

## Native Lifeways in the Southern San Joaquin Valley: Archaeological Investigations in the Elk Hills Naval Petroleum Reserve



Reenactment of a Yokuts Village Scene along the Kern County River,  
taken by Frank Latta (1954).

The artifacts displayed in this exhibit were excavated from eight (8) sites in Elk Hills. The excavations were on the former Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 1 (NPR-1) and were completed by the Department of Energy in order to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act. The archaeology focused on two areas, 1) the development of prehistoric cultural chronology for the Southern San Joaquin Valley region and 2) understanding prehistoric adaptive response to climate change in the Holocene.

The excavations resulted in the recovery of hundreds of artifacts. These included food processing equipment such as manos, metates, mortars, pestles and animal remains and shell from food refuse. Hundreds of shell beads that were traded in to use as a currency were also recovered. In addition, there were abundant flaked stone artifacts unearthed that ranged from raw materials, debitage that was created when making projectile points, and complete flakes in both chert and obsidian.

The outcome of the excavations from the eight sites at NPR-1 show that the climate change had an affect on the Native Americans living near Buena Vista Lake in the Late Holocene. There was a change in the native lifeways over time as the climate went from wet to dry and then wet again. The native changed from mobile groups relying on land animals to sedentary occupations that used aquatic resources for a majority of their food. During both periods, the local groups traded with coastal groups for shell beads. The mobile group from the earlier period also traded for flaked stone tools made of coastal materials.

*Yokut's Village is a collaborative project sponsored by the Native American Preservation Council of Kern County, CSUB Archaeology Department, US Department of Energy, Occidental of Elk Hills, and Pacific Legacy*

