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Partnership protects Native American site

Wayne Attoe

Through a partnership begun more than a decade ago, Greenspace — The Cambria Land Trust and The Archeological Conservancy continue to protect “one of the best preserved and oldest prehistoric villages on California’s Central Coast” (Lynn Dunbar, *American Archeology*, Winter 2000-2001). In late July, the two organizations purchased another piece of the site, which means nearly 50 percent of the vacant land there has been protected from development.

An 8,000-year-old prehistoric settlement covered what are now about five city blocks on Cambria’s Lodge Hill. Much of that was built upon before the two organizations joined forces to protect remaining parcels.

The Archeological Conservancy supports acquisition of the site because the underground record there is essential to understanding California’s earlier peoples. Materials found reflect an annual cycle of fishing, hunting, and harvesting wild plants, as well as trading and tool-making, according to Dunbar. The site was first excavated by Stanford University in 1978. Radio-carbon dating established the age of the settlement.

The partnership with Greenspace, begun in 2001, was the first time that The Archaeological Conservancy contracted directly with a local land trust in a joint venture. They partnered again in 2002, and now in 2012 to protect more of the site. Each group has contributed half the cost of each acquisition and they are co-owners. Because this registered archeological site is, like others in the state, vulnerable to disturbance and looting, Greenspace does not feature or promote it.

In 2001, archeologist John W. Parker surveyed a nearby parcel which was part of the larger settlement. He found dietary bones, bone tools, pipes, evidence of marine shellfish collecting, grinding stones, cobble tools, ornaments and beads. Chipped stones and chipped stone tools indicate the manufacture of stone tools took place for the purpose of cutting, chopping, scraping and drilling. Projectile points suggest they were used for hunting and butchering terrestrial mammals. These items reveal that inhabitants fished, hunted, butchered, gathered marine shellfish, gathered and processed vegetable food resources, manufactured basketry and used personal adornment (Joan Sullivan, *Bay Clipper*, July 2001). It is likely the site was inhabited by

about 100 to 400 Northern Chumash and Southern Salinan peoples within the past 700 years.

Greenspace has been able to join in these purchases in part because of bequests from Howard Bennett, Martin Huyck and Lillian Gleischer. Additionally, 45 families, individuals and companies have contributed to the purchases. The property sellers also deserve credit for working with Greenspace, as do local Realtors who played an important part in the transactions.

The Archaeological Conservancy was established in 1980 and, according to its website, is the only national nonprofit organization dedicated to acquiring and preserving the best of our nation's remaining archaeological sites. Based in Albuquerque, N.M., the Conservancy also operates regional offices in Mississippi, Maryland, Ohio and California.

One aspect of Greenspace's mission is protecting cultural resources through land acquisition. To do this and protect other natural resources, Greenspace works with willing sellers and has always recognized the rights of property owners. Donations are welcome for an endowment established to pay for required annual maintenance of this significant element in local history.

Another cultural resource Greenspace has protected is the 19th century Chinese temple and site of Cambria's "Chinese Center" at the Greenspace Creekside Reserve on Center Street in East Village.

Wayne Attoe is president of Greenspace — The Cambria Land Trust. A column featuring updates from Greenspace appears every fifth Thursday of the month. For more, go to www.greenspacecambria.org or call 927-2866.

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