

# RECLAMATION

## *Managing Water in the West*

### Categorical Exclusion Checklist

## Millerton Helicopter Facilities

CEC-16-027

Prepared by:

Kate Connor

Kate Connor  
Natural Resources Specialist  
South-Central California Area Office

Date: March 21, 2017

Concurred by:

See Attachment A

Kevin Palmer  
Archaeologist/Architectural Historian  
Mid-Pacific Regional Office

Date: See Attachment A

Regional Archeologist concurred with Item 8. Their determination has been placed within the project file.

Concurred by:

Shauna McDonald

Shauna McDonald  
Wildlife Biologist  
South-Central California Area Office

Date: 3/21/17

Concurred by:

R. Emerson

Rain L. Emerson  
Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist  
South-Central California Area Office  
ITA Designee concurred with Item 11. Their determination has been placed within the project file.

Date: 03/31/2017

Approved by:

for Michael P. Jackson

Michael P. Jackson  
Area Manager  
South-Central California Area Office

Date: 3/31/2017





## Background

Millerton Lake was created as a result of construction of Friant Dam on the San Joaquin River, which is owned and operated by the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). The Millerton Lake State Recreation Area is Federal land that surrounds Millerton Lake, which is maintained and operated by the California Department of Parks and Recreation on behalf of Reclamation. In 1949, Reclamation entered into a Cooperative Agreement with the State of California (CalFire) to allow the construction, operation, and maintenance of a fires suppression station within the Millerton Lake State Recreation Area in order to provide more adequate fire protection to the Federal lands and improvements at Millerton Lake (Figure 1).

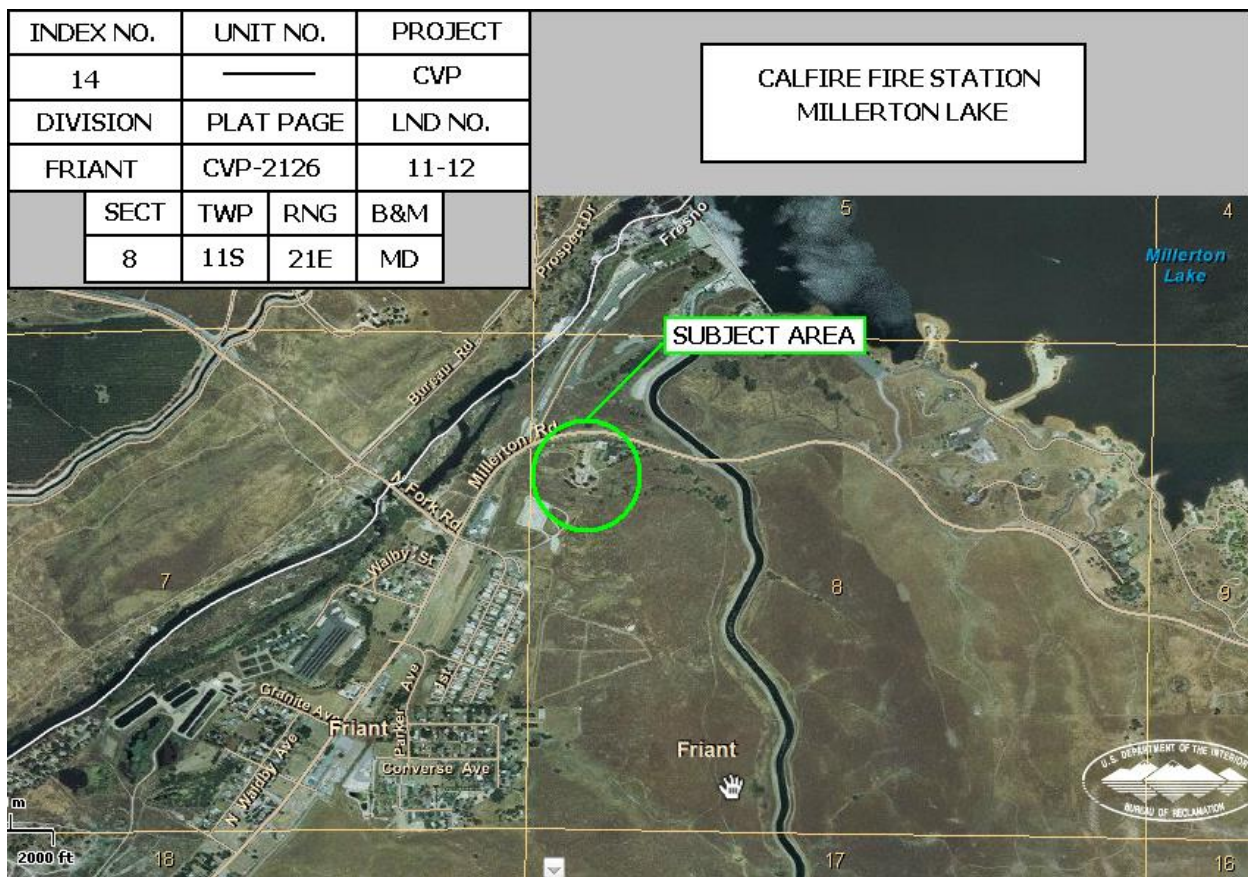


Figure 1 Location of Millerton Fire Station

The CalFire Millerton Fire Station is currently the home base for the Fresno Kings Fire Unit fire-fighting crew and a contracted helicopter. Currently there is a crude concrete pad that exists for helicopter take offs and landings but no facilities for the fire crew to use during the workday except for restrooms at the station's barracks.

CalFire has requested authorization from Reclamation to install, operate, and maintain a more suitable landing pad for the helicopter that would meet Federal Administration Association (FAA) standards and a modular building or work station to operate out of during the day.

## Nature of the Action

Reclamation proposes to amend the existing Cooperative Agreement with the State of California to allow facility upgrades at the Millerton Fire Station. The new infrastructure would be funded by CalFire. All work would be done by CalFire and/or its designee.

In order to construct the new infrastructure, the old cement storage building would be demolished. Existing non-native trees within the defined project area (Figure 2) would be cut flush with ground. A new 20-foot wide by 50-foot long concrete pad would be constructed for the helicopter. Excavation and ground disturbance for this pad would be minimal consisting of removing only the upper 4 to 6 inches of organic material. Concrete would be placed directly on the subgrade.

Six FAA approved landing lights around the perimeter of the landing pad would be installed. The electrical conduit leading to them would be 30-inches below site grade. A lighted windsock would also be installed. The excavation for this would be 2-feet below grade and would use a spread footing that is approximately 4-feet in width by 4-feet in length by 6-inches in depth.

A modular building 24 feet in width and 40 feet in length would be placed on wood foundations. The modular building would not be subject to American with Disabilities Act requirements.

Utilities including data, cable, electric and water would be run underground to the work station. Septic would consist of a poly tank buried 2 feet deep with an internal grinder pump that would send sewage to the existing septic tank under the lawn west of the existing barracks building. Trenches for all utilities would not exceed a depth of 2 feet. A driveway made of aggregate base rock or  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch crushed rock would be placed from the station to the modular building and in the parking spaces to control dust. No excavation would be required for this driveway.

A staging area up to 400 square feet would be required for equipment and materials. This staging area would be 20 feet x 20 feet and occur in the area of disturbed ground east of the new modular building where vehicles currently park. It is anticipated construction would take approximately two weeks to complete.





Figure 2 Proposed Action Area

### Environmental Commitments

CalFire shall implement the following environmental protection measures to avoid any effect on the California tiger salamander:

1. Rodent burrows would be avoided by 50 feet for any ground-disturbing work, and for driveway/parking area construction (i.e. gravel placement).
2. Nighttime work would be avoided.
3. Work would not occur during rain events.
4. Any trenches would either be covered at the end of each workday, or provided with escape ramps, to prevent entrapment of salamanders.
5. Food scraps would not be left at the work site.

Environmental consequences for resource areas assume the measures specified would be fully implemented.

## Exclusion Category

516 DM 14.5 D (1). *Maintenance, rehabilitation, and replacement of existing facilities which may involve a minor change in size, location, and/or operation.*

## Evaluation of Criteria for Categorical Exclusion

- |   |   |                                       |                                 |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. This action would have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment (40 CFR 1502.3).   | No<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain<br><input type="checkbox"/> | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. This action would have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA Section 102(2)(E) and 43 CFR 46.215(c)).  | No<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain<br><input type="checkbox"/> | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. This action would have significant impacts on public health or safety (43 CFR 46.215(a)).  | No<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain<br><input type="checkbox"/> | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. This action would have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographical characteristics as historic or cultural resources; parks, recreation, and refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (EO 11990); flood plains (EO 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas (43 CFR 46.215 (b)). | No<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain<br><input type="checkbox"/> | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. This action would have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks (43 CFR 46.215(d)).   | No<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain<br><input type="checkbox"/> | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. This action would establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects (43 CFR 46.215 (e)).  | No<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain<br><input type="checkbox"/> | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. This action would have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects (43 CFR 46.215 (f)).  | No<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain<br><input type="checkbox"/> | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> |

- |  | No                                  | Uncertain                | Yes                      |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 8. This action would have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by Reclamation (LND 02-01) (43 CFR 46.215 (g)).   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. This action would have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated critical habitat for these species (43 CFR 46.215 (h)).  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. This action would violate a Federal, tribal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for protection of the environment (43 CFR 46.215 (i)).   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. This action would affect ITAs (512 DM 2, Policy Memorandum dated December 15, 1993).   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. This action would have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EO 12898) (43 CFR 46.215 (j)).  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. This action would limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 13007, 43 CFR 46.215 (k), and 512 DM 3)).   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. This action would contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act, EO 13112, and 43 CFR 46.215 (l)). | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### NEPA Action: Categorical Exclusion

The Proposed Action is covered by the exclusion category and no extraordinary circumstances exist. The Action is excluded from further documentation in an EA or EIS.

## **Attachment A: Cultural Resources Determination**



**CULTURAL RESOURCE COMPLIANCE**  
**Mid-Pacific Region**  
**Division of Environmental Affairs**  
**Cultural Resources Branch**

MP-153 Tracking Number: 16-SCAO-244

Project Name: California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Helicopter Facilities Project at Millerton Lake State Recreation Area (SRA), Fresno County, California

NEPA Document: 16-027

MP 153 Cultural Resources Reviewer: Lex Palmer

Date: March 20, 2017

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This proposed undertaking on Reclamation lands by CAL FIRE would authorize the construction of a work station and a helicopter landing pad that meets Federal Aviation Administration standards at the Millerton SRA in Fresno County. Reclamation entered into a cooperative agreement in 1949 with California State to construct and operate a fire station at the SRA for the protection of Federal lands and SRA facilities. Reclamation determined that the authorization of this work is an undertaking as defined in 36 CFR § 800.16(y) and involves the type of activity that has the potential to cause effects on historic properties under 36 CFR § 800.3(a).

Based on historic properties identification efforts conducted by Reclamation and CAL FIRE cultural resources staff, Reclamation consulted with, and received concurrence from, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on a finding of no adverse effect to historic properties, pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.5(b). Consultation correspondence between Reclamation and the SHPO has been provided with this cultural resources compliance document for inclusion in the administrative record for this action.

This document serves as notification that Section 106 compliance has been completed for this undertaking. Please note that if project activities subsequently change, additional NHPA Section 106 review, including further consultation with the SHPO, may be required. Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment.

Attachment:

Letter: SHPO to Reclamation dated March 20, 2017

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

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www.ohp.parks.ca.gov



March 20, 2017

In reply refer to: BUR\_2017\_0216\_003

Ms. Anastasia T. Leigh, Regional Environmental Officer  
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Mid-Pacific Regional Office  
2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, CA 95825-1898

Subject: Section 106 Consultation for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Helicopter Facilities Project at Millerton Lake State Recreation Area (SRA), Fresno County, California (Project #15- SCAO-244)

Dear Ms. Leigh:

The Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) received on February 16, 2017 your letter initiating consultation on the above referenced undertaking under Section 106 of the NHPA (as amended), and its implementing regulations found at 36 CFR Part 800. Reclamation is proposing to authorize CAL FIRE to construct a work station and a helicopter landing pad that meets Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) standards, at Millerton Lake Fire Station, Millerton Lake SRA in Fresno County, California. Reclamation owns the lands at Millerton Lake and the State manages recreation at the SRA under an agreement with Reclamation. Reclamation is seeking comments on its finding of no historic properties affected. Documents sent with the submittal are:

- *Figure 1: Project Location; Figure 2: Area of Potential Effects (APE)*
- *An Archaeological Survey Report for the Millerton Fire Control Station Improved Helipad Construction Project in Friant, Fresno County, CA (By: D. Ruzicka, Archaeologist, CAL FIRE Southern Region Headquarters, Fresno, CA; January 2017) [With Contributions from: K. Palmer, Architectural Historian, Bureau of Reclamation, Mid-Pacific Region, Sacramento, CA].*

In 1949, the State entered into a Cooperative Agreement with Reclamation to construct and operate a fire station at the SRA for the protection of Federal lands and SRA facilities. The CAL FIRE Millerton Fire Station complex currently serves a fire crew and contracted helicopter using a non-FAA compliant helicopter pad and providing no facilities for fire crew use during the day. The proposed undertaking will provide the fire crew with a daytime work station and a safer and FAA-compliant helicopter pad.

Activities include demolishing a cement storage building and removing non-native trees within the project area. Excavation will be done to remove 4 to 6 inches of organic material to create a 20-foot wide by 50-foot long concrete helicopter landing pad. FAA approved landing lights and a lighted wind sock will be installed. A modular building 24 feet wide, 40 feet long, and 10 feet high would be placed on wood foundations. The septic system consists of a poly tank buried in a trench 2 feet deep and 3 feet wide; utilities including electric, water, data and cable television would be run underground to the work station. Trenches for all utilities will not exceed a depth of 2 feet or a width of 5 inches. An aggregate base of ¾-inch crushed rock will be placed on a driveway running from the station to the modular building and in the parking spaces to control dust.

The area of potential effects (APE) includes all project-related activities and is about 2.62 acres in total located within the 7.6-acre complex. The maximum depth will be 2 feet deep for the utility lines and septic tank, and 6 inches deep for the concrete helicopter pad. Staging will be on existing paved and graveled locations.

Efforts to identify historic properties were done by CAL FIRE Archaeologist Ms. Denise Ruzicka, with assistance from Reclamation Architectural Historian Mr. Lex Palmer and the results documented in the cultural resources inventory report (Ruzicka & Palmer 2016). Ms. Ruzicka conducted the records research and a mixed reconnaissance field survey (November 21 & December 29, 2016). Mr. Palmer assisted with the site context study and wrote the National Register of Historic Places (NTHP) significance evaluation. No historic properties were identified in the APE through these efforts. Based on submitted aerials, site photos and comment, the knoll on which the Millerton Fire Station is constructed appears to have been leveled for the complex at the time of its initial construction and the current helipad area to the immediate southwest of the fire station also exhibits ground disturbance. Based on the survey and construction activity over time, there appears to be a low probability for encountering subsurface information bearing deposits within the APE.

Reclamation contacted the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) to request a search of their sacred lands files which did not identify any such properties in or near the APE. Reclamation sent letters to the provided list of Native American contacts to invite participation in the Section 106 process and request assistance in identifying sites of religious and cultural significance or historic properties that may be affected. To date, no responses have been received. Should any Native American concerns subsequently be raised, Reclamation will work to address them and make notifications as required.

Millerton Fire Station, formerly known as Fort Millerton Forest Fire Station was built ca. 1954 and consisted of four buildings: the barracks/messhall, the gas and oil house, the equipment garage, and a warehouse, thought to have been a military surplus building. The warehouse building was removed by 1965. Original construction materials for the three main buildings are walls of Millerton brick, which is a locally made pumice stone brick, wood trim and wooden windows and doors. The distinctive bricks are thought to have been produced at a brick plant located near the fire station (the Millerton Brick Works) that operated between 1946-1959. The cement storage building at the station, constructed of wood rather than brick, is most likely part of the Brick works.

Over time, new buildings were added; an apparatus building in 1992 and the existing helipad was constructed between 1998 and 2002. Other ongoing modifications to the three buildings include adding roof turbines and removing the original wooden multi-light windows and doors and replacing them with modern metal windows and doors by non-reversible alterations. Principal facades are negatively altered visually by loss of historic materials and architectural elements, thus diminishing features of workmanship

Reclamation states that Millerton Fire Station was documented and evaluated as being eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources, but is not eligible for listing in the National Register due to the wholesale installation of modern metal windows and doors into the wall openings in the station buildings that are irreversible. The buildings no longer retain sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register per 36 CFR § 60.4.

Reclamation requests comments on adequacy of the historic property identification efforts and concurrence with the finding of “no effect to historic properties” for this undertaking.

After OHP staff review of the documentation, the following comments are offered.

The Millerton Fire Station complex was constructed ca. 1954 in an informal and restrained “Rustic Ranch” building style. The use of Millerton bricks in the three main buildings reflects an adobe-style texture and appearance. Given that the buildings are readily accessible up-close from the public pedestrian way, this spare style would need a high degree of integrity of design, materials and features of workmanship to convey its original historic appearance and rural “ranch” setting and feeling. I agree that the roof additions, loss of original wooden doors and multi-light windows and additions and alterations over time, have so diminished the integrity of the station that it no longer retains sufficient features to convey its original historic character and is therefore not eligible for listing in the National Register under any criteria. The Millerton Brick works, if it was at this location, appears to have been demolished and the cement storage building does not have a context on its own and is therefore not eligible for listing.

- Pursuant to 36 CFR 800.4(a)(1), there are no objections to the APE as defined;
- Pursuant to 36 CFR 800.4(b), Reclamation has documented a reasonable and good faith effort to identify historic properties within the area of potential effects.
- Pursuant to 36 CFR 800.4(c)(2), **I do not object** that Reclamation finds that the cement storage building, lacking a historic context, is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Pursuant to 36 CFR 800.4(c)(2), **I do not object** that Reclamation finds that the three Millerton Fire Station buildings have lost essential historic features, resulting in diminished integrity, and are therefore not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Reclamation has determined that the proposed undertaking will result in no historic properties affected. Pursuant to 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1), **I concur**.

Please be advised that under certain circumstances, such as unanticipated discovery or a change in project description, Reclamation may have additional future responsibilities for this undertaking under 36 CFR Part 800 (as amended). Should you require further information, please contact Jeanette Schulz at [Jeanette.Schulz@parks.ca.gov](mailto:Jeanette.Schulz@parks.ca.gov) or desk phone (916) 445-7031.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Julianne Polanco', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Julianne Polanco  
State Historic Preservation Officer