

Mendocino Woodlands: Leveraging Resources Effectively to Complete Cul- tural Landscape Projects for Historic Sites

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MENDOCINO WOODLANDS STATE PARK IS ONE OF MANY HISTORIC PROPERTIES caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place, a situation further exacerbated by lean economic times and reduced preservation funding. Blessed with incredible integrity, this national historic landmark is hovering on the brink of losing distinct cultural features, if rehabilitation and restoration work cannot move forward. Neither Mendocino Woodlands Camp Association (MWCA), which manages a decades old historic camp (Figures 1 and 2), or California State Parks, which owns the property, wanted that to happen, and realized that a cultural landscape report (CLR) was necessary to provide guidance necessary for future preservation treatments. They recognized a CLR was critical for looking holistically at preserving the historic character of this New Deal-era, former recreation demonstration area, which is one of only two remaining in the United States with such high integrity, and one of only two built on the west coast.

Mendocino Woodlands, located deep in a redwood forest in northern California, is incredibly remote, large, and complex, making a traditional approach to developing a CLR cost prohibitive. Added to that, California State Parks could provide only nominal financial assistance. Though MWCA worked hard to raise funds, it was still not enough to support a traditional approach. An innovative solution was needed to close the funding gap and address the site's challenges. In this case, the approach hinged on effective partnerships (one between a university and a consulting firm, and another between MWCA and California State Parks), consensus-building, and effective leveraging of project dollars.

MIG, a consulting firm, partnered with the University of Oregon (UO) to develop a CLR which provided more than \$120,000 worth of services for \$60,000. The resources of each partner were leveraged efficiently, so that tasks which were best suited for the university were accomplished by UO, and those best suited for a consulting firm were led by MIG. This necessitated the project being divided into two phases, with MIG providing guidance and support for a UO-led

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Figure 1. Mendocino Woodlands Camp Two Dining Hall, October 2011. Photo by Laurie Matthews.



Figure 2. Mendocino Woodlands Camp Two Bridge and Infirmary, October 2011. Photo by Laurie Matthews.



Figure 3. University of Oregon Inventory Team (left to right) Alexandria Donati, Justin Demeter, Jamie Whitney, Pete Rutowski, and Vivian Schoung, March 2010. Photo by Robert Z. Melnick.

landscape architecture design studio during phase one, and MIG taking the lead during phase two for building consensus between the partnering agencies, and developing the final report.

This partnership allowed the UO to introduce cultural landscape planning and design to its students, provide financial support for travel and lodging for the students, and facilitate a relationship between students and a professional office (Figure 3). Key to the success of this project was the passion brought to it by the Mendocino Woodlands Camp Association, and their ability to supplement actual dollars with in-kind donations of lodging, food, and research support for the team. This greatly reduced the funding gap, and was critical to moving the project from theory to reality. In addition, this partnership helped educate MWCA staff about cultural landscapes and historic preservation, and helped build consensus on tough issues for MWCA, California State Parks, and other partnering agencies.

Several lessons were learned during the completion of this project. Consensus-building not only helps achieve immediate project-related goals, but also can bring solutions to decades-long issues that only a village could solve. A large, mobile group is needed to inventory large, complex cultural landscapes efficiently, and setting up a system for how that documentation happens is critical for it to be accessible by everyone at every stage of the project. Preparation and flexibility is key, especially during intensive project phases like research and site inventory, to ensure that everyone's time is being used most effectively, and that the team is able to adapt to changing conditions and opportunities.

This project ultimately benefitted Mendocino Woodlands by developing a CLR that would have otherwise gone undone, but the project approach itself planted many other beneficial seeds for those involved. In essence, it's the process, that involved a team of people, which expanded the reach of this place, its history, and the incredible legacy that it will continue to share through continued, effective stewardship.