Exhibit 5.5: Archaeological Evaluation Report (Phase II) Format and Content Guide

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Archaeological Evaluation Report (Phase II) Format

The Archaeological Evaluation Report (AER) provides the basis for determining whether a site is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register), or as a historical resource under CEQA. It also provides documentation to support project effect findings. See Chapter 5 Section 5.6 for a general discussion of archaeological evaluation (Phase II) studies and Exhibit 5.14 for post-contact archaeology methods.

Archaeological Evaluation
(Phase II) Report Format

- Title page
- Summary of Findings (Abstract)
- Table of Contents
- Acknowledgments
- Introduction
- Site Context
- Research Design
- Field and Laboratory Methods
- Study Results
- Eligibility
- Summary and Conclusions
- References Cited
- Preparer's Qualifications
- Maps
- Tables and Figures
- Additional Appendices

Title Page

- Brief descriptive title with type of study (AEP), the primary number and trinomial for the site, and the name and general location of project (e.g., "Curve Correction on Route 989 between Forestview Drive and Limekiln Road").
- County, route, and postmile or local street or road name.
- EA/E-FIS[1] project number and phase (For Local Assistance projects, use the Federal-Aid project number).
- Project contract number (if prepared by consultants).

[1] Enterprise Resource Planning Financial Infrastructure, a 10-digit number, followed by a phase number of one or more digits.

- Name, title, and signature of the Caltrans Professionally Qualified Staff (PQS) as described in Attachment 1 of the Section 106 PA (106 PA[2]) or the PRC 5024 MOU (5024 MOU[3]) or consultant PQS-equivalent who prepares the report. Also state the preparer's PQS or PQS-equivalent level and address or location. If the report has multiple authors, all should be listed by name, but only the senior author's name, title, location, and signature are needed.
- Name, title, and signature (if required) of the PQS who reviewed the report for approval, along with the reviewer's PQS level and location (if different than preparer).
- Name, title, location, and signature of the Caltrans District Environmental Branch Chief (DEBC) for whom the document was prepared. The DEBC's signature on the title page indicates approval and acceptance of the document.
- If a governmental permit for the survey was issued, provide the name of the permitting agency and the permit number.
- USGS topographic quadrangle(s) depicting the study area.
- Primary numbers, and/or trinomials, and other permanent designations of all cultural resources identified in the report.
- Date (month/year) AER was prepared (appears at bottom of page).

Summary of Findings

- Summarize the purpose, scope, methods, and results of the study.
- Briefly discuss the National Register significance of the site.

Table of Contents

List the major proposal sections, subheadings, appendices, tables, and figures, with page numbers.

2 Programmatic Agreement Among the Federal Highway Administration, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the California State Historic Preservation Officer, the United States Army Corps of Engineers' Sacramento District, San Francisco District, and Los Angeles District, and the California Department of Transportation Regarding Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as it Pertains to the Administration of the Federal-Aid Highway Program in California (2024).

3 Memorandum of Understanding between the California Department of Transportation and the California State Historic Preservation Officer Regarding Compliance with Public Resources Code Section 5024 and Governor's Executive Order W-26-92 (2024).

Acknowledgments

Provide information as appropriate.

Introduction

Concisely describe or discuss the following:

- Proposed highway project
- Nature and purpose of the archaeological investigation
- Dates of fieldwork
- Names, titles, and qualifications of the supervisory personnel participating in the study
- Any permits or permission obtained
- Detailed description of arrangements for disposition or curation of the collection (attach disposition plan and/or signed curation agreement)
- Disposition of any human bone, associated funerary objects, or sacred objects
- Scope and results of Native American consultation and monitoring
- Other information, as necessary, to introduce the report, such as a brief history of the proposed project as it pertains to the site

Site Context

- Place the site in the regional context for which the research design was developed and within which the cultural remains are interpreted.
- Provide pertinent information on present-day environment, paleoenvironment, ethnography, archaeology, and history.
- The content of this section will vary significantly depending on whether pre- or post-contact or archaeological resources are evaluated (e.g., potentially limited paleoenvironmental or ethnographic information for post-contact sites).

Research Design

- State the core research design from the Archaeological Evaluation Proposal.
- If unexpected discoveries were made during fieldwork, revisions to the research design may be required; identify these changes and address as appropriate.
- Incorporate pertinent information obtained through tribal or other descendent community consultation between the proposal and fieldwork.

Field and Laboratory Methods

- Describe the methods and techniques used in the field and laboratory.
- Present the general analytical methods in the main text, reserving detailed discussions of specialists' analytical methods for appendices.

Study Results

Pre-contact Sites

In reports addressing multiple sites, each site is typically discussed in a separate chapter. However, chapters may alternatively be organized in part or entirely along topical lines (e.g., chronology, soils, features, etc.), if doing so aids in clarity of presentation.

Describe in detail the characteristics of the site and their interpretation. Discuss modifications to previous interpretations of the site's chronology, function, and affiliation as a result of these studies.

Describe and discuss:

- Overview of site type and constituents (e.g., midden, rock shelter, lithic deposit)
- Previous archaeological investigations at the site
- Chronological placement
- Site boundaries and extent (horizontal and vertical), including the methods by which these were defined
- Ethnographic affiliation and documentary references
- Tribal knowledge of site provided through consultation, including ascriptions of significance
- Site deposits (soil types, chemistry, color, stratigraphy), with profiles of representative or interpretively important excavation units
- Features, including locations, dimensions, attributes, and associations
- Artifacts, including description of the typologies used with sufficient detail for their replication and for evaluation of their interpretive relevance, and discussion of artifact distributions by class/material (e.g., flaked stone, ground stone, shell artifacts, bone artifacts, and historic materials) and type
- Results of special analyses (evidence on manufacture and use, obsidian sourcing, obsidian hydration, protein residues, etc.)
- Non-artifactual constituents (faunal and floral remains)

- Human bone, including its physical condition, associations (including photographs and drawings, if appropriate), circumstances of discovery, and handling and disposition (making reference to relevant laws and agreements, and to the individuals involved, including the county coroner, Native American Heritage Commission, Most Likely Descendant, other local Native American representatives, landowner, and other interested parties)

Post-contact Sites

Information in the site reports must reflect its status as a historic-era archaeological site or a component of a multi-component site, as follows:

- Previous archaeological investigations at the site
- Site type (e.g., homestead, mining camp, urban-commercial), including historical references
- Site boundaries (horizontal and vertical), including the methods by which these were defined
- Pertinent aspects of historical and archaeological background studies
- Environment
- Known disrupting influences/intrusions (e.g., roads, vandalism) that have changed the site's condition and/or affected its integrity
- Summary data gathered on the internal characteristics of the site (e.g., stratigraphy, artifact classes and their distribution, structural remains and activity areas, temporal affiliation[s])
- Artifacts should be described and enumerated by functional class and material type. The period of manufacture and use should be discussed, as well as any maker's marks or other attributes contributing to the identification of temporal affiliation
- Results of site-specific historical research including oral histories and contributions by descendants and descendant communities.
- Results of special analyses (specialized artifact studies, residues analysis, parasitic studies, etc.)

National Register Eligibility

Address the applicability of the four National Register criteria of eligibility to each site being evaluated.

- For each site, provide an opening summary paragraph that contains the name of the evaluated resource and a brief statement regarding the eligibility of the site, including any criteria under which the site is eligible, the period of significance, and level of significance (local, state, national). This summary paragraph will be used in effect documents, as well as other environmental documents, as needed.
- Detail the significance of the site under each National Register criterion.
    - Provide any tribal or descendant community perspectives and ascriptions of significance as identified through consultation or tribal expertise.
    - Discuss any applicable elements of the research design that apply to the site.
    - Identify the chronological components that contribute to the site's significance, as well as those that do not contribute (if applicable).
    - Discuss how the significance of the site is conveyed.
    - Discuss the role of setting as an element that contributes to the site's eligibility, especially if the site is eligible under criterion A, B, or C.
    - If the site is eligible under Criterion D, discuss the range of cultural materials present at the site, important research topics that the data might address now and in the future. Minor amounts of data on a wide range of topics may contribute to the site's significance. Discuss the importance of the research topics within the broader regional perspective.
- Address site integrity as it relates to each selected criterion.
    - Discuss elements impacting the site’s ability to convey its significance.
    - Identify and provide justification for contributing and non-contributing areas of the site. Indicate whether the contributing areas are within the proposed project's Area of Direct Impact (ADI).
- For state-only projects that involve Caltrans-owned resources, address the applicability of each of the California Historical Landmarks (CHL) criteria to the site, in addition to the National Register criteria.
- Discuss whether the site is or is not historical for the purposes of CEQA, as appropriate.

Summary and Conclusions

- Briefly summarize the results of the investigation, in terms of management and research goals.
- Note contributions to the understanding of regional pre- and post-contact history.
- Indicate conclusions concerning National Register eligibility, CHL eligibility, and/or whether resources are historical under CEQA, as applicable, and project effects.

References Cited

- List all references cited in the report.
- Bibliographic format should follow the most recent style guide for *American Antiquity* or *Historical Archaeology*, as appropriate.

Preparer's Qualifications

- Briefly summarize the professional qualifications of each person who contributed to the report. For Caltrans PQS it is sufficient to list their names, PQS level, and that their qualifications are on file in the Caltrans Division of Environmental Analysis Cultural Studies Office. For consultants, include name, classification or job title, qualifying degree(s) and major(s), and a one or two sentence description of qualifying experience. Exhibit 2.15 contains guidance for documenting preparer(s)' qualifications.

Maps

All maps should display the District, county, route, post miles, and EA/E-FIS project number and phase (for Local Assistance projects, use the Federal-Aid number), and should include north arrows and graphic scales.

- Study Vicinity Map: Point to the vicinity of the study area on a county or District map.
- Study Location Map: Depict the site location on the appropriate USGS topographic map.
- Study Site Map: This map should be scaled to show sufficient detail. An aerial photograph, detailed engineering/contour map, etc. can be used as a base map. Show the site boundary, topography, modern features, location of cultural surface features and study units (e.g., excavation units, surface scrapes, auger holes, etc.), and the pertinent portion of the project's Area of Potential Effects/Project Area Limits and ADI.

Tables and Figures

Incorporate tables and figures within the text, as appropriate, to document the work performed, its results, and its interpretation. Tables should summarize:

- Units excavated (their size, depth, and volume)
- Horizontal and vertical distributions of artifacts, ecofacts, and features
- Interpretively significant attributes of artifacts, ecofacts, and features
- Other information as appropriate

Information presented in the tables should not be repeated in the text, except as required for interpretive discussions. Figures may include:

- Sidewall profiles
- Feature plans
- Graphs and charts
- Artifact drawings

Photographs may show:

- General overviews of the site and its relation to the highway
- Study techniques and/or field methods
- Site features
- Excavation sidewalls
- Artifacts

Additional Graphics:

- It may be useful to include additional graphics (e.g., engineering cross sections, as-builts, historic maps, historic photographs) that illustrate project area conditions and support the findings.

Appendices

- Specialized Analysis Reports
- Updated Site Record, as well as previous site records
- Disposition plan and/or signed curation agreement
- Artifact catalog
- Other information as appropriate

Peer Review and Approval

Caltrans PQS certified at the Principal Investigator level in the appropriate discipline must peer review the draft AER following the guidelines in Exhibit 2.16: Peer Review Guidelines for Cultural Resources Reports. Peer reviewers’ names should be kept on record and comments retained in the project files.

Only Caltrans PQS may review AERs for approval, which the DBC approves. The Caltrans PQS or consultant who prepares the AER signs, dates and includes their discipline, PQS level (as applicable) and District/Headquarters or affiliation. The Caltrans PQS reviewing the AER for approval likewise signs, dates, and includes their PQS discipline, level, and District. Finally, the DEBC approves the AER by signing and dating the document. See Chapter 2 Section 2.12 and Exhibit 2.17 Table C for additional guidance on peer reviews and reviews for approvals.