Heritage Resources
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Dr. Glenn Russell
County of San Diego
Department of Planning and Land Use
5201 Ruffin Road, Suite B
San Diego, CA 92123-1666

Reference: Robnett Tentative Parcel Map (TPM 20726, Act. No. CP15567, Environmental Log No. 03-20-001): cultural resource survey

Dear Dr. Russell:

This letter describes the research and field survey performed for the Robnett Tentative Map (TPM 20726: Account No. CP15567, Environmental Log No. 03-20-001) property (Figures 1 and 2). These archaeological tasks are those outlined in the County letter dated April 3, 2003 and those required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Sections 21083.2 of the Statutes and 15064.5 of the Guidelines, and the County's Resource Protection Ordinance and Archaeological/Historical Report Procedures. Tasks included record searches, a review of historic maps and the 1928 aerial photograph of the property, a field survey, and documentation of three archaeological sites discovered on the property. The record searches and historic document review identified no previously known prehistoric or historic resources on the property, although several are noted in proximity. The field survey encountered adverse survey conditions—extremely steep slopes and dense chaparral vegetation. Because access was impossible in many areas of the property, the survey concentrated on drainage and level bench areas of high potential for presence of cultural resources. Because it is unlikely that resources are located in the steep sloped portions of the property and because proposed residential use will not likely extend into the steep slope areas, the inability to survey these areas is not considered a significant detriment to the evaluation effort. The field survey identified three bedrock milling sites on the level benches above the drainage, two with associated light lithic scatters. Subsequent to the survey, an intensive inspection of the areas surrounding the milling features was completed. Site mapping and milling documentation were also completed. The resulting DPR 523 Resource Record forms are included with this report as Attachment 1. The identified site boundaries, including an approximately 15-meter buffer, are illustrated in Figure 3 and on the project TPM blueline map submitted with this report. The project engineer has designed the proposed road and

pad improvements to avoid these sites and open space easements should be identified. Because the prehistoric resources located on the project property will be preserved in open space easements, no prehistoric or historic cultural resources will be impacted by the proposed Robnett Tentative Map project and no further measures related to cultural resources are recommended.

Natural and Cultural Background

The property lies south of the intersection of Honey Springs and Deerhorn Valley Roads and south of Bratton Valley. Two steep granite mountains, located northwest and south of the property, create a narrow gorge through which Pringle Creek exits Bratton Valley to the southwest. The Robnett property straddles the narrow gorge, with the west and eastern portions of the property lying on the slopes of the two granite mountains. Pringle Creek travels through the western portion of the property and a tributary travels through the northeast portion. One existing residence is located at the north central portion of the property on a small north terrace of the creek.

Geologically, the area is underlain by the Southern California Batholith and steep rock slopes and granite outcrops are the prominent features of the surrounding landscape. The soils are granitic sandy loams on the slopes and sandy alluvium in the drainages. Dense chaparral covers the slopes and thick riparian vegetation occupies the drainages.

Record searches were completed at the San Diego State University- South Coastal Information Center and San Diego Museum of Man. These are being submitted to the County under separate cover. Only three archaeological projects have taken place within a one- mile radius—two small surveys related to lot splits (Berryman 1990, Moriarty 1980) and one large survey of Mother Grundy Acres (Cupples 1978). These surveys resulted in the discovery of two bedrock milling sites; one with a small associated lithic scatter approximately 1000 meters northeast of the Robnett property, and the second the same distance east. One additional bedrock milling site is recorded along the river terrace immediately north of the Robnett property (Fink and Hightower 1978). Two habitation and milling sites are recorded at the San Diego Museum of Man, one at Bratton Ranch northeast of the Robnett property (Tyson 1975) and one in Pringle Canyon approximately one mile to the southwest. The scant recorded evidence for prehistoric occupation of the region is undoubtedly attributable to the lack of survey coverage but also likely due to dense vegetation cover.

Historic maps (County Map 1872; U. S. G. S. Cuyamaca quadrangle 1:125,000 1903 edition, Jamul quadrangle 30- minute 1943 edition, Potrero quadrangle 30- minute 1944 edition, Jamul quadrangle 30- minute 1955 edition, Potrero quadrangle 30- minute 1960 edition, Barrett Lake quadrangle 15- minute

1960 edition, and Temecula and Bonsall quadrangles 7.5 minute 1948 editions) and the 1928 aerial photograph on file at the County of San Diego Cartographic Services Department were reviewed. Bratton Valley is named for one of the earliest pioneer families in the Dulzura area, the valley being settled by brothers Andrew and John Bratton in the 1870s. John Bratton owned about 300 acres of patented land by 1879 and the family raised cattle in the valley until 1961 (Schmid 1963). The property immediately north of the Robnett project reportedly contains some of the early Bratton Ranch buildings (Aerial Photograph 1928, Maps 1944 and 1960). However, historic activities stayed north of the tributary drainage that lies just north of the Robnett property—the topography there is level valley bottom and suitable for grazing while the land to the south of the drainage, on the Robnett property, is steep sloped. The small house currently on the property was reportedly moved there in the 1960s (Robnett personal communication 6/7/03).

In summary, the project property lies at the south end of a hospitable valley that attracted prehistoric settlement as well as Anglo pioneer agriculturalists. The few archaeological surveys completed within a one-mile radius have discovered primarily bedrock milling sites. One habitation site lies at the south end of the level valley area and just north of the Robnett property. However, the Robnett property, consisting primarily of steep chaparral and rugged slopes, is marginal to the valley and was likely not attractive for settlement by either prehistoric or historic people.

Field Survey

The survey fieldwork was accomplished on June 7, 2003 with an additional two days (June 19 and 20) dedicated to intensively survey discovered bedrock milling areas, define site boundaries, and document milling features. The property consists primarily of steep chaparral-covered slopes on either side of a drainage tributary to Pringle Creek. Because of the presence of a well-watered creek, the drainage areas are densely vegetated with riparian trees and lush understory including thickets of vines, ferns, poison oak and weedy grasses. With the exception of two small terraces (one north of the creek at the extreme northeastern portion of the property and the second where the existing house is located at the extreme north-central portion of the property) the drainage margins are extremely steep sloped. The remaining approximately 80 percent of the property is mostly over 25 percent slope and very densely covered in chaparral species. Elevations rise from the drainages, 400 feet to the high points on the property. A few ridge fingers lie approximately 100 feet in elevation above the drainages. Some lower slopes are crossed by occasional animal or possibly migrant trails but generally the thick brush is over-head-high and mostly impenetrable. One central access road has been graded east from Honey Springs Road, to access each of the parcels for survey and percolation tests.

Because of the difficulties presented by the steep slopes and impenetrable brush, the survey targeted areas of less than 25 percent slope, areas of proposed housepads, and the drainage margins. Because thick vegetation cover mostly precluded inspection of the ground surface, survey concentrated on inspecting bedrock outcrops with appropriate surfaces for grinding. Some ground surface visibility was provided by rodent burrowing, open areas, and the dirt road.

Both sides of the drainage area at the northeastern corner of the property were thoroughly surveyed in transects that paralleled the drainage. The topography northeast of the drainage is level compared to the slopes on the southwest. Only a small portion of the northeast level area is on the property. At least two old structures (reportedly the old Bratton ranch house and Bratton Valley school house) are located on the northeastern terraces but are well north of the Robnett property. Although an old water tank has been dumped on the north terrace close to the drainage, no features related to the historic structures were found on the Robnett property. No evidence of SDMM-W-658, recorded south of Deerhorn Valley Road in the plowed fields at Bratton ranch, extend onto the Robnett property. The terrace area, northwest of the creek where the Robnett house is located at the north central portion of the property, is well cleared and visibility was excellent. Although bedrock milling site SDI-5699 is recorded just north of this area, no site remains or evidence of bedrock milling were found. The final drainage area lies northwest of Honey Springs Road on the western portion of the Robnett property. Both sides of the drainage were surveyed although the northwest side rises steeply from the creek edge. Some bedrock outcrops were present; none contained evidence of milling or other use.

The remainder of the survey focused on the chaparral slope areas. The chaparral is impenetrable in most areas, being over head high and densely packed. Poison oak is also frequent in the chaparral areas, particularly around rock outcrops. Several attempts were made to access relatively level ridge finger areas from the graded access road but only a few areas could be entered.

Interestingly, three bedrock milling sites were found in these higher areas (Figure 3). The first, identified as site CA-SDI-16,649 (Robnett-1), is located in a level swale at the head of a ravine leading up from the northeast drainage area. One large bedrock outcrop, containing Features A and B, is located immediately south of the dirt road that accesses the upper interior areas of the property. Additional survey was undertaken to the north and northwest to inspect an adjacent bedrock covered knoll, the proposed Parcel 4 pad area, and a level finger to the northwest. No additional resources were found on these fingers. However, one additional low bedrock milling outcrop (containing Features D and E) was encountered approximately 40 meters northwest of the first in a clearing about 15 meters north of the dirt road. During the subsequent site documentation effort two additional outcrops, Features F and G, were located close to Features D and E and Feature C was located to the south. A total of seven milling boulders contain 15

slicks and 9 basins. Associated artifacts included two groundstone fragments and several volcanic and quartz debitage. Some artifacts were discovered in the dirt road, at a distance from the features; however their original location is unclear. No evidence of midden soils is present in the dirt road or in proximity to the features.

A second bedrock milling area, CA-SDI-16,650 (Robnett-2), is located on a relatively flat ridge finger about 100 feet in elevation above the existing house and the drainage. Features A and B are located immediately northwest of the dirt road and Features C and D are located a short distance southwest. Located on these four boulders are eleven milling slicks. Several artifacts including at least 5 volcanic flakes, 1 core tool, and fire-affected rock were located in proximity to the outcrops. Additional survey was completed across the level finger to the east with no additional remains associated with CA-SDI-16,650 (Robnett-2) located. A third milling site, however, was located to the east. Identified as site CA-SDI-16,651 (Robnett-3), two slicks are located on a single outcrop with one associated potsherd.

The remaining areas of the property consist of slopes in excess of 25 percent, extreme elevation, and impenetrable vegetation that is impossible to survey. While it is remotely possible that some of the outcrops on these high steep slopes could have been visited by prehistoric peoples, no development is planned for these high slopes and the area will likely remain inaccessible and unaffected.

In summary, the low level drainage areas in the vicinity of the property—particularly the creek terraces to the north that comprise Bratton Valley—are where nearby prehistoric sites are recorded. The prevalence of bedrock milling indicates the importance of plant processing activities for the prehistoric occupants of the area. The drainage areas on the Robnett property, however, are primarily rugged and steep sided. The drainage areas were surveyed and although vegetation was thick, bedrock boulders were inspected and no cultural remains were found. The only two level drainage areas on the property, at the northeast and north center, also contained no remains. By contrast, on the elevated chaparral-covered slopes, three bedrock milling plant-processing areas were discovered. The lack of mortars and prevalence of basins and large slicks suggests that these features were used to grind seeds available from the surrounding chaparral plants as well as to process yucca. The absence of midden soils, the limited quantity of debitage, and presence of ground stone tools confirms the plant-processing focus of these sites.

A limitation of the survey was the inaccessibility of areas of the property due to extremely steep slopes and impenetrable chaparral. Thus, the survey focused on the drainage areas and level areas in the chaparral-covered slopes with the highest potential for the presence of prehistoric remains. Subsequent to the discovery of three bedrock milling areas on the elevated level benches, intensive survey was employed to define site boundaries. Substantial time and some brush cutting were utilized to explore the surrounding terrain and investigate bedrock outcrops in the vicinity. Although duff on the ground may have obscured

surface artifacts, it is unlikely that substantial remains were missed. Subsequent to the site documentation efforts, site boundaries were determined based on presence of features, artifacts, and topography. The three sites are documented on appropriate DPR 523 Resource Record Forms (included with this letter as Confidential Attachment 1), including the Site Sketch Form that illustrates the site boundaries and feature and artifact constituents. The site boundaries are shown on Figure 3 and the project TPM submitted with this report.

Conclusions

The research and field studies identified three plant-processing sites on two level fingers on the chaparral-covered slopes of the property. Substantial field time was devoted to investigating the surrounding chaparral covered areas to determine the extent of the remains. The sites have been documented on appropriate DPR 523 Resource Record Forms (Confidential Attachment 1) and the site boundaries are plotted on Figure 3 and the project Tentative Parcel Map. These sites originally lay within the proposed access road to parcels 2-4. The road has been re-configured to avoid the sites and the site areas will be included in an open space easement. The adjusted road alignment is shown on Figure 3 and on the Tentative Parcel Map. If an open space easement with these requirements is included in the project design, the cultural resources will be protected and the project should not incur significant impacts to cultural resources. Therefore, as defined in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Sections 21083.2 of the statues and 15064 of the Guidelines, and the County's Resource Protection Ordinance and Archaeological/Historical Report Procedures, there will be no impacts to cultural resources resulting from the proposed subdivision of the project property. No further measures related to cultural resources for the Robnett Tentative Parcel Map (TM 20726) property are recommended.

I hope this letter provides you with the information needed to complete the cultural resources review for this project. Please call me if you have any questions regarding the work completed or our findings.

Sincerely,

Sue A. Wade
Archaeologist-Historian

cc: Al Robnett, property owner

References Cited

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