Volume 2015 Article 194

2015

Cultural Resources Survey for the Montana Vista Proposed Wastewater Facility System, El Paso County, Texas

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TAC #7153

Prepared for

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2015

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Abstract

TRC conducted an intensive, linear pedestrian survey of two proposed option routes for residential wastewater collectors for the Montana Vista Proposed Wastewater Facility System in East El Paso. The project area is located within El Paso County, Texas. The project proposes approximately 188,285 feet of 8-inch sewer lines throughout the residential streets, which will reach depths of approximately 25 feet. A proposed collection line will run along Greg Rd/Edgemere Blvd for approximately 13,150 feet. This collector line will consist of 12-inch, 15-inch, and 18-inch sewer pipes that will reach depths of approximately 35 feet. This proposed collector line will tie into an existing 30-inch line at the intersection of Edgemere Blvd and Tim Floyd. The majority of the roads within the overall project area are paved. Three isolated prehistoric artifacts (two El Paso brownware sherds and one uniface fragment tool) were identified. In addition, the areas appeared highly impacted by localized dumping of furniture, tires, building material, construction material, modern glass beer bottles, off-road vehicle tracks, and wind-blown trash. The archeological pedestrian survey was conducted under TAC #7153. No further work is recommended for the project area.

Project Description

TRC has been contracted by Parkhill, Smith & Cooper (PSC) of El Paso, Texas to conduct a 100-percent intensive, pedestrian survey of approximately 28.11 total acres. Emphasis was recommended along the north portion of Option 1 Transmission Route, intersection of Montana Ave and Mark Jason Dr., going south to intersection of Mark Jason Dr. and Marvin Ln, which was moderately undeveloped. A further area of focus was within Option 1, from Greg Dr. going west towards Rene Dr. (Edgemere Blvd) to an existing tie-in. The area of focus within Option 2 Transmission Route was from the intersection of N. Ascension St. and Greg Dr. going south to Snoqualime (most likely Pebble Hills Blvd), then along Snoqualime going west towards an existing tie-in at Hueco Water Wells. The project area is within El Paso County, Texas, U.S. Geological Survey Topographic Map, Nations South Well Quadrangle (2010), 7.5-minute series, 31106-442 (Figure 1). The survey was conducted in order to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended (16 USC 470, NHPA), 36 CFR 800, and all other federal and state regulations. The archeological pedestrian survey was conducted from January 20 to 23, 2015 by Elia Perez (TRC-Principal Investigator) and Yennifer Palma (TRC-Crew Member).

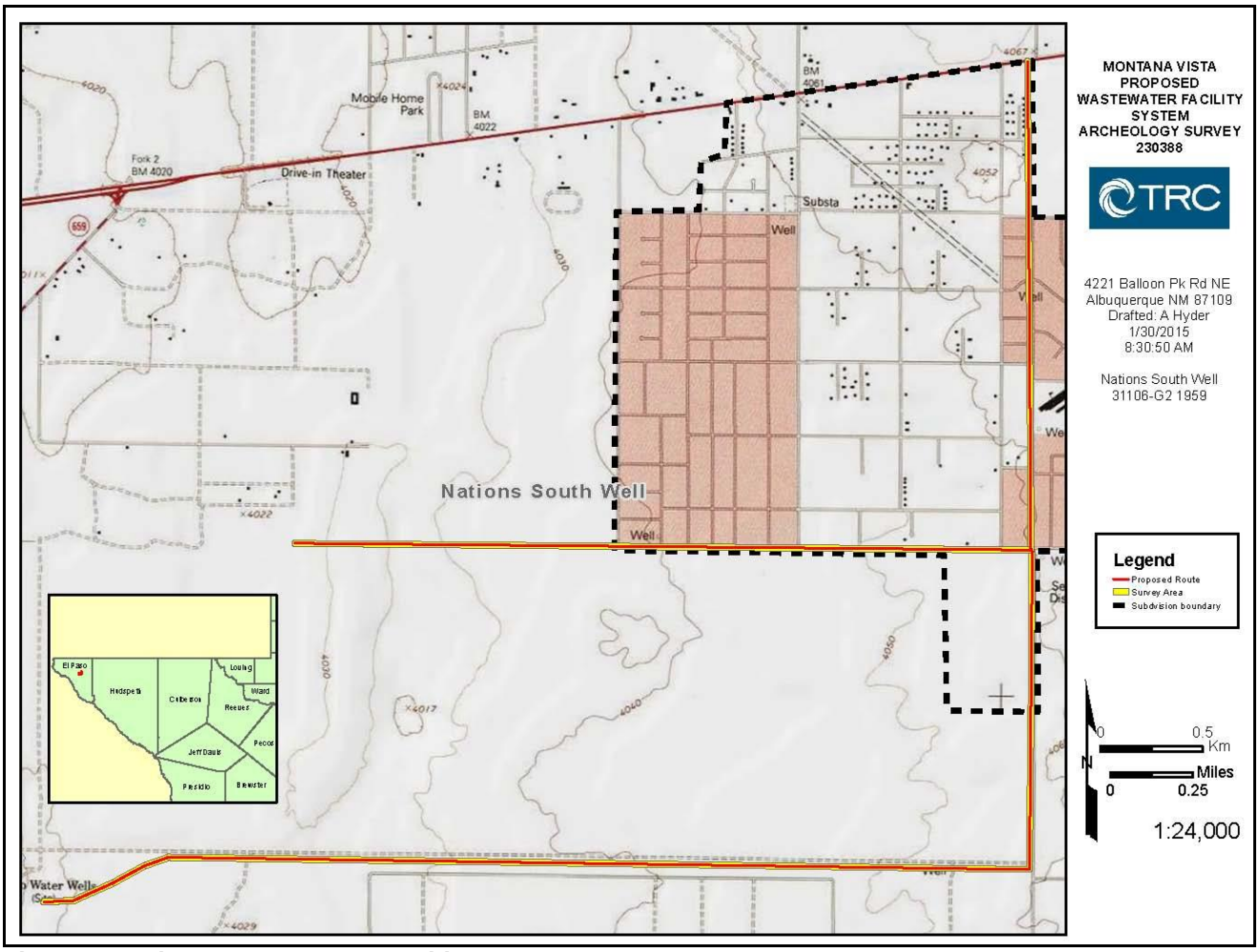

Figure 1. Project Area on Topographic Map.

Environment

The proposed project area is within the Hueco-Wink soil series. The Hueco-Wink Association are soils with "nearly level and gentle slopes that have fine sandy loam subsoil and are moderately deep over caliche" (Jaco 1971:3). The soils are within the Hueco Bolson. Vegetation is characterized as desert scrub consisting of mesquite, creosote bush, various cacti and grasses, soaptree yucca, and occasional Mormon tea and sage brush.

The soils consisted of loose, reddish-brown, coarse- to fine-grained eolian sand with a few to high densities of surface gravels and caliche nodules. The majority of the project area has been impacted by urban development in the form of paved and routinely maintained dirt roads, access roads from Greg Dr. and Snoqualime (most likely Pebble Hills Blvd), as well as roads accessing the on-going development, blading, and leveling for a subdivision north of Snoqualime (most likely Pebble Hills Blvd) going west towards an existing tie-in at Hueco Water Wells (Figure 2). Further impacts included localized dumping of furniture, tires, miscellaneous vehicle parts (bumpers, axles, etc.), construction debris, floor carpets, roof shingles, mattresses, dead animals, modern glass beer bottles, wind-blown trash (plastic bags and paper), and other miscellaneous trash (Figure 3). Vegetation included Russian thistle, ornamental shrubbery, trees, potted plants, mesquite, creosote bush, sage brush, and various gramma grasses. Ground surface visibility was more than 70 percent.

Figure 2. Snoqualime going west towards an existing tie-in at Hueco Water Wells.

Figure 3. Miscellaneous debris, modern glass beer bottles, along Option 1 going west.

Cultural History

The region has a long and varied history from pre-contact to recent historic. Although no prehistoric or historic artifacts were encountered during the pedestrian survey, a brief summary is presented below.

Paleoindian Period (9500 to 6000 B.C.)

The Paleoindian culture dates to the Late Pleistocene period, about 11,500 to 7,000 years ago. The climate was most likely wetter and cooler than in the present day and likely supported a large savanna or open woodlands with more heavily forested areas in the nearby Organ Mountains. Available water in the area supported large game animals. Early Paleoindian populations seemed to be specialized hunters who focused on now-extinct mammals, including mammoth and large bison. The Paleoindian tool assemblages contain finely made spear points, which are comparable over large areas. The earliest accepted complex for this period is referred to as the Clovis (9500 to 9050 B.C.), which is characterized by a relatively large, lanceolate projectile point with a short, wide flute. This spear point was used to hunt now-extinct forms of elephants and other Pleistocene megafauna. The succeeding Folsom complex (9050 to 8150 B.C.) is distinguished by a somewhat smaller point. The Folsom point is also fluted and was used to hunt an extinct form of bison. This complex is followed by the Plano cultural manifestation, which encompasses a series of complexes including Milnesand (8200 to 7200 B.C.), Scottsbluff (7120 to 6650 B.C.), and Firstview (6700 to 5500 B.C.).

Archaic Period (6000 B.C. to A.D. 200)

The presence of distinct projectile point styles and the absence of ceramic technology define the Archaic period. The Archaic period has traditionally included three divisions: Early (6000 to 4300 B.C.), Middle (4300 to 900 B.C.), and Late (900 B.C. to A.D. 200). Work by MacNeish (1993) suggests that locally, the Archaic period may be better divided into four phases. Because MacNeish's (1993) discussion of the local Archaic period includes details not presented elsewhere, much of the following discussion paraphrases his

report and includes his subdivisions: Gardner Springs (6000 to 4300 B.C.), Keystone (4300 to 2600 B.C.), Fresnal (2600 to 900 B.C.), and Hueco (900 B.C. to A.D. 200).

The earliest Archaic phase, Gardner Springs, is the least understood of the four Archaic stages. Jay, Abasolo, and Bajada projectile point styles are identified within this early assemblage (MacNeish 1993; Beckett and MacNeish 1994). MacNeish (1993) also included end scrapers, flake gravers, denticulates, prismatic blades, choppers, mullers, pebble cleavers, milling stones, and pestles in the assemblage.

Preliminary settlement pattern data suggest small bands exploited a variety of microenvironmental zones in the late spring and early summer when seasonal resources became available. During the fall, small groups used a variety of habitats including riverine, basin floors, and mountain terrains. Winter sites tended to be associated with basin floor playas. Because acorns and pinyon nuts could be stored in the winter, some sites tended to be in higher elevations in the fall (MacNeish 1993; Beckett and MacNeish 1994). Consequently, it is possible that mountain rock shelters were occupied during the fall and winter.

Settlement patterns remained fairly static throughout the Gardner Springs phase and into the subsequent Keystone phase. Winter sites are found on the basin floors and along the river, and a variety of habitats were exploited the remainder of the year. For example, the Keystone Dam Site contains a structure tentatively dated to the later part of this phase and may reflect a winter occupation (O'Laughlin 1980). The presence of habitational units may indicate an increase in population, social stress, climatic changes, or a combination of these influences. The Keystone phase is associated with projectile point styles such as Bat Cave, Pelona, Shumla, Gypsum-Almagre, Amargosa, and Todsen.

More archeological data are available for the Fresnal phase than for the previous two phases. During this phase, settlement patterns shifted from a seasonal to a semi-base camp strategy. Short-term or specialized task groups exploited a variety of resources from a central base camp (Binford 1980). The earliest radiocarbon dates on corn for the region indicate that cultigens had been introduced during the Fresnal phase (Tagg 1996). The large number of identified Fresnal phase sites suggests a significant population increase. The projectile points affiliated with this phase include Fresnal, San Jose, Todsen, Augustin, and Chiricahua (MacNeish 1993; Beckett and MacNeish 1994).

The succeeding Hueco phase population may have utilized an increasingly mixed economy. Seasonal, short-term base camps appeared to be associated with specialized task groups exploiting a variety of habitats. The addition of squash and beans to the list of documented cultigens implies expanding horticultural pursuits and may reflect a shift towards more semi-permanent occupations. In addition, large numbers of Hueco sites, found in a variety of habitats, indicate expanded land-use patterns. Projectile point styles identified with this Late Archaic phase include Hueco, San Pedro, Armijo, and Hatch (Beckett and MacNeish 1994). The Hueco phase people may have set the foundation for strategies employed by later Mesilla phase groups.

Formative Period (A.D. 200 to 1450)

The Formative period is marked by the presence of ceramics and, locally, has been divided into three phases: Mesilla, Doña Ana, and El Paso (Lehmer 1948). The adoption of ceramics played a major role in gradually increasing sedentism and the use of cultigens by providing a secure means of storing cached foodstuffs. In the archeological record, the sedentary— or perhaps more appropriately the semi-sedentary—Formative period adaptation is reflected by villages that frequently include comparably large, communal/socio-religious structures (Whalen 1994). The more mobile aspects of Formative period subsistence practices are represented by artifact scatters that predominantly include thermal features and are inferred to reflect foraging and/or logistical subsistence activities.

Mesilla Phase (A.D. 200 to 1100)

The early Mesilla phase (A.D. 200 to 750) appears to represent a continuation of the Hueco phase subsistence pattern, with the addition of undecorated brownware ceramics referred to as El Paso Brown

(Whalen 1994). The early brownware typically exhibits a distinctive tapering of vessel rims or lips, commonly referred to as pinched rims. Brush huts and pit structures comprise the documented habitation structure types, and large pit structures suspected to have served communal functions typically occur on more intensively occupied sites. Subsistence evidently remained focused on hunting and gathering, with horticultural activities constituting a secondary resource (Carmichael 1981, 1985, 1990).

Most early Mesilla phase sites reflect high levels of mobility, with even the structural examples indicating only brief (i.e., seasonal) periods of sedentism (Church and Sale 2003). Mesilla phase habitation sites, however, demonstrate increased occupational intensity (or duration) over the Late Archaic period predecessors (Whalen 1994).

The late Mesilla phase (A.D. 750 to 1100) is seen as a time of population increase, more semi-permanent habitations, and increased use of cultigens (Hard 1983; Whalen 1994). The most readily detectable changes in ceramic assemblages associated with the late Mesilla phase include a decrease in brownware jar rim taper, along with the addition of Mimbres Black-on-white and, occasionally, San Francisco Red ware types. Although the examples are extremely limited, the first appearance of paint decorations on the local brownware (i.e., El Paso Bichrome) is reported for the late Mesilla phase.

Doña Ana Phase (A.D. 1100 to 1200)

The Doña Ana phase began around A.D. 1100 and continued until about A.D. 1200. Rectangular pit structures become common during the Doña Ana phase, although Lehmer's (1948) excavations at Los Tules suggest that similar examples may have been present during the late Mesilla phase. Paint decorations become prominent on the local brownware, resulting in assemblages dominated by El Paso Bichrome and El Paso Polychrome. In addition, Mimbres Black-on-white, Chupadero Black-on-white, Three Rivers Red-on-terracotta, and St. Johns Polychrome are included on the list of intrusive ceramics. Meanwhile, the use of cultigens continues to increase during the Doña Ana phase, but groups probably continued to employ several land-use strategies.

El Paso Phase (A.D. 1200 to 1450)

The El Paso phase (A.D. 1200 to 1450) represents the culmination of the Formative period in the Jornada culture region and includes evidence for several large aggregated population centers near permanent water sources (Lehmer 1948; Sale and Laumbach 1989; Bentley 1993). In the Hueco Bolson and Tularosa Basin (and presumably in the nearby Mesilla Bolson), architecture during the El Paso phase is exemplified by linear, contiguous puddled adobe pueblo room blocks. Although a few large plaza-style pueblos have been reported, most of the pueblos include fewer than 20 rooms (Moore 1947). El Paso phase adobe field houses, as well as both round and rectangular pit structures, are also reported (Browning et al. 1992).

Ceramic assemblages during this phase reflect increasing contacts with the western Mogollon region of southeast Arizona and southwest New Mexico, northwest Chihuahua, east central Arizona, northwest New Mexico, and the northern frontiers of the Jornada Mogollon area. Ceramic types such as Gila Polychrome, Lincoln Black-on-red, Ramos Polychrome, Playas Red, and Seco Corrugated comprise the dominant intrusive wares. The locally produced El Paso Polychrome developed everted rims and completely replaced undecorated brownware during the El Paso phase. It also began to appear in contexts well beyond the Jornada culture area. The widespread distribution of El Paso Polychrome, along with the array of intrusive ceramic types, a noted increase in imported shell, and evidence of Mesoamerican influences reflected in rock art, indicate that extra-regional interaction increased markedly during the El Paso phase.

The ubiquity of corn, along with mounting evidence of beans and squash identified in El Paso phase habitation sites, indicates that the use of cultigens had reached an all-time high. Although agriculture may have provided an important subsistence resource, wild plants continued to play a major dietary role (Bradley 1983).

The pueblos of the Jornada region are abandoned around A.D. 1450, but the cause of this collapse is presently not well understood. The local inhabitants encountered during De Vaca's expedition in 1535 were hunter-gatherers, living in huts along the Rio Grande River. The relationship of these to the earlier sedentary occupants (descendants or unrelated, etc.) has not been determined.

Methodology

The intensive pedestrian survey was conducted using 15-m interval transects, where appropriate. Overview photographs of the project area were taken. The survey was conducted in order to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended (16 USC 470, NHPA), 36 CFR 800, and other federal and state regulations.

Documentation of all surface cultural artifacts, features, and sites was to be conducted. Only three isolated prehistoric cultural artifacts were located. The artifacts consisted of two El Paso brownware sherds and one uniface tool fragment. Identified features were to be fully recorded to include size, type, and results of trowel testing. None were identified. If a site was identified, it was to be fully recorded. None were identified.

The **Area of Potential Effect** (APE) was limited to the construction easement, about 30 feet in width and at least 35 feet in depth. The proposed project entails the construction of a Wastewater Facility System for Montana Vista in East El Paso (Figure 4). The residents of Montana Vista area currently utilize septic systems that have been causing a hazard to the community's health. The proposed project will provide a centralized collection system for the community of Montana Vista. The project proposes approximately 188,285 feet of 8-inch sewer lines throughout the residential streets, which will reach depths of approximately 25 feet. A proposed collection line will run along Greg Rd/Edgemere Blvd for approximately 13,150 feet. This collector line will consist of 12-inch, 15-inch, and 18-inch sewer pipes that will reach depths of approximately 35 feet. This proposed collector line will tie into an existing 30-inch line at the intersection of Edgemere Blvd and Tim Floyd. The majority of the roads within the overall project area are paved.

As per the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Response Letter dated December 8, 2014, no archeological sites or historical buildings have been recorded within the **Area of Potential Effect** (Letter from Wolfe, December 8, 2014). The request from THC indicated a concern for previously undisturbed areas with potential for significant cultural deposits within both proposed lines that constitute new construction.

A detailed archival search was conducted prior to the beginning of the fieldwork in order to determine the potential for significant cultural deposits. The site-file search (on-line THC-ATLAS) identified four previously conducted pedestrian surveys within a 1-mile radius of the proposed project boundaries. One survey was conducted for the Bureau of Land Management in 2001 but no additional data was provided. The survey was located about 0.05 miles south from the intersection of Montana Ave and Mark Jason Dr. of Option 1. A reconnaissance survey was conducted in 2006 by Geo-Marine Inc. The north portion of this survey encompasses the north portion of the currently proposed route along Snoqualime (Pebble Hills Blvd) to the tie-in at Hueco Water Wells of Option 2. The closest site is 41EP5809, approximately 0.06 miles south. Another survey conducted by Geo-Marine Inc. (2007) was located about 0.32 miles southwest from the middle of Greg Dr. of Option 1. The northern portion of this project encompasses Greg Dr. to Rene Dr. (Edgemere Blvd). The closest site (41EP5884) to this portion of the currently proposed project is approximately 0.11 miles south. Raba-Kistner conducted a survey in 2007 (Held and Darnell 2007). The survey was located 0.14 miles east of the intersection of Montana Ave and Mark Jason Dr. A recent survey conducted by SWCA in 2013 for the New Montana Power Station bisects the currently proposed west portion (Edgemere Blvd) to the end of Option 1.

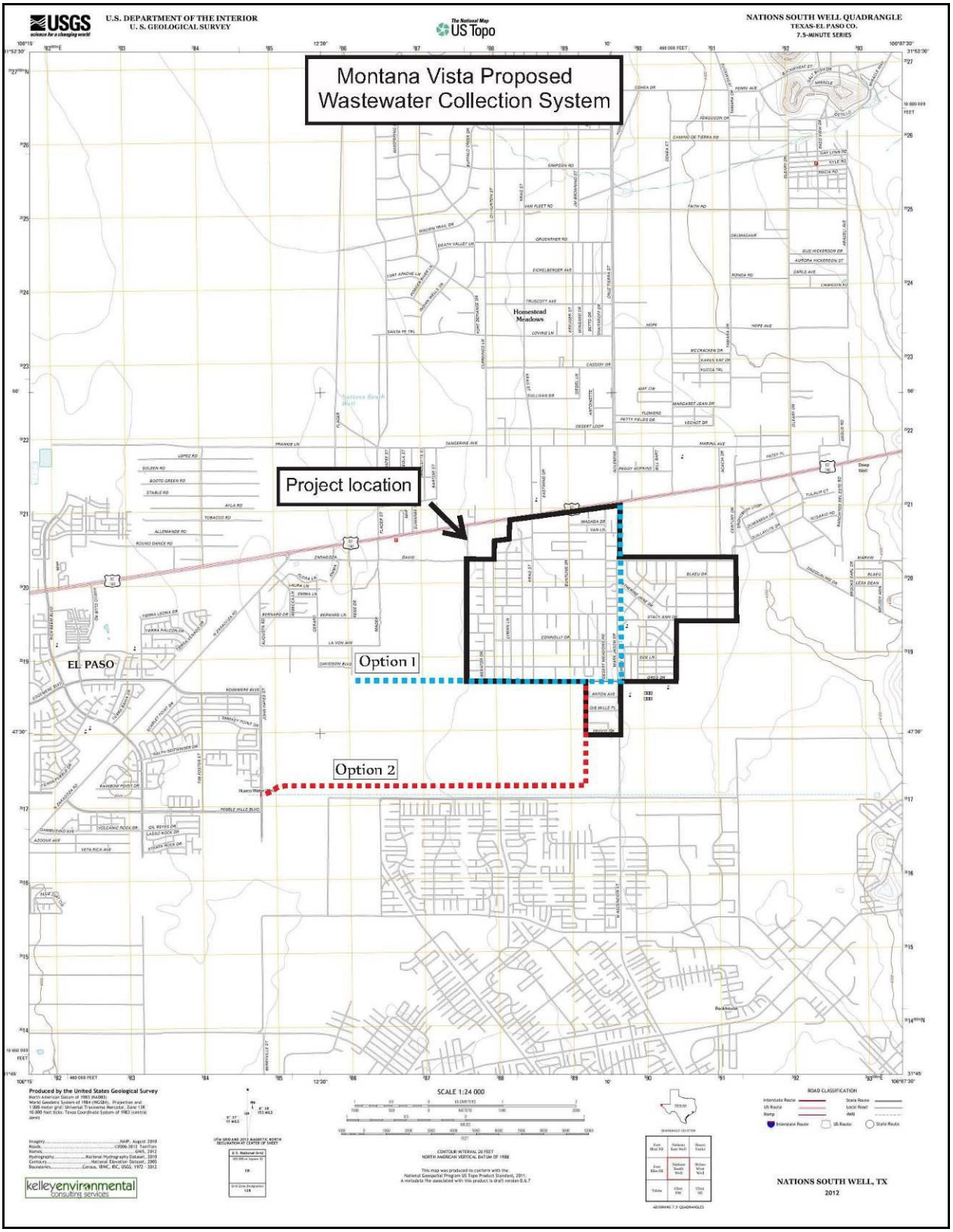

Figure 4. Location of proposed Options 1 and 2. Map courtesy of PSC.

In addition, 12 previously recorded sites were within the 1-mile radius of the proposed project boundaries. These sites were recorded during the above-mentioned surveys. Table 1 lists a short summary of the 12 previously recorded sites.

Table 1. Previously Recorded Sites within a 1-mile radius of the Proposed Project

Site #	NRHP Status	Year	Location (miles)	Comment
41EP4767	NE	1994	1.04 SE of Montana Ave/Mark Jason Dr.	Short-term camp
41EP4768	Undetermined	1994	0.86 NE from Greg Dr/Mark Jason Dr.	Campsite
41EP5542	E	2006 (GMI)	0.98 S from end of Option 2	E in 2002
41EP5543	NE	2007	0.54 S from end of Option 2	Prehistoric
41EP5807	E	2006 (GMI)	0.67 SW from end of Option 2	Campsite
41EP5808	E	2006 (GMI)	0.70 S from end of Option 2	Campsite
41EP5809	E	2006 (GMI)	0.06 S from end of Option 2	Campsite
41EP5881	E	2006 (GMI)	0.83 SW from middle of Greg Dr	Campsite
41EP5882	NE	2006 (GMI)	0.75 SW from middle of Greg Dr	Short-term camp
41EP5884	E	2006 (GMI)	0.94 SW from middle of Greg Dr	Campsite
41EP5885	E	2007 (GMI)	0.43 SW from end of Option 1	Campsite
41EP5886	E	2013 (SWCA)	0.47 SW from end of Option 1	E by GMI in 2007

None of the previously recorded sites will be affected by the proposed undertaking.

Results

The pedestrian survey was conducted from January 20 to 23, 2015 by Elia Perez (TRC-Principal Investigator) and Yennifer Palma (TRC-Crew Member). The intensive pedestrian survey was conducted using 15-m interval transects. The 15-m interval began at the middle of the road and extended to each edge, when applicable. Each person walked opposite sides of the road easement, especially along the unpaved road from Greg Dr. moving west.

No cultural features were located during the archeological survey. Three isolated prehistoric artifacts were located. One El Paso brownware sherd and one uniface tool fragment (silicified limestone) were located along the unpaved road from Greg Dr. moving west. The artifacts were surrounded by tires, skeleton remains of a dog, mattress, cardboard box fragments, and miscellaneous trash. The third artifact (El Paso brownware sherd) was located on the north side of Snoqualime (Pebble Hills Blvd). Foot traffic and trowel testing in the areas where prehistoric artifacts were identified did not expose additional prehistoric cultural remains.

Commercial, residential, and industrial development characterizes the project area (Figure 5). The majority of the roads are paved. Only the west portion of Option 1 to Greg Dr. was not paved (Figure 6). Notifications that a petroleum pipeline were visible along the middle of the unpaved roads within Option 1. From Snoqualime to the existing tie-in at Hueco Water Wells or intersection of Edgemere Blvd and Tim Floyd, the unpaved road was heavily impacted by continuous blading of the road, new access roads, and on-going construction of a new subdivision on the north side of the project road (Figure 7).

No further work is warranted. In the event that human remains or burial furniture are encountered during the construction of the collector lines, the contractor must cease all work and contact all pertinent agencies.

Figure 5. Intersection of Greg Dr. and Ascension St, facing north.

Figure 6. Paved Greg Dr. and unpaved road going west.

Figure 7. Intersection of Snoqualime and unpaved road going west to Edgemere Blvd/Tim Floyd.

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TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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February 12, 2015

Elia Perez
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Re: Draft Report: *Cultural Resource Survey for the Montana Vista Proposed Wastewater Facility System, El Paso County*. (Track No. 201505391)

Dear Ms. Perez:

Thank you for your correspondence concerning the above referenced project. This letter presents the comments of the Executive Director of the Texas Historical Commission, the state agency responsible for administering the Antiquities Code of Texas.

We have completed our review of the Draft Report for Antiquities Permit #7153, and the report is acceptable. We concur that the proposed improvements will not affect sites listed for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places or State Antiquities Landmarks. No further work is recommended. Therefore we will await receipt of the final copy of the report along with two tagged PDF format copies of the report on an archival quality CD or DVD. Please also insure that a digital shapefile of the project area is forwarded to archeological_projects@thc.state.tx.us if you have not already done so.

Thank you for your cooperation in this state review process, and for your efforts to preserve the irreplaceable heritage of Texas. If you have any questions please contact David Camarena Garcés at 512/463-6252 or david.camarena@thc.state.tx.us.

Sincerely,

for
Mark Wolfe, State Historic Preservation Officer