

## 7.0 CULTURAL RESOURCES

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This section considers and evaluates the potential impacts of the proposed project on historical, cultural, and paleontological resources. Cultural resources are defined as prehistoric and historic sites, structures, and districts, or any other physical evidence associated with human activity considered important to a culture, a subculture, or a community for scientific, traditional, religious, or any other reason. Paleontological resources include fossil remains, as well as fossil localities and formations which have produced fossil material.

For analysis purposes, cultural resources may be categorized into four groups: archaeological resources (prehistoric and historical); historic properties, buildings, and districts; areas of importance to Native Americans; and paleontological resources (fossilized remains of plants and animals). Cultural resource impacts include those to existing historic resources (i.e., historic districts, landmarks, etc.) and to archaeological and paleontological resources.

### 7.1 CONCEPTS AND TERMINOLOGY FOR EVALUATION OF CULTURAL RESOURCES

The following definitions are common terms used to discuss the regulatory requirements and treatment of cultural resources:

*Cultural resources* is the term used to describe several different types of properties: prehistoric and historical archaeological sites; architectural properties such as buildings, bridges, and infrastructure; and resources of importance to Native Americans.

*Historic properties* is a term defined by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) as any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), including artifacts, records, and material remains related to such a property.

*Historical resource* is a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) term that includes buildings, sites, structures, objects, or districts, each of which may have historical, prehistoric, architectural, archaeological, cultural, or scientific importance, and is eligible for listing or is listed in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) or a local registry of historical resources.

*Paleontological resource* is defined as including fossilized remains of vertebrate and invertebrate organisms, fossil tracks and trackways, and plant fossils. A unique paleontological site would include a known area of fossil-bearing rock strata.

## 7.2 EXISTING SETTING

### 7.2.1 CULTURAL SETTING

#### Prehistory

In the broadest terms, the archaeological signature of the Truckee Basin consists of a trend from hunting-based societies in earlier times to populations that were increasingly reliant on diverse resources by the time of historic contact. The gradual shift in characteristics may be attributed to factors such as paleoclimate, a shifting subsistence base, and demographic changes.

Some of the oldest archaeological remains reported for the Tahoe Region have been found in the Truckee River Canyon near Squaw Valley. These Pre-Archaic remains suggest occupation about 9,000 years ago. Other Pre-Archaic to Early Archaic occupation was documented at Spooner Lake near Spooner Summit overlooking Lake Tahoe, dating from about 7,000 years ago. The most intensive period of occupation in the region may have occurred at varying intervals between 500 and 4,000 years ago. The protohistoric ancestors of the Washoe, also of Late Archaic times, may date roughly from 500 years ago to historic contact in the early 1800s.

Archaeological research relevant to the project site began in the early 1950s when Heizer and Elsasser presented the first cultural chronology for the Sierra Nevada. The chronology was based on survey work conducted to the east of the crest of the Sierra Nevada around Lake Tahoe and parts of the drainages of the Truckee and Carson rivers. In their work, Heizer and Elsasser identified two “complexes.” The earliest cultural group, named the Martis Complex, was followed by the King’s Beach Complex. Both complexes were defined on the basis of surface material. Heizer and Elsasser did not excavate either of the “type sites” for these complexes (Placer County 2004).

Heizer and Elsasser defined the Martis Complex based on nine criteria derived from data obtained from 13 sites. These nine criteria are (1) the use of basalt as the preferred lithic material for tools; (2) the rare use of chert and obsidian for tool production; (3) the use of roughly chipped, large, heavy projectile points in a variety of forms; (4) the use of the mano and metate; (5) the use of bowl mortars with cylindrical pestles; (6) the use of boatstones and atlatls; (7) an economy primarily based on hunting and supplemented by the gathering of seeds; (8) the use of large numbers of basalt flake scrapers; and (9) the frequent use of expanded-base, finger-held drills.

Heizer and Elsasser highlighted the use of basalt as the preferred material for tools as the most distinguishing characteristic of the Martis Complex. They also suggest that the Martis Complex, based on this characteristic, may be related to other basalt-using complexes in the Great Basin, the Mojave Desert, and the Early Horizon in the Central Valley of California. Boatstones from the Martis Complex type site, CA-PLA-5, resemble those from the Central Valley of California, reinforcing the contention of Heizer and Elsasser that the Martis Complex may be related to the Early or Middle Horizon of the Central Valley (Placer County 2004).

Elsasser continued research along both the east and west sides of the Sierra crest and provided additional data to aid in characterizing the Martis Complex and defining its possible relationships to other cultural manifestations. In 1960, he published the results of excavations at three Martis Complex sites: CA-NEV-15, CA-SIE-20, and 26-DO-12. The excavation of these sites expanded the “territory” of the Martis Complex to include the upper elevations of the western slope of the Sierra Nevada. Elsasser suggested that Martis people most likely hunted large, seasonally migratory animals, such as deer and antelope, which they followed between the lower and higher elevations of the Sierra Nevada. Elsasser also emphasized the expanding and apparently widespread distribution of the Martis Complex across the mid-elevations of the Sierra Nevada (Placer County 2004).

Elsasser presented three possibilities for the areal distribution of the Martis Complex:

- It was a high altitude or summer manifestation of a culture that was centered farther out in the Great Basin, to the east; this perhaps had ultimate roots in the Southern California deserts.

- The same as above, except that the center or point of origin was in Central California, during Middle Horizon times.
- It was an essentially autochthonous culture, i.e., one that developed in the Sierra Nevada without strong reference to cultures on either side of the Sierra (Placer County 2004).

Elston et al. augmented the work of Heizer and Elsasser by exploring the relationship between the Martis Complex, the Kings Beach Complex, and the historic Washoe. The Kings Beach Complex is commonly divided into two periods: Early Kings Beach (1,300–700 BP), characterized by Rosegate Series points; and Late Kings Beach (700–150 BP), characterized by Desert Series Points. Early Kings Beach is thought to represent the initial phase of the Washoe ethnographic pattern (Placer County 2004).

### **Ethnography**

Before the arrival of Euro-Americans in the region, California was inhabited by groups of Native Americans speaking more than 100 different languages and occupying a variety of ecological settings. Kroeber and others recognized the uniqueness of California Native Americans and classified them as belonging to the California culture area. Kroeber further subdivided California into four subculture areas: Northwestern, Northeastern, Southern, and Central. The Central area encompasses the current project area, but does not include the Washoe, who are considered to be members of the Great Basin culture area. Kroeber however, states that California and the Great Basin are regions of close cultural kinship that should be joined into a larger culture area (Placer County 2004).

The Washoe historically inhabited the region east of the crest of the Sierra Nevada into the Carson Valley, extending from the Walker River in the south to Honey Lake in the north, with peripheral territory extending to the mid-elevations of the west Sierra slope. The Washoe speak a Hokan language and are the only Great Basin group to speak a non-Numic language. Kroeber and Downs postulate an early relationship, prior to 4,500 years ago, between the Hokan-speaking Washoe and other Hokan-speaking groups in California (Placer County 2004).

The contemporary Washoe have developed a Comprehensive Land Use Plan. It includes goals of reestablishing a presence within the Tahoe Sierra and revitalizing Washoe heritage and cultural knowledge, including the harvest and care of traditional plant resources and the protection of traditional properties within the cultural landscape. The Washoe regard all “prehistoric” remains and sites within the Truckee Basin as being associated with their history.

### **Social Organization**

The basic social and economic group for the Washoe was the family or household unit. Washoe households were somewhat loosely combined to form villages, referred to as *bunches* by Downs. The size and composition of bunches varied considerably, depending on environmental and interpersonal conditions. Downs states that the winter camp or village of several households seemed to be the basis for the bunch, but several villages located in close proximity to one another might also be considered a bunch. Each bunch had a headman or chief, which seems to have been a hereditary position passed on through either parent. During prehistoric and early historic times, however, there was never a single chief for all Washoe (Placer County 2004).

## ***Settlement and Subsistence Patterns***

The Washoe practiced seasonal transhumance, moving from one area or elevation to another to harvest plants, fish, and hunt game across contrasting lifezones that are in relatively close proximity to each other. The Washoe ranged across a rather extensive area that included jointly shared territory (e.g., areas claimed by both Nisenan and Washoe) whose entry was subject to traditional understandings of priority of ownership and current relations between groups (Placer County 2004).

## ***Material Culture and Technology***

The Washoe built two basic structures: the winter house, which consisted of a conical framework of poles covered by overlapping slabs of cedar and/or other conifer bark, with a short covered doorway or vestibule; and the summer brush house, which varied from a simple low enclosure resembling a windbreak to a completely covered, dome-shaped house. They also constructed covered fishing platforms over streams that were often described as floating houses by observers. In addition, the Washoe built sweat lodges and large earth-covered dance houses, but there is disagreement regarding whether or not these structures were regularly constructed before the historic period (Placer County 2004).

The Washoe commonly used flaked and ground stone tools including knives, arrow and spear points, club heads, arrow straighteners, scrapers, rough cobble and shaped pestles, bedrock mortars, and grinding stones (metates). Wood was also used for a variety of implements including both simple and sinew-backed bows, arrow shafts and points, looped stirring sticks, flat-bladed mush paddles, pipes, and hide preparation tools. Cordage was made from plant material and was used to construct fishing nets and braided and twined tumplines. Soaproot brushes were commonly used during grinding activities to collect meal and/or flour. Baskets were also manufactured and used for a variety of purposes from carrying items to storing food resources (Placer County 2004).

## ***Intergroup Relations***

The Washoe frequently interacted with the Nisenan and Northern Sierra Miwok as trading partners, at communal ceremonial gatherings, and in armed conflict (often as a result of perceived territorial encroachment). In fact, the ethnographic literature, particularly in reference to the Nisenan, reports rather regular hostilities between Hill and Valley Nisenan, Nisenan and Washoe, and Nisenan and Sierra Miwok. Most interactions among the three ethnographic groups, however, appear to have been civil and friendly in nature. For example, Beals states that the Nisenan and Washoe along the South Fork of the American River frequently interacted and often met for “Big Times” near Kyburz and Myers Station. The Washoe also traveled to Miwok territory during the summer, and often wintered on the west side of the Sierra Nevada. This scenario is not surprising considering the extreme mobility of the Washoe during their seasonal subsistence patterns. Indeed, Downs states that the Washoe often made long trading trips to the Pacific Coast and San Diego to obtain shellfish and particularly fine obsidian knives (Placer County 2004).

## **History**

### ***Early Settlement***

The history of the Truckee community began with the arrival of Joseph Gray, who built a stage station near the present-day downtown in 1863. Gray was soon joined by a blacksmith named

S. S. Coburn, and the fledgling settlement of Gray's Toll Station was renamed Coburn's Station. This tiny way station grew from two structures into a thriving town that accommodated emigrants, stagecoach travelers, and freight wagons en route westward to California's gold fields and eastward to the Comstock Lode in Nevada. In 1868, Coburn's Station burned and the name was changed to Truckee. The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1868 gave rise to other developments in transportation, lumber, ice, agriculture, and tourism, which were to become the essential economic bases of Truckee (Placer County 2003).

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, Truckee thrived on the related fields of lumber, railroading, and ice. By the 1920s, this industrial economy and society had largely disappeared, due to the relocation of the train-switching yard to Roseville, the depletion of local timber supplies, and the development of mechanical refrigeration. In its place, the community began to develop a recreation-based economy, boosted by the completion of a good state highway over Donner Summit. The 1960 Winter Olympics at nearby Squaw Valley secured Truckee's position as a center point for year-round recreation. In 1993, Truckee was incorporated as a town (Placer County 2003).

Virtually all of the Town of Truckee is considered moderately to extremely sensitive with regard to the presence of cultural resources. The downtown is home to a high concentration of structures that have historical significance. The area consisting of Donner Pass Road, Jibboom Street, Bridge Street, Church Street, and East and West River Street comprise the commercial and early residential area of Truckee. The downtown area is formed around the Southern Pacific railroad line that runs through the heart of the town. The Truckee station was an integral part of the first transcontinental railroad and became an important hub of train service for the western United States (Placer County 2003).

### ***Transportation***

Some of the first Euro-American visitors to the Truckee area were members of the Stephens-Murphy-Townsend Party, who ascended the Truckee River in mid-November of 1844. Subsequent emigrant travelers followed an alternate route to avoid the rugged Truckee River Canyon, leaving Nevada in the vicinity of Dog Valley and then angling back down to the Truckee River east of the route of present-day State Route 89. This route later became known as the Truckee Route of the Emigrant Trail (Placer County 2003).

The Emigrant Trail was a route that thousands of people followed in order to reach California or Oregon. Between the years 1841 and 1869, it is estimated that 300,000 to 500,000 individuals traveled 2,000 miles across the continent to California or Oregon in search of a new life or gold. A portion of the Emigrant Trail follows a route through the Truckee Basin. The trail passes through Truckee and continues toward Donner Lake. This area is where the ill-fated Donner Party was stranded during a harsh Sierra winter from 1846 to 1847 (Placer County 2003).

In 1864, the Dutch Flat and Donner Lake Wagon Road (DFDLWR) was opened over Donner Pass. The road followed basically the same route through Truckee that the earlier emigrants had followed, entering the northeast end of the town along a present-day dirt road that runs between the Old Truckee Cemetery and the Old Catholic Cemetery. This freight and passenger wagon road was situated near the proposed alignment of the Central Pacific Railroad, as it was designed to aid in transporting supplies to points along the line. It formed the final link in a continuous freight and passenger road from Dutch Flat to the Comstock mines near Virginia City. Used as a wagon haul road until 1909, the DFDLWR was rebuilt as an auto and truck road between 1909 and 1915. This new road was renamed the Lincoln Highway in 1915, forming the Verdi-Truckee

link in the nation's pioneer transcontinental automobile highway. In the 1920s, the Lincoln Highway was redesignated the Victory Highway, which subsequently became US Highway 40 in 1925. Travel along Highway 40 was short-lived, as later that year the route was moved into the Truckee River Canyon. Today, Interstate 80 provides a vital east-west route over the Sierra Nevada range (Placer County 2003).

### ***Logging***

Logging was first initiated in the Martis Valley area after the discovery of the Comstock Lode in 1859. The Martis Valley area soon became one of the major lumbering centers. Intensive cutting in the project area commenced in 1863. Lumber mills were prevalent throughout the area with lumber mills located at Hobart, Truckee, the Martis Valley, and the Squaw Valley area. Sawmills owned by George Schaffer were scattered throughout the Martis Valley. Railroad lines were constructed to connect Truckee with the Hobart lumber mill. A narrow gauge line was also constructed between Truckee and Tahoe City to haul freight, forest products, and tourists. Logging continued to be a major industry in the area until the 1920s (Placer County 2003).

### ***Grazing***

The Martis Valley Community Plan area has historically been used for cattle grazing. The meadows provided feed for cattle herds from the Sacramento Valley during the hot summer months. The historic Joerger Ranch is located between Schaffer Mill Road and State Route 267 north of the Lahontan development (Placer County 2003).

### ***Charcoal Production***

Charcoal production formed an important adjunct to the lumber industry. The organization of Sisson, Crocker & Company was created in 1866 at Truckee exclusively for the purpose of importing Chinese labor for railroad construction. With the completion of the railroad, the Chinese immigrants were channeled to the lumber industry, among other occupations. Such engagement forced immigrant Chinese into direct competition with Euro-Americans. Subsequent anti-Chinese sentiment resulted in the initial expulsion of Chinese from Truckee in 1878 and the ultimate demise of Truckee's Chinese community in 1886. Between those dates, the project area and adjoining lands were apparently under the ownership of Sisson, Crocker & Company, who employed large numbers of Chinese in the production of charcoal to supply the railroad and the smelting works of Nevada and Utah (Placer County 2003).

### ***Ice Production***

Truckee played an important role as an ice production area for the transcontinental railroad from the 1880s until the early 1900s. Truckee was a vital railroad switching yard, and the cold climate of the Martis Valley allowed for perishable goods on board trains to be packed with ice before being shipped east across Nevada or west toward Sacramento. The ice industry came to an abrupt halt with the introduction of mechanized refrigeration (Placer County 2003).

### ***Recreation***

Skis, which were once the only available means of winter transportation, are now a major form of winter recreation. "Snowshoe" racing, on skis 14 feet long, first became a popular sport during the 1860s. The Truckee Basin contains several winter recreational resorts. Squaw Valley, the oldest ski operation in the area, was started in 1947 and was the home of the 1960 Winter

Olympic Games. The Martis Valley Community Plan area contains the Northstar California resort that provides skiing as well as year-round recreational opportunities (Placer County 2003).

### **Known Cultural Resources**

#### ***Prehistoric Resources***

While several prehistoric sites and resources have been identified, there is a high probability that many additional cultural resources remain undiscovered in the project region. A comprehensive cultural resources inventory was completed by the Placer County Department of Museums. Phase III of the Placer County Cultural Resources Inventory focused on unincorporated areas of the county, including the Martis Valley. While this survey did not indicate that prehistoric resources had been located in the Martis Valley Community Plan area, it is a well-known fact that the Martis Valley was home to the Washoe people. Prehistoric campsites, lithic scatters, and bedrock milling stations are known to be present throughout the area. Many sensitive resource sites are adjacent to waterways and meadow areas (Placer County 2003).

A cultural resources record search was requested of the North Central Information Center (NCIC) at California State University, Sacramento. Using the information from the NCIC record search, the following prehistoric cultural resources have been identified in the project area.

The Cultural Resources Baseline Data for Northstar-at-Tahoe (KEA 2001) indicated eight prehistoric sites in the Northstar California project area. Most of the prehistoric remains consist of isolated artifacts such as single projectile points or flakes. The sections where the prehistoric resources were discovered exhibit relatively level ground and close proximity to at least seasonal water sources. Both of these features are consistently present on most prehistoric archaeological sites. Most of the terrain on the Northstar property is steep, rocky slope that is not attractive for a living environment and consequently was most likely infrequently occupied or visited by prehistoric peoples (Placer County 2003). The following resources were found to be prehistoric in nature near the proposed Northstar Mountain Master Plan (NMMP) project- and program-level components:

- (NS-32) Sawmill Flat Site I
- (NS-35) Sawmill Flat Site II
- (NS-36) Sawmill Flat Site III
- (NS-38) Sawmill Flat Prehistoric Isolates
- (NS-29) Sawmill Flat Site IV
- (NS-16) Middle Martis Creek Site I
- (NS-18) Middle Martis Creek Site II
- (NS-20) Middle Martis Creek Site III
- (NS-21) Middle Martis Creek Site IV
- (NS-43) Backside Prehistoric Site



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- (NS-44) Backside Prehistoric Isolate Flake
- (NS-46) Backside Prehistoric Site
- (NS-47) Sawtooth Ridge Isolate Flake
- (NS-48) Mount Pluto Isolate Flake

### **Historic Resources**

Properties of historical importance in California are currently designated as significant resources in three state registration programs: State Historical Landmarks, Points of Historical Interest, and the California Register of Historic Places. Below is a list of three State Historical Landmarks in the region (Placer County 2003).

- No. 134 Donner Monument (or) Pioneer Monument: Located at Donner Memorial State Park, Old Highway 40 at Interstate 80 and Truckee exit, Truckee, the memorial commemorates the ill-fated Donner Party of California-bound emigrants, who wintered here in 1846–1847. Many of the party died of exposure and starvation.
- No. 780-6 First Transcontinental Railroad, Truckee: While construction on Sierra tunnels delayed the Central Pacific Railroad, advance forces at Truckee began building 40 miles of track east and west of Truckee, moving supplies by wagon and sled. The Summit Tunnel was opened in December 1867. The line reached Truckee on April 3, 1868, and the Sierra was conquered. Rails reached Reno on June 19, 1868, and construction advanced eastward toward the meeting with the Union Pacific Railroad at the rate of 1 mile daily. On May 10, 1869, the rails met at Promontory, Utah, to complete the first transcontinental railroad. The site is located at the Southern Pacific Depot, 70 Donner Pass Road, Truckee.
- No. 724 Pioneer Ski Area of America, Squaw Valley: The VIII Olympic Games of 1960 commemorated a century of sport skiing in California and took place at Squaw Valley Sports Center, northeast corner of Blyth Olympic Arena Building, Squaw Valley Road, Squaw Valley. By 1860, the Sierra Nevada, particularly at the mining towns of Whiskey Diggings, Poker Flat, Port Wine, Onion Valley, LaPorte, and Johnsville, some 60 miles north of Squaw Valley, saw the first organized ski clubs and competition in the western hemisphere.

There is one National Historic Landmark in the region: Donner Camp located at Donner Memorial State Park, National Register Number 66000218. This site is a memorial to the Donner Party. In the winter of 1846–1847, a group of 89 California-bound emigrants led by Jacob and George Donner was trapped by the heavy snows of the High Sierra. Bitter cold and dwindling food supplies reduced the wagon train to a group of desperate individuals unable to cooperate, driven to terror and degradation. Four relief expeditions eventually rescued 47 of the party (Placer County 2003).

The Northstar-at-Tahoe North Lookout Ski Pod Project Final Environmental Impact Report indicates that the project area's likelihood to contain historic resources is considered moderately high. Sawmills, logging roads, skidways, and wood camps associated with logging are the principle historical sites. The Cultural Resources Baseline Data for Northstar-at-Tahoe prepared by KEA Environmental (2001) identifies historic resources on the Northstar California property. In general,

these features are located in two main areas near the eastern extent on Northstar property. One group of resources is located near the Middle Martis Creek drainage, which includes several sections of logging roads, a cabin site, and sections of the Richardson Brothers railroad grade, which would have been associated with the Richardson Brothers logging operations. The second cluster of sites is found on Sawmill Flat near the Sawmill Flat Reservoir. Present in this area is a large section of the Richardson Brothers log chute, associated supply depots, and two structures that may have been related to the logging operation or served as hunting cabins in the early years of the twentieth century (Placer County 2003). The following are the identified historic resources near the proposed NMMP project- and program-level components:

- (NS-1) Richardson Brothers Log Chute
- (NS-1 contd.) Richardson Brothers Log Chute & Railroad Grade
- (NS-2) Beaver Pond Aspen Carvings
- (NS-7) Richardson Brothers Railroad Grade
- (NS-4, NS-9) Logging Road Sections
- (NS-11) Terry's Cabin
- (NS-12) Terry's Cabin Stone Wall
- (NS-13) Sawmill Flat Cabins
- (NS-29) Sawmill Flat Historic Scatter, Site IV
- (NS-50) Backside Mine
- (NS-27) Middle Martis Mining Feature
- (NS-8, 9) Middle Martis Logging Roads
- (NS-24) Old Brockway Road
- (NS-42) Schaeffer Log Chute and Cabins
- (NS-45) Backside Carving
- (NS-51) Sawtooth Ridge Tree Blazes

The Historic Brockway Road Grade has partial pavement remaining. It runs parallel to the present-day State Route 267 for approximately one-half mile before disappearing in road fill from the present route (Placer County 2003).

### **Native American Coordination**

A sacred lands search and a list of Native American contacts were requested from the Native American Heritage Commission, and formal requests for Native American consultation (as required under Senate Bill 18) were made on April 29, 2013.