fieldwork, research and documentation necessary to formally establish the Landmark.



Photograph of brass plaque monument at Coso Rock Art National Historic Landmark

### **Mission Enhancement**

Through the implementation of the Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan and the Comprehensive Land Use Management Plan, cultural resources management has been fully incorporated into both facilities and mission planning. This has resulted in substantial savings in time and funding for both infrastructure projects like building remodels and utilities upgrades and weapons testing projects such as target construction. The “one stop shop” approach allows projects to be approved and executed efficiently and cost effectively.

In the earliest planning stages, the ICRMP Cultural Resources Database often provides sufficient information to site proposed test projects away from important archaeological and historic resources. This allows all test parameters to be met while avoiding costly and time-consuming mitigations and data recovery.

## **Transferability**

The NAWS China Lake Volunteer Program can serve as a model for other DoD installations. Taking advantage of people assets in the local community and within the Installation's military and civilian workforce provides a double payoff. First, the offset of manpower requirements provides immediate relief of budget and FTE. Second, and no less important, involving these people in the Cultural Resources Program connects them to the program and the overall mission in a very special way. This builds a corpus of allies and supporters, invaluable to a Command in these days of encroachment and development threats to the Installation's continuing mission.



Volunteers working in the field with an archaeologist to document a fire pit.