

Cultural Resources



The cultural history of what has come to be known as Yellowstone National Park begins with the first archeological evidence of American Indians present in the area more than 11,000 years ago. It extends through the first exploration by Euroamericans in the early nineteenth century; the establishment of the park and its administration by civilian employees (1872–1886), the military (1886–1918), and the National Park Service (1916 to present). The legacy of American Indian use, early park management, and the development of park concessions is preserved in the park’s museum, library and archival collections, archeological sites and cultural landscapes, and in historic buildings that are



still used today. Yellowstone plays a prominent role in the history of the park movement and illustrates the changes in how Americans have travelled and spent their leisure time.

Although the increased interest in cultural preservation at Yellowstone reflects a trend in the entire national park system, many of these resources have received relatively little attention because Yellowstone has been valued primarily as a “natural” park. Management of the park’s cultural resources has been

hampered by insufficient staff, funding, and facilities. For example, the absence of a full-time park archeologist to handle compliance with archeological protection requirements has delayed planning for road reconstruction and other development projects.

Since 1988, when Yellowstone had only one full-time employee devoted to cultural resources, the program has grown through additional staff and increased cooperation with park partners. Seasonal rangers, district resource management staff, and some maintenance employees spend at least part of their time working on cultural resources. A cultural resources coordinator on the park's concessions staff helps ensure compliance with laws that protecting the historic buildings and other facilities owned by the government and used by the park's concessioners.

Nonetheless, according to a 1997 service-wide analysis that was based on the extent of each park's cultural resources, Yellowstone still needs to significantly upgrade its cultural resources staff. Legislation passed in 1998 compels the park to inventory and document all of its cultural resources and develop systematic monitoring and protection programs for them. In some cases, the resources may be gone already. For example, archeological materials are eroding out of river banks and lake shores, and may be disappearing from the unsurveyed Bannock Trail and Nez Perce National Historic Trail. Also, people associated with the park and elders of surrounding American Indian tribes offer an ephemeral source of historical information. Unless park staff complete interviews with these people soon, the information may be lost forever.

STEWARDSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES FOR YELLOWSTONE'S CULTURAL RESOURCES

- ➔ **Research** enables us to identify cultural resources and determine their significance. A chipped stone found on a river bank may not appear important until research shows it was used as a fishing-net sinker by prehistoric people. Research can also enable us to prevent damage to cultural resources and develop ways to protect them.
- ➔ **Inventory and monitoring** ensures that we know the breadth and status of Yellowstone's cultural resources and what needs to be done to preserve them.
- ➔ **Preservation** helps ensure that cultural resources retain the qualities that make them significant and that future visitors may continue to enjoy these treasures. It is done through monitoring, maintenance, treatment, prevention of adverse impacts, and law enforcement.
- ➔ **Interpretation** tells the stories of how people have left their mark on Yellowstone in ways that promote understanding and appreciation among the visitors of today.

Archeology

The long presence of humans in Yellowstone prior to the park's establishment undoubtedly had some effects on its landscape, but our understanding of this history is limited. Only a very small portion of the park has been inventoried for archeological sites. Most of these archeological surveys have been done to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act in areas of high visitor impact or construction. Such areas may not accurately represent the range of archeological sites that may be found in the park. Most of the recorded sites are at or near the surface; little is known about buried sites or stratified sites with more than one cultural component.



Although more than 1,000 American Indian and Euroamerican archeological sites have been documented, many have not been revisited since their initial recording more than 30 years ago, and the current condition of most of them is poor or unknown. Only five percent of the recorded sites have been evaluated for National Register eligibility. Surveys done before 1980 need to be brought up to the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation."

American Indian and Euroamerican archeological resources are integral to understanding the human experience in Yellowstone. However, the lack of adequate baseline data limits our ability to protect and learn from these resources. Through resource impacts, natural erosion, land use activities, and vandalism, sites are being damaged or destroyed.

AMERICAN INDIAN SITES

About 84 percent of the recorded archeological sites are of American Indian origin. In addition to their network of trails, the Indians left behind burial sites near Fishing Bridge, a bison kill along the shore of Yellowstone Lake, tiny campsites indicated by only a few obsidian chips, rock shelters, tipi rings, and wickiups—tipi-shaped shelters of wood, the remains of which can still be discerned in some backcountry sites. Few of these sites have been evaluated as to tribal or cultural affiliation. The archeological evidence suggests that most Indian use during the past 11,000 years occurred seasonally by a variety of groups, including the Crow, Shoshone, Bannock, Nez Perce, and Blackfeet.



EUROAMERICAN SITES

The Euroamerican presence in Yellowstone is relatively well documented through maps, written and photographic records, cultural objects, structures, and buildings. However, if something was not photographed, drawn, painted, written about, or discussed in an oral history, the archeological record becomes the primary record. Archeology provides a means to test the historic documentation and obtain previously unknown information about the Euroamerican presence in Yellowstone.

Many of the known sites date from the late 1800s to the mid-1940s and are associated with early park development under the U.S. Army and the NPS, as well as with the development of concessions within the park. Recorded sites include the Queen's Laundry bathhouse; Baronett's Bridge and cabin site; the Upper Lamar Cabin; historic rock carvings; the E.C. Waters shipwreck; Norris hotels and lunch station; Soda Butte, Tower, and Fountain Flats soldier stations; Yancey's Stage Stop; Wylie Camps; the Fountain, Firehole, and Marshall hotels; Sylvan Pass Lodge; and the Mary Mountain, Chittenden, and Mammoth to Gardiner high roads, and the Blacktail Deer Plateau Road, as well as 30 historic bridges, and 51 sites of dumps or historic debris piles, 14 cabins (including those of hunters, miners, fur trappers, and poachers), 29 borrow pits or gravel quarries, 11 road camps or buildings, 4 trails, 2 explosive bunkers, and 2 old bridges. The Stephens Creek game ranch, and Rife House ditches, Reese Creek diversion dam, and Ice Lake dock have also been recorded, and reports are now being completed for 40 backcountry patrol cabins; the Corkscrew Bridge, and Midway Geyser Basin bridge and walkway; and the Iron Springs Quarry. Known but unrecorded sites include the Norris Blockhouse (the park's first headquarters), Camp Sheridan, graves, and old hotel and dump sites.

RECENT PROGRESS

Archeologist on site. Having an archeologist from the NPS Rocky Mountain Support Office relocated to Yellowstone in October 1995 has made it possible to initiate archeological inventory and evaluation projects and to begin training park staff in cultural resource awareness, site identification, and how to prevent and detect resource violations. However, the archeologist's time is shared with other Rocky Mountain parks until the year 2000. About 20 park rangers have been trained in Archeological Resources and Protection Act (ARPA) procedures so they can help identify sites that require monitoring to prevent ARPA violations.

Historic Landmark designation.

The Obsidian Cliff quarry site, a major source of obsidian that was used and traded across much of the West by Native Americans for thousands of years, was designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior in 1996.

Program Needs

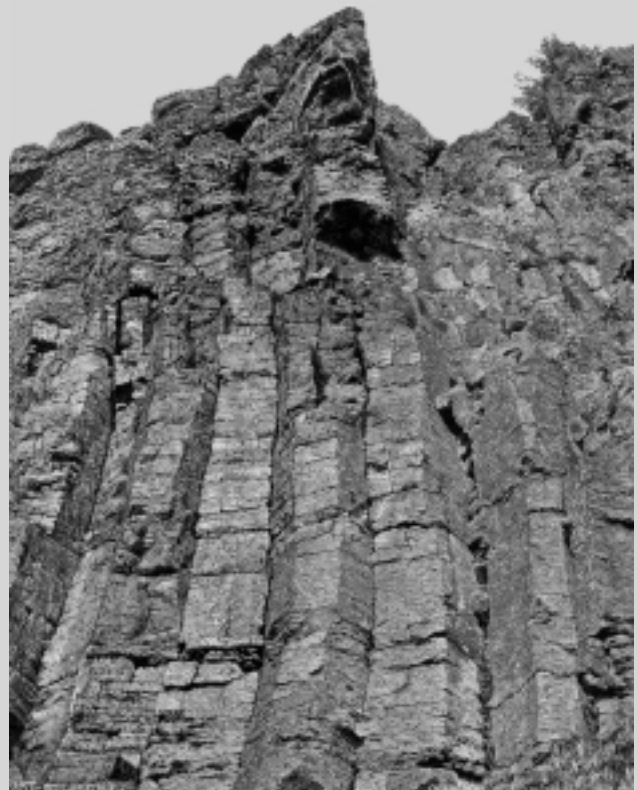
- **SITE SURVEYS AND MONITORING.** A comprehensive archeological survey should be designed for park developed areas, lake shores, trails, and backcountry areas. Documentation and evaluation of cultural resources is needed to determine their significance, treatment, and protection. Site-specific management plans should be developed for sites with special needs. Areas of the park where vandalism or illegal collection has been reported need to be surveyed and regularly monitored by law enforcement officers trained in ARPA procedures.

- **OBSIDIAN CLIFF PROTECTION.** The Obsidian Cliff quarry and sites are threatened by erosion, visitor access, and unauthorized collection of specimens. The area should be monitored to determine the effects of natural processes and human activities. Appropriate steps must be taken to protect the site's integrity, requiring additional patrols of the affected area.

- **ARCHEOLOGICAL EXPERTISE.** Additional staff or funds to hire contractors are needed to inventory, monitor, and protect archeological sites, as well as to complete planning and compliance requirements associated with construction and ground-disturbing activities.

Obsidian Cliff Historic Landmark Designation

“For nearly 12,000 years native peoples engaged in a cosmopolitan trade and industry in the volcanic stone called obsidian. As a raw material, it could be worked into tools sharper than modern surgical scalpels, and it could be transformed into jewel-like precious objects that continue to be revered as art and symbols into the present. One of the most renowned sources of obsidian was Obsidian Cliff. The ancient societies who used the Obsidian Cliff area were hunters and gatherers, and the societies all across North America to which that obsidian was traded varied substantially in economy, settlement, and socio-political and ceremonial organization over time and space. Obsidian Cliff includes intact mining features, workshops, and campsites of what can be called one of the first industrial areas by people in North America. The systematic excavation of archeological sites within Obsidian Cliff has the potential to yield important information regarding both the use and history of this obsidian in western North American prehistory, and the broader problem of intercultural transactions involved in the export of obsidian to distant users.”





ARCHEOLOGY

STEWARDSHIP GOALS



Professionally trained specialists perform systematic archeological surveys and evaluate sites for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.



Park staff conduct regular efforts to monitor and protect archeological sites, including the Obsidian Cliff National Historic Landmark.



Park staff and visitors gain an understanding of archeological resources, threats to them, and the means to protect them through well-informed interpretation and education efforts.

CURRENT STATE OF RESOURCES/PROGRAMS



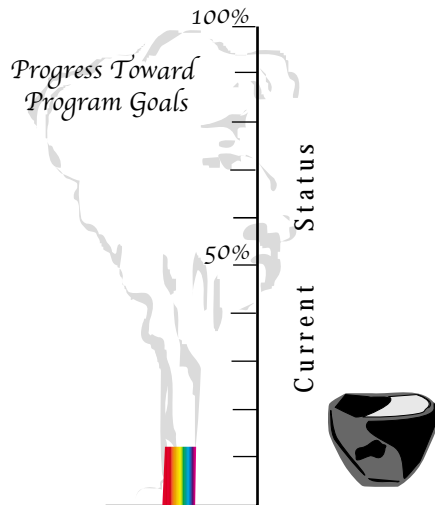
One archeologist is stationed in the park, but less than half of her time can be spent on Yellowstone projects; some work is done by contractors and outside researchers.



Less than 1% of the park has been surveyed for archeological resources, and most surveys have been done in connection with road improvements and other construction projects. Funds may be available in 1999 for a ranger trained in archeological resource protection to assist at Obsidian Cliff and elsewhere.



Neither park staff nor visitors have had much exposure to information about the park's archeological resources. Publications and exhibits have been proposed when funding is available.



1998 FUNDING AND STAFF

Recurring Funds	
Yellowstone N.P. Base Budget	\$ 7,300
Non-Recurring Funds	
One-time Projects	\$ 222,600
Fee Demonstration Projects	\$ 30,000
Staff	0.6 FTE

The human resources and funding necessary to professionally and effectively manage the park to stewardship levels will be identified in the park business plan.