

**DESERT RESEARCH INSTITUTE
CULTURAL RESOURCES RECONNAISSANCE
SHORT REPORT**

**SR102896-1
NTS Project No. 9704TR**

PROJECT:

A Class III Cultural Resources Reconnaissance of Proposed Access Roads and Staging Areas for the Clean Slate I, II and III Event Sites, Tonopah Test Range, Nye County, Nevada.

GEOGRAPHIC AREA:

Tonopah Test Range, Cactus Flat
IMACS Geographic Unit Cactus Flat (BQQ)

MAP REFERENCES:

Roller Coast Knob, NV 7.5' quadrangle (provisional 1987)
Breen Creek, NV 7.5' quadrangle (provisional 1988)
Stinking Spring SW, NV 7.5' quadrangle (provisional 1987)

AREA SURVEYED:

26.67 hectares (65.88 acres)

DATES OF RECONNAISSANCE:

October 28 and 29, 1996

PERSONNEL:

Authors: Anne E. DuBarton and William Gray Johnson
Field Personnel: Anne E. DuBarton and William Johnson

INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Desert Research Institute (DRI) received a request from the U.S. Department of Energy, Nevada Operations Office (DOE/NV) to conduct a cultural resources reconnaissance of three areas on the Tonopah Test Range (TTR) where proposed access roads and staging areas are necessary for clean up activities at the Clean Slate I, II and III event sites (Figure 1). Plans for the Clean Slate sites include removal of contaminated soils and transport to a radioactive waste

management site. Each location will require access roads and staging areas outside the fenced, contaminated areas (Figures 2-4). DRI archaeologists surveyed these areas for cultural resources on October 28th and 29th, 1996 and identified two prehistoric sites (26NY10128 and 26NY10130), one historic site (26NY10129) and two isolated artifacts. None of the sites are recommended to be considered potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NR). Therefore, DRI recommends that the project proceed as planned as long as all activities are within the surveyed areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING:

The Clean Slate I, II and III survey areas are all located on the TTR in south central Nevada. They are situated within an area of the TTR known as Cactus Flat. This valley contains a series of pleistocene lakes ranging from Main Lake at the north to Antelope Lake in the south. The valley is bounded by the Cactus Range to the east and the Kawich Range to the west. Both of these ranges support dense forests of pinyon pine (*Pinus monophylla*), the nut of which was an aboriginal food staple. On the south the flats grade into Gold Flat Playa and a series of hills that border Pahute Mesa. On the north Cactus Flats lead into Stone Cabin Valley. The main hydrographic feature in the project area is Breen Creek. It constitutes the only extensive flow of surface water within the entire Nellis Air Force Range (NAFR) territory (Bergin et al. 1979). The playa soils range from sands to silts depending on their distance from the playa center. Nearest to the playas these soils support a variety of salt tolerant species dominated by species of saltbush and shadscale (*Atriplex* spp.). Farther from the playa proper, particularly in the vicinity of Clean Slate I, northern desert shrub species such as sagebrush (*Artemisia nova*) and blackbush (*Coleogyne ramosissima*) become more common constituents, although saltbush is still present.

PREVIOUS CULTURAL RESOURCES STUDIES IN THE AREA:

Before fieldwork began a background literature review of the DRI archives and the Harry Reid Center archives was undertaken to determine if any cultural resources inventories have been conducted and to determine if any sites had been recorded within 1.6 km (1 mile) of the survey areas. The results of these reviews are provided for each survey area. Reports that contain information about cultural resources within the entire TTR region or within large areas of the TTR include Bergin et al. (1979) and U.S. Department of Energy (1988). The one percent survey of the northern NAFR ranges (including TTR) (Bergin et al. 1979) and the Environmental Impact Statement for Area 10 of the TTR (U.S. Department of Energy 1988) show that significant prehistoric and historic resources are found on the TTR. Significant prehistoric and historic cultural materials can be found along both banks of Breen Creek. Bergin et al. (1979:87) have documented some of these sites and have recommended the entire Breen Creek area be considered eligible for listing on the NR as a district. Sites associated with a mining boom in circa 1900 include the townsites of Silverbow and Mellan and mining camps including Antelope Spring, Cactus Spring, Trappmans Camp and Wilsons Camp (U.S. Department of Energy 1988). These sites are eligible for listing on the NR because of the information they may provide relating to the development of mining in Nevada.