

MINUTE ITEM

This Calendar Item No. C15
was approved as Minute Item
No. 15 by the State Lands
Commission by a vote of 3
to 0 at its 2/22/79
meeting.

CALENDAR ITEM

C15.

2/79
W 21237
Atkins

CERTIFICATION OF NEGATIVE DECLARATION
FOR SALVAGE OF THE VESSEL SAN PEDRO

APPLICANT: Fathom Eight, Corporation
P. O. Box 8505
San Marino, California 91108

Attention: Jim Muche

LAND TYPE: Tide and submerged in the Pacific Ocean.

LOCATION: Pacific Ocean near Catalina Island, Los
Angeles County.

PROJECT: The applicant has applied for a salvage
permit to salvage the historical vessel
Sar Pedro.

PREREQUISITE TERMS:

1. The State Lands Commission's staff, in accordance with Article 10, Section 2905(b) of the Cal. Adm. Code, has conducted an initial study and has concluded that the project will have no significant effect on the environment. Therefore, in compliance with Subsection (c) of Section 2905, a negative declaration was prepared and filed with the State Clearinghouse.
2. The State Clearinghouse acknowledged receipt of the negative declaration and has completed the required review. No adverse comments have been received.
3. In accordance with Chapter 1200, Statutes of 1977, the State Lands Commission must complete and certify a negative declaration within 105 days following receipt of a completed application and approve or deny the project within 1 year. Staff is recommending certification of the negative declaration at this time.
4. Negotiations are in process for a salvage permit. Project approval will be submitted for Commission action in the near future.

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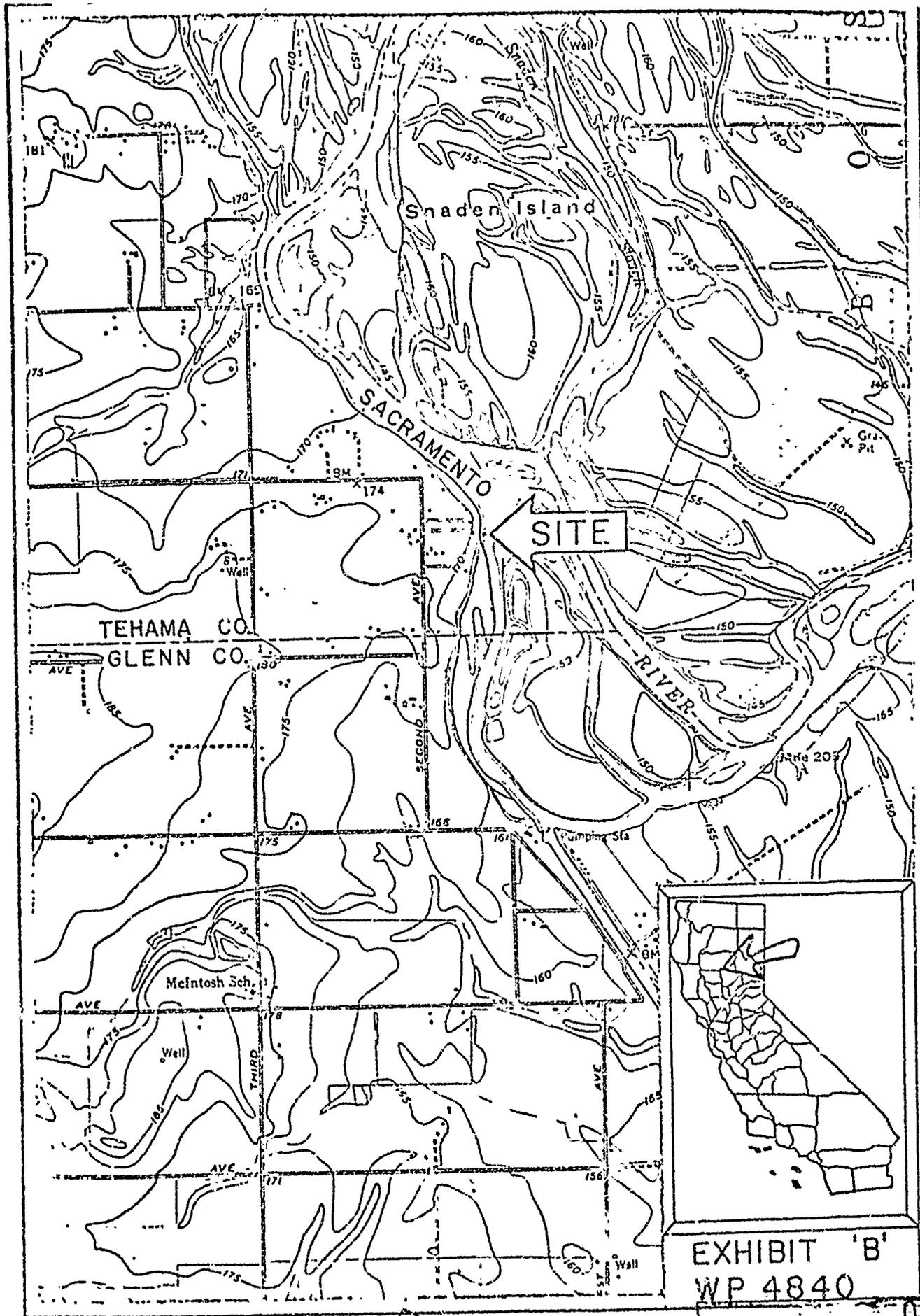


EXHIBIT 'B'
WP 4840

CHICO ± 12 MILES

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CALENDAR ITEM NO. C15. (CONTD)

EXHIBITS: A. Negative Declaration. B. Site Map.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE COMMISSION:

1. DETERMINE THAT AN EIR HAS NOT BEEN PREPARED FOR THIS PROJECT BUT THAT A NEGATIVE DECLARATION HAS BEEN PREPARED BY THE COMMISSION'S STAFF.
2. CERTIFY THAT THE NEGATIVE DECLARATION (#213) HAS BEEN COMPLETED IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE CEQA OF 1970, AS AMENDED, AND THE STATE EIR GUIDELINES, AND THAT THE COMMISSION HAS REVIEWED AND CONSIDERED THE INFORMATION CONTAINED THEREIN.
3. DETERMINE THAT THE PROJECT WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT.

NEGATIVE DECLARATION
SALVAGE OF THE SAN PEDRO

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This Negative Declaration is prepared pursuant to Section 15083, California Administrative Code, Title 14, Division 6 and is based upon an Initial Study pursuant to Sections 15080 and 15066 thereof.

Description

It is proposed to conduct an archaeological salvage of a historical 16th Century vessel. The operation will take place near Santa Catalina Island. It is believed that the complete operation may take as long as three years. Detailed mapping, retrieval, and preservation of all artifacts will be an integral part of the salvage procedures.

Determination

An initial study has been prepared and it is determined that the proposed project will not have a significant effect upon the environment.

1. The proposed project will have no cumulative impacts, or adverse effects on humans.
2. There will be minimal impacts upon fish and other marine organisms of the project environment.
3. Salvage of a historical sailing vessel is concerned only with historical values and will not directly influence in a measureable amount other relationships of the natural or human environment. Uses of public services, energy, and other resources will be minimal.

This initial study was prepared by the State Lands Division. A copy, together with comments, is available for inspection in the Sacramento Office of the Division.

INITIAL STUDY

SALVAGE OF THE SAN PEDRO

Prepared by: STATE LANDS DIVISION

August 3, 1977

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I. Description of Project

The project being proposed is an archaeological salvage of the historical vessel, San Pedro. The operation will take place in the open ocean off Santa Catalina Island of Southern California. Exact location of the operation is a trade secret as defined under CEQA. This report is being prepared pursuant to CEQA and other requirements. The rather specialized historical questions contained herein reflect required topics from the California History Plan.

The archaeological salvage will employ surveys, a grid system, excavation, mapping, preservation of artifact, and analysis. Complete salvage may take several years. All items connected with the vessel will be recovered insofar as such actions are possible considering cost, safety, and historical value. The success of the planned salvage of the contents of the vessel is assume to be completely feasible.

II. Environmental Description

A. Regional Description

The southern coast of California and offshore islands are characterized by mountains that trend from east to west. There are many prominent headlands, scenic coastal bluffs and coves. Many of the mountain ranges have canyons with heavy vegetation. Santa Catalina Island lies on the continental shelf. The Southern California coastal and offshore area has a Mediterranean dry summer subtropical climate characterized by warm, dry summers and mild, wet winters. Rainfall on Catalina averages around 14 inches yearly.

B. Geologic and Seismic

The surficial geology of the wreck site is predominately sandy with occasional rock outcrops. There is a gradual slope on the bottom of about thirty degrees. Shoreward of the site rock outcroppings increase. Detailed knowledge of the local landforms on the bottom at the site does not exist.

There is believed to be an earthquake fault several miles to the northeast. As structures are not involved in this project, there is no relationship between the possibility of earthquake damage and the operation of the archaeological salvage. Conventional consideration of hazards such as liquefaction and tsunamis is also not appropriate.

C. Natural Environment

The natural environment of the project area is that of the ocean floor. It is composed largely of sand. The most obvious feature is the presence of giant kelp (Macrocystus) which extends shoreward from the site in increasing number. Closer to shore the giant kelp finds more attachment to an increasing supply of boulders. The animal life on the bottom is primarily sandsharks and rays. In addition, there are clams, tube snails, a few pelagic fish, pink and green abalone and lobsters.

D. Historical and Archoeological

1. Historical Background

The vessel to be salvaged is believed to be the San Pedro. It was an early Manilla Galleon and was probably built in Spain, but possibly elsewhere. It sunk on June 4, 1598 after experiencing continual gales since leaving the Philippines. Upon arrival in California the galleon was shipping water badly and beginning to break up. An attempt was made to beach the vessel on Catalina. Before it could reach shore it broke up and sank in calm water. Salvage attempts were made by the vessel's commander, Don Mercurio de Salcedo in 1601 and 1603. Little was recovered due to the extreme depth of the vessel and the elapsed time since the sinking.

Little is known about the vessel except that it measured about 130 feet. It was probably typical of a galleon with a high forecastle and poop deck. They had a broad beam to offset the topheavy structure. There is no specific information on the San Pedro in popular published accounts. It can only be surmised that it was a typical ship of an early or transitional period, although the Spanish colony in Manilla was well established by this time. The cargo was probably typical for this period. Listed as common from historical records were: silks, cottons, rugs, jewelry, spices, religious articles, gems, and miscellaneous luxury goods.

2. Level of Historic Significance

The loss of the San Pedro was a blow to the Spanish at Acapulco. Colonists at Acapulco and Manilla depended upon the yearly galleon to provide needed luxury goods and currency for local trade. At the time of the sinking the galleons had not established coastal way-stations on the California coast as the galleon trade was to do much later at Monterey and San Diego. Occasional contacts did occur from the trade, however, and, in the case of the San Pedro, contacts with natives were made on Catalina during attempted salvages in 1601 and 1603.

The Manilla Galleon trade was one of the longest in history, approximately 250 years. The ships were limited in number and sustained colonies both at Acapulco in New Spain and at Manilla. The return trip eastward from Manilla was certainly one of the longest voyages regularly taken lasting seven or eight months. Many ships and crews were lost by storms, fire, disease and hostile action.

The trade with Manilla provided an incentive for exploration of the California coast to provide way stations and secure the coast from other nations. This cause was probably secondary to later mission efforts in the settlement of California, since even after colonization many galleons refused to stop at the California ports.

The primary importance of the San Pedro is that it represents a trade which had a significant impact upon the trade of New Spain and the Philippines. The nature of this trade is little known nor understood. Valuable information will be provided by the salvage about ship construction, cargo, navigation and life on board ship for passengers and the average sailor.

3. Integrity

The question of integrity of the ship is not particularly applicable. The California History Plan states that original location, fabric, appearance and environment are the components by which to measure integrity. The entire concept is meant to apply to structures on the land. Diving reports indicate that the vessel is completely buried under sand. Probably the vessel collapsed upon itself after some years and little will be left of the original timbers. The integrity of artifacts will not be known until time of salvage.

4. Historical Concerns of the Salvage Operation

The primary reason for the salvage of the San Pedro is to develop the historical potential of a lost resource and return as much of it to the public as possible. Much unknown information could be provided by a detailed archaeological salvage of the San Pedro. In its present situation it does not constitute a historical resource until it is brought to the public. Everything will be done in the proposed salvage to retain the historical value of all artifacts or remains of the vessel's structure.

Artifacts of the San Pedro, when recovered, will present the only known example of the cargo of a Manilla Galleon. Inferences about crew life and vessel construction methods may also be discovered. Historical study and public exhibits will allow the public to learn the history of the period.

Virtually all remains of the vessel will be recovered by the operation. A system of grids will permit three dimensional location of the contents of the vessel and perhaps the original form of the ship. Stratigraphic excavation control or other controlled grid sections will be used in mapping artifact location. Special support tools and extensive record keeping will be employed in the retrieval of all artifacts. Basic preservation and analysis will begin immediately upon retrieval. After completion of all archaeological salvage operations pits would be refilled and any disturbed kelp would be replanted.

E. Relationship to Area Planning

The environmental documentation in this report is only for the salvage of the San Pedro. Remains of the vessel and contents will be put on public display or transferred to a university in accordance with State regulations. The Office of Historic Preservation will be asked to offer assistance in the disposition of the artifacts. The State Lands Division has a list of noted

authorities in marine archaeology that will be available to help in aspects of the salvage operation and artifact appraisal. The total operation has no relationship to any political jurisdiction except the State as it is in State waters.

Coordination on the salvage with interested agencies indicates that most will not require a permit. The Coast Guard will have no involvement, since no navigation hazards will be created. The Corps of Engineers has no interest in the salvage project.

The regional office of the Coastal Zone Commission may require a permit and public hearing for the salvage. Any public hearing on this permit may jeopardize the security of the site. It is hoped that consideration and caution be exercised by the Coastal Zone Commission if they decide a public hearing is required.

The California Department of Fish and Game has been contacted regarding the project and has inspected the site. The Historic Preservation section of Parks and Recreation has been contacted regarding this project and will be contacted further on pertinent details of the operation.

State Lands Commission will require environmental clearance and other considerations for the salvage as specified in 2 Cal. Adm. Code, Article 2.5. A salvage permit has been properly obtained by the salvors. All portions or contents of the San Pedro are property of the State. Competent appraisers, approved by the Commission, will assess the fair market value of the salvaged items. Final consideration for the salvage operator and the State will be confirmed after all costs of the operation are deducted. The salvage company for the San Pedro will dispose of all material recovered by prior agreement with the State. Terms of the permit indicate that if the salvor keeps the material salvaged he shall pay an annual rent to the State. This amount is a set percentage of the net salvage value.

F. Other Considerations

Salvage of the San Pedro is concerned only with historical values and will not directly influence in a measurable amount other portions of the natural or human environment. Uses of public services, energy, or other resources will be minimal.

III. Environmental Impacts

Almost all of the expected impacts concerning the salvage of the San Pedro are positive. It is expected that the only negative occurrence will be turbidity and disturbance of a small amount to some marine organisms near the vessel. Some impact may occur on the giant kelp as a result of the operation. This would include the removal of some plants attached to any material to be retrieved or moved.

Positive impacts relate primarily to the history of the vessel. The recovery of the artifactual remains of the ship and its contents will contribute to an appreciation and knowledge of the Manilla trade.

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Remains of the San Pedro will provide examples of early ship construction, and trade goods involved in one of history's longest trade routes. If artifacts from the vessel are displayed, the public will receive educational benefit by way of interpretive display. Popular published articles on the vessel will also provide historical information to the public.

IV. Any Adverse Environmental Effects which Cannot be Avoided if the Proposal is Implemented

The only predictable deleterious impact will be minor temporary and localized turbidity in the vicinity of the vessel. The local availability of fish habitat will be temporarily reduced. Also, an undetermined but small amount of lower marine organisms may be disturbed by the salvage. Another possible impact will be the potential hazard to divers conducting the project. Safety measures are expected to reduce this threat.

V. Mitigation Measures Proposed to Minimize the Impact

Many aspects of the planned salvage will help to mitigate the impacts of the operation. Turbidity will be limited by concentrating on the small grid areas and using small tools. Also, these small activities will be spaced over a period of several years. During the winter and when the site is not worked the limited area of impact may recover biologically. If kelp plants are removed they will be replanted nearby. Also, pits created by the archaeological excavation will be refilled when the operation is complete.

Special salvage and preservation techniques will be used to reduce the potential loss of historical artifacts. Items will be removed carefully in context and preservation will begin immediately. Preservation will be completed in a shore based facility. In a sense the entire undertaking is a mitigation against the loss of a historical resource.

VI. Alternatives to the Proposed Action

A "no-project" alternative would prevent minor biological disturbance in a non-sensitive environment. The major consideration, however, would be the substantial loss to the State of a historical resource. Specific information to be learned from the vessel's contents may not be learned by other means. Further deterioration or looting to the vessel may also result. There are no other possible alternatives to the project. A variety of procedures may be adopted in the salvage, but these are not predictable at this time.

VII. The Growth-Inducing Impact of the Proposed Action

No growth relationship is seen to occur from the actual salvage or from the material retrieved.

VIII. Statement of Non-Significant Impacts

The proposed salvage will have no cumulative impacts, adverse effects on humans, or potential to degrade the human environment. Because the nature of the project is partly exploratory, the potential for limited but unpredictable impacts exists. It is expected that usual safeguards of the salvage operation will minimize the potential for unforeseen impacts.

IX. Selected Bibliography

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Exact Location Not Shown Due To Trade Secret.

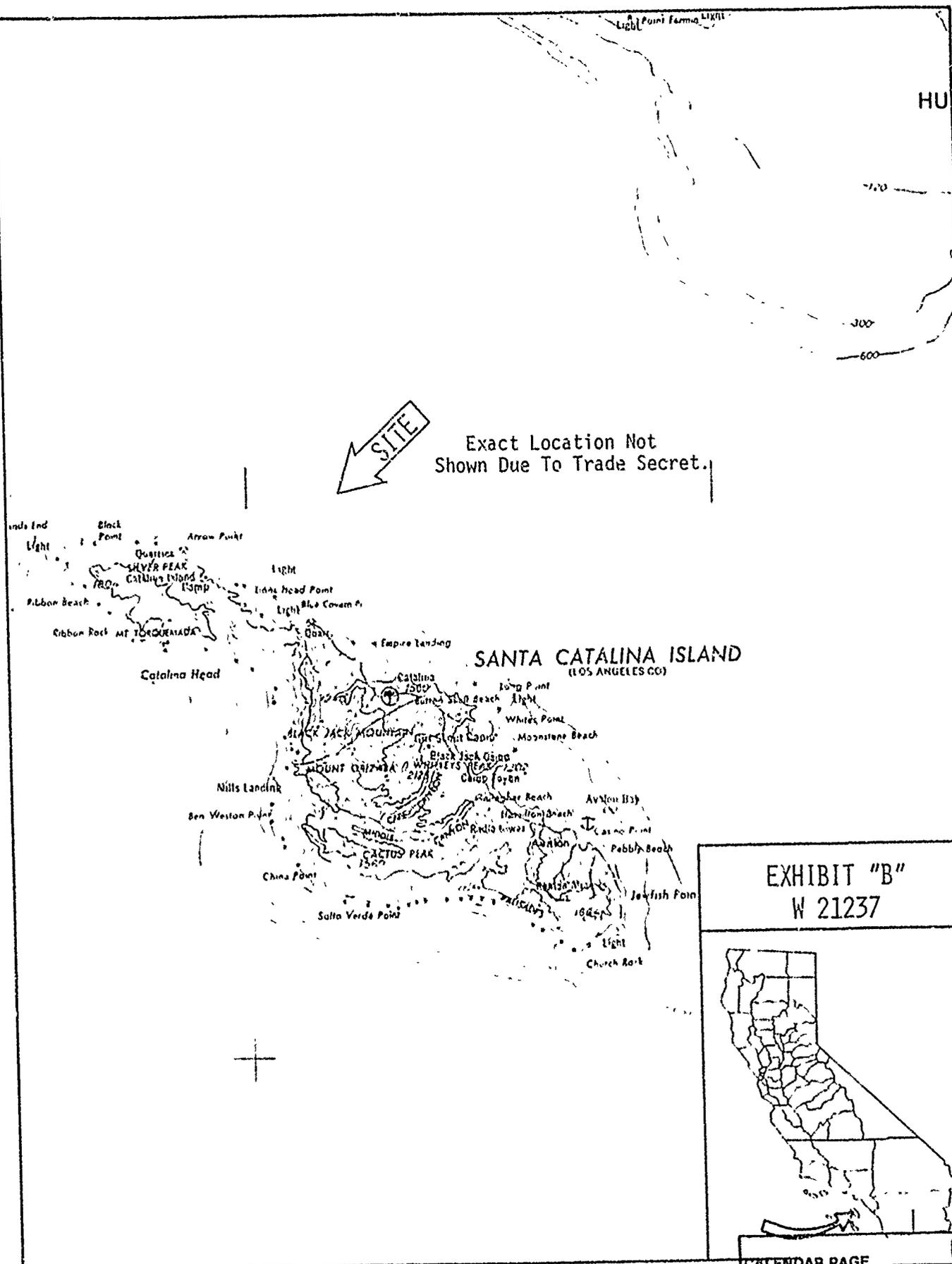


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