

SECTION II – CULTURAL RESOURCES INFORMATION TENNESSEE

INTRODUCTION

Cultural Resources are the past activities and accomplishments of people, including buildings, objects, locations, and structures that have scientific, historic, and/or cultural value. The cultural resources which the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) frequently deals with are historic properties of significant value. In general, to be of significance, the property must be at least 50 years old; however, clearly not all properties over 50 years old are considered significant. Examples of cultural resources include historic or prehistoric traces of districts, sites, buildings, structures, or objects.

NRCS field personnel will often encounter historic property in the form of non-structural archaeological sites, which usually extend below the soil surface. In most cases, these sites will be evident from the presence of cultural debris scattered on or near the surface. Such evidence indicates the potential presence of historic campgrounds, ancient trails or gathering places, or historic farms.

Because of the unique value of these resources, Congress has enacted laws to encourage protection of significant cultural resources from unnecessary destruction. The law directly affecting NRCS activities is the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA, P.L. 89-665, as amended). This Act provides guidelines to NRCS and other federal agencies for establishing a national policy that helps protect our important cultural resources.

The NHPA also established the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), which serves as an overseer of the Act's implementation. This Council works in conjunction with the State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPO) in carrying out the intent of the Act within the respective states. The SHPO serves as the liaison between the Advisory Council and the federal and state agencies within each state.

NHPA, Section 106, instructs federal agencies with direct or indirect jurisdiction over a federal or federally funded undertaking to take into account the effect of the undertaking on cultural resources, including those eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. An undertaking for the purposes of NHPA includes any NRCS practice that extends below the plow zone or removes the ground surface by excavating or grading.

In order to ensure compliance with cultural resources protection requirements, a six-step procedure will be used. The number of steps utilized in implementing the process will be determined by the magnitude of the undertaking and the significance of any cultural resource present. The results of the six-step procedure will be documented on the NRCS-CPA-52 which will be maintained in the case file. Not all NRCS activities are considered as an undertaking. NRCS practices meeting the definition of an undertaking are listed in the document, [Tennessee Cultural Resources Undertaking Designations](#), found in Section II, Cultural Resources Information folder of the electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG).

The six-step procedure is as follows:

- Step 1. Determine if the project or practice is an undertaking or potentially an undertaking. If not, document the determination in the case file, and cultural resource obligations are met.
- Step 2. If NRCS assistance involves an undertaking, determine level of cultural resource investigation needed. If the area is not known to contain significant cultural resources, landowner interview, cursory field examination, and field office record review are sufficient investigations for determining if assistance can continue. This review should include a check of the National Register of Historic Places (<http://nrhp.focus.nps.gov/natreghome.do?searchtype=natreghome>).

If the investigation indicates that cultural resources are unlikely to be found, document the case file and proceed with assistance.

- Step 3. When initial investigation indicates that cultural resources are likely to be present at the undertaking site, the field office will conduct a field survey. This survey will verify if cultural resources are present and their significance. Field procedures for this process are located on pages Section II-3 through Section II-4 of this Technical Guide. If the survey reveals that the undertaking will not destroy cultural resources of significance, the case file will be documented and assistance may continue.
- Step 4. When significant cultural resources will be impacted, the TN-NRCS State Cultural Resources Specialist or the TN-NRCS Cultural Resources Coordinator must be notified. The site will be analyzed to determine if impacting the cultural resources can be avoided. If so, the plans will be modified, the case file documented, and assistance will continue.
- Step 5. When impacting the resource cannot be avoided, the TN-NRCS State Cultural Resources Specialist or TN-NRCS Cultural Resources Coordinator must arrange for a review by a professional archaeologist. The archaeologist will determine the degree of cultural resource significance and potential adverse effect(s). When the level of adverse effect is acceptable, the case file will be documented, and assistance may continue.
- Step 6. When the archaeologist determines that the adverse effects are unacceptable, recommendations for protection alternatives or mitigation will be developed for use with the undertaking. A protection or mitigation plan must be agreed to by the landowner, NRCS, and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) before technical assistance may continue. Additional information relating to cultural resources in Tennessee and the Tennessee Historical Commission can be found at http://www.tn.gov/environment/history/history_section-106-review.shtml.

With the discovery of a cultural resource, the TN-NRCS State Cultural Resources Specialist or TN-NRCS Cultural Resources Coordinator will contact the Tennessee Historical Commission for consultation. Cultural resources must be protected in all Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) activities.

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**CONDUCTING ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATIONS
OF CULTURAL RESOURCES
TENNESSEE**

PREHISTORIC FEATURES AND/OR MATERIALS

If you find any of the following, CALL the TN-NRCS Cultural Resources Specialist or TN-NRCS Cultural Resources Coordinator during construction. If something is not covered or you are not sure, always call.

- **BONE**
 - Any human bone
 - Any deeply buried bone
 - Bone at any level with any materials made by humans
 - Bone at any level that cannot clearly be identified as modern and nonhuman
 - Decorated in any manner

- **CHARCOAL/ASH**
 - Any concentration not clearly from a recent fire (If only aluminum cans are present, it is recent.)
 - Scattered pieces; if there are any flakes, pieces of pottery, shell, or stones that are not obviously part of a streambed or large stratum of rock

- **LITHICS**
 - If one arrowhead, spear point, or chipped stone tool such as a scraper is found, search the back dirt for more material. If anything is found, call. If not, note the location, describe the item found in documentation, and make a drawing of the item for the record. Keep watching.
 - If more than ten (10) flakes are found within a project area, search for other material in the bank (soil profile) and dirt. If others are found, call. If no others are found, proceed with caution.

- **GROUND STONE**

Any polished or ground limestone, shale, sandstone, etc.

- **CERAMICS**

More than two pieces of pottery (not historic dishes)

- **SHELL**
 - Layers of shell in the cut bank
 - More than ten (10) pieces, other than clearly modern snails, within two (2) square yards

- **EARTHWORK, MOUNDS**

Any earthwork or “Indian mound” that appears to be out of place with the landscape

- **CAVES, ROCK SHELTERS, OVERHANGS**

Any cave, rock shelter, or overhang that has the appearance of or any indication of being used by humans in the distant past

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HISTORIC FEATURES AND/OR MATERIALS

If items are less than 50 years old (for example, a dump with an old radio, bedsprings, or a few dishes from the 1980's), note what was seen.

If you find of any of the following items that are more than 50 years old, CALL the TN-NRCS Cultural Resources Specialist or TN-NRCS Cultural Resources Coordinator during construction:

- **WOOD**
 - Lumber – More than one piece of hand cut or with square nails, for example, the remains of a wall
 - Logs – Altered (notched or bark removed)
 - Other – Part of an object, for example a canoe)
- **EARTHWORKS**

Civil War fortifications, trenches
- **GLASS, CERAMICS**
 - Several pieces of different kinds together
 - More than a dozen pieces of any of these colors – purple, cobalt blue, white milk, dark amber or green, or with decorations
- **DRESSED STONE**

Any dressed stone found in an alignment. Dressed stone is that which is worked, such as chiseled, chipped, rough-cut, etc.
- **BRICK/CLAY**
 - Several in an alignment as a foundation or in a pile
 - Any off-sized or old-looking stones
 - Burned clay/earth, especially with impressions from other materials
- **CONCRETE**

Remnants of a foundation or structure; for example, a well or cistern, unless it is clearly less than 50 years old
- **OTHER**

Any buttons, beads, toys, jewelry, coins, smoking pipes, rock art, or fiber/plant items that appear to be at least 50 years old