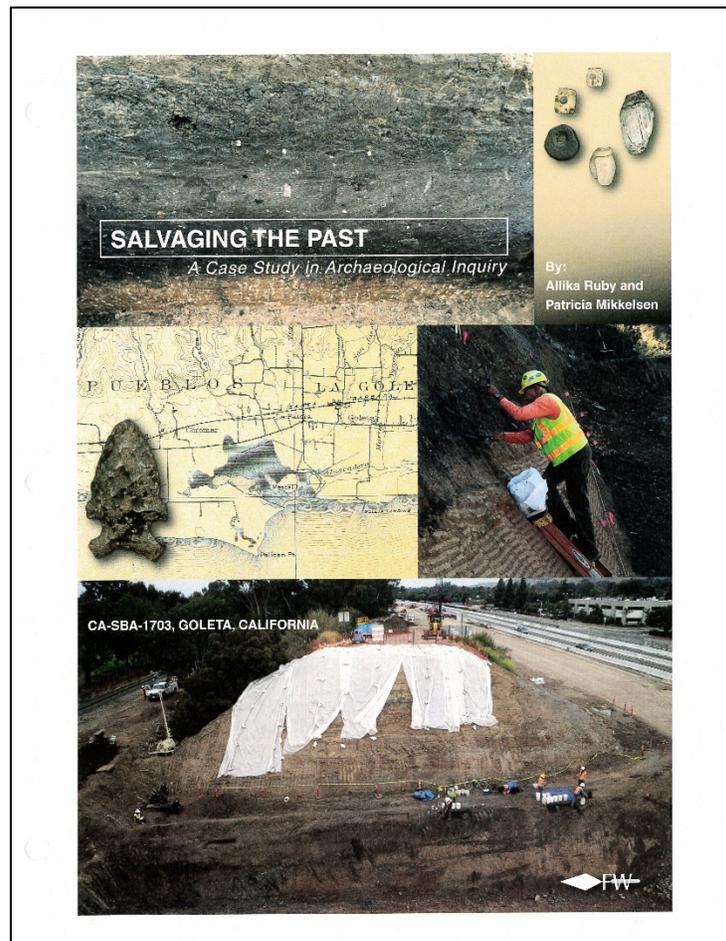


2017 Governor's Historic Preservation Awards

Salvaging the Past: A Case Study in Archaeological Inquiry



The Las Vegas and San Pedro Creeks Capacity Improvements Project involved culvert replacement for flood control along US Route 101 near the city of Goleta, Santa Barbara County. A huge box culvert lay in a rechanneled drainage, stretching under railroad tracks, multi-lane Route 101, and an off-ramp. There were also two known sites either side of the highway, in a very urban environment, one occupied early in time-CA-SBA-1703-the other a named ethnographic village-S'axpi/i/'s (SBA-60). Project construction involved removing the old culvert, restructuring the land form, and emplacing a new culvert.

Following removal of the culvert south of Route 101, along with the overpass roadway, an alert, properly trained construction crew member noted weathered shell fragments and dark soil underlying construction fill in the exposed slopes of the rechanneled drainage. Far Western was tasked with conducting salvage data recovery operations, with time, budget, weather, and safety constraints. Our geoarchaeologist identified intact versus disturbed deposits, and we developed a work plan to recover maximum information in a hectic environment using

appropriate and diverse field techniques. The Santa Ynez Elders Council and Barbareño Chumash tribe members were fully involved in the project, and in the review of the case study with their comments incorporated into the final product.

One of the main problems with technical reporting of archaeological data recovery is that the information is not publically accessible. Technical reports are written and often preserved only in restricted repositories. Given the unique circumstances of the project, the Principal Investigators decided to create a visually appealing document specifically geared to archaeology students focusing on cultural resources management and contract archaeology. It includes perspectives on site preservation in an urban environment, excavation strategies adapting to special conditions, and local and regional environmental reconstruction focusing on Goleta Slough. Study questions were also prepared, relating to the important aspects of the study. Far Western provided the report and study questions to seven regional institutions to be incorporated into lesson plans; they have already been used in several classroom settings, with positive feedback.

This case study exemplifies how contract archaeology can be used to further educational goals and research issues, and generate public interest. Just as importantly, the project serves as example that archaeological deposits can survive intact almost anywhere, even with massive amounts of disturbance. As stewards of the past, archaeologists, Native Americans, construction workers, agencies, and the public, should work together to preserve what little is left of these important non-renewable resources.