CLASS I ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Northstar Mine Water Treatment Project, circa 100 acres, Nevada County, California.

Prepared for

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL - HISTORICAL - CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SERVICES
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ATTACHMENTS

   Project Location and Archaeological Survey Area Map.
   Copy of Records Search from NCIC, NEV-13-25, dated May 2, 2013.
1. INTRODUCTION

Project Background

This report details the results of a Class I archaeological records search, overview and field inspection of the proposed Northstar Mine Water Treatment project which involves a study area of approximately 100-acres located generally from approximately 100’ west of Allison Ranch to the centerline of Wolf Creek, and from the Drew Tunnel in the north to a point south of Mote Lane, in part within the City of Grass Valley, Nevada County, California. The project would involve a series of pipelines, diversion and discharge features and a water treatment facility, the whole of which would serve to treat water currently discharged from the Drew Tunnel location, before being discharged into Wolf Creek.

The proposed project constitutes a “project,” per CEQA, which could impact various types of resources located within the Area of Potential Effects (APE). Evaluation of the potential impacts to cultural (i.e., archaeological and historical) resources must be considered per Nevada County rules and regulations as well as requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, Public Resources Code, Section 21000, et seq. (CEQA), and The California CEQA Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, California Administrative Code, Section 15000 et seq. (Guidelines, as amended October 1998).

For the present project, the goals and objectives translate into the following general tasks consistent with a Class I, feasibility-level study with respect to cultural resource issues:

- Complete a Records Search at the North Central California Information Center at CSU-Sacramento to determine if any previously recorded sites, archaeological Districts, prehistoric or historic features or other cultural resources exist within the study boundary.

- Conduct an intensive-level pedestrian survey in order to identify cultural resources, the presence of which might prohibit or substantially constrain implementation of the water treatment project components.

- Prepare a Class I archaeological report that summarizes project effects and recommends appropriate additional specific studies commensurate with (1) the goals of the proponent’s project and (2) a finding that potential future development impacts can or might be reduced to less than significant levels.

The remainder of this document details the results of the records search, background research, and cursory-level field inspection. The report provides an assessment of cultural resources or cultural resource types, which could be affected by development within the study area. The report concludes with recommendations for mitigative actions or treatment, consistent with a conclusion that potential impacts to cultural resources of the Northstar Mine Water Treatment project could or may be reduced to less than significant levels.
Location

The Northstar Mine Water Treatment project/study area totals approximately 100-acres located generally from approximately 100’ west of Allison Ranch to the centerline of Wolf Creek, and from the Drew Tunnel in the north to a point south of Mote Lane, in part within the City of Grass Valley, Nevada County, California. Lands affected are located within a portion of Section 34 of T16N, R8E, and Sections 2 & 3 of T15N, R8E, as shown on the USGS Grass Valley, California, 7.5’ quad (see attached Project Location Map).

The most important natural surface water source within the project area is Wolf Creek which flows roughly north-south through the central portion of the project area. Several small, unnamed ephemeral stream courses confluence with Wolf Creek both within, and nearby the study area.

Based on a review of topographic and other maps, and notwithstanding prior impacts to surface and subsurface soil components resulting from prior logging, mining use and infrastructure development, the study area appeared to contain lands ranging from low to high in sensitivity for prehistoric resources, and high in sensitivity for the presence of historic-period sites and features.

2. EXISTING CONDITIONS and INFORMATION

Records at North Central Information Center

Prior to conducting the cursory-level field survey, a search of archaeological records maintained by the North Central Information Center at CSU-Sacramento was conducted (NCIC File # NEV-13-25, dated May 2, 2013). This search documented the following existing conditions for the c. 100-acre study area:

**Previous Archaeological Survey:** Approximately 85% of the project area has been subjected to formal archaeological survey as a result of nine previous investigations. Relevant studies include:

1. Windmiller (1999, NCIC Report No. 593) conducted an archaeological survey involving approximately 760 acres, including most of the present study area. Windmiller identified/recorded nineteen (19) sites within the 760 acres, one (P-29-896) of which is located within the present study area.

2. Jensen (2000, NCIC Report No. 2643) conducted an archaeological survey involving approximately 11.6 acres, including a very small portion of the southeastern corner of the present study area. No resources were identified within Jensen’s survey boundary.

(P-29-1436/CA-NEV-950-H) which is located within/immediately adjacent to the present study area.

4. Lindstrom (1990, NCIC Report No. 4635) conducted an archaeological survey involving approximately 36.4 acres, including the central portion of the present project study area. Lindstrom identified/recorded two (2) sites within the 36.4 acres, one (P-29-1457) of which is located within the present study area.

5. Farber (1984, NCIC Report No. 4642) conducted an archaeological survey involving approximately 60 acres, including a small portion of the eastern edge of the present project study area. Farber identified/recorded three (3) sites within the 60 acres, none of which are located within the present study area.

6. Leonhard (1997, NCIC Report No. 4643) conducted an archaeological survey involving approximately 12 acres, including a very small portion of the southeastern corner of the present study area. Leonhard identified/recorded site P-29-1469 which is located within the present study area.

7. Ferrier (1990, NCIC Report No. 4651) conducted an archaeological survey involving approximately 754 acres, including approximately 80% of the present project study area. Ferrier identified/recorded five (5) sites within the 754 acres, none of which are located within the present study area.

8. Day (1999, NCIC Report No. 4664) conducted an archaeological survey involving approximately 755 acres, including approximately 80% of the present project study area. Day identified/recorded twenty-four (24) sites within the 755 acres, two (P-29-896 & -898) of which are located within the present study area.

9. Basin Research Associates (2007, NCIC Report No. 9815) prepared an Historic Property Survey Report for the Grass Valley Wastewater Treatment Plant Facility, which is located immediately adjacent to the northeast side of the present study area. One historic-era resource (P-29-3132) was identified/recorded as a result of the investigation.

**Recorded or Otherwise Documented Cultural Resources:** No prehistoric site have been identified or formally recorded within the study boundary.

Several historic-era resources have been identified within the general study area. However, a total of four historic-era sites have been formally documented within the present study boundary. These sites include P-29-896, -898, -1457 and –1473, and are summarized below.

**P-29-896** is described as numerous (25+) prospect pits, waste rock piles, and water conveyance features (ditches). Scattered over approximately 17-acres on the slopes west of Wolf Creek, the site is situated west of Allison Ranch Road. According to
Windmiller (1999), this site likely predates activities at the North Star Mine, and likely date to between 1850-1860.

P-29-898 is described as two earthen berms/dams which likely served as settling ponds. The site is situated a short distance west of Allison Ranch Road, and Windmiller (1999) speculates that they may have been associated with either the New York Mine or the North Star Central Shaft.

While documented as being located within the present study area, the record originally prepared by Lindstrom for site P-29-1457 identifies problems with resource information. While the site is described as the location of the Hold Sawmill, historic descriptive information place the site between 2-3/4 and 4 miles south of Grass Valley, which would place the mill’s location completely outside and south of the present study area. Furthermore, Lindstrom indicates that there is no evidence of the mill site, or any of its associated features, within the study area.

Recorded by Lindstrom in 1991, P-29-1473 is described as four separate isolates, including a shed, a ditch and two dirt roads. Isolates, by definition, do not achieve the threshold of historic property/significant historical resource/unique archaeological resource, and thus warrants no further consideration or treatment.

Additional archaeological surveys have been undertaken on lands in the vicinity of the Northstar Mine study area. While these provide useful information concerning prehistoric and early historic use of the project vicinity generally, these other studies did not extend into the present study area boundary and thus offer no specific information concerning the presence of prehistoric or historical cultural resources within the study area.

**Other Sources Consulted**

In addition to the archaeological records of Nevada County as maintained by the North Central Information Center, the following sources were also consulted:

- The California Register of Historic Resources (2008 and updates).
- The California Inventory of Historical Resources (1976).
- California State Historical Landmarks (1996).
- The Determination of Eligibility (2012).
- Caltrans Bridge Inventory.
- Historic Maps: 1867 GLO; 1871 GLO; 1885-86 Smartsville map; 1949 USGS 7.5’ Grass Valley, quad.
- Published and unpublished documents relevant to environment, ethnography, prehistory and early historic developments in the vicinity, providing context for assessing site types and distribution patterns for the project area (summarized above under Location, Environmental and Cultural Context).
Environmental Context

Nevada County is part of the Sierra Nevada Range, a geologic block approximately 400 miles long and 80 miles wide which extends in a north-south band along the eastern portion of California. Two features of the Sierra Nevada distinctly characterize the terrain of Nevada County. The western third of the county is comprised of rolling foothills which form a transition between the low-lying Sacramento Valley and the mountains to the east. The area extending from the Yuba County line to just northeast of the Grass Valley/Nevada City area is generally comprised of metavolcanic and granitic formations.

Biologically, the study area is located in a transition zone between the lower foothill elevations and the higher Sierra Nevada mountains. This transition zone is considered the Yellow Pine Belt (Storer and Usinger 1963). Because it is a transition zone, or ecotone, a variety of flora and fauna species occur in the area that typically occur at zones of either higher or lower elevations. As a transition area, the Yellow Pine Belt in the Grass Valley area is comprised of a number of specific habitat types (Holland 1986). The numerous habitats give rise to a wide variety of flora and fauna.

Various species of waterfowl routinely migrate through the Grass Valley area, including Canada geese, mallard, cinnamon teal, American wigeon, common goldeneye, bufflehead, and common merganser. As well, raptor species include red-tailed hawk, sharp-shinned hawk and American kestrel. Upland bird species such as California quail are also commonly observed in the area.

Terrestrial species include deer mouse, western harvest mouse, California meadow vole, Botta's pocket gopher, beaver, coyote, bobcat, and gray fox.

Prehistoric use and occupation focused on major surface water sources and other natural resource areas, with particular emphasis given to stream confluences and to ecotones created at the interface of foothill/valley lands, elements of which are located within and/or near the present study area.

Generally, environmental conditions within the region have remained stable throughout the past 8-10,000 years, although minor fluctuations in overall precipitation and temperature regime have been documented, and these may have influenced prehistoric patterns of land use and settlement.

Most of the study area is situated within gently-to-moderately sloping lands associated with the Wolf Creek drainage system. Virtually all of the study area has been affected by past mining activities and related use over the past 150 years, with additional impacts associated with demolition of past mining features, and construction of contemporary infrastructure components (including the waste water treatment facility, upgrades made to Allison Ranch Road, and placement of both buried and overhead utilities).
Cultural Context

**Prehistory:** Initial human entry into California occurred at the beginning of the paleo-Indian Period – between about 10,000 and 6,000 B.C. (Fredrickson 1974). Within portions of the Central Valley, fluted projectile points have been found at Tracy Lake (Heizer 1938) and around the margins of Buena Vista Lake in Kern County. Similar materials have been found to the north, at Samwel Cave near Shasta Lake and near McCloud and Big Springs in Siskiyou County. These early peoples are thought to have subsisted using a combination of hunting and lacustrine exploitation (Moratto 2004).

These early cultural assemblages were followed by an increase in Native population density after about 7,500 years ago. Archaeologically defined as the Lower Archaic Period (6,000 to 3,000 BC), the transition to a less specialized foraging strategy clearly coincides with a middle Holocene climatic change to generally drier conditions which brought about desiccation of many of the West’s pluvial lakes. Hunting and gathering populations of this period were small, mobile groups that focused increasingly on diverse environmental settings. By the beginning of the Middle Archaic Period (from about 3,000 to 1,000 BC), the broad regional patterns of foraging subsistence strategies had given way to more intensive procurement strategies, manifest in part by the establishment of year-round use of select village sites which in turn were located along major waterways. One of the most securely dated of these Archaic assemblages in northern California is from the Squaw Creek Site located north of Redding. Here, a charcoal-based C-14 date suggests extensive Native American presence around 6,500 years ago, or 4,500 BC. Most of the artifactual material dating to this time period has counterparts further south, around Borax (Clear) Lake and the Farmington Area a short distance east of Sacramento. Important artifact types from this time period include large wide-stemmed projectile points and manos and metates.

Toward the end of this period, between about 1,000 BC and AD 100, sociopolitical complexity and the development of status distinctions appear, partially defining the Upper Archaic Period. Archaeological expressions within the northern and north-central Sierra Nevada during this period are defined as the Martis Complex, which maintained a hunter-gathering subsistence strategy and a high degree of mobility. Distinctive artifact types include manos and metates used for processing food, and relatively large, heavy projectile points and bifaces manufactured from locally available basalt.

Defining the Emergent Period, from AD 300-500 through AD 1,800, within both northern and north-central Sierra Nevada and Central Valley contexts, Penutian-speaking Native American peoples are thought to have arrived, including those (i.e., Nisenan) who occupied lands within and around the project area at the time of initial contact with European-American populations. Arriving ultimately from southern Oregon and the Columbia and Modoc Plateau region and proceeding down the major drainage systems (including the Feather, Yuba, Bear and American Rivers), these Penutian-speaking arrivals may have begun to displace the Martis populations, especially along the major river systems (Moratto 1984:303-304). Presumably introduced by these Penutian arrivals were more extensive use of bulbs and other plant foods, animal and fishing products more intensively processed with mortars and pestles, and perhaps the bow and arrow and associated small stemmed- and corner-notched projectile points (Ragir 1972).
**Ethnography:** The project area is located within territory occupied by the Nisenan at the time of initial contact with European Americans (Wilson and Towne 1978: Figure 1). The Nisenan are Native American peoples also referred to as “Southern Maidu” who occupied the drainages of the southern Feather River and Honcut Creek in the north, through Bear River and the Yuba and American River drainages in the south. Villages were frequently located on flats adjoining streams, and were inhabited mainly in the winter as it was usually necessary to go out into the hills and higher elevation zones to establish temporary camps during food gathering seasons (i.e., spring, summer and fall).

As with all northern California Indian groups, economic life for the Nisenan revolved around hunting, fishing and the collecting of plant foods. These people were very sophisticated in terms of their knowledge of the uses of local animals and plants, and of the availability of raw material sources that could be used in manufacturing an immense array of primary and secondary tools and implements. Unfortunately, only fragmentary evidence of the material culture of these people remains, due in part to perishability and in part to the impacts to archaeological sites resulting from later (historic) land uses (mining, timber harvest, and ranching).

Based on the results of previous survey work within the general and immediate area, the potential range of prehistoric site types included the following:

- Surface scatters of lithic artifacts and debitage associated with midden accumulations (sometimes including other surface features such as housepit depressions, mortar holes, petroglyphs), resulting from protracted occupation along stream channels, particularly where streams merge with one another.
- Surface scatters of lithic artifacts and debitage without midden accumulations, resulting from short-term occupation and/or specialized economic activities.
- Bedrock milling stations, including especially mortar holes, where suitable bedrock outcrops are exposed.
- Petroglyphs.
- Isolated finds of aboriginal artifacts and flakes.

As noted above, it was not expected that all of these site types would be encountered within the study area, but rather that these would be the most likely *types* to be encountered if any sites or features were identified at all.

**Historic Context:** Historic evidence exists to document that some of the Spanish and Mexican expeditions of the early 19th century may have come through and made brief stays within northern California. Gabriel Moraga’s expedition was undertaken in 1806, with additional incursions occurring through the 1840’s. European Americans began arriving in more substantial numbers in the mid-1820’s, most notably with the trapping expeditions of Jedediah Smith.

The earliest documentation of Euro-American presence in the Grass Valley area was in 1846, when Claude Chana and a group of French immigrants passed through the region via Truckee Pass. However, the European American incursion with the greatest impact on Native American population and culture and the environmental structure of this area occurred
immediately following the discovery of gold at Coloma in 1848, which initiated the Gold Rush of 1849.

During the summer of 1849, John Marshall panned a small amount of gold on Deer Creek in present-day Nevada City. In October of the same year, David Stump and two other prospectors from Oregon mined Wolf Creek near the sites of the Eureka and Idaho mines.

In early 1849, the first settlement in Nevada County was established east of Smartville near Pleasant Valley to provide supplies for miners. In August 1849, a Dr. Saunders built a cabin on Badger Hill at the eastern edge of present day Grass Valley, and shortly thereafter settlers began moving into the resource-rich region. A sawmill was established later that year, a post office, called Centerville, was established on July 10, 1851. On August 20, 1852, the name was replaced by the title Grass Valley.

Initial mining of the region was conducted almost entirely via surface placer techniques. Drift mining began in the 1850’s and continued until about 1900. George McKnight discovered gold-bearing quartz at Gold Hill (a short distance north of the present study area) in 1850, and shortly thereafter others made similar discoveries at Ophir, Rich and Massachusetts Hills. The Gold Hill and Allison Ranch were the leading lode mines during the 1850s.

The Gold Hill Mine operated between 1850 and 1857, and had a total production of $4 million. Many other gold veins were discovered in the vicinity, the more prominent being at Massachusetts Hill, and the Eureka on Wolf Creek in 1861, while the Allison Ranch, North Star, Empire and the Idaho were discovered by 1863. Of these latter, the most productive have been the consolidated North Star and Empire mines. These mines operated for more than a century, yielding over $80 million. The longest vein extends for nearly two miles and the longest shaft extended nearly 7,000 feet, with 4,000 feet of vertical depth.

Mining activities slowed down during the Comstock rush between 1859-65, but regained momentum during the late 1860’s. A more serious decline in gold production occurred in the 1870s, and by 1880 the Empire and Idaho mines were the only active mines in the region. In 1884, the North Star was reopened, and the North Star, Empire, Idaho-Maryland, Pennsylvania and W.Y.O.D. became highly productive. From 1900 to 1925, the North Star and Empire were the largest producers, and by 1928, the North Star had a total output of $33 million.

Mining once again intensified during the Great Depression of the 1930’s, but was officially suspended by the federal government during World War II, leading to the failure of many of Nevada County's mines. After the war, the Empire, Pennsylvania, North Star and Idaho-Maryland mines re-opened, but operations gradually decreased, with the Idaho-Maryland closing in 1956 and the Empire-Star in 1957, ending 106 years of mining operations in the Grass Valley District.

Logging and ranching represent additional historic themes for this area within the southern portion of Grass Valley. As with the earlier mining emphasis, activities associated with logging and ranching have also adversely affected the local cultural resource base, although
typically with somewhat less severe impacts than actions associated with the early days of gold mining.

Historic overviews for this portion of Nevada County suggested the potential presence of a range of historic site types, including:

- Two-track trails/wagon roads, most of which are now paved roadways or no longer exist.
- Water distribution systems, including small and large ditch, canal and channel systems, and levees dating to historic time periods.
- Occupation sites and homesteads with associated features such as refuse disposal areas, privy pits, barns, sheds, etc.
- Historic cemeteries.
- Mining-related features, such as general landscape modifications including sluiced areas and tailings/waste rock piles, adits, shafts and in rare instances associated headworks.

As with prehistoric sites, not all of these were expected to be present within the present study area, although these represent the range of types considered most likely to be found based on background information available.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SURVEY

Fieldwork was undertaken during June and July 2013 by Sean Michael Jensen. Mr. Jensen is a professional archaeologist, with 26 years experience in California archaeology, who meets the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Professional Qualification, as demonstrated in his inclusion on the California Historical Resources Information System’s list of qualified consultants. No special problems were encountered and all survey objectives were satisfactorily achieved.

All of the project area was subjected to intensive pedestrian survey by walking back and forth across the 100-acre study area with systematic transects spaced at c. 20 meter intervals. In searching for cultural resources, the surveyor considered the results of background research and was alert for unusual contours, soil changes, distinctive vegetation patterns, exotic materials, artifacts, feature or feature remnants and other possible markers of cultural sites.

The entire study area appears to have been subjected to at least minimal levels of disturbance, while substantial portions of the study area have been subjected to intensive disturbance, primarily associated with past mining activities. No prehistoric resources were identified during the present pedestrian survey. The explanation for the absence of such resources is best explained by the level of disturbance to which most of the study area has been subjected.

Numerous historic-era features were observed throughout the study area. In terms of number and spatial area, the majority of these observations are comprised of waste rock piles and topographic modifications (i.e., byproducts of past mining). In addition to these observations, a number of stacked rock features, shallow ditches, foundations, adits and roads were observed throughout the study area.
4. SUMMARY and RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the present Class I archaeological survey, the following tasks were undertaken, general conclusions reached, and recommendations are offered:

- Records at the North Central Information Center (NCIC) at CSU-Sacramento document that approximately 85% of the study area has been subjected to formal archaeological survey, and that no prehistoric sites have been documented within, or adjacent to the study area.

- NCIC records and State of California historical resource data bases document four historical resources within the property. One of these (P-29-1457) was found to be erroneously plotted within the study area, while the second resource (P-29-1473) was recorded as four separate isolates. Both of these latter resources fail to achieve the threshold of an historic property, significant historical resource, or unique archaeological resource, and thus warrant no further consideration. The two remaining resources P-29-896 and P-29-898 represent historical resources of significance or potential significance within the study area.

- The entire study area appears to have been subjected to at least minimal levels of disturbance, while substantial portions of the study area have been subjected to intensive disturbance, primarily associated with past mining activities. No prehistoric resources were identified during the present pedestrian survey. The explanation for the absence of such resources is best explained by the level of disturbance to which most of the study area has been subjected.

- Additional historic-era features, presently unrecorded, were observed throughout the study area. In terms of number and spatial area, the majority of these observations are comprised of waste rock piles and topographic modifications (i.e., byproducts of past mining). In addition to these observations, a number of stacked rock features, shallow ditches, foundations, adits and roads were observed throughout the study area.

- Based on these findings, the conclusions of this Class I evaluation and mitigative actions flowing there from include the following:
  1. Establish narrowly-defined APE, and record all historic-era resources located within the APE.
  2. Conduct formal evaluation of all historic-era resources identified within the established APE. Fundamental to the evaluation of these resources is additional background investigations into the origins of said resources, and their (potential) relationship with previously identified/recorded resources (i.e., Northstar Mine, etc.).
  3. Prepare a Class III Archaeological Survey Report. This report would not only document specific findings in terms of sites or features present, but also include evaluations of site significance as well as detailed recommendations for mitigative
action and site treatment adequate to ensure that project effects are reduced to less than significant levels.

5. REFERENCES CITED and/or UTILIZED

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CLASS I ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Northstar Mine Water Treatment Project, circa 100 acres, Nevada County, California.

ATTACHMENT

• Project Location Map
• Records Search, North Central Information Center (NCIC)
May 2, 2013

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NCIC File No.: NEV-13-25

Records Search Results for  
Northstar Mine WWTP  
T15N/R8E Sections 2 & 3; T16N/R8E Section 34  
USGS 7.5' Grass Valley Quad, Nevada County

- **NCIC Resources Within/Adjacent to Project Area:**  
P-29-892  
P-29-896  
P-29-898  
P-29-1436 CA-NEV-950H  
P-29-1456  
P-29-1457  
P-29-1469 CA-NEV-961H  
P-29-1473  
P-29-1517  
P-29-3132  
Copies enclosed

- **NCIC Reports Within/Adjacent to Project Area:**  
593  
2237  
2643  
4627  
4635  
4642  
4643  
4647  
4651  
4664  
9815  
Bibliographic references enclosed
- **OHP Historic Property Data File (2012)**: Grass Valley and vicinity properties enclosed
- **Determination of Eligibility (2012)**: Nevada County properties enclosed
- **NRHP/CRHR listings (2008 & updates)**: Nothing listed
- **California Inventory of Historic Resources (1976)**: Nothing listed
- **California State Historical Landmarks (1996)**: Nothing listed
- **Points of Historic Interest (1992)**: Nothing listed
- **Caltrans Bridge Inventory**: Nothing listed

**Historic Maps:**
1867 GLO  
1871 GLO  
1885-86 Smartsville map  
1949 USGS 7.5’ Grass Valley quad

Thank you for using our services. An invoice confidentiality agreement is enclosed; please sign and return a copy for our files.