

Section 1 - Cultural Resources Introduction

- **Cultural Resources Information**

The resources described below are provided to assist NRCS personnel in accomplishing the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act which outlines the procedures to be followed by federal agencies for the conservation of Cultural resources during planning. This process, as it pertains to field office operations, is described in General Manual 420, Part 401.

- **Planning and Cultural Resources**

Section 2 - provides basic information concerning cultural resources including definitions, why cultural resources are important, and appropriate steps to be followed in order to incorporate the consideration of cultural resources in the planning process.

- **Individuals/Firms Interested in Doing Archaeological Contracting**

Section 3 - contains a listing of archeological contractors in Alaska. The individuals/firms listed can be contacted for the purpose of performing cultural resource surveys under contract and would be contacted directly by a property owner who is interested in having a cultural resources survey performed.

- **Federal Preservation Officer (FPO) List Contacts for Federal Undertakings in Alaska**

Section 4 - contains a listing of contacts for federal cultural resource undertakings in Alaska.

Cultural resource undertakings is any project, activity or program funded in whole, or in part under the direct or indirect jurisdiction of federal agencies that can result in changes in the character or use of a cultural resource (historic property) located in the area of potential effects.

- **Directory of Local Historic Preservation Commission in Alaska**

Section 5 - The Certified Local Government (CLG) program is a partnership between the state historic preservation office and local jurisdictions which meet national and state requirements for certification. It is part of the nationwide program established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 to preserve historic properties including buildings, structures, sites, neighborhoods, and other places of importance in the historical and cultural life of the nation. The program provides for the development of local preservation programs. Political subdivisions of Alaska, such as cities and boroughs, may apply to the State Historic Preservation Office to become Certified Local Governments. CLG's receive technical assistance and are eligible for Certified Local Government Grants. The kinds of projects that can be funded by CLG grants include:

- * Survey and inventory of historic buildings.
- * Survey of local prehistoric and historic archeological resources.
- * Preparation of nominations of local properties to the National Register of Historic Places.
- * Activities related to comprehensive community planning such as:
 - Providing staff support for a local

historic preservation commission.

- Developing architectural guidelines for use by historic preservation commissions for the review of new construction and alterations to properties within historic districts.
- Developing or strengthening local preservation ordinances.
- Preparing management plans for the protection of local historic resources.

- * Programs for public education in historic preservation such as:
 - Preparing and producing exhibits concerning local historical resources and their protection.
 - Preparing and producing brochures describing local historical resources.
 - Preparing special events that educate the public concerning local history and the community's historic resources.
- * Rehabilitation of historic buildings, including architectural plans, engineering studies and physical rehabilitation.

- **Property Listed on the National Register of Historic Places**

Section 6 - The purpose of this section is to list Alaska buildings, structures, sites, districts and object significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. The National Register of Historic Places was established in 1935 and expanded by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's list of properties considered worthy of preservation. The Alaska Office of History and Archaeology nominated significant properties to the National Register. Approximately 1400 Alaskan properties are eligible for or listed in the National Register. The program is a planning tool, because recognition of significant cultural properties encourages their preservation through public awareness.

- **Cultural Resources (Archaeological) Awareness Guidelines**

Section 7 - Archaeological resources are the physical remains of the past, that can be studied by archaeologists and other scholars to answer questions about history and prehistory. The answers to such questions can be used by everyone to better understand and appreciate our heritage. Although a standing building may be an archeological resource, most archeological resources are sites and groups of sites, buried in the ground and invisible, or very hard to see, on the surface.

Archaeological sites are especially important to historic preservation because they are our only sources of knowledge about prehistory -- the thousands of years before written records began to be made in the United States. More recent archaeological sites can provide information on aspects of history that were never written down, even though they occurred after written records began to be kept.

Archeological sites are fragile and irreplaceable; they cannot be rebuilt or remade. Destroying an archeological site is often equated with burning a book, since it destroys the information at the site, like the book, contains. But each site is a unique resource -- a one of a kind book. Even excavation by archaeologists, using modern techniques and great skill, destroys some information, so archaeologists are careful to dig only as much as they need to in order to address important questions, and they try to concentrate their work on sites that must be destroyed for other reasons, such as to make way for modern development.

Protecting archaeological resources:

Recognizing the importance of their archeological resources, more and more communities across the nation are establishing programs to protect them. An important aspect of such programs is **identification**. Since most archeological resources are underground, they can be hard to see --- especially if buildings, streets, or landscaping have covered them.

Identifying them requires two things: background research to identify the most likely places to look, and fieldwork to determine whether resources really exist in the expected locations. Fieldwork may include both inspection of the ground surface, and excavation using hand tools or machines such as backhoes. Some communities have comprehensive archeological survey programs, while others provide for surveys, often at the expense of developers, only when needed in advance of development that will disturb the ground.

The **physical protection** of archeological resources can be achieved in many ways. If a site can simply be left alone, in the ground, this is usually to be preferred; there are plenty of threatened sites for archaeologists to study, and a site preserved today is one that can be studied by archaeologists ten years, a hundred years, or even a thousand years from now, when archaeologists will have new tools and concepts to use, and new questions to ask about the past. Sometimes archeological sites can be **incorporated** in to development projects, so that they remain intact within landscaped areas, are buried under fill on top of which new structures are built, or exposed to some extent and interpreted for the public.

Where an archeological resource cannot be physically preserved, **data recover** is appropriate. Data recovery means excavating the site to study the information it contains, and translating that information from the form it takes in the ground into books, maps, notes, and other forms that can be consulted by scholars in the future, before the site is destroyed. Data recovery requires careful planning and development of research designs and strategies to guide the work. Fieldwork usually involves careful excavation, under professional supervision, to record not only objects in the ground but -- most importantly -- the way those objects lie in the ground relative to one another, which can reveal the human activities responsible for their being there. Analysis of the results of fieldwork leads to the preparation of reports, computerized data bases, and other documents that help answer questions about the

past and preserve the site's information for future study.

Archaeologists and pothunters. Professional archaeologists are usually found in college and university anthropology departments (because archaeology is a subdivisions of anthropology), in museums, and in environmental consulting firms. Some local governments have established archaeological programs, and all State Historic Preservation Officers have archaeologists on their staff. In some states and communities there are also avocational archaeological societies, which make it possible for interested non-professional to participate in archaeological work. Unfortunately, there are also some people who excavate archaeological sites from non-archaeological reasons -- to build up their own private collections of artifacts, to obtain artifacts for sale, or even to rob graves. Archaeologists refer to such people, whose activities destroy archaeological resources without scientific gain, as "pothunters". While the work of avocational archaeologists should be supported, pothunting should be discouraged because it deprives all of us of bits of our heritage.

- **Alaska Heritage Resources Survey**

Section 8 - The AHRS site survey form provides us with a basic inventory of known archaeological sites in Alaska; thus, constituting a valuable resource demarcating archaeological cultures. In addition, the AHRS site form provides the basic data needed to ensure that archaeological sites are not carelessly destroyed by highway construction, sewer and water development, etc.

Access to historic, prehistoric, and paleontologic site information contained in the Alaska Heritage Resources Information (AHRS) is closed to the general public. Authorized users are representatives of federal, state, or local government on official business: researchers engaged in legitimate scientific research: individuals or representatives of organizations conducting cultural resource surveys aimed at protection of such information or sites: or such individuals determined by the Chief of the office

maintaining the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey as having a legitimate need for access. Notification of state department heads of such information, as required by AS 41.35.070(a), will be by review of projects rather than direct routine transmittal of information.

The Department of Natural Resources considers that the AHRS is the central repository for all historic, prehistoric, and paleontological site location information in Alaska. The basic purpose of the AHRS is to facilitate cultural resource evaluation for research, planning, and development purposes.

State agencies, native corporations, federal agencies, and other organizations charged with managing cultural resources are concerned with the state policy to keep AHRS site location data confidential. Unrestricted availability of such information to any and all individuals increases the threat of site destruction and may prompt federal agencies, native corporations, and private land owners to withhold site information from the AHRS. In order to receive the most comprehensive site location data possible, it is necessary to limit dissemination of such information to professional organizations and legitimate researchers. Failure to do so may result in loss of information to the state, thereby causing a major hindrance to that state's developmental planning process and to scientific research in general.

- **Instructions for Preliminary Cultural Resources Evaluation Worksheet**

Section 9 - The preliminary cultural Resources Evaluation Worksheet AK-CR-1 is intended to be a permanent record of all NRCS technical and financial assisted activities including conservation planning RC&D and non-exigency 216 actions, as part of Environmental Evaluation procedures for "undertakings".

The NRCS's role in protecting cultural resources is to provide as much information as possible to help in the analysis. Each question of the Worksheet is discussed in detail.

- **A Summary of Federal and State Legislation on Archeology and Historic Preservation**

Section 10 - provides a brief description of relevant federal and state laws concerning cultural resources.

A detailed description of federal laws is contained in the United States Department of Interior, National Park Service Publication titled, "Federal Historic Preservation Laws". This publication will be filed in your NRCS reference library as a supplement to this section on federal legislation.