

## 2024 Secretary of the Navy Environmental Award Nomination Naval Air Station Fallon

### Cultural Resource Management – Large Installation

#### INTRODUCTION

##### *Installation History*

Naval Air Station (NAS) Fallon's Cultural Resource Program has made significant strides in managing cultural resources within the installation's boundaries. Located in the High Desert of Nevada's Great Basin and currently spanning 860,000 acres, NAS Fallon represents 35 percent of the Navy's total land holdings in the United States. The installation's mission is to contribute to all phases of naval aviation and naval special warfare training 90 days before deployment. More than 1,400 military and civilians provide the most realistic training available for carrier air wings, consisting of more than 60 aircraft and associated support crews of 1,000 to 1,500 personnel. Military personnel from the Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Nevada Air National Guard train at NAS Fallon.

The installation was established as part of the Army Air Corps' Western Defense Program in 1942. The Defense Program's goal was to establish inland fighter bases to counter a successful Japanese west coast invasion. Contemporary sources repeatedly cited Fallon's dry and clear climate as a desirable characteristic for flying warplanes compared to military bases in coastal California that tended to be foggy. With the defeat of the Japanese Fleet at the Battle of Midway in June of 1942, the base's primary mission changed to training, servicing, and support to air groups deploying for combat training, which remains one of its primary missions. In 2009 the training of Navy Special Operations personnel was added to its mission.

Approximately 97 percent of NAS Fallon's land holdings have been left undisturbed and are home to sizeable prehistoric habitation and smaller resource procurement camps that border ancient Lake Lahontan and Carson Lake. NAS Fallon currently contains six Native American sensitive

sites associated with traditional cultural practices. Areas directly bordering NAS Fallon's Training ranges include remnants of Pony Express Stations and the California Emigrant National Historic Trail. NAS Fallon Main Station contains multiple features associated with the Newlands Project Historic District, which was an irrigation system constructed in the early 1900s as part of a national effort to entice settlement in the interior west of the country.



Historic Spring Box Located in Dixie Valley Settlement

##### *Installation Cultural Resource Policy*

The NAS Fallon Cultural Resource Program manages the resources located on the installation consistent with federal regulation, Department of Defense (DoD), and Navy goals. These goals consist of managing and maintaining cultural properties to preserve historical, archaeological, architectural, and cultural values, which results in sound and responsible stewardship. To meet DoD and Navy goals, the cultural resource program at NAS Fallon has developed and implemented several initiatives: 1) Long term planning, 2) Understanding of installation and tenant missions and objectives, 3) Coordination and consultation with tribes, and 4) Project support for other Environmental Management Programs.

**BACKGROUND**

*NAS Fallon Cultural Team*

The NAS Fallon Cultural Team consists of Mike Baskerville, Archaeologist; Jessica Elrod, Contract Archaeologist; Kish LaPierre, Native American Tribal Liaison; and Toni Burton, Tribal Coordinator.

*NAS Fallon Cultural Team Responsibilities*

Mike Baskerville and Jessica Elrod conduct field inventories, document sites, conduct background research, write reports, and conduct the more routine consultations with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer, Tribes and local historic interest groups. Additionally they manage the cultural Geographical Information System (GIS) system, paper and electronic records. Kish LaPierre sets the agenda for Tribal consultation and is responsible for developing program direction and agreements. She also ensures that the installation is following through on its agreements. Toni Burton acts as coordinator between the tribes and the Navy. She is responsible for ensuring ongoing coordination between installation staff and Tribes on various efforts of mutual interest.

*Cultural Team Training*

Team training was impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic and Installation responsibilities, however during this award period Kish LaPierre attended the NAVFAC Presentation Course and Mike Baskerville completed a Master’s Program in History with a focus on Military History. This will assist the installation with consultation efforts related to historic period properties located on the installation and in the region. Additionally the team as a group participated in Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Training and participated in individual classes related to Native American Consultation, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and environmental law.

*ICRMP*

The NAS Fallon Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (ICRMP) was signed in 2013. It remains up to date on current cultural policies at NAS Fallon. An update of the ICRMP is being drafted. Starting the new draft was delayed pending Congressional approval of the Fallon Range Training Complex Modernization.

*Programmatic Agreement*

The NAS Fallon Programmatic Agreement (PA) was signed in 2011 and was extended in 2020. A draft of an updated PA is currently being internally reviewed. The new draft contains substantial number of proposed improvements related to consultation timelines and undertakings exempt from consultation. Additionally the PA eliminates differing consultation requirements for Navy fee lands and the ranges.

*Geographical Information System*

NAS Fallon manages information associated with inventories, prehistoric and historic sites, and buildings. Information tracked includes age, artifact types, decade of construction and eligibility. This information assists in the management of cultural properties as it allows the cultural team to respond to project reviews quickly and allows seeing how land use has changed over 12,000 years in response to fluctuations in both the natural and cultural environment.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

*Fallon Range Modernization Effort*

In November 2022 Congress approved the Fallon Range Modernization. As part of the modernization effort the Navy agreed to culturally inventory the expansion areas. The entirety of B-16 Range was inventoried as part of the initial Environmental Impact Statement Inventories. Since the approval, expansion inventory efforts have focused on the B-20 and B-17 Ranges. To date 73,590 acres of the 118,000 acres identified

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within the B-20 withdrawal have been inventoried. Of the 183,000 acres identified for inventory in the B-17 Range 13,159 acres have been inventoried.

Inventories of these areas have resulted in the location of sites dating from the early Paleo-Indian period to historic era mining sites.



Dixie Meadows, Important Resource Area  
for Native Americans

Within the B-20 expansion area there was an area proposed as the Stillwater District on the basis that it contains a high concentration of prehistoric habitation sites. The National Register nomination was never completed due to a lack of documented sites to support the nomination. Inventories conducted by the Navy have now documented a sufficient resource to support the resubmission of that nomination. The location of these sites is important as there has been a significant loss of prehistoric villages due to the historic expansion of the Stillwater Marsh area.

Inventories of the B-20 and B-17 expansion areas are being carried out as part of an agreement between the Navy and Native Americans. These inventories are important for range sustainability as they will allow the Navy increased flexibility when designing range use (current and future), as conflicts with resources can be quickly avoided and range projects quickly implemented.

### *Support for Other Resources*

In 2022 an intensive 2,800 acre cultural resources inventory of NAS Fallon's Greenbelt was completed. The Greenbelt at NAS Fallon is utilized to reduce dust hazards around the installation's airfield. Local farmers who lease these spaces grow a variety of crops such as feed corn, alfalfa, and hay. The green spaces play an important role in installation's mission and the local economy.

The inventory documented 106 cultural properties. Cultural properties included prehistoric sites, remnants of historic homesteads, and elements of the Newlands Project Historic District. The Newlands District is a power and irrigation system that was designed by the federal government to develop suitable farmland of the inland areas of the west.

The cultural team is also supporting natural resource efforts related to environmental resiliency studies. Support has come in the form of the development and implementation of a five year study to collect geological samples that will provide information on how natural conditions changed in response to past environmental fluctuations. The information will be used to develop strategies for managing natural resources and fire behavior in response to ongoing environmental changes.

This information would also be beneficial to the cultural resource program as it would provide information on existing gaps on how Native American land use has changed over the previous 12,000 years in response to fluctuations in the natural environment.

### *Native American Outreach*

During the award period, consultation and coordination with the tribes and tribal interest groups have focused on finalizing an Access Agreement for Native American use of the training ranges for the collection of resources and conducting visits to locations important to maintaining individual tribal cultural heritage.

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Additional efforts have focused NAGPRA. These efforts have focused on returning cultural artifacts and human remains that were not previously claimed during earlier NAGPRA repatriation actions.

During this period the NAS Fallon Native American Tribal Liaison staff, and the Installation Commanding Officer Captain Shane Tanner have routinely engaged with the leadership of federally recognized tribes to maintain the kind of positive working relationship that is critical to carrying out the installation's mission. These efforts have included attending tribal community events such as the Walker River Paiute Tribes Annual Pine Nut Festival and the Fallon Paiute- Shoshones Annual Earth Day Event. It should also be noted Under Secretary of the Navy Erik Raven, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Meredith Berger, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy Karnig Ohannessian also participated in these events and have contributed significantly to the installation's efforts to build a long term relationship with the tribes.



Historic Pump House Located in the Dixie Valley Settlement Area

### *Community Engagement*

In 2021, the NAS Fallon Interagency Executive Committee (IEC) was formed to provide local,

state, federal, and tribal agencies the opportunity to make suggestions related to the management of cultural and natural resources. NAS Fallon Archaeologists' and Tribal Liaisons have participated in every IEC meeting since the group was created. Cultural resource program staff have provided briefings about ongoing projects and cultural resource management at the installation.



Boyer Ranch House Constructed in the 1860s, Oldest Building in Churchill County, and Located on Navy Fee Lands

### **CONCLUSION**

NAS Fallon is committed to maintaining the highest standards of cultural resource management on lands managed by the installation. Evidence of this can be found in its continued commitment to working with various tenants to carry on with the installation mission and at the same time manage installation cultural resources consistent with Navy guidance. Additional evidence of commitment can be found in the program's support of other environmental programs when there is an opportunity. Finally, the Native American Tribal Liaison Staff has contributed significantly to the installation mission by reducing conflict through continuous communication focused on building strong relationships.