Due to your considerable interest in the historical Padre Dam site and the City's proposed Fortuna Mountain-Mission Gorge Metropolitan Park along the line of our recent discussion with you, Tom Fletcher and myself, we have sent you and to Mr. Herbert E. Kahler of the National Park Service information relative to the Padre Dam and Indian Campside area for consideration as a national historical area.

As you are aware, the dam represents the first successful major irrigation attempt in Spanish California. The dam was built with Indian labor under the supervision of the Franciscan Fathers around 1800, and was used to supply water to the first mission in California. The dam site and adjacent lands offer an outstanding opportunity to preserve the past for the living present. The land northerly of the actual dam was the site of early camps of local Indians, and was also the main campsite of the Indians when they constructed the dam.

Enthusiastic interest for the preservation of this historical area has been shown by the Conference of California Historical Societies, San Diego Historical Society, San Diego Museum of Man, San Diego Chapter of the Sierra Club as well as archeologists, and various City officials and San Diego County citizens. The site is already designated by a State Historical Marker.

In recognition of the need to preserve our natural resources and to provide the ever-increasing urban populous with needed open space, the City Council approved a sketch plan for the acquisition and development of the Fortuna Mountain and Mission Gorge area for a large metropolitan park.

This 1997 acre metropolitan park, only a short distance from the horizon year center of population for the San Diego Metropolitan area, is a bold step in the preservation of our historical heritage and natural resources for future generations.

The City of San Diego already owns 333 acres of this park area and has half ownership of another 99 acres. Also, negotiations are now underway to acquire an additional 105 acres. The remaining acreage lies within the Camp Elliott surplus properties and is under application with General Services Administration.
In addition to the acquisition of 1,460 acres for this metropolitan park and historical area, the City has under application with G.S.A. another 405 acres of neighborhood and community parks and open space greenbelts to provide desirable park and recreation areas for those Camp Elliott areas being sold for urban development. These areas are in accord with the officially adopted Camp Elliott Community Plan, a copy of which is enclosed, and provide for complete park facilities interconnected with the metropolitan park and will greatly add to the value of those areas released for private development.

The City of San Diego greatly appreciates the opportunity to plan and then implement these plans through coordination with federal agencies. We feel that the City is taking great steps in conserving our natural resources and preserving our historical heritage and every effort toward the establishment of a National Historical area to preserve the Padre Dam Indian Camp area will tremendously benefit the future generations of this country.

Sincerely yours,

Charles C. Dail
Memorandum

To: Under Secretary Carr
From: Herb Kahler
Subject: Padre Dam

The theme study, "Conservation of Our Natural Resources," which covers the Old Padre Dam, is scheduled for completion in February, 1963. It will be submitted to the Advisory Board at the spring meeting.

If the Padre Dam (privately owned) is evaluated favorably, there are two courses of action that might be followed:

1. Give the site a Registered National Historic Landmark plaque and encourage the city of San Diego to acquire it. If we understand correctly, the privately owned acreage of the Dam site is about two acres. The city plan calls for the acquisition of 20 acres so as to connect and round out a sizeable city park. The proposed land conservation fund bill might supply the city with the necessary financial assistance to purchase the 20 acres.

2. Introduce legislation to acquire the Dam site for Federal administration. The operation of a small Federal park within a large city park is not efficient. Two superintendents, two maintenance shops, etc. are not warranted. The park plan as envisioned treats the entire area as one unit.

We have marked the historical data section of the enclosed report which reveals the inconclusive evidence as to when the dam was built. Through individual research efforts by our staff, we hope to pinpoint the date more closely than has been the case in the past.

Enclosed is a letter I have prepared to Mr. Dail that you may wish to use.

(SGD) HERBERT E. KAHLER

Enclosure

cc:
Regional Director, Western History (Survey)
Dear Charlie:

I appreciate receiving your letter of November 28, enclosing a copy of your application to GSA for portions of Camp Elliott and your plan for the development of the Padre Dam and the Fortuna Mountain-Mission Gorge Park.

I have been impressed with the broad scope of your planning in providing open space for your ever-increasing population.

As I mentioned to you and Tom Fletcher when you were here, our study on the "Conservation of Natural Resources," which covers the Padre Dam, is scheduled for completion in February. That date still stands. The study will be presented to the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments at its spring meeting.

If the Board acts favorably, we can move forward in designating Padre Dam a Registered National Historic Landmark.

Since the property is in private ownership, it will be necessary to explore means to aid in its acquisition. We anticipate the introduction of a land conservation fund bill in the next session of the Congress that will provide Federal assistance in acquiring historical and recreational areas.

I sincerely hope that this measure will be enacted and that it will be helpful in projects of this kind.

Wishing you the season's greetings, I am,

Sincerely yours,

(sgd) Jim

James K. Carr
Under Secretary

Hon. Charles C. Dail
Mayor of San Diego
San Diego, California

cc:
L58-CBA
Regional Director, Western w/c inc.
History (Survey) w/c inc.

HERKehler:bfr 12/5/62
Dear Charlie:

Supplementing my letter of December 6 to you about Old Padre Dam, we have contacted the Housing and Home Finance Agency here to see if they may be able to assist you in acquiring the Old Padre Dam area now in private ownership.

Under Title VII of the Housing Act of 1961, they are empowered to assist communities, regions and states in providing necessary open-space land which could not otherwise be provided. They have advised that if the Old Padre Dam is not included in your present application for assistance, they would not object if you amended your application to include it.

Your request should be directed to the Regional Director of Urban Renewal, Housing and Home Finance Agency, Third Floor, 989 Market Street, San Francisco 3, California.

I hope this suggestion may aid you in the early realization of your park program.

Sincerely yours,

James K. Carr
Under Secretary

Hon. Charles C. Dail
Mayor of San Diego
San Diego, California

CC:
Arthur David, Urban Renewal
LM (2), EOR
Regional Director, Western History (Survey)

HEKahler:bfr 12/13/62
March 20, 1963

Memorandum

To: Mr. Carr
From: Herb Kahler
Subject: Padre Dam

The Consulting Committee on History and Archeology recommended Padre Dam as eligible for Registered National Historic Landmark status. This proposal now goes to the Advisory Board, March 25-26, for final recommendation to the Secretary.

The enclosed preliminary report is highly informative on the subject of Conservation. As usual, it will be revised to reflect the final actions of the Advisory Board and Padre Dam will be included in the body of the study and not as an insert.

(SGD) HERBERT E. KAHLER

Enclosure

cc:
Mr. Burt
Mr. Thompson
Mr. Kahler (det.)

HerbKahler:jd
Dear Jim:

The Padre Dam Historical Site, which is located within surplus Camp Elliott lands currently under immediate disposition by the GSA, has been revised at the request of the GSA to include only 46.26 acres of surplus land.

A series of explorations conducted by the Museum of Man Society has discovered the site of a sizeable Indian Village of the Yuman (Mission) Culture adjacent to the dam, and the historical site application has been revised to include this village. Exploration is continuing and many artifacts have been found, including manos, projectile points, and pottery pieces of high quality.

Recently, Tom Fletcher, City Manager, met with W. C. Moreland, Assistant Commissioner of Real Estate for the GSA, and was informed that the GSA would impose no objections to the 46-acre historical site if this amount of land is requested for an historical site by the Department of the Interior.

We sincerely hope that such a recommendation will be made, to enable the preservation of the dam and the adjacent Indian Village as an educational and historical attribute to Fortuna Mountain-Mission Gorge Metropolitan Park.

Sincerely yours,

Charles C. Dail

The Honorable James K. Carr
Under Secretary of the Interior
U. S. Department of the Interior
Interior Building
Washington 25, D. C.
Dear Charlie:

I have received your letter of April 2 concerning the status of the application for surplus land at the Padre Dam Historic Site. The application for 46.26 acres has been sent from GSA to the Regional Office of the National Park Service in San Francisco, California. I am confident that they will review with sympathetic understanding the application for the use of this land for educational and historical purposes. As soon as a recommendation from the National Park Service Office in San Francisco is received, it will be sent to the members of the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments for action on their part.

We are pleased to see that your park program is moving forward and we will try to be as helpful as we can in its full realization.

Sincerely yours,

James K. Carr
Under Secretary

Ron. Charles C. Dail
Mayor of San Diego
San Diego, California
Memorandum

To: Under Secretary
From: Assistant Director, Conservation, Interpretation and Use National Park Service

Subject: Padre Dam

The Advisory Board at its last meeting recommended the Padre Dam Site as eligible for a National Registered Landmark Certificate and Marker. This recommendation together with a press release is in preparation as is a letter from you to Mayor Dail apprising him of this fact.

Enclosures
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, SAN FRANCISCO

UNDER SECRETARY CASE HAS URGENTLY REQUESTED EARTHLY POSSIBLE
ACTION ON COMPLETION OF YOUR INVESTIGATION OF APPLICATION BY
SAN DIEGO FOR PORTION OF HISTORIC PARK DAM SITE TO BE
TRANSFERRED AS SURPLUS PROPERTY. PLEASE FORWARD YOUR REPORT
BY USUAL PROCEDURES WITHIN 10 DAYS IF POSSIBLE.

(CGD) JACOBSN E. PARK

PRICE
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Copy to: Mr. Morris Bumga, Room 6132
Mr. Edward Crafts, Director, BOR
Branch of History
Mr. Young

R/Young: at 4-25-63

Rogers W. Young
Staff Historian

RE 7-1080,
Ext. 2415

April 25, 1963 3:00 p.m.
Ron. Charles C. Dail
Mayor of San Diego
San Diego, California

Dear Mr. Dail:

Under Secretary Carr has asked us to reply to your letter of April 2, concerning the status of the application by the City of San Diego for surplus land at the historic Padre Dam site. Although there has been some delay in our reply, we are glad to report that we are working as rapidly as possible to expedite the investigation and review of the application and to provide recommendations to the General Services Administration on this matter.

The City's application for 46.26 acres of the historic site is in the hands of the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service in San Francisco, California, for investigation and report. Within a week or ten days, this report and its recommendations should reach Washington, and the findings will be provided promptly to the General Services Administration. We will request the latter agency to expedite their final consideration of the application and to inform the City as soon as possible.

We want to assure you that the National Park Service phases of the investigation of the Padre Dam site are moving forward rapidly and that we are interested in the preservation of the property by the City. We are pleased to see that your park program is progressing, and we will try to be as helpful as we can in its full realization.

Sincerely yours,

Jackson E. Price
Assistant Director

Copy to: Mr. Morris Burge, Room 613, w/c of incoming
Mr. Ed Cratts, Director, BOR, w/c of incoming
Regional Director, Western Region, w/c of incoming
Branch of History

RWYoung:at 4-25-63
July 5, 1963

Hon. Charles C. Dale
Mayor of the City of San Diego
Civic Center
San Diego, California

Dear Mayor Dale:

We were pleased to receive your letter applying for the Registered National Historic Landmark certificate and plaque for Old Padre Dam in San Diego, California.

The Registry of National Historic Landmarks is administered largely by our Regional Offices, except for the preparation of the certificates by the Washington Office. Old Padre Dam is located in our Western Region, and inquiries you may wish to make about the Registry may be addressed to Regional Director Edward A. Hummel, National Park Service, Western Region, 180 New Montgomery Street, San Francisco 5, California.

Please notify us as to the name you wish used to designate the site on the certificate and plaque. We make this request because the dam is known by a variety of names—Mission Dam, Old Mission Dam, Padre Dam, The Padres' Dam, and so on. In presenting the site to the Advisory Board we used the name "Old Mission Dam," as this was used in the City of San Diego's application to General Services Administration for surplus federal property.

If you have any questions about the Landmarks program, or if you desire more information, please feel free to write to us or directly to Mr. Hummel.

We are happy to have Old Padre Dam included in the Registry.

Sincerely yours,

Charles W. Porter III
Acting Chief, Division of History and Archeology

cc:
Mr. Littleton

JWWalker:vg
August 30, 1963

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Western Region

From: Chief Historian

Subject: National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings: Correct Name for Padre Dam (Old Mission Dam), San Diego, California

On July 5 we acknowledged receipt of Mayor Dail's application for the certificate and marker (copy to you), for the above site. We also asked Mayor Dail to let us know what name should be used on the certificate and marker, since the site is known by several names. To date we have received no word from him. Will you kindly look into this matter and advise us accordingly, so that the certificate may be prepared?

Charles W. Porter

cc: Mr. Littleton

JOLittleton:mg
Memorandum

To: Deputy Under Secretary Morris Bulge

From: Assistant Director, Conservation, Interpretation and Use

Subject: Status of Padre Dam Site, California

In response to your telephone call on December 5, we are pleased to supply the following information on the above subject.

Notice regarding the eligibility of the Padre Dam site for Registered National Historic Landmark status was sent to Mayor Charles E. Beil, San Diego, California, on May 30. He completed the application forms for the Registered National Historic Landmark certificate and plaque. The certificate was prepared by the National Park Service, Washington Office, signed by the Secretary and the Director of the National Park Service, and was sent to the Western Region, National Park Service, on November 19. The marker was sent to Mr. L. E. Earnest, Park and Recreation Department, San Diego, California, on October 1.

The application of the City of San Diego for 46.29 acres of land at the former Camp Elliott Reservation, containing a key portion of the historic Padre Dam property, was approved for transfer by the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments in March 1963. Under Secretary Carr recommended the transfer of the property to the City for historic monument purposes, under Federal surplus property legislation, in his letter of May 30 to the General Services Administration. That agency has authorized the conveyance of the property.

A brief report on the Padre Dam site is enclosed. A statement regarding the appropriations for the Visitor Center at Cabrillo National Monument is also enclosed.

(SGD) Jackson E. Price

Enclosures 2
May 3, 1963

Memorandum

To: Field Representative, Western Field Office, BOR

From: Regional Director, Western Region

Subject: Application for Federal Surplus Property for Historical Monument Purposes—San Diego—N-Calif-694-A

In accordance with the procedures outlined in the joint NPS-BOR memorandum of August 23, 1962, we transmit herewith six copies of our report on the application of the City of San Diego for a portion of Camp Elliott, San Diego, for historical monument purposes. This report was requested by Acting Field Representative Henderson's memorandum of March 5.

The recommendation upon the application is that the determination should be favorable.

A statement of our costs in making the investigation and report will be the subject of a separate memorandum.

By a teletype dated April 25 we were informed that the Office of the Under Secretary has requested prompt action upon this application.

Lawrence C. Merriam

Enclosures

cc: Director, w/2 cc report (Airmail)
PORTION OF
CAMP ELLIOTT
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
GSA Control No. N-Calif-694-A

REPORT ON APPLICATION
of
CITY OF SAN DIEGO
FOR TRANSFER OF SURPLUS PROPERTY
FOR HISTORIC MONUMENT PURPOSES

Prepared by
Western Region, National Park Service
for
Bureau of Outdoor Recreation

May 1963

Investigation and Report by
John A. Hussey, Regional Chief, Division of History and Archeology
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PORTION OF U.S. NAVAL RETRAINING COMMAND
CAMP ELLIOTT, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

REPORT ON APPLICATION
OF
CITY OF SAN DIEGO
FOR TRANSFER OF SURPLUS PROPERTY
FOR HISTORIC MONUMENT PURPOSES

*************

INTRODUCTION

Authority and Purpose

Subsection 13(h) of the Surplus Property Act of 1944 (58 Stat. 770), as amended by the Act of June 10, 1948 (62 Stat. 350), continued in effect by subsection 602(a) of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of June 30, 1949 (63 Stat. 377), and as further amended by the Act of July 20, 1961 (75 Stat. 211), authorizes the disposal by the General Services Administration to States, political subdivisions, instrumentalities thereof, and municipalities, of surplus real properties, together with surplus improvements and equipment located thereon, which have been determined by the Secretary of the Interior to be suitable and desirable for public park and public recreation areas or as historical monuments, for the benefit of the public and which, in the case of historical properties, have been recommended for historical monument use by the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments.

This report is submitted in response to a request from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and in accordance with authority to make the necessary determination delegated to the Director of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation by the Secretary of the Interior on July 9, 1962 (27 F.R. 6719).

The purpose of this report is to describe and evaluate the property desired by the applicant in respect to its proposed use and to recommend disposal determination. The Western Region,
National Park Service, was requested to make this report by a memorandum dated March 5, 1963, from the Acting Field Representative, Western Field Office, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

Application

**Applicant:** City of San Diego, California, by and through Mr. T. W. Fletcher, City Manager, Civic Center, 1600 Pacific Highway, San Diego, California

**Date:**

- Original application, dated October 22, 1962, applied for 151 acres as Parcel 2 of a proposed "Old Padre Dam Historic Site."
- Revised application, dated November 28, 1962, applied for 123.45 acres for historic monument purposes.
- Revised application, dated February 27, 1963, submitted as an addendum to the original application, applied for 46.29 acres for historic monument purposes.

**Description of Property:** The surplus property requested as a historic monument consists of a single parcel containing 46.29 acres in the southeasterly portion of the Federally owned Camp Elliott. The southern boundary of the requested tract is also a part of the southern boundary of the Camp Elliott Naval Reservation. The boundaries of the requested area are clearly shown on Map No. 1 of this report, the tract in question being thereon designated as "Historical Site." A complete legal description of the requested property is given in the appendix to this report.

The southern boundary of the requested tract approximates the course of the San Diego River, which here runs through a rather open valley. Directly west of the property, however, the river enters the constricted Mission Gorge (see Plate 1). Immediately north of a narrow strip of river bottomland the terrain rises sharply from the river level for about 20 to 50 feet, then levels off to form a rolling plateau containing several hillocks, the highest of which, at the extreme north edge of the tract, is about 104 feet above the river level.
The bottomland along the river is densely covered with trees, mostly willows and cottonwoods. The balance of the tract is largely grassland, dotted with sagebrush and other semi-desert shrubs.

No surplus buildings, improvements, or utilities exist on the requested property. However, the tract does contain, at its southern edge, approximately one half of the remains of the Old Mission Dam, a stone and masonry structure erected across the San Diego River by the priests of the San Diego Mission early in the 19th century.

Program of Utilization: As outlined in its original application, as amended, the City's proposed use program for the property is as follows:

1. Preserve, develop, maintain, and administer the tract as the "Padre Dam Historical Site," which, in turn, would be a part of a larger city administered Fortuna Mountain-Mission Gorge Metropolitan Park.

2. Preserve, make accessible, and interpret the remains of the Old Mission Dam (also known as the Padre Dam).

3. Preserve, scientifically explore, exhibit, and interpret several extensive aboriginal occupation sites which have been discovered in the upland sections of the tract.

4. Preserve as much as possible of the natural appearance (the historic scene) and the native vegetative cover at the damsite and in the area of Indian occupation.

5. Initiate, as soon as possible after the acquisition of the property, an archeological survey to determine the full extent of archeological and historical values so that future roads, parking areas, trails, and other developments may be planned so as not to destroy the cultural values.

6. Build roads, parking areas, and trails to give access to the historical and archeological sites to be preserved and exhibited.
7. Erect signs, markers, trailside exhibits, and other facilities to interpret the historical and archeological sites. Eventually, one of the Indian villages may be reconstructed.

Extent of Investigation: The Western Field Office, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, requested the National Park Service to make the necessary investigation of the amended application on March 5, 1963. Dr. John A. Hussey, Regional Chief, Division of History and Archeology, made a preliminary historical investigation of the Old Mission Dam shortly thereafter. On April 29, 1963, he visited San Diego to make a field inspection of the property and to discuss the proposed utilization program with City officials. The following persons were interviewed during that visit and contributed helpful information:

Mr. Harry C. Haelsig
City Planning Director
City Planning Department, San Diego

Mr. L. S. Earnest
Director, Park and Recreation Department
San Diego, California

Mr. S. W. Eberhardt
Senior Planner, City Planning Department
San Diego, California

Mr. Keith Rogers
Associate Planner, City Planning Department
San Diego, California

Dr. Clark C. Evernham
Managing Director
San Diego Museum of Man

Additional historical information was obtained through research at the University of California Library, April 30, 1963.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended Determination

It is recommended that the determination concerning the property at Camp Elliott requested for historical monument purposes be favorable.

The property requested for historical monument purposes is suitable and desirable for such use; its historical values are such as to qualify it in its entirety for transfer as a historical monument; its historical significance relates to a period of time more than fifty years prior to the present; its area does not exceed that necessary for the preservation and proper observation of the historic monument situated thereon.

Resume of the Historical Justification

The Old Mission Dam, with its aqueduct and flume extending about five miles to the Mission of San Diego de Alcalá, was one of the earliest major irrigation-engineering projects on the Pacific Coast of the United States. The exact date of its construction by Indians working under the direction of the mission fathers is not known; but evidence indicates that the aqueduct was begun about 1813 and completed about 1816, and it is probable that the dam dates from about the same period. The new irrigation system supplemented or replaced one which was started soon after the mission was founded in 1769.

The historical significance of the Old Mission Dam has been widely recognized. The dam and flume have been officially designated by the State of California as California Registered Historical Landmark No. 52 and are marked by a bronze plaque (now missing). At its meeting on March 25-27, 1963, the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments found the Padre Dam to be of "exceptional value" as illustrating and commemorating the history of the United States and recommended to the Secretary of the Interior that it be declared eligible for a National Registered Landmark Certificate and Marker.

In addition, the San Diego Museum of Man has conducted preliminary archeological reconnaissances in the requested tract and has uncovered at least four sites of aboriginal occupation, two dating from the La Jollan culture (about 3000 to 5000 B.C.) and two dating from the more recent Yuman or Diegueno culture.
(about 1550 to about 1820 A.D.). These sites appear to merit further scientific exploration and preservation, since they seem to be extensive and rich in cultural materials.

The proposed use of the property as a historical monument is therefore justified.

Conclusions and Justifications Regarding the Suitability of the Proposed Use Program for the Historical Monument

The proposed use program is suitable for the projected historical monument.

The measures proposed adequately provide for the preservation and interpretation of the surviving remains of the Old Mission Dam and for the Indian sites.

Conclusions and Justification Regarding the Responsibility of the Applicant to Accomplish the Proposed Use Program

The City of San Diego, through its City Planning Department and its Park and Recreation Department, is able and qualified to undertake the development, maintenance, and operation of the proposed monument as projected in the application.

The City has ample legal authority to acquire and operate properties as historical monuments. It has the necessary historical and archeological advice available, and it possesses the necessary planning and engineering staff, operational personnel, financial resources, and experience to accomplish the proposed program in a creditable manner.

Description and Justification of the Recommended Boundaries Considered not to Exceed those Necessary for the Preservation and Proper Observation of the Historical Monument

The area recommended as necessary for the preservation and proper observation of the historical monument is all of that area applied for as a historic monument.

To the extent that the available surplus Federal property permits, the requested area provides a suitable setting for the preservation and interpretation of the Old Mission Dam. It includes the northern half of the dam itself and preserves the natural landscape immediately to the north of the damsite and
of the formerly impounded San Diego River. It permits the preservation of this setting, in general, to a natural horizon line on the north and provides room for access facilities without too much disturbance of the immediate dam setting. In addition, it permits the preservation of the four archeological sites thus far located.

If anything, the requested property is too small for the ideal utilization of the opportunity provided by the surplus property at Camp Elliott for the preservation of the historic scene at the Old Mission Dam. It is our opinion that the proposed application should have included all the available surplus lands westward to the west boundary of Rancho El Cajon and northward to the proposed Soledad Freeway (see Map No. 1). Although the failure to include these additional lands is not too serious from the historical standpoint, since they will be within the proposed Fortuna Mountain-Mission Gorge Metropolitan Park and thus will have some measure of control, yet their use strictly for historical purposes would provide greater protection for the historic scene.
HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY

Synopsis of Significance in the Broad History of the Nation, State, or Region

The development of irrigation by the Spaniards in California was an important phase of the occupation of the Pacific Coast of the United States by Europeans. Indeed, the early history of the California missions and presidios indicates that without the diversion and distribution of river water to overcome the frequent draughts, the first efforts at settlement in the province might have failed. Mission San Diego de Alcalá, founded by Franciscan Fathers in 1769, was the first mission established in California, and it is known that it had a simple irrigation system of diversion dams and ditches quite soon after its founding.

Severe water shortages in 1800 and 1803 are believed to have contributed to the padres' decision to replace or supplement their early irrigation facilities with a much more elaborate system. At any rate, about 1813-1816 the so-called Old Mission Dam (or Padre Dam) was built across the San Diego River about five miles east of the mission, and water was conducted to the mission fields by a well-engineered aqueduct. Thus the Old Mission Dam, as an elaboration and continuation of the primitive San Diego water distribution system, may be said to represent the first European irrigation project on the Pacific Coast of the United States. Certainly it was one of the earliest irrigation-engineering projects in California.

The Old Mission Dam was one of the sites assessed by the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings under Theme Study XIX, "Conservation of Natural Resources." In considering this theme at its meeting on March 25-27, 1963, the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments found the dam to be of exceptional value as illustrating and commemorating the history of the United States, and it recommended that the site be declared eligible for National Registered Historical Landmark status. The "Mission Dam and Flume" has also been designated as California Registered Historical Landmark No. 52, and in 1941 it was marked by a bronze plaque erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution. The historical significance of the site in the history of both the Nation and the State thus seems to have been amply established.
Early in 1963 the San Diego Museum of Man conducted archeological explorations on the land adjoining the Old Mission Dam on the north. At least four aboriginal occupation sites were discovered, two dating from the La Jolla period (about 3000 to 5000 B.C.) and two from the Yuman or Diegueño Indian period (about 1550 to mission times). On February 27, 1963, Dr. Clark C. Evernhun, Managing Director of the Museum, informed Mr. Henry Haelsig, Planning Director of the City of San Diego, that the discoveries were of significance since "the majority of Indian sites in western San Diego County have been or are being destroyed by population growth" and thus "the preservation of this site for future use should be considered important."

Identification of the Property

Although the exact date and circumstances surrounding the construction of the Old Mission Dam are unknown, there seems to be no reasonable doubt that the structure was indeed a part of the San Diego Mission irrigation system. Mission records from 1813 to 1816 mention the construction of an aqueduct which almost certainly was that leading from this dam; and as early as 1867 the very reputable Judge Benjamin Hayes visited the dam and recorded the oral testimony of old Spanish settlers that the dam was "built by the Fathers to supply water at the Mission of San Diego." The physical evidence of the aqueduct, traces of which may still be found in places, leading from the dam toward the mission would alone appear sufficient to establish the identification of the site.

Historical Narrative

In view of the investigations of this site already made by the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, by the State of California, and by the City of San Diego in connection with its original application, there seems to be no need in the present report for a detailed historical narrative concerning the Old Mission Dam. It seems sufficient, therefore, to quote at length from the following statement prepared by the National Park Service for use of the Advisory Board:

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1Benjamin I. Hayes, Pioneer Notes from the Diaries of Judge Benjamin Hayes, 1849-1875 (Los Angeles, 1929), 292.
The San Diego Mission was the first to be established in Upper or "United States" California, and is called the "Birthplace of California." It was founded by the famous Father Junípero Serra of the Order of St. Francis in 1769, in another location, and moved in 1774 to the present site. The Franciscan fathers were successful in obtaining the conversion of large numbers of Diegueño and other Indians to Christianity, and induced all whom they could to live in the neighborhood of the mission where the natives could be instructed in agriculture and other arts of European civilization.

Severe water shortages occurred in 1800 and 1803, which are believed to have contributed to the padres' decision to replace or supplement their earlier simple diversion ditches with the much more elaborate system described here. Research has not shown exactly when the work commenced, but it was not likely started before 1800 and it seems to have been completed by 1817. Thus this project was of approximately the same date as, or perhaps earlier than, the irrigation system begun in 1806 at Santa Barbara Mission.

The dam was a solid masonry wall about 220 feet long, 13 feet thick at the bottom, and 12 feet or more high at its maximum. Native stone and locally-produced cement were used for the dam and also for the aqueduct and flume. The latter conducted a stream of water approximately two feet wide and one foot deep. Tiles of native manufacture were used to produce a smooth channel, and the result was so sturdy that it was reported by Bancroft to have supported itself across gulches even after the foundations washed away or were removed. William E. Smythe stated that the flume passed through a tunnel in one place. He concluded, speaking of the entire project:

It is this achievement which gives the Mission Fathers a high place in the history
of irrigation, and the remains of that ancient dam should be regarded as a hallowed shrine in a land where water is the God of the Harvest. 1


1 W. E. Smythe, History of San Diego, 1542-1907 (San Diego, 1907), p. 64. Smythe was the author also of The Conquest of Arid America.
Extent of Surviving Historical Remains

As originally constructed, the Old Mission Dam spanned the entire channel of the San Diego River. According to a careful measurement made in 1867, the original structure was 244 feet long, with a 12-foot gateway located 82 feet from the south end of the dam. The base of the wall was 13 feet thick; and the height of the dam was 13 feet or more on its lower side. The work was constructed of river boulders and native rock bound together with a tough, locally made cement. The gateway was faced with thin bricks or tiles.

An aqueduct, which began on the north bank "a few feet" above the river channel, conducted water from the reservoir to San Diego Mission. The channel, lined with tile and brick, was about 6 inches wide on the bottom and flared outward at the top, so that the stream of water was about 2 feet wide on the surface and 1 foot deep. The canal frequently spanned gulches 10 or 15 feet deep, and so sturdily were these flumes built that the aqueduct often remained intact over the gulches even after the foundations had washed away or been removed.

A strong buttress near the south end of the dam is evidence that floods threatened the structure during the early years of its existence. One witness reported in 1867 that by 1831 floods had made the aqueduct useless and had thrown down a part of the "great dam." Evidently the system was not used after that time; and floods and vandalism--local residents carried off the tiles and bricks for their houses--gradually took their toll.

At the present time few traces of the aqueduct are visible above ground, but parts of it are still occasionally found during excavations. The dam, however, is still impressive. As late as 1933 an engineer estimated that it was still 85% intact in the vertical and 83% in the horizontal. The pond behind the dam has now been almost completely filled with sand.

It should be noted that the south boundary of Camp Elliott bisects the dam and that only the northern portion of the structure is on the surplus property requested for historic monument purposes. The southern--and more impressive--section of the dam is on property owned by the Sinnott family. The City of San Diego is presently negotiating for 26 acres of land immediately south of the proposed historical site and hopes to add this property to the Fortuna Mountain-Mission Gorge Metropolitan Park in order to protect the remainder of the dam and its historic setting.

1 Hayes, op. cit., 293.
2 Ibid., 296.
Since the aboriginal sites on the proposed historical park have only been sampled, their full extent is not yet known. The San Diego Museum of Man hopes to conduct future explorations to determine the full nature of the archeological values.

Other Physical Characteristics

The 46.29-acre tract applied for for historical monument purposes is physically attractive and is virtually unimpaired by modern intrusions. As already described, a narrow strip of land along the southern boundary includes the north bank of the San Diego River, comprised of level bottomland densely covered with willows, cottonwoods, and other water-loving trees and shrubs.

North of this thin strip of green, the ground rises sharply up a grass-and-shrub-covered bank for from 20 to 50 feet to a rolling plateau. This upland is largely covered with grass, but it is dotted with sagebrush and other shrubs of the semi desert. The upland contains several rocky hillocks, the highest of which, at the extreme north end of the proposed historic site, has an elevation of 378.5 feet.

Accessibility and Location

The requested property is within the city limits of San Diego. It lies on the north side of the paved Mission Gorge Road about 16 miles northeast of the Civic Center. San Diego is an incorporated city which, as of December 31, 1962, had a population of 622,975.

Electricity and city water are presently available near the property, and any needs for these utilities in the historic site could be met by an extension of nearby services. A new sewer line is in process of construction down the bed of the San Diego River (this line apparently did no harm to the dam).

At the present time direct access to the proposed site from Mission Gorge Road is over private property or by an indirect route over unimproved roads from adjacent city owned property.
Adaptability, Cost, and Feasibility of Development

The area requested is adaptable and suitable for historic monument use.

The relatively undisturbed terrain permits the preservation of the historic scene on the north side of the Old Mission Dam. The surface formation is such that access roads and trails, as well as interpretive features, can be developed without too much violence to the historic landscape.

The applicant has made no firm estimates of the cost of developing the property as a historic site. However, if the adjoining Fortuna Mountain-Mission Gorge Park is developed as planned, the cost of extending roads and other visitor facilities into the historic site should not be great. Certainly the costs would appear to be entirely feasible in view of the financial resources and annual budget of the applying agency.

Estimated Cost of Proper Maintenance

The applicant has not made an estimate of the annual cost of maintaining and operating the area. A plan of operation and development will be completed after the property has been acquired and after archeological excavations reveal the full extent of the values to be preserved and interpreted. Until such explorations are completed, a final plan cannot be devised.

Boundary Data

A complete legal description of the property requested is given in the appendix to this report, and the boundaries are clearly shown on Map No. 1.

The area considered not to exceed that necessary for the preservation and proper observation of the historical monument is as follows: All of that land applied for at Camp Elliott by the City of San Diego for historical monument purposes.

This area is barely sufficient to protect the north end of the Old Mission Dam and its historic setting, and to protect the archeological sites which have been found on the property. In fact, it would be highly desirable, from a historical standpoint, for the
historical monument area to be expanded westward to the west boundary of the Rancho El Cajon and northward to the proposed Soledad Freeway (see Map No. 1). Also, it is to be hoped that the City will be successful in its efforts to obtain the 26-acre privately owned tract immediately to the south which contains the southern portion of the Old Mission Dam.

All of the land applied for is qualified for transfer for historic monument use since the events which it is proposed to commemorate there occurred between about 1807 and 1817, more than fifty years ago.

Place in State or Regional Plan for Conservation of Park and Historical Resources

The City of San Diego, through its Planning Department and Park and Recreation Department, has developed a far-seeing and well-balanced plan for preserving the city's principal scenic, historic, and recreation resources. In 1962 it submitted a careful plan for the development of the portions of Camp Elliott scheduled for disposal by the Federal Government, and this plan, in turn, was in accord with an existing General Plan Study of San Diego. This "Elliott Community Plan" provided that 1,460 acres of Camp Elliott would be incorporated into an already planned and authorized 1,948-acre Fortuna Mountain-Mission Gorge Metropolitan Park. The Padre Dam Historic Site is planned to be a part of this larger metropolitan park.

The City of San Diego and County of San Diego have worked actively to preserve the region's principal historic sites. Presidio Park, owned and operated by the city, preserves the site of the first Spanish settlement in California—the Presidio of San Diego. It also marks the location of the first site of San Diego Mission. The City also owns and maintains the historic plaza in Old Town. San Diego County has preserved the Whaley House, a structure of the early American period situated in Old Town, San Diego. The restored San Diego Mission, as it was developed on its second site, is still an active church. Thus, the Padre Dam Historical Site fits logically into the local plan to preserve sites which commemorate the principal aspects of the regional history.

Nature of and Justification for the Proposed Use Program

Upon careful analysis of the original application and of the amendment submitted February 27, 1963, it is seen that the City of San Diego proposes the following historical use program for the property:
It is proposed to develop and operate the area as the Padre Dam Historical Site, which will be an integral, but specially protected, part of the proposed Fortune Mountain-Mission Gorge Metropolitan Park. The main objective of the historical site will be to protect all available remains of the Old Mission Dam and as much as possible of its immediate natural setting. It is also planned to survey archeological values in the area, some of which are already known, and to preserve the principal aboriginal sites. It is proposed to render accessible, display, and interpret the dam and the principal archeological sites for the benefit and enjoyment of the public.

To carry out these general objectives, the City proposes the following specific measures:

1. Preserve, make accessible, and interpret the remains of the Old Mission Dam.

2. Preserve, scientifically explore, exhibit, and interpret several extensive aboriginal occupation sites which have been discovered in the upland sections of the tract.

3. Preserve as much as possible of the natural appearance (the historic scene) and the native vegetative cover at the damsite and in the area of Indian occupation.

4. Initiate, as soon as possible after the acquisition of the property, an archeological survey to determine the full extent of archeological and historical values so that future roads, parking areas, trails, and other developments may be planned so as not to destroy the cultural values.

5. Build roads, parking areas, and trails, to give access to the historical and archeological sites to be preserved and exhibited (see Map No. 2 for tentative access road plans).

6. Erect signs, markers, trailside exhibits, and other facilities to interpret the historical and archeological values. Eventually, one of the Indian villages may be reconstructed (see Map No. 2 for tentative location).

In addition, as revealed by conversation with city officials on April 29, 1963, it is hoped that a small museum can be placed on or near the historical property.
This program appears suitable and justifiable. The plan to explore the area archeologically before determining a final development program is particularly commendable since in that way subsurface archeological values can be identified and preserved. The measures proposed appear adequate to preserve and interpret the historical values of the area.
Responsibility of Agency Requesting Property

Legal Authority

The City of San Diego is a legally incorporated city, and authority for the development and operation of park areas is contained in Section 55 of the San Diego City Charter (as amended in 1953) which created the Park and Recreation Department. The city has full authority to acquire lands for park purposes (Article 1, Section 1, of the Charter of the City of San Diego approved by State Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 34 of April 15, 1931).

Adequacy of Financing

The operating budget of the City Park and Recreation Department and related cultural institutions for the current 1962-63 fiscal year is $4,462,153. This amount does not include a share of the city's capital outlay funds, which are derived from a 1/2 cent sales tax and from sales of city property. There is every reason, therefore, to believe that the city could finance the development and operation of the Padre Dam Historic Site as proposed.

Experience in Historical Work

The City of San Diego, through its City Park and Recreation Department, has long operated and maintained several historic sites. The principal sites, within Presidio Park, are those of the San Diego Presidio and Fort Stockton (an American fortification dating from the period of the conquest), as well as the first site of the San Diego Mission. In Old Town, in San Diego, the City owns and administers Casa de Estudillo, El Campo Santo, and the Old Town Plaza.

The City also contributes financially to the operation of the San Diego Historical Society (which, in turn, administers the Junipero Serra Museum) and the San Diego Museum of Man.

Adequacy of Staff and Experience with Similar Areas

The staff of the City Park and Recreation Department is adequate for the planning, maintenance, and operation of the proposed historical site. Although the department has no historians or archeologists on its staff, it has available the advice of the highly qualified historians of the Serra Museum and of the highly regarded archeologists of the San Diego Museum of Man. City officials have indicated that development of the historical site will be undertaken only after obtaining the technical assistance of the staffs of these institutions.
Proposed Padre Dam Historic Site is situated along the line of trees and on the grassy plain directly to the right of the words "old mission dam."
Plate 2. Remains of Old Mission Dam, the chief feature of the proposed historic site. View from south bank of San Diego River, looking northeast.

Plate 3. Detail view of Old Mission Dam, showing use of both tiles and stones in construction. View from center of San Diego River, looking southeast. This portion of the dam is not on the Camp Elliott property.
Plate 4. North end of surviving section of Old Mission Dam, located on the surplus Camp Elliott property.

Plate 5. View north from Mission Gorge Road across the San Diego River and Old Mission Dam. Proposed scenic viewpoint (elev. 324.5 ft.) is on top of the rocky hillock in left center.
Plate 6. View northeast and east up south bank of San Diego River from near Old Mission Dam. Dirt road and parking areas in foreground are on private property for which the City is negotiating. Mission Gorge Road is at the extreme right. Area of surplus property proposed for historic monument use shows in left center.
Plate 7. View north from Mission Gorge Road up the small canyon which forms the west boundary of the proposed historic site. Slope of hillock proposed for scenic viewpoint shows at right center.

Plate 8. View southwest down Mission Gorge from proposed scenic viewpoint. Aqueduct from Old Mission Dam was along right bank of San Diego River.
Plate 9. View north along west boundary of proposed historic site from projected scenic viewpoint. Hillock with large bush in right center (elev. 378.5 ft.) marks proposed north boundary. Soledad Freeway will be at foot of hills in distance.

Plate 10. View east from projected scenic viewpoint, showing sharp upward slope from river bottomland (right) to rolling plateau containing archeological sites.
Plate 11. General view of upland portion of proposed historic site, looking northwest from Test Site No. 3 near east boundary.

Plate 12. Bedrock mortars and Diegueno Indian manos found in upland area of proposed historic site.
Plate 13. View eastward across Archaeological Test Site No. 3, where Diegueno Indian artifacts were found. Fence marks east boundary of proposed historic site.

Plate 14. Hillock (elev. 378.5 ft.) marking north boundary of proposed historic site is in center of view. Artifacts dating from the La Jollan culture were found here. Soledad Freeway will be at foot of hills in far distance.
MAP NO. 1  PADRE DAM HISTORICAL SITE
(Portion of Camp Elliott Requested for Historic Monument Purposes)
APPENDIX

Legal Description of Requested Surplus Property
PADRE DAM HISTORICAL SITE

All that portion of Lot 2, Resubdivision of Fanita Rancho according to map thereof No. 1703 filed in the San Diego County Recorder's Office, lying within the following described boundaries:

Beginning at the southeast corner of said Lot 2; (California Coordinate System Zone 6, \( y = 246,223.605, \ x = 1,757,950.738 \));

Thence along the boundary of said Lot 2, the following courses:

a. \( S 68^\circ 11' 17" \ W, 700.50 \) feet (C.C.S. Zone 6, \( y = 245,963.329, \ x = 1,757,300.388 \));

b. \( S 76^\circ 30' 17" \ W, 686.16 \) feet (C.C.S. Zone 6, \( y = 245,803.200, \ x = 1,756,633.174 \));

c. \( S 68^\circ 25' 17" \ W, 517.38 \) feet to the southwest corner of said Lot 2 (C.C.S. Zone 6, \( y = 245,621.345, \ x = 1,756,148.807 \));

d. \( N 7^\circ 32' 38" \ W along said westerly lot line, 320.00 \) feet (C.C.S. Zone 6, \( y = 245,938.577, \ x = 1,756,106.811 \));

Thence leaving the boundary of said Lot 2, \( N 69^\circ 25' 17" \ E, 360.00 \) feet (C.C.S. Zone 6, \( y = 246,065.114, \ x = 1,756,443.840 \));

Thence \( N 7^\circ 32' 28" \ W, parallel with the westerly line of said Lot 2, 750.00 \) feet (C.C.S. Zone 6, \( y = 246,808.627, \ x = 1,756,345.412 \));

Thence \( N 48^\circ 35' 53" \ E, 770.00 \) feet (C.C.S. Zone 6, \( y = 247,317.837, \ x = 1,756,922.980 \));

Thence \( S 81^\circ 10' 17" \ E, 1,050.00 \) feet to the east line of said Lot 2 (C.C.S. Zone 6, \( y = 247,158.550, \ x = 1,757,960.828 \));

Thence \( S 0^\circ 37' 06" \ W along said easterly lot line, 935.00 \) feet to the point of beginning.

\[ \text{Area} = 46.29 \text{ Acres} \]
MAY 14 1963

Memorandum

To: Under Secretary

From: Acting Director, National Park Service

Subject: Favorable Recommendation of Disposition of Surplus Federal Property at Padre Dam, California

We are happy to report that the investigation of the surplus Federal property at the site of historic Padre Dam, in California, has been completed by the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, reviewed in this Office and favorably recommended to the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation for action. We have requested the latter agency to transmit this favorable recommendation to the General Services Administration promptly and to request that agency to expedite the transfer of the property to the City of San Diego.

A copy of the report is enclosed.

Enclosure

P. S. In accordance with your request to Mr. Herbert E. Kahler on May 13, we are asking the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation to prepare its recommendation on Padre Dam to the General Services Administration for your signature.
Dear Charlie:

You will be pleased to learn that the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments has recommended the Old Mission Dam (Pedro Dam) for classification as of exceptional value in illustrating and commemorating the history of the United States. The site is therefore eligible for Registered National Historic Landmark status.

Pedro Dam was evaluated in a recent study of "Conservation of Natural Resources," which is one of the studies of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, prepared by the National Park Service.

The National Park Service has also completed the study for General Services Administration on your request for the transfer of 46.29 acres and we have asked General Services Administration to expedite the transfer of this tract to you. We hope that you will apply, on behalf of the city, for the Landmark Certificate and Bronze Plaque which we shall be happy to supply as we did in the case of the Presidio. It is a real pleasure to work with you on this project.

Sincerely yours,

(sgd) James K. Carr

Under Secretary of the Interior

cc:

LG (2)
Secretary's Reading File Copy
Regional Director, Western
Mr. Littleton
OS Office Copy
LPW Comeback Copy
JOLLittleton:mg 5-3-63
Rewritten:NEKahl:jd 5-21-63