Guidance for Archaeological Management Reports in California
California Office of Historic Preservation
2015

Background:

The California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) is pleased to present this Guidance for Archaeological Management Reports in California (Guidance). This Guidance compliments OHP’s 1990 Archaeological Resource Management Reports: Recommended Contents and Format (ARMR) but does not replace or supersede it (http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/pages/1054/files/armr.pdf). The purpose of the 1990 ARMR was to “aid archaeological report preparation and review by ensuring that all needed data would be included and organized to optimize efficiency and utility”. This new Guidance builds on ARMR reflecting growth in professional best practices, current reporting structures, and legislative changes.

This Guidance is a result of efforts of the Archaeological Resources Committee (ARC) of the State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC), attempting to address some of the goals identified the Archaeological White Papers (http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=26522). The purpose of this Guidance is to offer the community of archaeological resource consultants, managers, and regulators with informal consensual standards for the current practice of professional archaeology in California.

Purpose and Scope:

Based on the same premise as the ARMR, the new Guidance also takes into account the past twenty-five years of lessons learned in California archaeological resource management. The new Guidance also aims to provide flexibility for differing levels of effort, including clarifying distinctions between survey and evaluation reports. This Guidance does not supersede any Agency-specific reporting requirements.

This effort describes two types of standard technical reports: survey (AKA Phase I) and evaluation (AKA Phase II). It does not describe data recovery or treatment/mitigation (AKA Phase III) because such documents should be site-specific, regulatory agency drive, and be developed in consultation with interested parties who ascribe value to the subject property. The following sections itemize and provide a description of the types of information that should be included in an archaeological report to ensure adequate information has been gathered to support analyses and interpretations. While key information should be included in any report, the level of detail will vary depending on the report type and management goals. For example, an in depth research design on the character and interpretation of particular prehistoric assemblages would not be appropriate for a pedestrian archaeological survey more appropriately focused on anticipated surface locations and frequencies of archaeological sites on the landscape. Flexibility in reporting is encouraged and it is expected that survey and evaluation phases may be combined into one document provided all the key information is included.
A Note about Consultation:

As stated above, the practice of archaeological resource management in California has changed substantially over the past several decades, one aspect being the active engagement of descendent communities, specifically federally and non-federally recognized Indian tribes but also ethnic communities. Museums, scientists, avocationalists, and other interest groups may also be interested in the human history of the resource. It is important to recognize that notifying an individual or organization about a project and holding public meetings is not the same as active consultation that must be two-way communication. With that in mind, this Guidance use the term Outreach and Consultation to distinguish initial contacts (sending letters or making phone calls to invite participation) from active Consultation which requires meaningful engagement to seek to understand the values with which others may imbue archaeological resources and to reach agreement, where reasonable and feasible, on how properties should be managed.