

**A CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY OF THE 46-ACRE HILLSTAR PROJECT AREA,
CITY OF SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS**

Prepared for

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SWCA Project Number 6499-004-AUS

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ABSTRACT

SWCA was contracted by Hillstar Investments, Ltd. to conduct a cultural resources survey of a 46-acre tract in southern San Antonio, Bexar County. The survey was associated with a planned residential development that would create several streets and cul-de-sacs, and subdivide the project area into numerous, small residential lots. The survey was conducted to comply with requirements of the City of San Antonio's Historic Preservation and Urban Design Ordinance #80910. The investigations included a background literature review of the project area and a pedestrian survey with shovel testing.

The triangular-shaped project area is located approximately 0.6 miles east of the intersection of Loop 410 and Somerset Road in southern San Antonio. The area is currently an undeveloped hay field, though aerial photographs from the mid-1990s show extensive disturbances, including a racing track and several access roads. The background literature review revealed that the northern portion of the project area was surveyed by archaeologists from the Federal Highway Administration in 1986 during construction work on Loop 410. In addition, the central portion of the proposed development area was surveyed in 1983 by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Texas Water Development Board prior to the installation of the aqueduct. No cultural materials were found within or directly adjacent to the project area in either of these surveys.

The field investigations determined that the project area had been cleared and converted to agricultural land sometime in the past five years. Though none of the development noted on the 1990s aerial photograph exists today, the field survey found numerous piles of soil and 'car-related' debris along the edges of the property. Because ground visibility was excellent (approximately 85-percent) and portions of the project area had been previously surveyed, only nine shovel tests were judgementally excavated across the 32 acres within the proposed area of potential effect. In general, the shovel tests encountered somewhat loose soils with no inclusions. None of the shovel tests contained buried artifacts or features.

No artifacts, features, or archaeological sites were found on the surface or within the shovel tests. The proposed development will not impact any significant archaeological sites, and SWCA recommends that the project be allowed to proceed as planned.

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

PROJECT TITLE: 46-acre Hillstar Survey

SWCA PROJECT NUMBER: 6499-004-AUS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: SWCA conducted a pedestrian survey with shovel testing of a proposed 46-acre residential development in Bexar County.

LOCATION: The 46-acre project area is located in southern San Antonio, approximately 0.6 miles southeast of the intersection of Loop 410 and Somerset Road. It is bounded on the north by Loop 410 and on the east, south, and west by undeveloped agricultural and pastoral land. The project area appears on the Terrell Wells U.S.G.S. 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle.

NUMBER OF ACRES SURVEYED: 32 acres.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kerri S. Barile, SWCA Environmental Consultants

DATES OF WORK: 21 November 2002

PURPOSE OF WORK: The project sponsor is complying with City of San Antonio requirements regarding historic preservation.

NUMBER OF SITES: None

LIST OF POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT SITES: None

COMMENTS: Aerial photographs of the area taken in the mid-1990s show the area to be completely disturbed. In addition, two portions of the project area had been previously surveyed in the 1980s. No cultural resources were discovered on the property during the current survey.

INTRODUCTION

SWCA was contracted by Hillstar Investments, Ltd. to conduct a cultural resources survey of a 46-acre tract in southern San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The survey was associated with a planned residential development and was conducted to comply with requirements of the City of San Antonio's Historic Preservation and Urban Design Ordinance #80910. The San Antonio Historic Preservation Office (HPO) oversees compliance with the ordinance.

The investigations included a background literature review of the project area and a pedestrian survey with shovel testing. Kerri S. Barile, the Principal Investigator, and Thanet Skoglund conducted the survey on November 21, 2002.

No cultural resources were found during the survey of the project area. Therefore, this report follows the short report format recommended by the Council of Texas Archeologists for small projects with negative findings.

DEFINITION OF STUDY AREA

The triangular-shaped project area is located approximately 0.6 miles east of the intersection of Loop 410 and Somerset Road in southern San Antonio (Figure 1). The proposed development area is bounded on the north by the Loop 410 feeder road and on the east, south, and west by undeveloped agricultural and pastoral land.

The project area is currently an undeveloped hay field (Figure 2). Modern disturbances located within the area include a north-south running subsurface aqueduct, which was constructed in 1983, and an overhead power line that first appears on area maps in 1992 (see Figure 3). The topography of the project area is nearly level, and Leon Creek is located approximately 300 m east of the eastern end of the project area (see Figure 1).

The proposed development would create several streets and cul-de-sacs and subdivide the project area into numerous, small residential lots. Approximately 14 acres of the 46-acre property,

located along the eastern and western edges of the project area, will not be developed and were, therefore, excluded from the survey (Figure 3).

All of the soils within the project area are mapped as Venus loam with 0- to 3-percent slope. Venus loams are deep silty loams and clay loams, and they are dark in color. These soils are often found on terraces or alluvial banks along rivers and creeks. Because this type of soil is well drained, areas containing Venus loam are often used as agricultural fields (Taylor et al. 1991).

The geology of the project area reflects the proximity of Leon Creek. The majority of the project area occupies young, Pleistocene fluvial terrace deposits related to Leon Creek (Barnes 1983). These deposits are formed of gravel, sand, silt, and clay, and they are often found around rivers and creeks within and adjacent to the Edwards Plateau. The very western end of the project area comprises Leona Formation deposits. Like the fluvial terrace deposits, this geologic formation was created in the Pleistocene epoch. It is composed of fine calcareous silt and coarse gravels, and it is often found on the edges of wide creek terraces (Barnes 1983).

METHODS

Background Review

An archaeological background literature and records search was performed by SWCA archaeologists to determine the locations and content of any previous surveys and recorded sites in or near the project area. The investigation included examining records at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) and the Texas Historical Commission.

Field Methods

To conduct the field survey, two archaeologists walked the entire project area and judgementally excavated shovel tests to prospect for buried cultural materials. The shovel tests were excavated to between 50 and 75 cm deep; the compact soils of the project area made deeper tests too difficult. Shovel testing was limited to areas

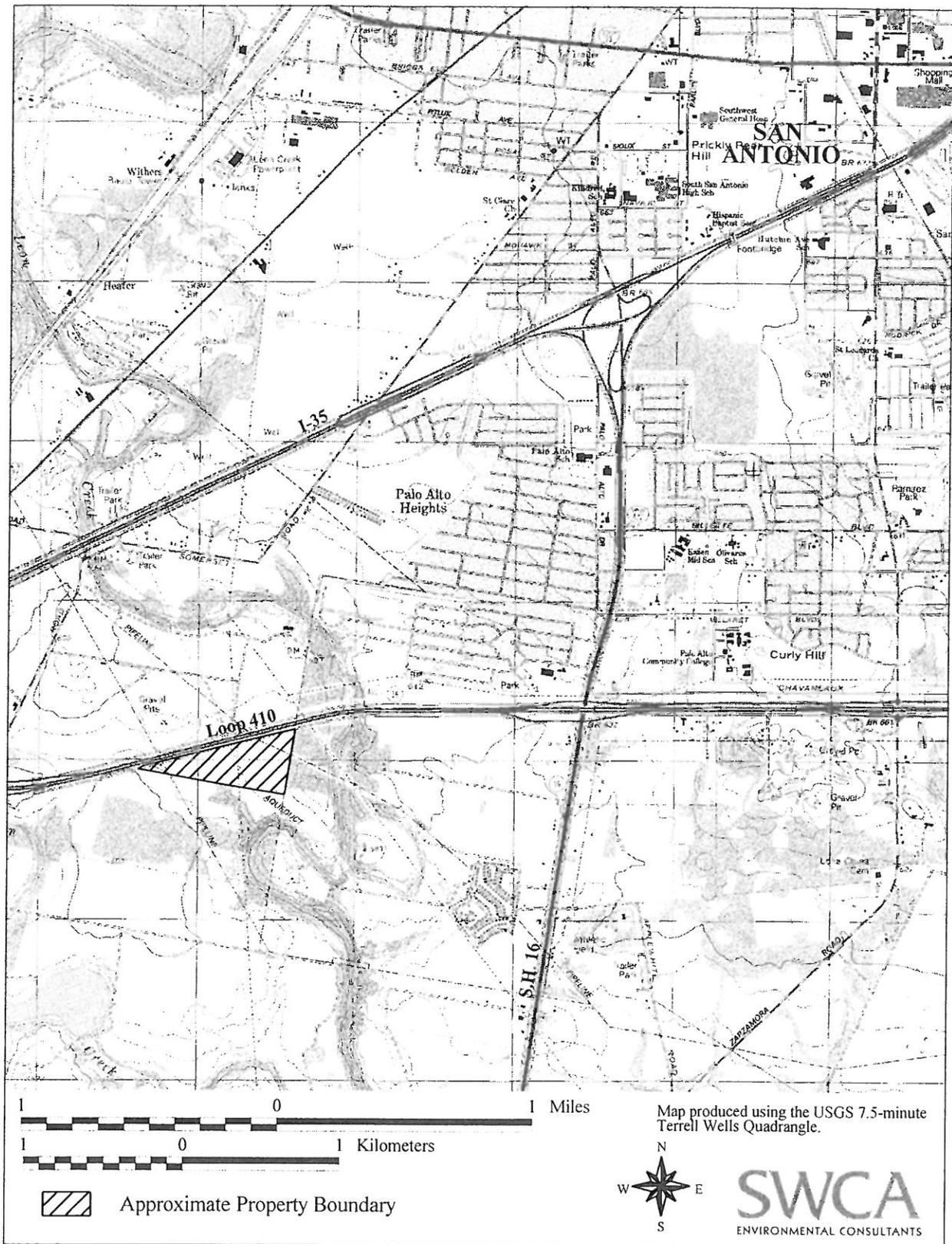


Figure 1. Project location map.

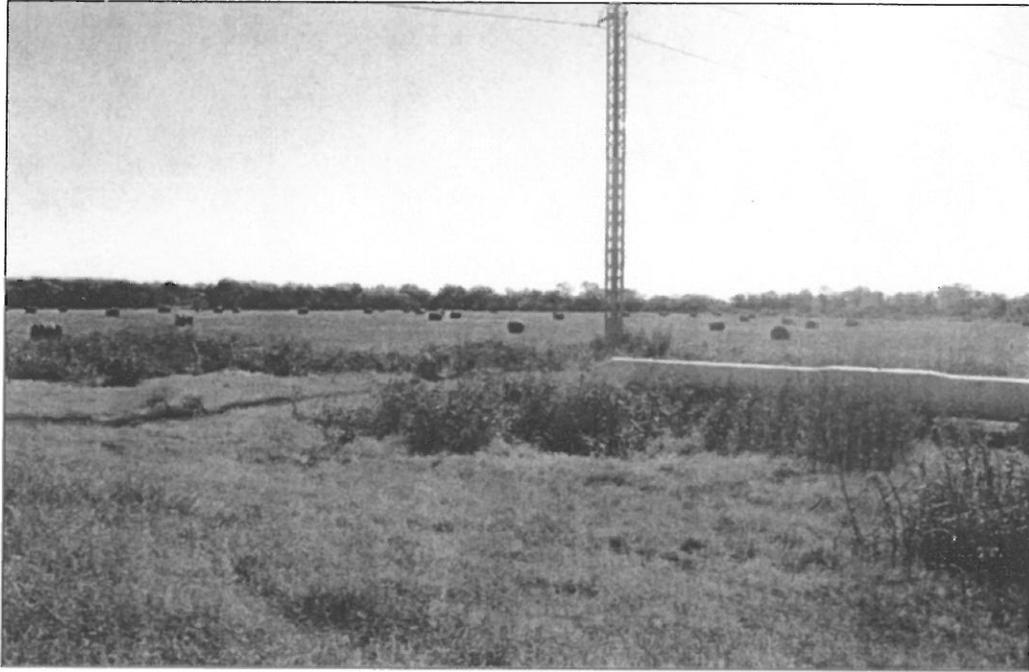


Figure 2. *Overview of project area looking southeast from the Loop 410 access road. Note aqueduct pipe and overhead power line.*

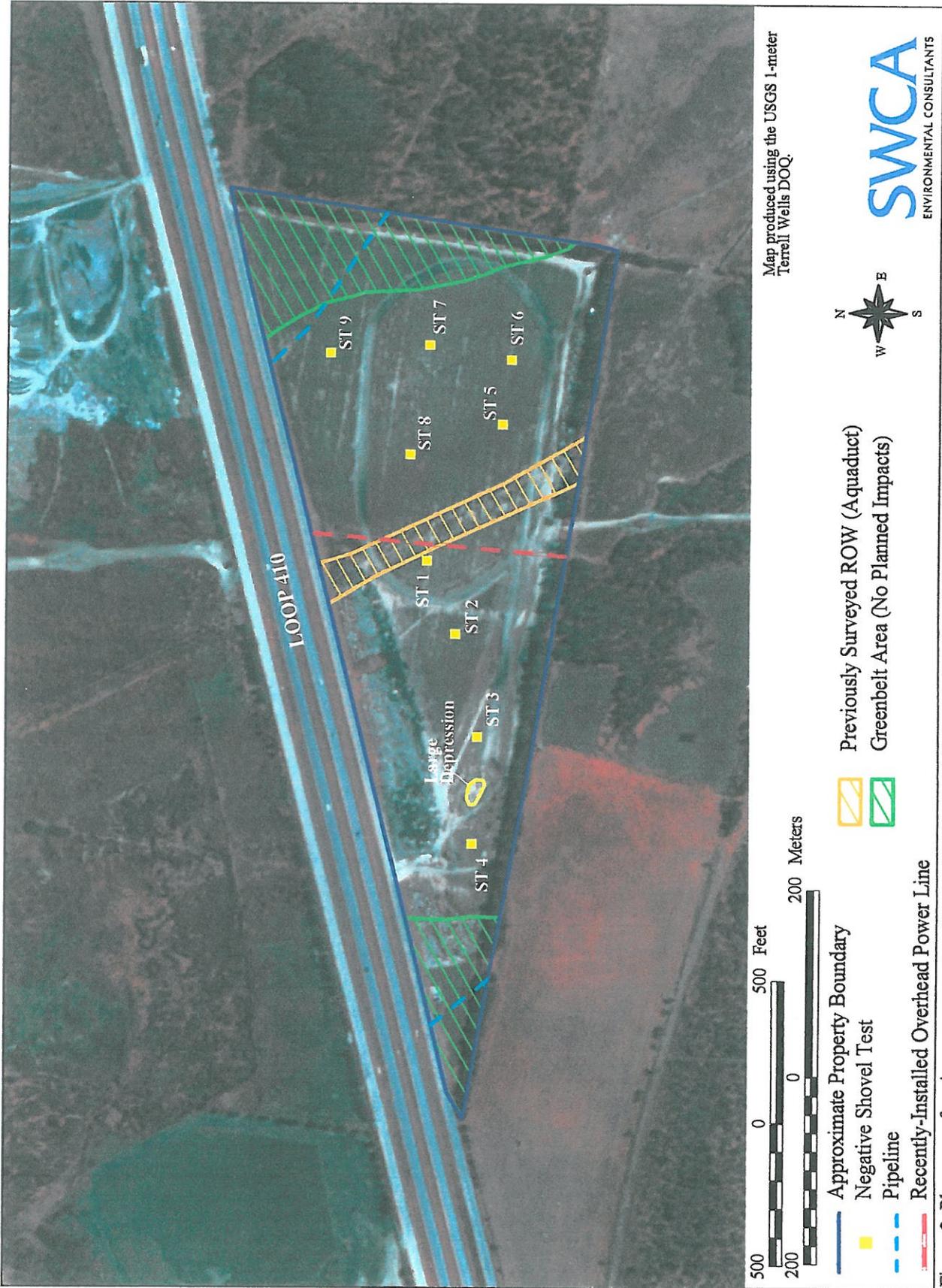


Figure 3. Plan map of project area.

that had not been previously surveyed, areas that were not significantly disturbed in previous construction activities, and areas that would be effected by future construction. The crew recorded the location of each shovel test with a GPS receiver and photographed the project area to document existing conditions.

RESULTS

Background Review

The background review determined that two portions of the project area have been surveyed for cultural resources. The northern edge of the project area, along Loop 410, was surveyed by the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation (SDHPT, now the Texas Department of Transportation) in 1986 (SDHPT 1986). The survey recorded one archaeological site, 41BX704, on the eastern side of Leon Creek, approximately 500 m east of the current project area. The site was destroyed by road and bridge construction within the right-of-way of Loop 410. Site 41BX704 was categorized as a prehistoric open campsite, but no temporally diagnostic artifacts were recovered.

The central corridor of the current project area was surveyed in 1983 by archaeologists from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Texas Water Development Board (see Figure 3). This linear, north-south survey was conducted in preparation for the installation of a subsurface aqueduct. No archaeological sites were found within or near the project area.

In the late 1990s, the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) conducted an intensive survey of Lackland Air Force Base, which is approximately 10 km northwest of the proposed Hillstar project area (Nickels et al. 1997). Archaeologists from CAR subsequently tested eight sites on the base for significance (Houk and Nickels 1997). The cultural history of the surrounding region and the history of archaeological research in southwestern Bexar

County are summarized in the reports of those investigations.

Field Survey

Prior to the field survey, SWCA examined aerial photographs of the area taken in the mid-1990s. These photos clearly showed numerous disturbances within the project boundaries, including a car racing track, several roadways, and landscape alterations (see Figure 3). In addition, the 7.5-minute Terrell Wells, Texas U.S.G.S. topographic map, last updated in 1992, shows several pipelines, the overhead power line, and an aqueduct running through the proposed development area (see Figure 1).

Visual inspection of the property during the field survey, however, proved that the entire area was mechanically cleared within the past five to seven years. The majority of the property is now an open hay field (see Figure 2), though disturbances still exist within the northwest portion of the property and along the property boundaries. An inspection of these disturbances clearly indicated that they were created during the transition from a race track to agricultural fields. Along all of the property boundaries are large (5- to 15-ft tall) push piles of earth mixed with construction debris, including large slabs of concrete (Figure 4), cut lumber, and large metal fragments. Several of these push piles also exhibit evidence of the race track's use, as several large piles of used tires were found near the southeastern corner of the property (Figure 5). The field survey also noted a large, abandoned travel trailer near the southeastern corner of the property (Figure 6). This trailer is evident on aerial photographs, as well, indicating that it has been parked at this location for several years.

In addition to race track-related disturbances, a large power line was constructed through the property in the early 1990s (see Figures 2 and 3). The overhead lines and their support columns run north-south through the center of the proposed development area.



Figure 4. *Example of construction debris along the property boundaries.*



Figure 5. *Car tires piled near the southeastern corner of the project area.*



Figure 6. *Abandoned trailer near the southeastern corner of the project area. It appears on the aerial photograph (Figure 3) as a silver oval.*

Adjacent to the power lines, a subsurface water aqueduct also runs roughly north-south through the center of the project area. The only above-ground evidence of this pipeline is a connection tube near the northern border of the property (see Figure 2). Since the entire aqueduct corridor was surveyed in 1983, this area was not included in the current survey.

Because the ground visibility was very high (85-percent) and the aerial photograph showed numerous recent disturbances in the area, only nine shovel tests were excavated within the 32-acre area of potential effect (Table 1). Shovel tests were judgementslly placed across the project area in areas with the least amount of known disturbances (see Figure 3). All of the shovel tests encountered brown to light brown silty loams with no inclusions to depths of 75 cm below the surface. The texture and depth of the soil, as well as the complete lack of inclusions, confirms that the area was completely bulldozed during the removal of the

race track and associated landscape features. In addition, none of the shovel tests contained buried artifacts or features.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Hillstar 46-acre project area was thoroughly investigated by a team of two archaeologists. Nine shovel tests were excavated across the 32 acres that would be impacted by the planned development. No artifacts, features, or archaeological sites were found on the surface or within the shovel tests, and aerial photographs from the mid-1990s showed significant disturbances throughout the project area. The proposed development will not impact any significant archaeological sites, and SWCA recommends to the HPO that project be allowed to proceed as planned. If, however, any significant cultural resources are found during development, further disturbance or alteration in the vicinity of the discovery must be immediately stopped until the HPO can be

Table 1. Shovel Test Data

ST	Depths (cm)	Munsell	Color	Texture	Description
1	0 to 60	10YR4/4	Brown	Silty Loam	Roots within upper 20 cm; Slight increase in moisture with depth.
2	0 to 40	10YR 3/3	Dark brown	Silty Loam	Many roots in upper 30 cm.
	40 to 70+	10YR 4/4	Brown	Silty Loam	Very fine sediment; No inclusions.
3	0 to 35	10YR 4/3	Brown	Silty Loam	Many roots in upper 30 cm.
	35 to 75	10YR 4/4	Light brown	Silty Loam	No inclusions; Increased moisture from previous level.
4	0 ro 40	10YR 4/3	Brown	Silty Loam	Many roots in upper 30 cm.
	40 to 70+	10YR 4/4	Light brown	Silty Loam	No inclusions; Increased moisture from previous level.
5	0 to 40	10YR4/4	Brown	Clay Loam	Few surface roots; Increase in clay content with depth. Terminated at dense clay.
6	0 to 30	10YR 4/3	Brown	Silty Loam	Plow zone; roots in upper 30 cm.
	30 to 70	10YR 4/4	Light brown	Silty Loam	No inclusions.
7	0 to 30	10YR 4/3	Brown	Silty Loam	Plow zone, roots in upper 30 cm.
	30 to 65	10YR 4/4	Light brown	Silty Loam	No inclusions.
8	0 to 70	10YR4/3	Brown	Silty Loam	Few roots at surface.
9	0 to 30	10YR 4/3	Brown	Silty Loam	Plow zone, roots in upper 30 cm; one water-worn pebble.
	30 to 70	10YR 4/4	Light brown	Silty Loam	No inclusions.

afforded the opportunity to examine and evaluate the discovery to determine whether or not additional investigation or documentation, or avoidance, will be required per applicable city codes.

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