

# ARCHAEOLOGY 101

## What is it??:

**Archaeology:** the study of human behavior and culture through the analysis of material remains.

**Archaeological Site:** a place with evidence of human activity. Material evidence can be located on the surface or below the surface of the ground. Federal Law defines an archaeological site as 50 years or older, while the State of Oregon says an archaeological is at least 75 years or older.

**Prehistoric Archaeology:** the study of past human behavior and culture characterized by cultural material and archaeological sites dating before Euro-American contact. Sites might include lithic scatters, rock cairns, etc.

**Historical Archaeology:** the study of human culture through material remains, written documentation and oral information. Within Oregon, historic sites (rural and urban) date between 1805 and 1950 and can be characterized as homesteads, logging camps, Chinese mining camps, fur trade posts, etc.

- *Rural Sites:* include farmsteads, extraction and processing sites such as mines and logging operations, CCC camps and project sites such as spring developments, etc.
- *Urban Sites:* include homes, public works, and community stores, hotels, brothels, etc.
- *Submerged Sites:* underwater sites characterized by sunken boats, ships, dam and bridge features.

## **More Sites and Locations:**

- *Rock Cairns or Rock Wall.* These can be on steep slopes, along talus fields, and on mesa tops and benches. Sometimes heavy lichen can suggest age.
- *Talus Pits.* These are usually along a talus field.
- *Can and Bottle Dumps.* Sometimes along abandoned roads, ditches, or flat open areas which may have held a structure.
- *Lithic Scatters.* Can be along flood plains, benches and bars, or along mesas and slopes.
- *Culturally Modified Trees, (ie Peeled Trees or Dendraglyphs).* In the forest, along old roads, near berry patches.
- *Shell Middens.* Located along the coast, along bluffs and benches and near fresh water streams. May or may not be readily visible on the surface.

## **Why we do it??**

Federal and state cultural resource laws help identify and protect archaeological resources for future generations.

**Section 106 of National Historic Preservation Act (1966)** says that any agency funded in full or in part with federal dollars will take into account the effects of an undertaking on “any district, site, building, structure or object that is included in or eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places”.

### **Oregon State Law**

**ORS 358.910** declares that “Archaeological sites are acknowledged to be a finite, irreplaceable and non-renewable cultural resource, and are an intrinsic part of the cultural heritage of the people of Oregon”.

**ORS 395** says that “A person may not excavate, injure, destroy, or alter an archaeological site or object or remove an archaeological object located on public or private lands in Oregon unless....authorized by a permit”.

## **Where and How projects affect a site??**

Many ODOT projects which entail “ground disturbance” can and will affect an archaeological site. These activities require archaeological review.

*Ground Disturbance:* can include but is not limited to, excavating for a new road, culvert replacement, tree planting, bridge building, staging areas, depositing fill, borrow pits, plowing and re-seeding, extracting rock, etc.

Generally, ODOT projects which will need archaeological review include sign post installation, utility pole installation, pavement preservation projects which entail deep excavation, sidewalk installation in urban areas, guardrail installation, utility installation, culvert replacement, bridge replacement, road widening and new highway construction.

### **\*Previously disturbed areas *can* have archaeological sites!**

Example:

1. Plow zone site. Intact archaeological sites have been found buried beneath the plow zone in Oregon, even in fields plowed since the 1840s.
2. Paved city streets. Covering evidence of old urban businesses, homes, etc.

## **When do you call for HELP??**

1. *Early on!* You’re the first folks on a project. If you see something that could be an archaeological site, or you’re just not sure, just pick up the phone and call your friendly ODOT archaeologist. If we can identify an archaeological site early on, we can change design plans well enough in advance.

2. *Emergency situations!* You just set a survey marker in a pile of rocks and your buddy notices something strange, like the rocks look stacked and they're covered with lichen and moss. Call an archaeologist immediately; don't wait until you leave the site. If you do leave the site, GPS the location so an archaeologist can re-locate your position.

## **Who do you call??**

ODOT Archaeologists are here to assist you. In addition to the Senior Archaeologist who oversees the Archaeological Program, each region has a designated archaeologist, and there's an archaeologist on staff who handles maintenance projects statewide!

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