Administrative Summary

Between March 27, 2007, and August 10, 2007, SWCA Environmental Consultants conducted just over 14 weeks of data recovery activities at the Hokona Site (LA 153714) along NM 53 near El Morro National Monument. Excavations were funded and sponsored by the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) to fulfill National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 requirements prior to beginning road improvements in the area; the proposed project involved Federal Highway Administration funding. Permission to work on State Land was granted by the New Mexico State Land Office. Because Hokona was located within the NM 53 right-of-way and future take area, it was slated for complete destruction during the proposed straightening of the “S” curve in the adjacent portion of road. Data recovery activities included site mapping, collection of surface artifacts, excavation of test units, hand excavation of all features, and use of a backhoe to mechanically strip the site.

Located in the eastern part of the El Morro Valley in Cibola County, New Mexico, Hokona sat on the northeast-facing slope of a low basalt rise on the valley floor. Excavation determined it to be a multi-occupation Pueblo III-IV site containing 45 cultural features, a diffuse midden area, and thousands of associated artifacts. Features included three large pit structures, one large masonry habitation structure, several smaller masonry structures and rock alignments, numerous other intramural and external hearths, post holes, and pits, and three human burials. Features were found from the surface of the site down to more than 2 meters below the surface and dated primarily between A.D. 1275 and A.D. 1350. Hokona was interpreted as a year-round settlement, occupied at least two different times, by one or a few small family units. In contrast with the many large Pueblo III-IV settlements farther west, Hokona offers a glimpse into life at a small, contemporary hamlet, and provides a study in the effects of diverse post-depositional processes on prehistoric Puebloan sites.

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