

ARCHAEOLOGY BULLETIN

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OREGON STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

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HIRING AN ARCHAEOLOGIST

NOVEMBER 2019

Professional archaeologists have access to restricted information about archaeological sites and are trained to identify, analyze, and document these resources. You may need to hire an archaeologist to help comply with state and federal laws, see Archaeology Bulletin 1 and 3 for additional information. This bulletin provides guidance on how to hire a professional archaeologist.

What should I expect an archaeologist to do?

- Research—They have experience conducting background research including access to confidential archaeological site records, obtaining Tribal information, and assessing the likelihood of undocumented sites.
- Field work—Skilled at identifying sites through a variety of techniques (e.g., survey, excavation, monitoring, remote sensing), are able to hold archaeological permits, and can properly document archaeological sites.
- Report—They write reports detailing their archaeological work.
- Recommendations—They provide recommendations for how a project can proceed while complying with state and federal laws. They can also provide recommendations on best management practices.

What should I not expect an archaeologist to do?

- Tribal consultation—Archaeologists should consult with tribes as part of their work however, such consultation is often inadequate to address all of the concerns that may be relevant to the entity or project they work for. We recommend cities and counties form strong relationships with their local tribes and keep them informed of future projects. The Legislative Commission on Indian Services can assist local governments and private landowners in determining appropriate tribes.
- Provide project approval – Archaeologists are not able to clear projects, determine site significance, or determine a project’s effect without consultation with SHPO, tribes and federal agencies (if involved). They provide **recommendations** but the project proponent must still seek concurrence from SHPO. For projects with a federal nexus, work should be submitted to the federal agency for review prior to submittal to SHPO and Tribes.

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Where do I find an archaeologist?

The Association of Oregon Archaeologists (AOA) maintains a list of archaeological contractors www.oregonarchaeologists.com. Each of the listed firms has a qualified archaeologist able to complete all phases of archaeological research. SHPO and AOA are not able to endorse any particular firm. You may also search for similar lists in nearby states, or you may choose to do a search of professional archaeological firms.

How do I decide which archaeologist to hire?

SHPO recommends contacting at least three firms to compare experience, cost, and services before making a decision. The right archaeological firm for your project may not be the most or least expensive choice, and choosing a contractor based on cost alone may result in additional costs or project delay. Provide each firm with a clear description of the work you need accomplished, a schedule for when you want the work done, the full project area, and detailed plans.

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Questions to ask an archaeological contractor include:

- What is your experience doing archaeological survey and excavation?
- What is your experience working in my specific region of Oregon?
- Are you qualified to apply for a state or federal archaeological permit?
- Have you applied for an archaeological permit in the state of Oregon?
- What is your experience in Oregon with prehistoric and historic archaeological sites?
- What is your experience and expertise in working with state archaeological and burial laws?
- How would you characterize your relationship with Tribes in the area of the project?
- How familiar are you with the SHPO Guidelines?
- How often do your projects come out over or under budget?
- Will I be provided with a Scope of Work (SOW)?
- Will all needed investigation be contained in the SOW? What things may be added to it?
- How much will the work cost? (Best and worst case scenarios)

We recommend asking the contractor for references from people with similar projects and asking those references their experience working with the archaeologist.

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What should I expect in a Scope of Work?

The archaeologist you hire should provide you with a SOW. For small projects it may not be necessary but we recommend getting a summary of what they will do in writing. The SOW should lay out work that the archaeologist will do to address your project's archaeological issues and it should include a plan for any reasonably anticipated contingency that may arise. Look for the following steps to be built into the document, although your SOW may not include all of these and may not be in this order:

- Schedule of work
- Applying for archaeological permits
- Records search
- Consultation with Tribes and other entities (e.g., historical societies, black pioneers)
- Plan map of the project
- Field reconnaissance including pedestrian survey
- Remote sensing
- Subsurface exploratory probing
- Subsurface testing
- Recording and/or updating any sites and isolates found and submitting them through the State of Oregon archaeological site form system
- Recommendations of Eligibility for all sites and isolates
- Monitoring of construction-related activities
- Damage assessment plan
- Inadvertent discovery plan
- Contingency plans
- Final Archaeological Investigation Report
- Curation

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