

WESTSIDE CREEKS ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

Appendix H: Cultural

CULTURAL RESOURCES APPENDIX

Cultural resources can be defined as the broad pattern of events, real properties, and cultural life ways or practices that have significance to humans. Buildings and places where significant events occurred, archeological sites containing significant information about human activities, traditional places or activities that hold special significance, and folkways which are practiced as either cultural or life sustaining, are all part of the broad category features of groups of people. The potential cultural resources within the Westside Creeks (WSC) project areas are expected to be archeological, consisting primarily of evidence associated with the presence of prehistoric and historic peoples. These types of historic properties are evaluated for eligibility or listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Section 106 (16 U.S.C. 470f) of the National Historical Preservation Act (NHPA) requires that Federal agencies consider their undertakings, or projects, and the potential of those undertakings to impact NRHP eligible or listed properties through the procedures found in 36 CFR Part 800 (*Protection of Historic Properties*). These consultations must include the Texas State Historic Preservation office (SHPO) and federally recognized Native American tribes potentially affected by the proposed action. USACE has begun consultation with the SHPO and affected Native American tribes, which includes the development of a Programmatic Agreement to ensure compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA.

Within the WSC study area, the San Antonio Channel Improvement Project (SACIP) greatly altered the original course of the creeks under study. For this reason, the WSC are considered to be highly disturbed. The Area of Potential Effects (APE) for archaeological resources lies within the existing right of way of the SACIP. The limits of the APE for view shed impacts to above ground and architectural properties is ½ mile of the SACIP boundary, since proposed construction activities are unlikely to be perceived beyond this point.

ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES

As part of the Conceptual Plan for the WSC study, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) conducted a reconnaissance level survey of known and potential NRHP - eligible architectural resources within the APE. The survey identified several areas with high potential for cultural significance as well as several well documented resources, especially on San Pedro creek near downtown San Antonio. Resources such as Governor's Palace, Military Plaza and the Aztec Theater, which are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, were identified.

There is little to no potential to effect above ground resources, specifically buildings and structures along the WSC. The limit for Area of Potential Effects (APE) for architectural resources and associated view sheds is up to ½ mile from the existing boundary of the SACIP. However, ecosystem restoration along the creeks is not considered to be an adverse effect to the view shed. No above ground resources are located within the proposed construction footprint for any of the WSC alternative plans. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) has concluded that no additional above-ground identification efforts are required for the WSC APE.

ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

A check of the THC data files was conducted to gather information on any and all previous investigations within the WSC. The effected portions of Apache Creek, Martinez Creek, San

Pedro Creek, and Alazán Creek were examined for known resources and previous survey work. The data search was limited to the existing SACIP right of way since physical impacts are not expected beyond that limit.

The THC records search revealed that no survey has been conducted within the WSC study area. Therefore, there is a reasonable likelihood for the presence of significant archaeological sites. Recent construction activities along portions of the San Antonio River have turned up several deeply buried archaeological sites, despite thorough surveys conducted during the planning and design stages. This is evidence that the creation of the SACIP channel did not necessarily destroy all deposits present, suggesting that sites of varying significance may be present throughout the region.

However, consultation with the THC and review of maps of the area prior to the construction of the SACIP reveal that the WSC were significantly altered, and in some cases moved all together from their natural state. Whatever plan is selected, above the No Action plan, will call largely for excavations no deeper than 18 inches within the current SACIP footprint to remove the existing soil and seed bank from the side slopes. In an alluvial setting such as this, soil deposition builds rapidly and as a result, culture bearing deposits become deeply buried in a short time. Along the San Antonio main stem, archaeological deposits were found some four feet below the current ground surface. At the most shallow, artifacts considered not to be *in situ* were recovered from two feet below the present day surface. In addition, deep auger testing in some areas along the San Antonio River within the SACIP footprint revealed a disturbed construction matrix at depths up to 8 feet below the surface. This information has led the THC and USACE to agree that an archaeological survey aimed at an 18-24 inch construction depth is unlikely to identify significant cultural resources that would be impacted by construction. In areas where deeper excavation for a pilot channel may be required, the likelihood of encountering archaeological sites is also very low. If the channel is in a new location as a result of SACIP construction, then that construction, along with utility placement, will have disturbed any cultural deposits. In areas where the current channel is more or less in its natural placement, archaeological sites are unlikely to be encountered during pilot channel excavation as prehistoric and historic people utilized the banks of rivers and tributaries, in lieu of the channel beds.

USACE will have an archaeological monitor on site during soil removal and excavation activities. The monitor will be able to identify any cultural material that may be exposed during construction and evaluate the significance of the materials as they are revealed. A monitor is routinely on-site during construction to look for and evaluate inadvertent discoveries of cultural materials during construction. The presence of the monitor is not considered to add any additional risk to the construction schedule than would be accounted for during any USACE construction activities.