

Interpretation

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Current Situation

The current Statewide Historic Preservation Plan states that the OHP is tasked with promoting a historic preservation ethic through preservation, education, and public awareness, and, most significantly, by demonstrating leadership and stewardship for historic preservation in California.

- Lack of funding has forced the OHP to focus its efforts on meeting its statutory mandates, not on public outreach and interpretation.
- OHP outreach focuses on preservation ordinances and heritage tourism.
- The OHP website does not provide links to educational, research-oriented, interpretive or outreach websites.

Ideal Situation

The OHP should be able to take the lead in promoting and supporting archaeological interpretation and outreach efforts. An ideal situation would be one where the OHP offers:

- High-quality, accessible information available to the general public and academic researchers.
- Well-publicized and enforceable standards for competent, high quality archaeological work.
- Clear guidance and support to cultural resources management (CRM) and non-CRM professionals alike.

How to Bridge the Gap

A link needs to be made between localized interpretation efforts and the OHP whereby these efforts can be shared with the people of California. The OHP should provide clear guidance and support to both the CRM community and the larger population interested in our state's cultural heritage. Two basic solution categories are proposed:

- I. Expand the OHP links to existing outreach programs and provide access to these programs for the general public.
 - Contact federal, state, and local agencies, museums, universities, non-profit, and CRM organizations to identify high-quality research designs, outreach and education programs, interpretive material, regional and thematic overviews, and teaching plans, and provide links and contact information for them.
 - Prepare technical and thematic bulletins for California based on the National Register bulletins.
 - Develop and provide links to existing teaching packets based on important themes in state history geared to different age groups.
 - Create an online library of research, educational, and technical information on the OHP homepage and make this information available in different languages.
- II. Provide funding, training, and staff to the OHP to meet critical interpretation and outreach needs.
 - Fully fund the California Historical Resources Information System Centers.
 - Contact California-based private and public universities and colleges and professional and avocational societies, and identify those with history and archaeology interpretive programs, what can be done to support them, and in cases where none exist, what can be done to start them.
 - Study K-12 educational programs to see where archaeological courses are being offered and how to reach underserved sectors of the population.
 - Reach out to land trust and environmental protection organizations that are actively seeking public interpretation for resources on non-profit and public lands.
 - Create and publish a map of the state depicting the extent of active outreach programs to see which communities are underserved.
 - Consult with professional educational organizations to inquire how the OHP can assist them in teaching our state's history in the classrooms;
 - Help more local governments achieve certified local government status, address cultural resources in General Plan updates, and adopt comprehensive Cultural Resources Ordinances or Codes to establish and clarify professional standards, guidelines, and processes for CEQA compliance.

- Conduct classes for public agencies to support them in their responsibilities under CEQA and other CRM “best practices” laws. Provide technical assistance to meet those responsibilities by establishing professional standards and guidelines for preparation of legally defensible cultural resources studies and related CEQA documents.
- Develop an internship program at the OHP to pursue a broad outreach agenda targeting descendant groups and under-served geographic areas.