



**DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

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October 6, 2021

In reply, refer to: FEMA_2021_0729_001

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Mr. Michael Audin
Acting Deputy Environmental Officer
FEMA Region IX
1111 Broadway, Suite 1200
Oakland, CA 94607-4052

Subject: Mel Canyon Debris and Sediment Catchment Basin Project, City of Duarte, Los Angeles County, DC-HMGP-4344-397-122

Dear Mr. Audin:

The California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) has received the July 29, 2021, letter from FEMA initiating consultation regarding an undertaking in Los Angeles County. FEMA is consulting with the SHPO to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (54 U.S.C. §306108), as amended, and its implementing regulations at 36 CFR Part 800 and the 2019 Programmatic Agreement among FEMA, the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and California Office of Emergency Services. Along with the letter, FEMA submitted project maps and a report entitled Archaeological Investigation for the City of Duarte – Mel Canyon Debris and Sediment Catchment Basin Project, Los Angeles County, California (FEMA-HGMP-4344-397-122).

FEMA is considering providing funding to construct a debris and sediment catchment basin in Mel Canyon to prevent rock, sand, silt, and organic debris from flowing downslope onto Melcanyon Road and surrounding streets, causing drainage and flooding issues for adjacent and downstream properties. Vegetation clearance and 2.46 acres of grading would be required within the project area. A gabion vertical drop structure or basin would then be built, and ring nets and gabion walls would be installed to act as debris barriers. Reinforced concrete pipes with catch basins would be installed upslope of the catchment basin to flow directly into the flood control channel. The catchment basin would tie into the existing storm drain system south of the structure. Additional project activities would include the construction of gates and fencing, asphalt roadways to facilitate maintenance access, driveway aprons, and drainage features. Access to the project area would be from Melcanyon Road and Opal

Canyon Road, and staging would occur within a 0.9-acre field owned by the Valley View Elementary School.

FEMA defined an Area of Potential Effects (APE) covering approximately 5.1 acres and centered in Mel Canyon in the City of Duarte in southeastern Los Angeles County. The maximum vertical APE, or depth of project ground-disturbing activities, would extend to bedrock or until suitable basal material is reached within the catchment basin area.

A record search and pedestrian archaeological survey did not reveal any prehistoric artifacts, ecofacts, or features and no materials or features in the APE that could be dated to the historic period. A geoarchaeological assessment revealed moderate to high potential to reveal buried archaeological resources, though the likelihood of encountering intact or in situ cultural materials during project ground-disturbing activities may be diminished given the scale of recent soil and debris flow through Mel Canyon.

A search of the Sacred Lands File at the Native American Heritage Commission indicated that Native American cultural resources are present in the APE. FEMA conducted Tribal consultation with the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians; Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Indians; Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, California; Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation; Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians; Gabrielino/Tongva Nation; Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California; and Gabrielino-Tongva Tribe.

The Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians responded that the project area is culturally sensitive, and that the tribe wished to participate in the field survey and have a tribal monitor present during construction. The Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation also stated that the project is in a very sensitive, sacred area where burials may be present, and that the tribe wished to participate in the project field visit, have a tribal monitor present during project ground-disturbing activities, and develop a mitigation plan that would allow the tribe to collect native plants from areas where vegetation would be cleared because of the project.

Based upon these responses, FEMA is recommending archaeological and Native American monitoring during project ground-disturbing activities. The sensitivity of the project area, potential to encounter buried cultural resources, poor ground surface visibility, and partial inaccessibility of the APE during the pedestrian survey indicate that archaeological monitoring is warranted to ensure that inadvertent discoveries, if encountered, are properly treated and managed during project construction.

Mr. Michael Audin
October 6, 2021
Page 3

FEMA_2021_0729_001

Because identification efforts did not identify any historic properties within the APE, FEMA proposes a finding of *No Historic Properties Affected*. **The SHPO does not object to this finding.**

Please be advised that under certain circumstances, such as an unanticipated discovery or a change in project description, FEMA may have additional future responsibilities for this undertaking under 36 CFR Part 800.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these comments, please contact Mark Beason, State Historian, at (916) 445-4047 or mark.beason@parks.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Polanco', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Julianne Polanco
State Historic Preservation Officer