United States Department of Agriculture

FACT SHEET

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Cultural Resources and Your Conservation Project

Overview

Cultural resources are broadly defined as the traces of past human activities. They include prehistoric and historic artifacts like arrowheads, pottery and glassware; and archaeological sites, buildings and structures like bridges and canals. Cultural resources also encompass places or properties that are of traditional importance to a group of people, such as the sacred sites of Native American tribes.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, Section 106 requires all federal agencies — including Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) — to consider the effects of agency activities on significant cultural resources and to do so early in project planning.

If cultural resources are discovered during construction, stop all work in the area immediately.

How NRCS considers cultural resources in conservation planning

Very early in the planning process, the NRCS field office staff provides basic descriptive information on the proposed project and its natural and cultural setting to the cultural resources specialist in the NRCS state office. The specialist examines this information and

other data available from archives, libraries, and consulting parties and makes a determination on the potential for the project area to contain significant cultural resources.

Information on projects with potential for affecting cultural resources is sent to appropriate agencies and tribes for comment. If no significant concerns are identified, the project can move to final planning, design and construction.

Field investigation and additional study may be required for areas with high potential for cultural resources. The local conservationist and the specialist can provide specific details on the requirements and extent of any additional studies required for your project. If you decide at any time you do not want any studies to occur, NRCS must withdraw all assistance from your project.

Landowner rights and responsibilities

- Provide NRCS with information on

known or suspected cultural resources in your project area early in the planning process for a conservation practice in order to prevent later delays.

- Comply with Arkansas Burial Law regarding the protection of cemeteries and human remains.

- Protect cultural resources (building foundation, artifacts, etc.) if receiving assistance from NRCS.

- Postpone construction until NRCS has completed all Section 106 historic preservation review. Premature construction could damage cultural resources and lead to NRCS withdrawing all assistance from the project.

What to do if cultural resources are discovered during construction

- Stop all work in the area immediately.

- Protect the site.

- For human remains, contact the local sheriff's office.

- Contact NRCS.

- Prevent others from disturbing the site.

- Discontinue construction until the site investigation is complete and a determination of the importance of the site has been made.

For more information about the Past of Arkansas

- Learn about historic preservation in Arkansas by contacting the Arkansas Archeological Survey, 2475 N. Hatch, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 72704 (tel: 479-575-3556; web site: www.uark.edu/campus-resources/archinfo/).

- Request a copy of the pamphlet "Protecting Historic Properties: A Citizen's Guide to Section 106 Review" from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 809, Washington, DC 20004 (tel: 202-606-8503; e-mail: achp@achp.gov; web site: www.achp.gov).

- Contact NRCS's Cultural Resources Specialist for Arkansas:

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