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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****CONTACTS Andrew Willis, PHONE: (562) 590-5071****Sarah Christie, PHONE: (916) 747-1164****Website: <http://www.coastal.ca.gov>****Staff report available at <http://documents.coastal.ca.gov/reports/2013/9/W10-s-9-2013.pdf>****COASTAL COMMISSION ANNOUNCES AGREEMENT TO RESTORE DAMAGE TO A HISTORIC NATIVE AMERICAN VILLAGE SITE**

**Eureka, CA, September 11, 2013** – The California Coastal Commission today directed property owners to restore a significant archaeological site that was damaged as a result of unpermitted development activities undertaken on two adjacent properties on the Bolsa Chica Mesa in Orange County. At the public hearing on the enforcement action to resolve this Coastal Act violation, Coastal Commissioners stressed the significance of the cultural history of the Bolsa Chica Mesa and the seriousness of the violation.

The enforcement action addresses excavation of 8 trenches and 18 test units that resulted in damage to cultural “midden” and artifacts at the site of a 9,000-year-old Native American village. Cultural midden is evidence of human habitation found in soil, such as discarded shells and animal bones, scorched rocks, and artifacts that indicates the location of ancient villages. Many unique artifacts were removed from the properties as a result of the excavations, including tools and beads, a pearl that might have functioned as a talisman, and a lip ornament that was likely worn by someone of special status.

Several of the excavations intruded into the remnants of an over 2000-year old residential structure. Although no physical portions of the impacted residential structure remained, its location is known from the circular soil depression and compaction that echoes the presence of a structure at one time.

The property owners did not apply for nor receive a coastal development permit to authorize the excavations. The coastal development permit process is critical to protecting coastal resources, including cultural resources, for many reasons, including because the coastal development permit process provides a process to analyze potential mitigation options, such as avoidance of cultural resources. Archaeological and cultural resources such as this Native American village site that spans the properties, and associated artifacts, are afforded protection under the California Coastal

Act, as well as other statutes. The State Historic Preservation Officer has determined that this village site is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places due to its research potential and cultural import.

"It's always deeply disturbing to see violations that have harmed Native American cultural sites," said Coastal Commission chair Mary Shallenberger. "The true value of these resources is beyond calculation, and given our history with First Peoples, we really need to re-think how we approach what is left of their heritage with the dignity it deserves. This settlement begins to address some of those losses, as is fitting."

Commission enforcement staff worked extensively with the property owners to reach a consensual resolution of this violation. The settlement action requires the property owners to: 1) restore existing impacted areas, 2) in consultation with representatives of the affected tribes, arrange for final appropriate treatment of the artifacts excavated from the site as a result of the unpermitted development, 3) pay a \$600,000 settlement penalty to the California Coastal Conservancy for the purpose of promoting preservation of Native American cultural resources in coastal Orange County in consultation with the Coastal Commission staff, and 4) construct a cultural site and public trails on the Bolsa Chica Mesa, which must cost a minimum of \$200,000 to construct, to provide an area that can be used by Native Americans for ceremonial and reflection purposes, as well as the general public.

"Our enforcement staff has worked quickly to address a serious violation of the Coastal Act, and to ensure that the damaged areas of this significant cultural site are restored" said Charles Lester, Executive Director of the Coastal Commission. "We look forward to using the settlement both to restore the cultural integrity of the site and implement additional measures that promote the preservation of and education about Native American cultural resources and heritage."

The Bolsa Chica Mesa juts into the 1,000-acre Bolsa Chica wetlands complex, which at one time consisted of over 4,000 acres of wetlands at the mouths of the San Gabriel and Santa Ana rivers. These historic wetlands provided resources for Native American peoples who lived in the area, facilitating the establishment of a large village site that spans the impacted properties.

The enforcement action, which was agreed to by the property owners, was finalized by the Commission's issuance today, at its hearing in Eureka, of Consent Cease and Desist and Restoration Orders. "This action demonstrates the benefits of working with the Commission and staff to resolve Coastal Act violations," said Lester. "We hope that actions such as these will send a strong message to others to work with the Commission and other regulatory bodies before taking actions that may disturb such significant sites. Moreover, this shows that it can benefit all parties to work cooperatively to resolve violations, and that the Commission is committed to protecting out precious coastal resources." ###