

Archaeological White Papers Summary Report
Archaeological Resources Committee
State Historical Resources Commission

In 2006, the State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC) established the Archaeological Resources Committee (ARC) for the purpose of improving professional archaeological practices in California. The ARC was established following the recommendations and leadership of SHRC Commissioners Trish Fernandez and Donn Grenda. Enlisted as volunteers for participation in the ARC were professional archaeologists representing the Society for California Archaeology (SCA), various state and federal agencies, academia, private consulting firms, the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP); California Indians and others responsible for outreach to the Native American community; local government organizations including OHP Certified Local Governments (CLGs); and developers. Each volunteer was responsible for identifying interested parties within their area of expertise and to serve as a communication liaison to these parties.

The ARC built upon the deficiencies in archaeology as identified by the California Statewide Historic Preservation Plan (2006-2010) by focusing on five areas for which professional archaeological practices may be improved: Curation, Conservation, Interpretation, Preservation, and Standards and Guidelines. A white paper was drafted for each of these topics. The white papers were organized into three major sections that addressed the current situation, the ideal situation, and ways to bridge the gap. Each white paper was drafted by a lead author, who reviewed previous research and solicited comments from their ARC peers. Between March 2007 and September 2008, the draft white papers were submitted for public review through various venues such as the SCA Newsletter (Volume 41, Number 1), the Annual SCA Meeting in 2007, the OHP website, focused workshops throughout the state with California Indian groups, and through direct distribution to identified interested parties. The public draft of the white papers included an invitation to comment with a deadline of October 31, 2008.

The ARC received 324 comments that were organized into 47 common sets. Among the 47 sets, 17 were from archaeologists, 28 were from California Indians, 1 was from a local government, and 1 was from an attorney.

A letter from ARC Chairperson Fernandez and SHPO Donaldson acknowledging the ARC's receipt of comments was mailed to all commenters on July 16, 2009. This letter noted the fact that many comments were very specific in recommending changes in current policies and offering examples of model implementation measures; which are to be considered in the next phase.

All comments received by the 10/31/08 deadline were posted on the OHP website and were considered by the authors and ARC members in developing the revised draft white papers. These revised drafts will be considered for approval by the SHRC at its April 2010 public hearing. The revised draft white papers, in addition to the comments received and responses to those comments, are posted on the OHP website as part of the April

2010 SHRC meeting notice. By the time this newsletter is published, the SHRC will have decided whether to approve the white papers. What this means is that the SHRC will have on record its official position regarding the state of professional archaeology in California, the deficiencies, and the goals to which the profession should aspire. Through the establishment of these white papers, the SHRC may move forward with a firm basis to make policy and legislative recommendations that will incrementally improve archaeological practices.

Building upon the foundation of a formal adoption by the SRHC, the ARC will identify specific remedies for each of the deficiencies identified in the white papers. The next step is to prioritize the recommendations and develop specific action plans for each priority. As with any major overhaul of practices, procedures, and policy, this effort is expected to take many years.