



MARINE CORPS AIR STATION BEAUFORT



Nomination for Secretary of Defense/Secretary of the Navy 2012 Environmental Awards Cultural Resources Management – Installation

INTRODUCTION

Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Beaufort, South Carolina, serves as a home and base of operations for Fleet Marine Force units of the Second Marine Aircraft Wing and the Second Force Service Support Group. Marine Aircraft Group 31 (MAG-31) is the principal tenant and is composed of six squadrons of F/A-18 aircraft, two of which are usually deployed. Our mission is to maintain and operate facilities in support of flight operations and to provide services and material to support the MAG, associated Wing units, and other activities and units as designated by the Commandant of the Marine Corps.



MCAS Beaufort supports a population of nearly 8,500 persons, which comprise greater than 3,500 military personnel and their 3,600 family members; the Air Station employs an additional 1,300 civilian employees.

The main Air Station complex and the Laurel Bay Family Housing Area together encompass almost 7,000 acres. The MCAS Beaufort Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (ICRMP) addresses both areas, plus the 5,183 acres of the Townsend Bombing Range in Georgia—a federal property for which MCAS Beaufort is responsible.

For at least 10,000 years, people have occupied the land that now houses the Air Station and the Laurel Bay Housing Area. Native Americans were drawn to the area by the bountiful estuarine resources, and evidence of their seasonal camps is found throughout the Air Station. By the mid 1700s, Native Americans had been displaced by English colonists and large rice and indigo plantations, which were worked by African and Indian slaves. After the Civil War, the large plantations were divided into small tracts and farmed by newly freed African-Americans. During the late 1890s to mid-1900s, lands that had grown cotton were converted to the cultivation of truck crops produced for northern markets. Forested lands were harvested for lumber. In the 1940s, the Navy and then the Marines adapted the land for airfields and began the construction recognizable today as the Air Station.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

No program can be truly successful without a clear plan, excellent direction, and outstanding support. The cultural resources program at the Air Station has all these elements, as demonstrated by these examples. John Luce, the manager for this program area, has directed this program for the Air Station for 21 years, and is the architect for its direction and success. The Air Station has had and continues to get excellent support from the Savannah Corps of Engineers, Naval Facilities



Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Southeast, New South Associates, and Southeastern Archeological Research in completing these important studies.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

INTEGRATED CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Air Station directs its cultural resources management program through its Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan (ICRMP), initially developed in 2001. The plan is updated completely every five years, with “pencil” changes made annually as warranted by changes to the physical site or by developments through its continuing investigations. The most recent issuance of the ICRMP was completed in 2012, and is staged for signature by the Commanding Officer.

The duties of the Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Officer (NREAO) are enumerated in the ICRMP as follows:

- ❖ Consults with Station departments on master planning activities to determine if adverse effects may occur
- ❖ Participates in the Public Works site approval process
- ❖ Reviews project proposals that may affect cultural resources
- ❖ Works with project proponents to implement projects that minimize effects on cultural resources
- ❖ Communicates with Native American Tribes
- ❖ Prepares documents and communicates with the state historic preservation office (SHPO) through the NHPA Section 106 process
- ❖ Develops strategy with SHPO to mitigate adverse effects
- ❖ Completes annual ICRMP review/updates and 5-year command reviews.

Cultural resource management is a key element in project planning at the Air Station. With all the work conducted to prepare for the advent of the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF), NREAO worked closely with operations to ensure that mission needs were met while completing all the evaluations required by regulations (and ICRMP) and protecting the cultural assets of the facility. Air Station property had to be assessed for potential cultural assets as part of siting this new fighter. In particular, cultural assets on board the Air Station were thoroughly reviewed to evaluate eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP); one site was identified as eligible through concurrence of the SHPO, with two candidate sites still being reviewed by the SHPO. Similar assessments were made to ensure the sustainability of Townsend Range in Georgia (as described in more detail below).

For years, the Air Station has operated with memoranda of understanding with 15 tribes. The Native American groups are included in distributions of plans and documents that may affect Native American lands. As part of the assessments at the Air Station, specific attention was paid to identification of sacred sites, with none so identified.

The Air Station has been an excellent steward of the resources to complete this work. The Air Station has elicited support from NAVFAC for its studies, and has used the University of Alabama through an innovative contracting arrangement to support archiving of artifacts from the cultural resource program.

Cultural resources awareness and community relations are important to furthering the understanding of the heritage of the facility and its place in the community. Each year, NREAO conducts a cultural awareness training program for DOD civilian and military personnel, including the local schools.



Community relations are of utmost importance at the Air Station, with a specific liaison officer identified for interacting with community officials and organizations. The Air Station has worked in partnership with local groups to ensure successful acquisition and stewardship of properties associated with expansion of properties to address potential noise reduction. And the Air Station has well-functioning programmatic agreements with the SHPO in both South Carolina and Georgia, as described below.

WINDOWS IN TIME

Cemeteries are remarkable historical archives for communities, providing insights into the peoples who inhabited the surrounding area and into their culture. The Lowcountry of South Carolina – where the Air Station is located – is particularly rich in such history, having been the site of some of the earliest settlements in the eastern United States. Owing to the practice of family cemeteries and cemeteries associated with plantations, there are numerous burial plots on the Air Station property. Each has been cataloged through this recent work, which investigated not only the current sites but also archives to determine which families and plantations contributed to these locations, all established and operated well before the U.S. Navy acquired the properties in the early 1940s.



While understanding its mission for training and readiness, the Air Station recognized its obligation to protect and manage these cemeteries under various South Carolina statutes, including SC 16-16-600 (Destruction or Desecration of Human Remains or Repositories Thereof) and SC Code 27-43-10, 20, 30, and 40 (Removal of Abandoned Cemeteries). To ensure proper management of these cemeteries, the Air Station commissioned the complete survey and history of the sites aboard the installation.

The project completed by New South Associates in 2011 used a marriage of new field investigation techniques and old-fashioned, hard field surveys and library research in dusty volumes. Research of historical maps and deeds identified the past ownership of the properties, tracing the roots of the ownership through tax records as well as early maps. The identification of time periods was facilitated through this research. Field surveys were necessary, however, to obtain the detailed mapping desired for the final logging into geographical information systems (GIS). To aid in locating specific graves, field surveys of markers and depressions were conducted combined with ground penetrating radar to minimize disturbance of the grounds.





Eight cemeteries were detailed through this study (Howard, Givens, Red House, BOQ2, Edgerly, Dilbert, DeTreville-Lawrence, and Chaplin). While two were identified as family plots associated with planter families from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the majority of the burial areas were cataloged as community sites, associated with African American slaves and freemen, dating from the late 1700s to present. Through this survey effort, a total of 386 graves have been identified in the nearly 4 acres of cemeteries around the Air Station. Nineteen new

graves were identified through use of the ground penetrating radar (GPR), which allowed more complete survey of subsurface regions. All the recently identified graves were at community locations, meaning the family cemeteries were already well characterized.

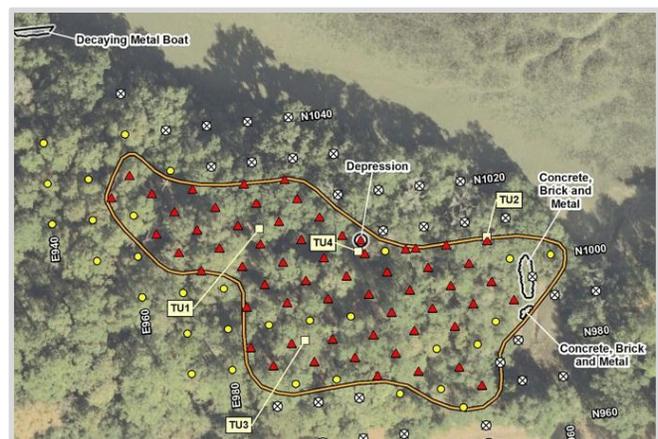
Many of the sites were completely overgrown, and not well maintained. Markers were either worn or eroded beyond reading or non-existent at this stage after years of inattention in the wet environment of the Lowcountry. Two of the sites, however, are still active. Long-range plans that are being considered include identification of unmarked graves; repair, restoration, or replacement of markers; filling of slumped graves with granite dust; and outreach to the community to aid in further identification of cemeteries, through recounting of oral histories where written records were not found.



CLASSIFICATION OF AREAS ABOARD THE AIR STATION

The Air Station has over many years conducted archeological surveys of many properties that comprise the facility. As of the 2007 ICRMP, a total of 29 archeological projects were completed at the Air Station, identifying 186 sites on the Air Station (and Laurel Bay Housing Area, or LBHA). Eleven sites were identified as eligible for listing in the NRHP, with another 30 sites needing more research to complete the eligibility evaluation. One site (situated at LBHA) is listed in the NRHP. The remaining sites (145) of those previously identified are not eligible for listing.

During the reporting period, however, the results of eleven additional surveys detailed in five studies have been completed during the reporting period, characterizing another 75 acres have been added to this already-complete catalog. The field surveys were preceded by thorough research into the past use of the specific locations, through review of historical maps, photographs, and records. Field surveys began with visual observations of the sites, with certain portions of sites at





times restricted due to mission operations (such as air field operations) or known hazards (such as underground pipelines or power lines).

A variety of techniques were used, including post-hole assessments on a 10-m or 30-m grid to evaluate whether there was potential occupation of those specific locations. During the studies, someone trained in the identification of human skeletal remains was retained on site to inspect any bone that recovered during excavation. No human skeletal material was identified, nor was any other suspected Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) cultural item. No artifacts were recovered for curation at many sites. However, three projects identified several sites at which cultural artifacts were found. These sites are targeted for further assessment.



These projects are part of the many evaluations needed to ensure all cultural and natural resources are not compromised as the Air Station embarks on the numerous construction activities associated with location of the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF). With completion of these studies, the Air Station has completed an initial characterization of nearly the entire Station-proper property. Surveys have also been conducted for new properties acquired to address AICUZ issues, including the newly acquired Walsh property.

The Air Station has worked diligently with the South Carolina SHPO to characterize the entire Air Station with respect to cultural and historic properties. This undertaking

has been made possible with the recent completion of these surveys. But it was not merely the completion of the studies that will further the Air Station's cultural resources management program. During this period, cantonments have been defined wherein development can proceed without further investigation.

Using the results of the studies, and through correspondence with the South Carolina SHPO, the Air Station has defined cantonment areas on the facility wherein development can proceed without undue burden of additional investigation. The SHPO has recognized that most of Air Station structures have been surveyed and that the larger portion of the cantonment area has previously been developed. In correspondence from the SHPO, there is agreement that:

- ❖ Majority of the buildings and structures have been surveyed and inventories;
- ❖ Program comments in accordance with 36 CFR 800 have addressed several types of buildings present at the Air Station (including Wherry and Capehart Family Housing, ammunition storage facilities, and Cold War Era Unaccompanied Personnel Housing);
- ❖ It is unlikely any of the structures at the Air Station (after reaching the 50-yr mark) will meet the criteria for listing in the NRHP;
- ❖ Ongoing activities (operations, maintenance and repair, rehabilitation, renovation, mothballing, deconstruction and salvage, remediation, transfer, sale, lease, closure) will not affect historic properties, and should exempt them from further consultation with the SHPO; and



- ❖ The undisturbed areas of the cantonment have largely been surveyed and the SHPO agreed with criteria to be used in conducting the archeological surveys for the remaining two sites where a survey is needed.

Completion of these studies and clear establishment of cantonments will shorten the review necessary to proceed with development of new projects, while furthering our overall understanding of the historical nature of the site. The SHPO has cited the cooperative relationship with the Air Station for its innovation in developing and implementing these procedures.

GIS MAPPING OF AIR STATION CULTURAL SITES

All Federally-funded projects require review under NEPA, meaning all projects at the Air Station require such consideration. With the many historical sites aboard the Air Station and the nearby Laurel Bay Housing Area, the Air Station is obligated to buffer and protect the resources. Especially important with the greater development of the facilities with the advent of the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) to the Air Station, clear delineation of all such sites is underway. Two of the highlights provided above (Windows in Time; Classification of Areas aboard the Air Station) show the efforts made to clearly identify areas that should be protected and areas that are clear for development.

These sites have been identified in the past as simple coordinates in the map of the Air Station. While this approach gives a general sense of what areas might be available for development, it still requires a fair amount of field investigation to clearly delineate the acceptable boundaries for various projects. As the Marine Corps moves toward a more integrated and comprehensive geographical information system (GIS), the Air Station likewise took this step forward in delineating boundaries for its historically important sites.

Additional survey work provides the data necessary to ensure that all such sites are not merely identified in the geographical information system (GIS), but are detailed. Way points on the boundaries of each site are logged and uploaded to the GIS to define an area of interest and not simply the general location by single-point coordinates. All currently-identified cultural and historical sites at both locations will be mapped in the GIS, depicting the actual area of each site (as polygon) instead of being identified as a single point. Clear delineation in the GIS enhances and speeds the Air Station's review of projects under NEPA provisions and enhance protection of these cultural and historical sites.

TOWNSEND RANGE EXPANSION

As custodian of Townsend Bombing Range in McIntosh County, Georgia, the Air Station is responsible for environmental evaluations as well as management of natural and cultural resources. Plans have been prepared for expanding and enhancing the existing Townsend Range. This plan will increase the size of the range from 5,183 acres with an additional 28,630 acres; the cultural resource evaluations including not only this property, but also included additional acreage in the region one mile from that boundary around the entire perimeter of the range. Such major expenditures necessitate review under NEPA, which necessarily includes a review of potential impacts on cultural assets.

The Air Station proactively engaged private land owners to gain access to their lands to conduct this intensive archaeological survey and a historic built resources reconnaissance survey, which identified six resources within the project area, including a single grave marker provided by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) for B.B. Rozier, a Corporal in the McIntosh Light Dragoons during the Civil War.



An intensive archaeological survey, conducted within proposed target areas, covered approximately 1,732-acres of land and included the excavation of 6,672 shovel test pits. The survey identified nine new archaeological sites (four historic and prehistoric, five prehistoric) and eleven isolated finds. The results of the survey were combined with the limited archaeological data for the region to develop an archaeological predictive model, a tool that will greatly facilitate the prioritization of areas for future surveys should land acquisition occur.

The project showed again an excellent working relationship between the Air Station's NREAO and the SHPO, in this case, in Georgia. Our team worked with the SHPO to identify candidate structures for investigation, and confirmed data available in hard copy files and electronic data bases. Five particular locations were noted for further study: Rozier Cemetery, Georgia Coast & Piedmont Railroad, house (Low Country Lane, Long County), Snuff Box Canal, and Old Barrington Road, but only required if a future federal project might affect them.

In addition, the Air Station consulted 21 federally-recognized Native American Tribes and other stakeholders about this expansion and investigation, and developed a Programmatic Agreement (PA) with the Georgia SHPO to satisfy the Section 106 compliance requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, streamlining these efforts now and into the future.