

**INTENSIVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES SURVEY OF THE PROPOSED NANI  
FALCONE SKATE PARK PROJECT IN BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS**

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Prepared for

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Texas Antiquities Permit 5234

SWCA Project Number 15327-293-AUS  
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## ABSTRACT

On behalf of the City of San Antonio, SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) conducted an intensive archaeological survey of the proposed Nani Falcone Skate Park in northwest San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The proposed project will involve the construction of a skate park facility along French Creek, northwest of the intersection of Bandera and Guilbeau Roads. Proposed subsurface impacts are not known at this time, but are not expected to exceed six feet. Overall the area of potential effects (APE) is an irregular-shaped project area encompassing 65.5 acres.

As the City of San Antonio is a political subdivision of the State of Texas, the client is fulfilling project regulatory requirements in compliance with the Texas Antiquities Code. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) issued Texas Antiquities Permit 5234 to SWCA to conduct the cultural resource investigations. All cultural resources located within the proposed area were identified and evaluated for their eligibility for designation as a State Archeological Landmark (SAL).

SWCA conducted a background review and an intensive archaeological survey of the 65.5-acre project area. The background review revealed that portions of the project area have been previously surveyed yet there are no previously recorded sites within the project area. Fourteen archaeological sites and seven archeological surveys are recorded within a one-mile radius of the project area.

SWCA archaeologists conducted field investigations within the proposed 65.5-acre project area on April 10, 2009. The intensive surface inspection and shovel testing regimen failed to produce any evidence of cultural materials within the 65.5-acre project area. More than half of the project area was assessed as low probability areas, including the landscaped park development, the highly eroded portions of the creek, and the southern end near Guilbeau Road where the broad creek channel appeared artificial. The 14 shovel tests conducted during this survey concentrated on the remaining acreage that was assessed as having a higher probability to contain buried intact cultural resources. No cultural materials were identified on the surface or within any of the shovel test excavations.

Based on the survey-level investigations, it is SWCA's opinion that construction of the proposed skate park at French Creek will have no adverse impacts on significant cultural resources. SWCA recommends no further archeological investigations.

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## **MANAGEMENT SUMMARY**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Intensive Archaeological Resources Survey of the Proposed Nani Falcone Skate Park Project in Bexar County, Texas.

**SWCA PROJECT NUMBER:** 15327-293-AUS.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** SWCA conducted archaeological investigations of a 65.5-acre project area at French Creek in northwest San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas, on behalf of the City of San Antonio. Work involved a background review and an intensive pedestrian survey.

**LOCATION:** The project area is in Bexar County, Texas and is depicted on the Helotes (2998-312) USGS 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle map, northwest of the intersection of Bandera and Guilbeau Roads.

**NUMBER OF ACRES SURVEYED:** 65.5 acres.

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Mary Jo Galindo, Ph.D.

**DATES OF WORK:** April 10, 2009.

**PURPOSE OF WORK:** The client is fulfilling project regulatory requirements in compliance with the Texas Antiquities Code.

**TEXAS ANTIQUITIES PERMIT NUMBER:** 5234

**NUMBER OF SITES:** None

**ELIGIBILITY OF SITES:** N/A

**CURATION:** No artifacts were collected; as a result, no curation was necessary.

## **INTRODUCTION**

On behalf of the City of San Antonio (COSA), SWCA conducted an intensive archaeological survey of the proposed Nani Falcone Skate Park Project in Bexar County (Figure 1). The proposed project will involve the construction of a skate park facility along French Creek, northwest of the intersection of Bandera and Guilbeau Roads. Proposed subsurface impacts are not known at this time, but are not expected to exceed six feet. Overall the area of potential effects (APE) is an irregular-shaped project area encompassing 65.5 acres (Figure 2). The Texas Historical Commission (THC) issued Texas Antiquities Permit 5234 to SWCA to conduct the cultural resource investigations.

The archaeological investigations included a 100 percent intensive archaeological survey of the project area. The goal of the work was to locate all prehistoric and historic archaeological sites in the project area, establish vertical and horizontal site boundaries as appropriate, and provide sufficient information to significance recommendations. All work was done in accordance with the standards and guidelines of the THC and the Council of Texas Archaeologists (CTA).

## **PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION**

Located in northwest San Antonio, Texas, the project area is northwest of the intersection of Bandera and Guilbeau Roads in Bexar County, Texas. The project area appears previously disturbed on a recent aerial (see Figure 2). It has been cleared of vegetation, except along the riparian corridor of French Creek, where large oaks and immature invasive tree species predominate. A water well and stock pond, probably associated with prior ranching activities, are noted on the topographic map near the center of the project

area. These features are still preserved in the park, with the well and associated artificial drainages integrated along the park's path, while the adjacent stock tank has been drained and is overgrown with small trees and underbrush.

Several two-track roads have traversed the project area in the past, while a concrete sidewalk outlines and connects the developed areas of the Nani Falcone Community Park (formerly French Creek Park). The park encompasses 28 acres of developed land and 37.5 acres undeveloped. It was named for Ernani C. Falcone in 2005 on land purchased by COSA in 1996 and 2001. It features a disc golf course, two pavilions, two playgrounds, two water features, a multi-purpose field, a restroom, and 1.1 miles of hiking trails. The park has no known historic significance or facilities noted on the city's website (SAPARD 2009). Finally, adjacent to the project area are residential developments, commercial properties, a public library, and a fire station.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

### ***GEOLOGY***

The underlying geology of the project area is mapped as Quaternary-age Fluvial Terrace Deposits. These deposits are made up of predominately gravel, limestone, dolomite, and chert (Fisher 1983). The deposits also consist of sand, silt, and clay. Most low terrace deposits along entrenched streams are above flood level (Fisher 1983).

### ***SOILS***

Several types of soil are mapped in the project area: Lewisville silty clay, Trinity and Frio soils, Crawford clay, and Crawford and Bexar stony soils (Taylor et al. 1991:Map Sheet 35). Approximately 75 percent of the project area

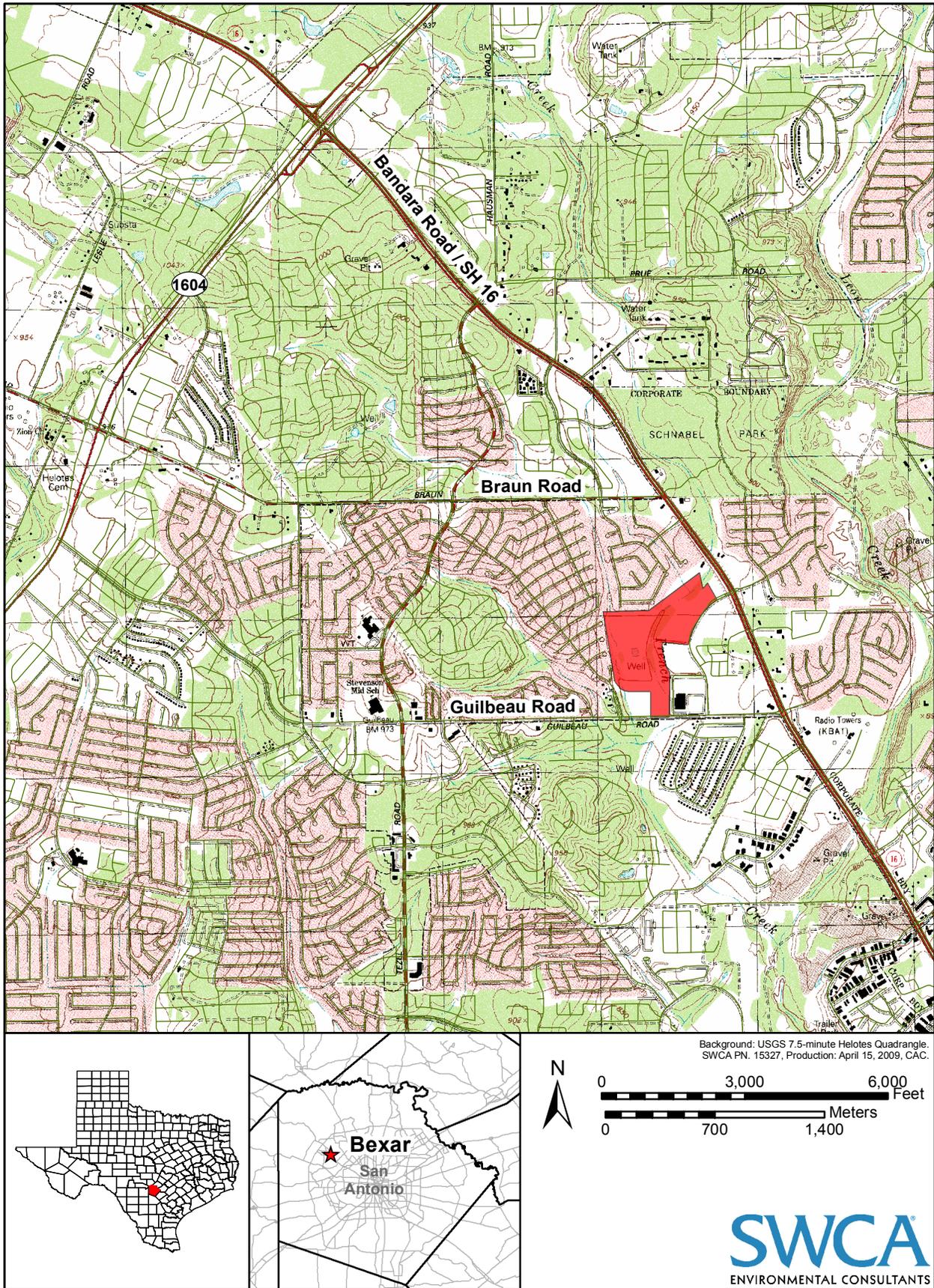


Figure 1. Project Location Map.



Figure 2. Project Area Map.

is mapped as Lewisville silty clay. Lewisville silty clay, with 0 to 3 percent slopes, occurs on the nearly level, broad terraces along French Creek. The surface layer is a silty clay or light clay, 24 inches thick. The underlying layer consists of brown silty clay, 20 inches thick (Taylor et al. 1991:25).

Trinity and Frio soils, with 0 to 1 percent slopes, are mapped along French Creek and are frequently flooded. These types of soils comprise approximately 24 percent of the project area. Trinity and Frio soils are very deep, moderately well drained, very slowly permeable soils that formed in calcareous clayey alluvium. These soils are on long, narrow, irregularly-shaped areas on the flood plain of French Creek (Taylor et al. 1991:32).

A small amount of Crawford clay, with 0 to 1 percent slopes, is mapped along the northern boundary of the project area, while an even smaller amount of Crawford and Bexar stony soils is at the property's northwest corner. Crawford soils are moderately deep, well drained, very slowly permeable soils that formed in residuum over limestone bedrock. They are found on nearly level to gently sloping uplands (Taylor et al. 1991:13). Crawford and Bexar stony soils are comprised of about 51 percent Crawford clay and 36 percent Bexar clay. Bexar soils are moderately deep, well drained, slowly permeable soils on upland plains. These slightly acid soils have dark reddish brown cobbly clay loam A horizons, dark reddish brown cobbly clay Bt horizons and are underlain by hard limestone at depths of 20 to 40 inches (Taylor et al. 1991:13).

## **VEGETATION**

The project area is along the southern margin of the Balconian biotic province (Blair 1950). This province has highly variable vegetation of the Edwards Plateau and Hill country

(Spearing 1991:24). Typical vegetation of the Edwards Plateau region consists of Texas oak (*Quercus texana*), live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), Ashe Juniper (*Juniperus ashei*), mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*), some bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), and grass prairies (Blair 1950; Simpson 1988; Spearing 1991). As noted above, the general vegetation of the 65.5 acres is mainly manicured grass with a riparian corridor along French Creek that includes mesquite and large oaks, but is mostly comprised of secondary growth and immature deciduous trees, including invasive species.

## **METHODS**

### **ARCHIVAL RESEARCH AND BACKGROUND REVIEW**

SWCA conducted a thorough archaeological background review of the project area. An SWCA archaeologist searched site files and maps at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) and the THC's Texas Archeological Sites Atlas (Atlas), an online database, for any previously recorded surveys and historic or prehistoric archaeological sites located in or adjacent to the project area. In addition to identifying previously recorded archaeological sites, the Atlas review included the following types of information: NRHP properties, SALs, Official Texas Historical Markers, Registered Texas Historic Land Marks, cemeteries, and local neighborhood surveys.

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD METHODS**

SWCA's investigations consisted of an intensive pedestrian survey with subsurface investigations within the project area. Archaeologists examined the ground surface and extensive erosional profiles and exposures for cultural resources. Subsurface investigations involved shovel testing in

settings with the potential to contain buried cultural materials. The shovel tests were approximately 30 cm in diameter and excavated to culturally sterile deposits or impassible gravel, whichever came first. The matrix from each shovel test was screened through ¼-inch mesh, and the location of each excavation was plotted using a hand-held GPS receiver. Each shovel test was recorded on a standardized form to document the excavations.

### ***ARTIFACT COLLECTION***

SWCA proposed a non-collection survey. Artifacts were to be tabulated, analyzed, and documented in the field, but not collected. Temporally diagnostic artifacts were to be described in detail and photographed in the field. In this case, no artifacts were encountered within the project area and, as such, the non-collection policy was not a factor.

## **RESULTS**

### ***PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS***

The background review revealed that portions of the project area have been previously surveyed yet there are no previously recorded sites within the project area. Fourteen previously recorded archaeological sites and seven archeological surveys are recorded within a one-mile radius of the project area.

The eastern half of the project area (roughly 35 acres) was surveyed in 1977 as part of investigations by the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) on behalf of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Site 41BX325 was recorded during this area survey and, at 0.21 miles northwest, it is the closest of the 14 sites within a mile of the project area. It was

recorded in an agricultural field adjacent to French Creek, where lithic debitage and tools were observed on the surface. The site was revisited in 2007, by which time it was reportedly destroyed by residential development (Atlas).

Three linear and four other area surveys have been conducted within a mile of the project area, including a linear one by the FHWA in 1990 along Eckhart Road northeast of its intersection with Bandera Road. No sites within a mile of the project area were recorded during this survey (Atlas). The second linear survey was conducted under Antiquities Permit 1977 along Leon Creek from Bandera to Babcock Roads in 1999 by archaeologists from CAR on behalf of the San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department (SAPARD). None of the three sites identified during this survey are within a mile of the project area (Cargill 1999).

In 2001, SAPARD sponsored a linear survey by CAR under Antiquities Permit 2724 of the Leon Creek Greenway Hike and Bike Trail (Zapata and Weston 2002). Four of the seven sites that were revisited during this survey are within a mile of the proposed skate park location (41BX60, 41BX61, 41BX62, and 41BX73). Site 41BX60 was originally recorded in 1971 as a small open prehistoric campsite with Montell and Almgre diagnostic projectile points. No recommendations for further work or eligibility for inclusion to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or for designation as a State Archeological Landmark (SAL) are recorded (Atlas). Site 41BX61 is a rockshelter along Leon Creek that was recorded in 1970 by Paul McGuff and Bill Fawcett, who recommended testing because the site exhibited deep deposits and was threatened by construction. Site 41BX62 is also a rockshelter along Leon Creek; however, at the time it was recorded in 1971

(also by McGuff and Fawcett), it was devoid of fill and only a few flakes were observed along the talus slope. McGuff and Fawcett recommended no further work. Site revisit information for these three sites is not available in the Atlas; however, Zapata and Weston (2002) did not encounter evidence of cultural activity or occupation at these sites and recommended no further work.

An area survey adjacent to Leon Creek and another small survey south of the project area were conducted on behalf of the EPA in 1979 and the Veteran's Administration in 1984, respectively. No sites were recorded during either survey (Atlas). SAPARD sponsored a small area survey in 1998 along Leon Creek; no sites were recorded. Finally, Abasolo Archaeological Consultants conducted a survey under Antiquities Permit 4811 in 2008 on behalf of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; however, no further information was available (Atlas).

The remaining nine previously recorded archeological sites include 41BX54, 41BX55, 41BX56, 41BX57, 41BX58, 41BX59, 41BX74, 41BX1250, and 41BX1725. Site 41BX54, a surficial lithic scatter, was recorded along Leon Creek during a 1971 survey by Paul and Ellen McGuff. It was revisited during a 1977 survey by Frank Weir on behalf of the Bandera Commons Apartments Survey Project. The site was again revisited in 2007, at which time it was reported destroyed by road and bridge construction (Atlas).

Site 41BX55 was also recorded along Leon Creek during the 1971 survey by the McGuffs, who recommended no further work at the surficial lithic scatter. Another site recorded during the same survey is 41BX56, which is a large hilltop campsite with diagnostic projectile points, including Angostura,

Bulverde, and Nolan. Site 41BX56 was recommended for testing (Atlas).

Site 41BX57, also recorded during the 1971 Leon Creek Survey, is atop a bluff with Bulverde and Castroville projectile points. No specific recommendations for further work were given; however, it was noted that the site was "not as extensive in occupation and cultural debris as others" (Atlas).

Site 41BX58 was also recorded during the 1971 Leon Creek Survey; no further work was recommended for the surficial lithic scatter. Another site recorded during the same survey is 41BX59, which is a large campsite at the confluence of the creek and a small tributary. No diagnostic artifacts are noted; however, site 41BX59 was recommended for testing (Atlas).

Site 41BX74, an open campsite, was also recorded during the 1971 Leon Creek Survey. The site was again revisited in 2007, at which time it was reported destroyed by residential construction (Atlas). Site 41BX1250, an open campsite, was recorded during Weir's 1977 Bandera Commons Apartments Survey Project. No further work was recommended (Atlas). Finally, site 41BX1725 was recorded within a mile of the project area by THC Steward David Calame in 2007. No diagnostics were noted among the surficial lithic scatter, which had been impacted by residential development. No further work was recommended (Atlas).

## ***RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION***

On April 10, 2009, an intensive pedestrian and subsurface archaeological survey was conducted by SWCA archaeologists at the proposed 65.5-acre project area. The project area occupies upland terraces and the eroded, broad floodplain of French Creek (Figures 3 and 4). The APE is mainly level to gently-

sloping with broad areas of erosion in floodplain from the center to the northeastern end of the APE (Figures 5 and 6). At the northeast corner of the project area is a berm along French Creek's left bank. This portion of the project area (approximately 35 acres) had been surveyed for archeological resources in 1977 on behalf of the EPA, as detailed above. Based on the age of this previous survey, the current survey included all 65.5 acres.

The project area has been previously cleared of vegetation, except along the riparian corridor of French Creek, where large oaks and immature invasive tree species predominate. A water well, stock pond, and associated canals are still preserved in the park, although the stock tank has been drained and is overgrown. Several two-track roads have traversed the project area in the past, while presently 1.1 miles of walking trails and concrete sidewalks outline and connect the developed areas of the park that encompass 28 of the total 65.5 acres (SAPARD 2009). There are also previous disturbances evidenced by the boulder piles and refuse along the creek's right bank. The surface of the project area has also been compromised by the disposal of debris, vegetation, and refuse in various places (Figure 7).

Fourteen shovel tests were excavated within the 65.5-acre project area (Figure 8, Table 1). THC's survey standards for projects of this size recommend one shovel test per two acres, or in this case, 33. Thus, the survey deviated from the standards based on the availability of exposures and on the observed prior disturbances mentioned above.

More than half of the project area was assessed as low probability areas, including the landscaped park development, the highly eroded portions of the creek, and the southern end near Guilbeau Road where the broad

creek channel appeared artificial (Figures 9 and 10). The 14 shovel tests conducted during this survey concentrated on the remaining acreage that was assessed as having a higher probability to contain buried intact cultural resources.

The shovel tests were terminated at depths of 10–45 centimeters below surface (cmbs) due to the presence of hardpan clay or impenetrable gravel. Soils consisted of friable to blocky clay or sandy loam atop dense clay or gravel. Surface visibility of the uplands was typically good (ca. 50-75%) with leaf litter obscuring the surface along the creek's riparian corridor.

Shovel tests (STs) 1–4 were placed on the left bank of French Creek because the right bank had boulders and debris piled along it amongst the riparian corridor (Figure 11). In the vicinity of STs 3 and 4, a berm had been constructed along the creek's left bank (Figure 12). Severe erosion was noted at the confluence of a tributary and the main channel of French Creek, between STs 4 and 5. ST 5 was placed on the right bank of the creek, while ST 6 was excavated in the adjacent pasture.

ST 7 was placed adjacent to the well location in the riparian corridor along the left bank of French Creek. ST 8 was excavated along the same bank, about 100 m south near the confluence of the creek and an artificial canal that runs east-west between the main creek channel and a tributary. This artificial canal appears to have functioned with the well and stock pond complex.

STs 9 and 10 were placed on the upland terrace south and west of the well and stock pond in areas that resemble former pastures, while STs 11–13 were excavated along the left bank of a tributary of French Creek. The



**Figure 3.** Overview of typical vegetation and ground visibility on the uplands within the project area.



**Figure 4.** Example of the eroded banks of French Creek within the project area.



**Figure 5.** The right bank of French Creek near the APE's northeastern corner.



**Figure 6.** French Creek at the APE's northeastern corner.



**Figure 7.** View of debris in the project area.

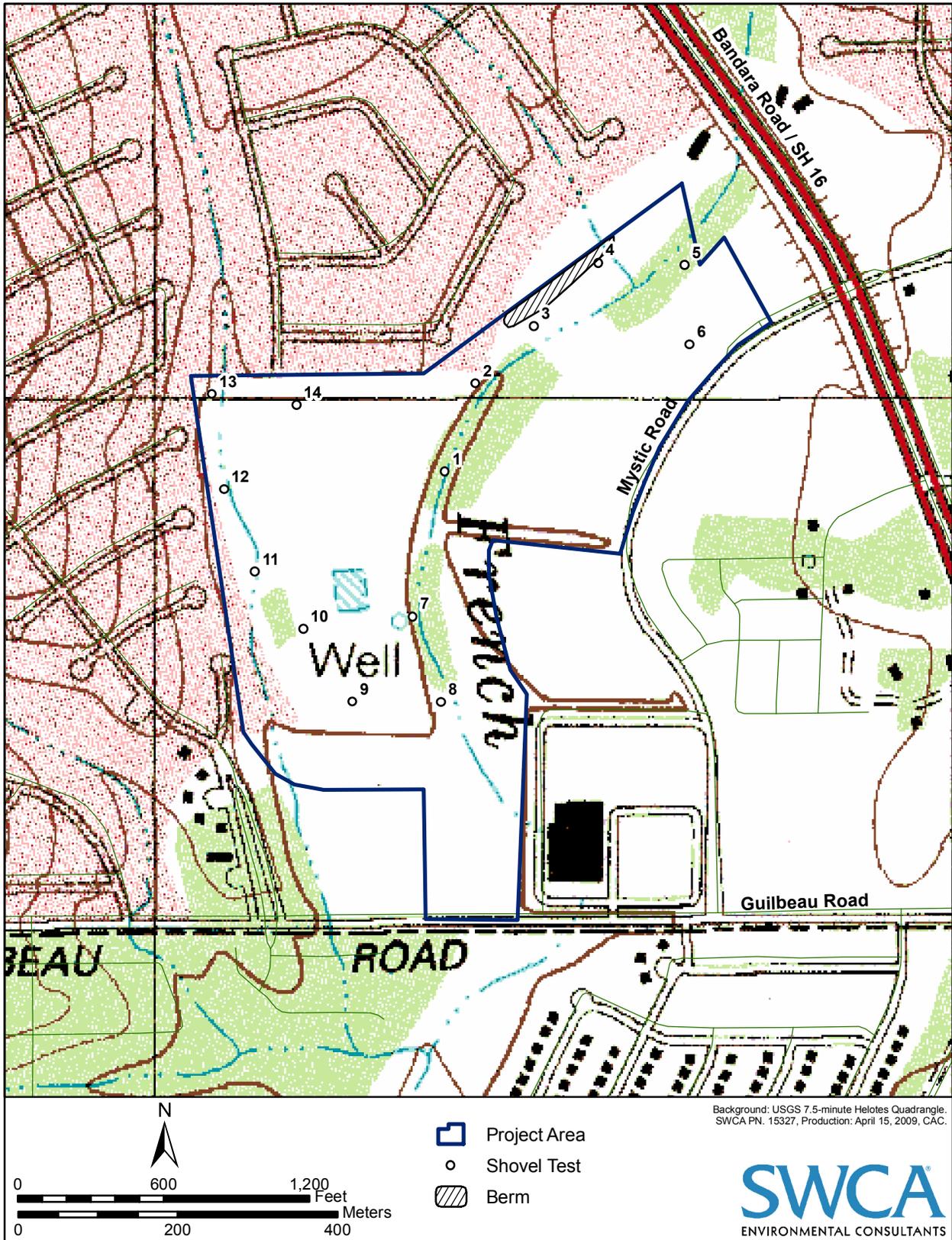


Figure 8. Shovel Test Locations.

**Table 1.** Shovel Test Data

Shovel Test #	Depth (cmbs)	Munsell	Soil Color	Soil Texture Description	Inclusions	Comments
1	1-15	10YR2/1	black	clay	roots	medium-sized sandstone cobbles at 15 cmbs
	15-20	10YR3/3	dark brown	clay	roots	redder clay
2	0-40	7.5YR4/3	brown	blocky clay	rootlets	mature live oaks with yaupon and cedar understory
3	0-5	10YR3/2	very dark grayish brown	clay loam	30-50% gravel	small- and medium-sized gravel
4	0-40	10YR3/4	dark yellowish brown	friable clay	rootlets	small- and medium-sized Chinaberry trees
5	0-20	10YR3/3	dark brown	clay	2% gravel	clay content increases with depth
6	0-20	10YR4/6	dark yellowish brown	sandy loam	gravel	pasture
	20-40	10YR4/4	dark yellowish brown	clay	none	none
7	0-5	10YR3/2	very dark grayish brown	silty loam	rootlets	very organic top soil, near well pavillion
	5-10	10YR6/4	light yellowish brown	silty loam	none	degrading sandstone, silty with tiny pebbles
8	0-20	10YR4/6	dark yellowish brown	sandy loam	gravel	mesquite and grass
	20-30	10YR4/4	dark yellowish brown	clay	gravel	at creek confluence
9	0-10	10YR3/3	dark brown	silty loam	30-50% gravel	treeless area between two drainages, dried reeds on surface
	10-25	10YR3/3	dark brown	clay	5-10 % gravel	moist and sticky
10	0-25	10YR4/6	dark yellowish brown	sandy loam	rootlets	occasional limestone rock
	25-35	10YR4/4	dark yellowish brown	clay	no gravel	pasture near well
11	0-10	10YR4/2	dark grayish brown	silty loam	<2% gravel	20 m east of residences' back fencelines
	10-30	10YR3/2	very dark grayish brown	clay	none	moist and sticky
12	0-20	10YR4/6	dark yellowish brown	loamy clay	rootlets	oaks and grass
	20-45	10YR4/4	dark yellowish brown	clay	none	along backyard fences
13	0-10	10YR4/2	dark grayish brown	silty loam	none	near big oak tree
	10-25	10YR3/2	very dark grayish brown	clay	none	moist and sticky
14	0-10	10YR4/4	dark yellowish brown	clay	gravel	grassy Frisbee golf infield



**Figure 9.** The developed portions of the park include recent landscaping, concrete walkways and playgrounds.



**Figure 10.** French Creek at Guilbeau Road, facing north



**Figure 11.** The right bank of French Creek contains large boulders and rock piles, presumably from adjacent land clearing.



**Figure 12.** Berm along the left bank of French Creek.

shallowest investigation was ST 14, which was in the infield of the disc golf course.

The investigation of the 65.5-acre project area resulted in entirely negative findings. No cultural materials, aside from modern refuse, were identified either on the surface or within any shovel test.

## **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

On behalf of COSA, SWCA conducted a cultural resources investigation of the 65.5-acre Nani Falcone Skate Park project located in northwest San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. Work was done to satisfy requirements of the Texas Antiquities Code under permit number 5234.

The background review revealed that the eastern half of the project area (roughly 35 acres) was surveyed in 1977 as part of investigations by CAR at UTSA on behalf of the EPA, yet there are no previously recorded sites within the project area. Fourteen previously recorded archaeological sites and seven additional archeological surveys are recorded within a one-mile radius of the project area.

The project area has been previously cleared of vegetation, except along the riparian corridor of French Creek. A prior water well, stock pond, and associated canals are still preserved in the park, which also features 1.1 miles of walking trails and concrete sidewalks outlining and connecting the developed areas of the park. There are also previous disturbances evidenced in part by the boulder piles and refuse along the creek's right bank.

More than half of the project area was assessed as low probability areas, including the landscaped park development, the highly eroded portions of the creek, and the southern end near Guilbeau Road where the broad

creek channel appeared artificial. The 14 shovel tests conducted during this survey concentrated on the remaining acreage that was assessed as having a higher probability to contain buried intact cultural resources. No cultural materials were identified on the surface or within any of the shovel test excavations.

Based upon the results of current investigations, it is SWCA's opinion that the development of the project area will have no adverse impacts on significant cultural resources. SWCA recommends no further archaeological investigations within the project area.

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