

## CHAPTER 7

### SUMMARY

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HRA's archaeological survey resulted in the identification of 56 separate concentrations of artifacts or cultural features within the Corn Creek National Register District (26CK2605). Forty-two of these loci are prehistoric lithic scatters, seasonal camps, thermal features, and trails. Twelve of the 56 loci are associated with the historic period occupation of the site. Two of the loci, the Corn Creek Field Station and the Archaic locus investigated during the Tule Springs project (Locus 17) were occupied for thousands of years and contain numerous features and artifact scatters representing these separate occupations. Together, these archaeologically complex loci suggest that the Corn Creek National Register District has been occupied continuously, as a temporary or permanent residence, since the Middle Archaic period approximately 5,000 years ago.

The Corn Creek Field Station, which incorporates the historic structures in the Field Station and numerous prehistoric middens and features, is the largest locus in the project area. It covers an area of 183 acres surrounding FWS facilities. This locus is the only one classified by HRA as a habitation during both the prehistoric and historic periods. The locus is a continuous scatter of artifacts, features, and structures, dating to the Middle Archaic, Late Archaic, Virgin Anasazi, Southern Paiute, and Euroamerican Historic periods. HRA's discovery of a possible Virgin Anasazi Basketmaker habitation at the Field Station makes this locus one of the most important prehistoric sites in southern Nevada. In addition, the several intact or partially intact features eroding from areas of the sand dunes throughout the Field Station suggest that the area contains numerous buried and scientifically significant cultural features. Excavation of the thermal features and associated artifacts would provide important information on the settlement and subsistence strategies of the site's prehistoric occupants.

The second largest locus, Locus 17, covers a 22 acre-area and includes the Middle Archaic camp investigated during the Tule Springs expedition, a large but sparse scatter of prehistoric artifacts, and 24 thermal features. This locus is located one mile northwest of the Field Station and the trenches and backdirt piles reported by Williams and Orlins (1963) are still visible. The projectile points and pottery types identified suggest the area contains features dating to the Archaic, the Virgin Anasazi, and the Southern Paiute periods. Because intact buried thermal features were discovered buried under the sand dunes, William Eckerle examined the geomorphology of the sand dunes to evaluate the probability of additional features. His analysis suggests that the sand dunes in the locus and elsewhere across the sand dunes are likely to contain additional buried features and artifact scatters.

HRA grouped the prehistoric loci into five categories. These categories are habitation (N=1), lithic scatter (N=2), camp (N=27), thermal feature (N=13), and trail (N=1). The possible pit structure identified in a midden area of the Corn Creek Field Station during test excavations is the only prehistoric habitation currently identified in the archaeological district. However, HRA considers it likely that additional habitation features may be buried in the Field Station Locus, particularly in the vicinity of the springs and in or in the six midden features that HRA identified in the Field Station Locus. With the possible exception of Locus 26, none of the other loci have artifact densities, structural features, or midden features that hint at the presence of habitation features.

The historic loci include 4 roads, 5 trash scatters, 1 mine, 1 dugout, and 1 windmill. In addition to these loci, the Corn Creek Field Station contains several historic buildings, features, and trash scatters. Five structures located in the Field Station are historic. These structures are the Railroad Tie House, a pump house, the Refuge Manager's House, the Service Building, and the Carpentry Shop. The Field Station also contains the remains of a CCC camp that was built and briefly occupied in 1941.

The geomorphological study by Eckerle suggests that spatial changes in spring activity have probably occurred in the project area. However, as of yet, there are not enough dates on the springs to see any clear pattern for their emergence and duration of flow. The geomorphological research resulted in a sensitivity classification for the presence of buried cultural deposits. Twenty-two loci, including the Corn Creek Field Station and the other large locus, Locus 17, are rated as having high geoarchaeological sensitivity. These high sensitivity loci might easily contain buried components that are intact from a contextual integrity standpoint. Eight loci are classified as having low geoarchaeological sensitivity. These low sensitivity loci are estimated to be unlikely to contain buried components that are intact from a contextual integrity standpoint. Eighteen loci are rated as having moderate or unknown geoarchaeological sensitivity.

### **National Register Status**

Based on the findings of their intensive survey, HRA made recommendations regarding the eligibility of individual prehistoric and historic loci as contributing or non-contributing elements to the site's National Register status. HRA recommended that 37 of the 44 Native American loci be considered as contributing elements to the Corn Creek site's listing on the National Register under Criterion D, for their information potential. The 37 loci have the potential to contain intact buried cultural deposits that could provide information important to the prehistoric themes of subsistence, settlement patterns, technology and/or chronology. HRA recommended that seven badly disturbed Native American loci (11, 24, 29, 33, 55, 60, and 61) be considered as not contributing to the site's National Register status. All seven of these loci are small lithic scatters or heavily eroded thermal features that lack integrity and are unlikely to contain significant information relevant to the prehistoric themes.

Regarding the historical period structures, features, and artifact scatters, HRA recommended that seven historic period archaeological remains and three structures be considered as contributing elements to the Corn Creek site's listing on the National Register. HRA recommended that, among the archaeological remains, the dirt-road loci (Loci 2, 3, 45, and 54), a windmill (Locus 4), a mine (Locus 34), and a dugout (Locus 49) be considered as contributing to the Corn Creek site's National Register status. All seven of these loci are eligible under Criteria A and D, for their information potential or their association with the themes of Ranching and the Wildlife Refuge. HRA recommends that the other five historic archaeological loci within the Corn Springs site be considered as not contributing to the site's National Register listing. These five loci are trash deposits with limited information potential (Loci 39, 44, 46, 50 and 64) beyond that recorded.

The Corn Creek Field Station contains five historic structures, the remains of a CCC camp, and historic trash piles that were evaluated by HRA. HRA recommends that four of the structures are contributing elements to the Corn Creek site's National Register status. The Railroad Tie House is historic in age and in good condition. It contributes under Criterion A, C, and D. The Service Building is also historic in age, is in good condition, and it is associated with the initial development of the refuge. The Service Building contributes under Criterion A and C. The Refuge Manager's House and Carpenter's Shop are substantially intact from the Historic period and contribute to the site's National Register listing under Criterion A as part of the inventory of features and structures of that period. HRA recommends that the remains of the CCC camp have not been fully recorded and should therefore be considered as contributing to the Corn Creek site's listing on the National Register under Criterion D. The "Blacksmith Shop", although it probably did not function in this capacity was probably constructed of materials from the Ranching period. As such, HRA originally recommended that it could be considered as contributing to Corn Creek's National Register status. HRA also recommended that an architectural historian evaluate the building to determine its National Register status. Recent research and test excavations suggest the Blacksmith Shop was built after 1960 and therefore is not a contributing element to the National Register District. HRA recommended that the pump house be considered as not contributing to the Corn Creek site's listing on the National Register. The pump house has been modified and lacks integrity. HRA also recommended that the historic trash piles recorded in Locus 1

not be considered as contributing elements because they lack integrity, and they will not provide additional information important to the understanding of the history of the site.

### **Intact Cultural Deposits at the Field Station**

As part of the Corn Creek survey HRA was asked to identify areas of the Field Station that do not contain intact archaeological deposits that contribute to the significance of the Corn Creek Site. The Field Station contains surface and subsurface evidence of multiple episodes of use and reuse. Recent test excavations by HRA in Midden 1 support the inference that the surface artifacts, which were identified throughout the Field Station, may signal the presence of intact cultural deposits. Without an extensive subsurface testing program using backhoe trenches and hand units, it is difficult to determine what areas of the Field Station contain intact cultural deposits.

The test excavations carried out by HRA in the Field Station demonstrated that the middens are likely to contain intact and stratigraphically complex buried features to a depth of 60 cm. We can infer from this evidence that similar intact cultural deposits are probably present in other middens and feature complexes that surround the Field Station. The Historic period occupation of the Corn Creek site has likely damaged and obscured prehistoric features that were once present in the upper stratigraphic levels of the graded, plowed, built-on, and turfed-over portions of the Field Station. However, it is also possible that older, more deeply buried features remain intact below this surface disturbance.

Significant remains of prehistoric habitation sites have often been found in the United States below plow-zones and other surface layers of disturbed soil. Although we cannot be certain of the depth of the disturbed soils in the immediate area of the buildings at the Field Station without conducting additional test excavations, it is reasonable to infer that soils that have been plowed, bladed, or graded (i.e. roads, parking lots, pastures, ponds, and planted fields) have disturbed the integrity of any features to a depth of 1 ft. HRA therefore recommended that because intact features are unlikely to be preserved in the upper 12 inches of portions of the Corn Creek Field Station, and that these areas can be developed by FWS as long as the proposed activity does not disturb the soil below a depth of approximately 1 ft.

### **CONCLUSION**

HRA prepared this report to document the history of the Corn Creek National Register District. The historical documentation involved three main elements. The first element was the consultation with Robert “Bob” Worts, HRA’s main informant, who spent time on the ranch at Corn Creek between 1936 and 1939. Bob Worts visited Corn Creek with HRA in 2002, and he was generous with his memories, information, and maps. Unfortunately, Bob passed away in November, 2005 at the age of 87. The second element of the historical documentation involved consultation with Southern Paiute Elders from the Las Vegas, Moapa, Shivwits bands and Pahrump Paiute Tribes in the fall of 2002 at the Corn Creek Field Station (Chapter 1). Finally, Elizabeth Warren’s historical research described in depth the rich stories behind the people and buildings that make up the the Corn Creek Field Station. The Field Station still captures the setting and feeling of the ranching period. Similar sites in the Las Vegas Valley from this time period have disappeared because of development, but Corn Creen still remains as a reminder of what the valley once was.

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