

# DATA RECOVERY EXCAVATIONS AT SEVEN SITES ALONG INTERSTATE 25 IN SANDOVAL COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

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The New Mexico Department of Transportation selected SWCA Environmental Consultants to conduct data recovery investigations at seven historic properties along Interstate 25 (I-25) between Tramway Boulevard in the city of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico, and the U.S. Highway 550 interchange north of the town of Bernalillo, Sandoval County, New Mexico. The primary focus of the research was on environmental factors, growth of population and groups, and variability in subsistence and settlement patterns. The problem domains that cross-cut this demographic/ecological focus include chronology, subsistence, technology, and settlement patterns.

Most of the data recovery effort was spent at LA 123291. The investigation revealed 57 cultural features during the hand excavation and the mechanical stripping phases. The site has four pit structures, each with multiple floor features, two middens, and eight extramural features. LA 123291 dates between 380 B.C. and A.D. 220 (Late Archaic). In addition to the cultural features, the site has numerous diagnostic projectile points, shell and stone ornaments, and a variety of other lithic tools and debitage. There is a rich faunal collection that, together with the protein residue and macrobotanical analyses, indicates the inhabitants enjoyed a varied diet that included rabbit, pronghorn, mountain sheep, bison, and a variety of plant resources including maize. The earliest evidence of farming in the Albuquerque Basin comes from river valley sites, and the discoveries at I-25 sites LA 123289 and (especially) LA 123291 shed considerable new light on early agriculture in the area. The authors postulate that early farming here developed at least partially as a means of increasing the resource base in response to population growth and territorial circumscription.