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requirements are met. Among the requirements outlined in the management plan are the consistent evaluation and treatment of cultural resource sites on Edwards AFB. It also outlines five areas for which the Cultural Resources Section is responsible: These include the protection of resources from potentially-harmful impacts during construction projects or other actions; coordination with Native American groups concerning federal laws, such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, which protects Native American human remains; inventorying, evaluating and curating artifacts associated with cultural sites on base; protection of significant sites and, when appropriate, nominating these sites for the National Register of Historic Places.

Because the document outlines the requirements previously established by federal and state agencies, preservation can be handled on a larger, programmatic scale. By eliminating the need for case-by-case reviews, this saves the Air Force time and

money, thus supporting the mission.

### **Edwards prior to Air Force occupation**

As base archaeologists methodically survey the 301,000 acres of Edwards AFB, they continue to discover prehistoric sites, which at this writing number more than 1,000.

Native peoples of the Antelope Valley may have lived here as early as 8,000 B.C., however, most of the prehistoric sites here are probably between 175 and 2,000 years old.

Four primary Native American cultures resided part time in the Antelope Valley: the Kawaiisu of the Tehachapi area, the Kitanemuk of the Tejon area, the Tataviam of the upper Santa Clara River area, and the Vayume of the Mojave River area. Some of these peoples visited the desert during the cooler months to gather yucca products, hard seeds and mesquite pods and beans before returning to the mountains for the summer.

The settlements on Edwards AFB occupied by these native peoples have yielded such

significant artifacts as arrowheads (or "projectile points"), hearths, milling stones and tools. These artifacts give us a view into what life was like for these cultures.

### **Then the settlers came**

Until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the area was considered a remote wilderness by California settlers. Explorer John C. Fremont, in 1844, wrote of the Antelope Valley: "A vast desert plain spread before us, from which the boldest traveler turned away in despair."

Since then, activities have ranged from exploration to homesteading and from mining to ranching. Edwards AFB archaeologists have documented more than 1,000 historic cultural sites on base and continue to find more.

In 1885, the first homesteads were established in the Edwards AFB area, just to the west of Rosamond Dry Lake.

In 1910, the Corum family settled several miles to the south of the railroad station. Not long after, Clifford Corum was named postmaster of the post office of Muroc, a name devised by the Corums by spelling their name backward. The post office was to serve Muroc, which at first boasted a population of 25 to 30 people, but then grew to include two

stores and a school, in addition to the post office and train station.

The best known civilian resident of Edwards AFB was woman aviator Pancho Barnes, who broke several aeronautical records in the early years of flight. Barnes, known for her ribald sense of humor and the hospitality of her Happy Bottom Riding Club, befriended some of the most famous Edwards test pilots, including Gen. Chuck Yeager, who, in 1947, broke the sound barrier in the Bell X-1.

#### **Military history**

The military first came to the area in 1928. In 1935, Rogers Dry Lake was dedicated for military use, and shortly thereafter a bombing and gunnery range, used to train bombing crews throughout World War II, was established.

The Muroc Flight Test Base was a separate facility created in 1942 to test the Bell XP-59A Airacomet, the first American

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### *Cultural resources on federal lands must be preserved for future generations*

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jet aircraft. In 1948, the bombing range, by then known as Muroc Army Air Field, was combined with Muroc Flight Test Base to form Muroc AFB. The base's training range function was abandoned after World War II in order to concentrate on flight test.

Important aircraft tested at the base, which was renamed Edwards AFB in 1949, include the Bell X-1, the X-15, and America's first generation of jet and supersonic aircraft. Meanwhile, base tenant facilities at the rocket laboratory and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory developed rocket engines for the country's manned and unmanned space programs.

Archaeological evidence of Edwards AFB military history

can still be found throughout the 400 square miles of the base. The range contains several examples of World War II bombing targets. The hangar which housed the XP-59A program still stands at North Base, and is potentially eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historical Places as part of the Muroc Flight Test Base Historic District. In addition, Rogers Dry Lake has been designated as a National Historic Landmark.

#### **Preserving our heritage**

It's important that these historic sites are protected, and it's the law.

Whenever a project is proposed, the potential impacts of that project on cultural resources must be examined during the environmental impact analysis process. For instance, when retrofitting buildings or performing construction on undeveloped parts of the base, government organizations and base tenants may be required to consult with base archaeologists on the best way to protect resources.

In addition to these potential impacts, natural processes are also at work whittling away at the base's resources.

The Cultural Resources Section is actively trying to slow down the process of natural deterioration of significant sites, as well as protecting them from damage caused by looters, vandals and "amateur archaeologists."

Archeological sites residing on federal property are preserved by laws dating back to the Antiquities Act of 1906. More recently enacted is the Archeological Resource Protection Act and the Archeological and Historic Preservation Act, which protects sites more than 100 years old. Other laws include the National Historic Sites Act of 1935 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, among others.

At Edwards AFB, lawbreakers can be charged with trespass, theft or destruction of government property.

Besides being against the law, private collecting interferes with the archaeologist's job.

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**Clockwise from left is another view of the Lansford adobe; Col. Hap Arnold, who first brought the military to Edwards; and base archaeologists examining a prehistoric site**



