

Training on Looting, Vandalism and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act

Rationale

Looting is still a very serious and frequently occurring activity throughout the United States. In 2004, the National Park Service reported that the theft of protected artifacts and natural resources such as fossils had jumped 46 percent from the previous two years to about 20,000 violations. In 2006, federal law enforcement finally caught up with looters that were hooked on methamphetamines, but not before they had ravaged more than 100 cultural sites in Oregon and racked up more than one million dollars in archaeological damage (The Oregonian, November 1, 2006). Networks of collectors interlock from one region of the country to another. In Utah's San Juan County alone, there are an estimated 20,000 known archaeological sites, and more than ninety percent have been looted (San Francisco Chronicle, April 8th, 2001). In addition to the more traditional commercial looter, a new breed of methamphetamine addicts is infusing a newer and more dangerous risk to the archaeological record. On U.S. Bureau of Reclamation lands along Caballo Reservoir in New Mexico, for example, thirty percent of the 117 recorded sites showed signs of looting (Archaeological Sites Inventory, U.S. Bureau Reclamation, Albuquerque Area Office). A recent records search of archaeological sites in Texas found that 2,307 archaeological sites showed evidence of looting, while in New Mexico a state sites record search found over 6,800 sites had been looted.

There are very few organizations or institutions that offer workshops or mini-courses for archaeologists and other cultural resources professionals on looting and vandalism. This workshop will be of value to numerous stakeholders; federal agencies responsible for protecting cultural resources; archaeologists who can benefit from understanding the damage assessment process; avocationals and site stewards, who are often the boots-on-the-ground site monitors; Native American groups, on whose lands looting often occurs; and law enforcement officers who can benefit from understanding the interplay between crime investigation and the archaeological specialists who assist them. While one may not be called upon to assist federal law enforcement, looting occurs not only on federal and tribal lands, but also state and private lands. In addition, the techniques learned will allow for recording site damage, tracking single or multiple episodes of looting, and writing field damage assessment reports that can aid land managers or private landowners by making site protection (for example, periodic monitoring and stabilization of site damage) recommendations. Those who take this workshop will also work through the ethical and values implications of looting and those who do it, and the larger issue of ethical values and responsibilities toward the archaeological record.

Abstract

This two-day workshop will combine classroom instruction and discussion of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, (its key provisions and case studies), and related legislation, with field instruction in assessing and recording site damage.

What participants can expect to learn:

- Knowing the statute
- Identifying the signs of looting

- Isolating areas of damage
- Recording and mapping site damage
- Keys to writing a field damage assessment
- The importance of site record databases
- Developing site looting episode chronologies
- Recommending steps for site protection

Materials provided:

- Binders and zip files with ARPA regulations, case studies, field assessment reports, and PowerPoints
- Site information for field exercise
- Field forms and instruction sheets
- Clipboards

Participants need to bring:

- Field toolkit
- Camera (iphone)

Day One: 9:00 AM-4:00 PM

A) Morning: 9:00 AM-11:30 AM

1. Introduction

- a) The nature of looting; looter profiles
- b) The role of stakeholders: federal agencies, archaeologists, Native American tribes, site stewards and law enforcement.

2. Field Examples and damage recognition (Part 1)

- a) Targeted looting and destruction of context

BREAK: 9:45-10:00

3. Field examples (part 2)

- a) Petroglyphs/Pictographs
- b) Construction-related site damage

4. Avenues to combat looting

LUNCH: 11:30PM - 1:00PM

B) Afternoon 1:00-4:00PM

1. The Archaeological Resources Protection Act

- a) Historical context
- b) Key provisions and definitions

BREAK: 2:15-2:30PM

- c) Prohibited Acts
- d) Punishments
- e) The role of civil penalties
- f) The issue of permits
- f) Proportionality

2. Writing the field damage assessment

End of Day One: 4:00PM

Day Two: 9:00AM-4:00 PM

A) Morning: 9:00AM-12:00 PM

1. Case Investigations

BREAK: 9:45-10:00AM

2. Issues and Ethics

- a) Looting as cultural tradition
- b) ARPA as “sumptuary law”
- c) Ethics of Context
- d) Operation Cerberus Action

3. Databases: use of site records

- a) Reviewing existing site records
- b) Methodological issues
- c) Incorporating detailed information into site records data

4. Role of the Archaeologist in Litigation OR Developing chronologies with condition assessments, TBA.

LUNCH: 12:00PM-1:00PM

B) Early Afternoon 1:00-4:00PM

1. Field application (1:00- 3:00)

- a) Identification of site damage
- b) Conducting a field damage assessment
- c) Recording damage under ARPA

C) Late Afternoon: 3:00-4:00PM (Return to training center)

1. Discussion of field results
2. Summary discussions
3. Hand out certificates of completion
3. Adjournment

End of Day Two: 4:00PM