

2011 GOVERNOR'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

San Nicolas Island Archaeological Field School Program



Students excavating a historic site on San Nicolas Island

This nomination recognizes the Environmental Division, Naval Base Ventura County for sustaining a high level of excellence in facilitating the San Nicolas Island (SNI) Archaeological Field School Program. The program is a cooperative agreement between California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA) and the Navy designed to meet educational needs and federal historic preservation mandates under Sections 110 and 111 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The nomination seeks official recognition of the program for the positive and significant impact it has had on students from CSULA and elsewhere who directly benefit from this unique and rewarding experience.

SNI, which is 13,370 acres, is about 60 miles from the southern California coast. Its cultural history spans at least 8,000 years. Cultural resources include over 550 prehistoric archaeological sites; approximately 20 historic archaeological sites representing activities of 19th century Aleut sea otter hunters, Chinese abalone fishermen, and Anglo sheep ranchers; a few sites and structures from World War II; numerous Cold War structures; and a number of beached and offshore shipwrecks.

The program directly conducts field and laboratory investigations on these and other significant cultural resources. The field school started in the mid-1970s and has run continuously since the early 1990s. Fifteen students participate every summer in the three-week field course, assisting the Navy in their historic preservation and management needs. The training received translates into immediate and marketable skills ideal for work in government agencies and private archaeological firms.

The Environmental Division has provided funding, air transport to and from the island, transportation on the island, room and board, lab facilities, and archaeological equipment. This remarkable level of support has given students, many of them low-income, inner-city students, the chance to gain valuable

hands-on training in archaeological field and lab techniques, cultural resources law, and project and data management. The author of this nomination, Rene Vellanoweth, participated in this program as a grad student in the 1990s and now serves as the Chair of the Anthropology Department at CSULA as well as continuing to direct field schools on San Nicolas Island.

Learn more about the San Nicolas Island Archaeological Field School: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCmmSmh1stE>