

**CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY OF HIGH-PROBABILITY AREAS AT THE
WESTWINDS PROJECT AREA, BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS**

Prepared for

PAPE-DAWSON ENGINEERS, INC.

555 East Ramsey
San Antonio, Texas 78216

Prepared by

Mindy L. Bonine and Kristi E. Turner

SWCA® ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

4407 Monterey Oaks Blvd.
Building 1, Suite 110
Austin, Texas 78749
www.swca.com

Principal Investigator

Kevin A. Miller

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ABSTRACT

On behalf of Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc., SWCA conducted a survey within high-probability areas at the Westwinds project area, located at the southwestern corner of Loop 1604 and Culebra Road, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The Westwinds project area is part of a larger 3,200-acre Alamo Ranch/Westwinds property, which is bordered by Culebra Road to the north, Loop 1604 and a residential subdivision to the east and southeast, and a small subdivision to the southwest. Westwinds forms the northern half of the overall project area. Culebra and Helotes creeks are located less than 0.5 miles to the north-northeast. The project would involve various surface and subsurface impacts related to the construction of houses, utilities, structures, and roads. Based on the results of the archaeological background records review in December 2004 and consultation with Ms. Kay Hinder of the City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Office (HPO), the current investigation concentrated on a subsurface investigation with backhoe trenching of terraces surrounding a “Y” shaped tributary within the north-eastern corner of the property.

The background records review revealed that no previous surveys had been conducted within the project area and no previously recorded sites were located within the project area boundaries. Ten previously recorded sites and at least two surveys were located within 1 mile of the project area, but none of the sites have been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or warranted State Archeological Landmark designation. The background review also indicated the geology and soils of the majority of the Westwinds project area consist of a very shallow upland setting with very little potential for sites with good integrity. Thus, the HPO determined that an investigation of only the deeper soils along the “Y” shaped tributary of Culebra Creek would be necessary. During the field investigation, archaeologists traversed the approximately 20 acres surrounding the tributary and excavated seven backhoe trenches. The survey revealed silty loam and clay over bedrock, with bedrock depth ranging from 100–170 cmbs. No cultural resources were located during the survey. Based on these findings, the proposed project will have no effect on significant cultural resources. No additional archaeological investigations are recommended.

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

PROJECT TITLE: Cultural Resource Survey of High-Probability Areas at the Westwinds Project Area, Bexar County, Texas.

SWCA PROJECT NUMBER: 9495-004.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: SWCA was contracted to conduct a survey of high probability areas at the Westwinds project area, which were recommended for survey by Ms. Kay Hinds of the City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Office (HPO). The Westwinds development would involve various surface and subsurface impacts related to the construction of houses, utilities, structures, and roads. An archaeological background records review of the Westwinds project area was conducted as part of a larger 3,200-acre property in December 2004, and based on these results, the current investigation concentrated on a subsurface investigation with backhoe trenching of terraces surrounding a tributary within the northern portion of the property.

LOCATION: The Westwinds project area is part of a larger 3,200-acre Alamo Ranch/Westwinds property located at the southwestern corner of Loop 1604 and Culebra Road, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The 3,200-acre property is bordered by Culebra Road to the north, Loop 1604 and a residential subdivision to the east and southeast, and a small subdivision to the southwest. Culebra and Helotes creeks are located less than 0.5 miles to the north-northeast. The property is depicted on the Culebra Hill, La Coste NE, and Helotes USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle maps.

NUMBER OF ACRES SURVEYED: Approximately 20 acres along a “Y” shaped drainage.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kevin A. Miller.

DATES OF WORK: April 1, 2005.

PURPOSE OF WORK: The project sponsor is complying with the City of San Antonio’s Historic Preservation and Design Section of the Unified Development Code.

NUMBER OF SITES: None.

CURATION: No artifacts were collected, and nothing was curated.

COMMENTS: Although the terraces adjacent to the tributary of Culebra Creek was of some depth and contained the possibility of buried archaeological sites, no cultural material was located within any of the backhoe trenches or on the ground surface. The main channel of the “Y” had been channelized, and the ground surrounding the two forks had been heavily modified through plowing and tree removal. No further work is recommended.

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc., SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) conducted a cultural resource investigation of the Westwinds project area, located within the northern portion of a 3,200-acre property located at the southwest corner of Loop 1604 and Culebra Road (Figure 1). An archaeological background records review of the 3,200-acre property was conducted in December 2004, and based on the results of the review and consultation with Ms. Kay Hinds of the San Antonio Historic Preservation Office (HPO), an agreement was reached concerning further work within the Westwinds project area. Subsequent investigations included an intensive pedestrian survey with backhoe trenching of portions of the property that surround a “Y” shaped tributary of Culebra Creek. The purpose of the investigation was to determine if the undertaking would adversely affect significant cultural resources, and to assist in complying with the City of San Antonio’s Historic Preservation and Design Section of the Unified Development Code.

The survey was conducted by Kevin Miller, the principal investigator, and Mindy Bonine, the project archaeologist, who were assisted by two archaeological field technicians. The fieldwork was conducted on April 1, 2005.

DEFINITION OF STUDY AREA

The 3,200-acre property, named Alamo Ranch/Westwinds, is situated southwest of the intersection of Culebra Road and Loop 1604 in northwestern Bexar County, at the edge of the San Antonio corporate boundary. Westwinds forms the northern half of the larger project area. The property, which appears on the Culebra Hill, La Coste NE, and Helotes 7.5 minute USGS quadrangle maps, is bordered by Culebra Road to the north, Loop 1604 and a residential subdivision

called North San Antonio Hills to the east and southeast, and a small residential subdivision called Jaybar Ranch to the southwest. Roft Road and a portion of Culebra Hill border the northwesternmost edge of the property. Additionally, the property surrounds but does not include the William H. Taft High School and the Cordi Marian Villa Convent and Chapel properties. The remainder of the lands bordering the Alamo Ranch/Westwinds property is undeveloped. Culebra Creek is located less than 0.5 miles north-northeast of the property; Culebra Creek drains northwest to southeast, and Helotes Creek flows north-south and intersects with Culebra Creek just east of Loop 1604.

The proposed development of the 3,200-acre property would include the construction of roads, houses, structures, and utilities, involving a variety of surficial and subsurface impacts. Currently, very few developmental impacts are located within the project area, and include dirt roads, a high-voltage power line right-of-way (ROW), two gas pipeline ROWs, and a cluster of standing structures. These standing structures as well as drainages within the southern portion of the 3,200-acre property were investigated for potential archaeological and historic significance; the results of those investigations are presented in a separate report (Bonine and Turner 2005).

METHODS

BACKGROUND REVIEW

SWCA conducted a background archeological literature and records search of the entire 3,200-acre property in December 2004. An SWCA archaeologist searched the Texas Historic Sites Atlas (Atlas) online database for any previously recorded surveys and historic or prehistoric archeological sites located in or near the project area. In addition to identifying recorded

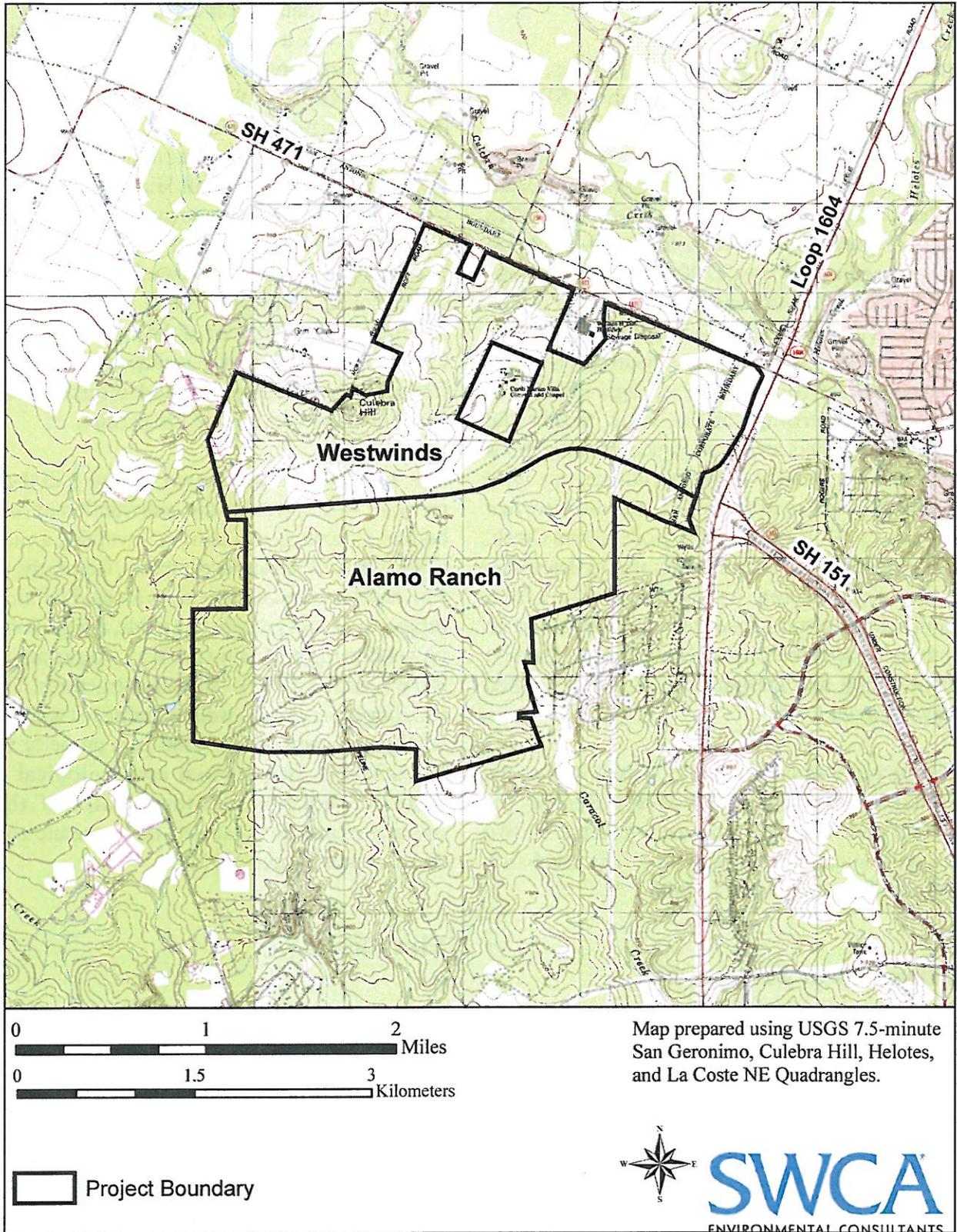


Figure 1. Project location map.

archeological sites, the review included the following types of information on the Atlas: National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) properties, State Archeological Landmarks (SALs), Official Texas Historical Markers (OTHMs), Registered Texas Historic Landmarks (RTHLs), cemeteries, and local neighborhood surveys. The archaeologist also examined the following sources: the *Soil Survey of Bexar County, Texas*, the *Geologic Atlas of Texas*, and the Culebra Hill, La Coste NE, and Helotes, Texas USGS 7.5-minute topographic maps of the project area. A review of aerial photographs was conducted to assist in determining whether any standing buildings are located on the property and utilized maps and photos on the City of San Antonio's GIS Mapping Application, an online resource (<http://maps.sanantonio.gov/website/COSAMaps/viewer.asp>).

FIELD METHODS

Based on the recommendations by the HPO, the field investigation of the Westwinds project area concentrated only on areas surrounding the "Y" shaped tributary in the northeastern corner of the project area. This area was investigated with backhoe trenches and a pedestrian survey to determine the presence and potential significance of cultural resources. As the majority of the project area (90 percent) comprises Tarrant association soils, which are made of gently undulating limestone prairies of stony soils that are very shallow (Taylor et al. 1962), these areas were not investigated; the potential to contain significant cultural resources is considered low in such soils. Areas that did contain the potential for buried archaeological sites, such as areas around the "Y" shaped tributary, comprising about 20 acres, warranted subsurface investigations.

One fork of the tributary begins near a dirt road just south of the intersection of the dirt road and Culebra Road, and travels east-southeast where it meets up with the second fork of the tributary, which is traveling downward from the south. The forks converge just east of the high-voltage power line ROW, and combine into one tributary traveling east. The tributary bends sharply to the north and meets Culebra Road about 800 feet (243.82 m) west of the intersection of Culebra Road and Loop 1604. Towards the tips of the two forks, the soils became increasing shallow and rocky. A visual survey of the areas surrounding the two forks indicates that the area had recently been bulldozed, clearing much of the existing foliage and exposing the shallow soils and bedrock. As the soils appear to be very rocky and shallow in these areas, backhoe trenches were not deemed necessary, and a visual inspection was conducted instead. Thus, only the areas on either side of the main channel were investigated with backhoe trenches.

A total of seven backhoe trenches was placed on the terraces surrounding the tributary. They were excavated to basal bedrock. Trenches were placed approximately 100 m apart, following the contour of the tributary. Archaeologists monitored the progress of excavation, looking for signs of cultural material in the trench walls or floor. Each trench was recorded on a backhoe trench form, which noted depth, color and type of soil, inclusions, boundary delineations, and presence or absence of cultural material. Environmental conditions were documented with notes and photographs, and select representative trenches were also photographed. Each backhoe trench was mapped with a Global Positioning System (GPS) and plotted on topographic maps.

RESULTS

BACKGROUND REVIEW

The Culebra Hill USGS 7.5-minute topographic map indicates that 90 percent of the project area is situated on limestone prairies, between Caracol Creek to the south and the confluence of Culebra and Helotes Creeks to the northeast. The majority of the project area appears to be uplands with only a slight topographic change at the southern and northeastern edges of the project area.

The background literature review revealed that the project area has not been previously surveyed for archeological resources and that no archeological sites have been recorded within the project area boundaries. Several surveys have been conducted nearby, although documentation of only two could be located. However, ten previously recorded sites (41BX126, 41BX327, 41BX708–711, 41BX1422–1424, and 41BX1465) are located within 1 mile of the project area.

PREVIOUSLY CONDUCTED SURVEYS

In 1985, archaeologists from the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation (SDHPT) conducted a 6.1-mile long archeological survey from State Highway (SH) 16 to Loop 1604, immediately west of the current project area. The project involved improving the existing two lane farm-to-market highway to an arterial four-lane highway within 220 feet of new ROW. During the survey, no historic structures were identified, although one previously recorded site (41BX327) was located adjacent to the ROW (Holzman 1985). No evidence of the site was found within the ROW. A description of site 41BX327 is provided below.

In 1993, archaeologists with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) conducted a cultural resources survey with shovel testing of 13.3 miles of Loop 1604, immediately west and southwest of the current project area. The project entailed widening Loop 1604 from two lanes to four lanes, and was conducted within 300-feet of existing ROW from 1 mile west of SH 16 to U.S. Highway 90. Archaeologists located four prehistoric and two historic sites during the survey (TxDOT 1993). Of these, only one site (41BX126) is located within 1 mile of the current project area and is described below.

PREVIOUSLY RECORDED SITES

There are no recorded NRHP properties, SALs, OTHMs, RTHLs, or cemeteries in the project area, and none are located within 1 mile of the project area. The previously recorded sites within 1 mile of the project area are described below.

41BX126

Site 41BX126, a prehistoric open campsite, roughly dating to the Archaic period, was recorded in 1971 by Paul and Ellen McGuff during an archeological survey conducted on behalf of SDHPT. The site sits at the base of a hill approximately 400 feet east of Helotes Creek. At the time the site was recorded, it was considered to have been in good condition. No subsurface work was conducted. Artifacts observed on the surface included debitage, worked flakes, bifaces, and one Pedernales projectile point. The recording archaeologists suggested testing of the site prior to the road expansion. No recommendation as to the sites' eligibility for listing on the NRHP or potential for SAL status was provided.

41BX327

Site 41BX327 is described as a Pleistocene faunal locality. This site was recorded in 1977, and was revisited in 1985 during an archeological survey of 13.3 miles within the existing Loop 1604 ROW in northwestern San Antonio (Holzman 1985). The site is located approximately 1 mile south of Loop 1604 on Culebra Road within a rock quarrying facility. The area is part of the Helotes Creek drainage. Materials collected from alluvial soils include a nearly complete tusk, large long bone, skull, and tooth fragments belonging an Imperial Mammoth (*Mammuthus imperator*). In addition, some bison bones were reported, but no information is provided on the Texas archeological site form. All of the materials collected were donated by the landowner to the Center for Archeological Research (CAR) at The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). No recommendation as to the sites' eligibility for listing on the NRHP or potential for SAL status was provided.

41BX708–41BX711

Sites 41BX708, 41BX709, and 41BX710 are all prehistoric burned rock middens associated with the Archaic period. These sites were recorded along the banks of Culebra Creek in northwest San Antonio in 1986 by Texas Archeological Society member C.K. Chandler. Sites 41BX708–710 consist of large burned rock middens with associated cultural debris including flakes, cores, dart points, and faunal remains. Site 41BX708 is the most extensive, yielding one pottery sherd, several untyped projectile points and lithic blades. Sites 41BX708–710 are considered to have been in good condition, although some moderate disturbances caused by pot hunting were evident. Also recorded by Chandler, site 41BX711 is a historic house built in the 1840s from limestone, and is also known as the “old

Hoffman stone house.” Site 41BX711 was being repaired and renovated at the time it was recorded. No recommendation as to the sites' eligibility for listing on the NRHP or potential for SAL status was provided.

41BX1422–41BX1424

Sites 41BX1422 and 41BX1423 are prehistoric burned rock middens recorded by CAR archaeologists from UTSA during an archeological survey conducted in 1999. These sites are located on the terraces of Culebra Creek. Site 41BX1422 contained two distinct areas and types of burned rock formation dating to the Archaic and Late Prehistoric periods. These included one dome-shaped concentration standing 60 cm above the ground surface and a flat subsurface linear burned rock concentration. Shovel testing was conducted to determine the extent of the site and a 1 x 1 m test unit was excavated to explore a buried hearth feature. Artifacts collected include unmodified debitage, one arrow point, one dart point, and a few lithic tools. Site 41BX1422 was considered to have low research value due to heavy disturbance and was not recommended for further investigation.

Site 41BX1423, another burned rock midden dating to the Archaic and Late Prehistoric periods, was shovel tested and mechanically trenched. Materials collected include unmodified debitage, one arrow point, one dart point, and a few lithic tools.

Site 41BX1424 is described as a lithic procurement locality recorded during the same archeological survey conducted by CAR archaeologists in 1999. This site is located on the north bank of a small tributary of Culebra Creek. Site 41BX1424 is a surficial site with no subsurface materials recorded from shovel testing. The artifacts observed on the surface include debitage and cores. Site 41BX1423 is

also considered to have low research value due to the paucity of observed artifacts and lack of diagnostic materials. The site was not recommended for further investigation.

41BX1465

Site 41BX1465 was recorded in 2001 during an archeological survey conducted by Geo-Marine, Inc. The site is described as a prehistoric lithic quarry consisting of flakes and cores located on a terrace overlooking Culebra Creek. No temporally diagnostic materials were observed and no artifacts were collected. A limited number of shovel tests was excavated, and the site is considered to have a low research value due to modern disturbance and bioturbation. No further work was recommended.

FIELD SURVEY

On April 1, 2005, four SWCA archaeologists conducted an intensive pedestrian survey with subsurface backhoe trenching of the approximately 20 acres surrounding the “Y” shaped tributary within the northeastern corner of the Westwinds project area (Figure 2). This area was determined by the background records review and consultation with the HPO to have the most potential to contain intact subsurface cultural resources within the project area. The remaining areas within the property comprise upland shallow rocky soils with outcrops of bedrock, and subsurface investigations were not deemed necessary.

The majority of the 20-acre area surrounding the tributary consisted of small flat terraces containing field grasses and very few trees (Figure 3). These areas were concentrated on the eastern side of the tributary at the main channel. At the southern side of the tributary’s main channel, large vegetation had been removed to convert the land into fields, and the

terrace had been plowed; however, the disturbances appeared to be relatively shallow. On the northern side of the tributary’s main channel, large vegetation had also been removed, but the disturbances appeared to be deeper, including the top 40–50 cm of the soil. Moving westward, the terrain changed to include more trees and shallower soil (Figure 4). The portion of the tributary that crossed the power line ROW had been completely altered and leveled. The tributary itself consisted of exposed bedrock and gravels (Figure 5), which had been observably channelized. As mentioned above, a visual inspection of the forks of the tributary found severe disturbances and shallow soils, and that area was not investigated with backhoe trenches (Figure 6). A surface reconnaissance of this area did not encounter any cultural material.

A total of seven backhoe trenches was excavated around the main channel of the tributary, four on the northern side and three on the southern side. Six of the trenches were excavated on the terrace adjacent to the tributary, but backhoe trench (BHT) 6 was placed at a slightly higher elevation away from the tributary in the plowed field. The trenches revealed 50–60 cm of friable dark brown (10YR3/2) silt loam and clay loam over 60–80 cm of yellowish brown clay (10YR4/4) covering the bedrock below (Figure 7). The depth of bedrock ranged from 100 to 170 cmbs. Plow zones were seen in all of the trenches. One trench, BHT 5, contained a layer of reddish brown (7.5YR4/4) clay above the bedrock. Otherwise, all of the trenches contained similar profiles.

No cultural materials or features were identified in any of the trenches. Additionally, no cultural materials were encountered in any exposures or on the surface of the project area. Of note, no raw chert materials were observed on the surface or within the channel deposits of the tributary.

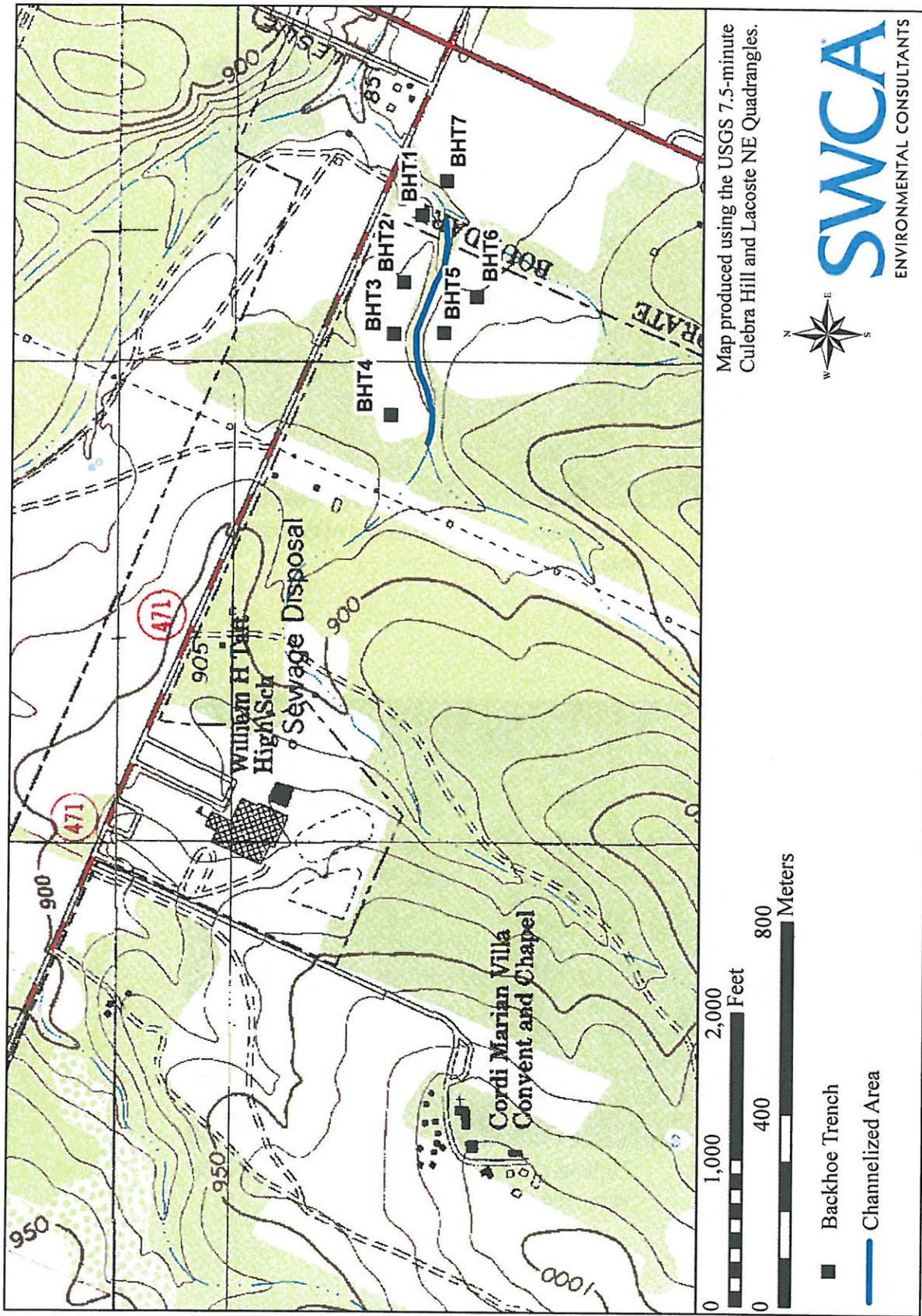


Figure 2. Project area map.



Figure 3. Field grasses at the eastern end of the surveyed area.



Figure 4. Upland areas located at the west side of the surveyed area.

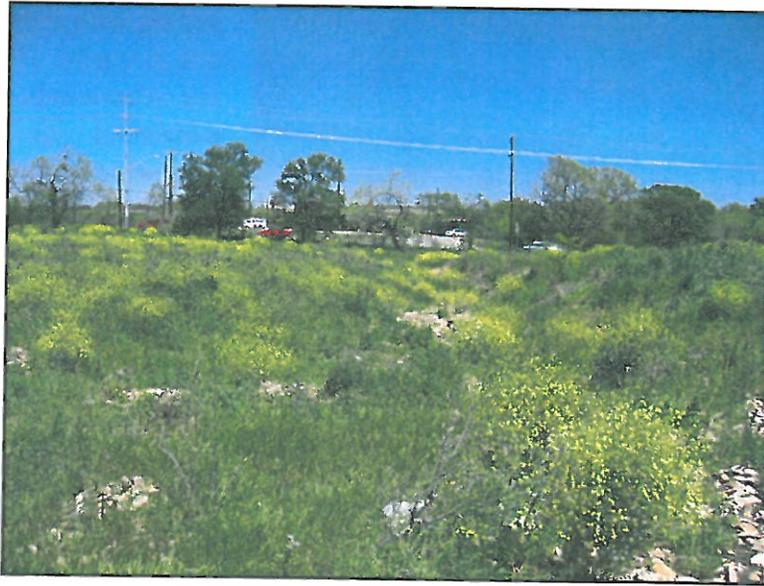


Figure 5. Base of “Y” shaped tributary, facing north.



Figure 6. Bulldozed area and brush piles located around the forks of the tributary.



Figure 7. BHT 6, located on the southern side of the tributary.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SWCA conducted a cultural resource investigation within the northeastern corner of the Westwinds project area, which consists of the northern portion of the Alamo Ranch/Westwinds property, a 3,200-acre property located at the southwest corner of Loop 1604 and Culebra Road, Bexar County, Texas. The work was designed to determine if the undertaking would adversely affect significant cultural resources, and to comply with the City of San Antonio's Historic Preservation and Design Section of the Unified Development Code.

The background records review revealed no previous surveys were conducted within the project area and no previously recorded sites were located within the project area boundaries. Ten previously recorded sites and at least two surveys were located within 1 mile of the project area, but none of the sites have been determined eligible for the NRHP, or warranted SAL designation. The background review also indicated the geology and soils of the majority

of the Westwinds project area consist of a very shallow upland setting with very little potential for site integrity. The only portions of the Westwinds project area with potential to contain intact subsurface cultural material were the terraces surrounding a "Y" shaped tributary that feeds into Culebra Creek. These areas were investigated with a pedestrian survey and backhoe trenching.

During the field investigation, archaeologists surveyed the project area and found the two forks of the "Y" had recently been bulldozed, clearing much of the existing foliage and exposing the shallow soils and

bedrock. As the soils appeared to be very rocky and shallow in these areas, backhoe trenches were not deemed necessary, and a visual inspection was conducted instead. Within the remainder of the 20 acre area, seven backhoe trenches were placed on both sides of the tributary. They were excavated to bedrock, which ranged in depth from 100 to 170 cmbs, and the soils encountered consisted of silty loam and clays.

No cultural material, features, intact deposits, or historic features were encountered during the pedestrian survey or within the backhoe trenches. Based on these findings, no significant cultural resources will be affected by the proposed project, and no additional archaeological investigations are recommended.

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