

Archaeology Guidelines

Section: Introduction



State Historic Preservation Office

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Introduction

The Archaeology Guidelines contain the standards and specifications by which the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) reviews, evaluates, and comments on archaeological survey methods, results, recommendations, and reports, including, but not limited to:

- 1) [Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act](#)
- 2) [The Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act \(SMCRA\)](#)
- 3) [Ohio Revised Code Section 149.53](#)
- 4) [Historic Preservation Fund sub grants](#)

These are minimum standards for conducting archaeological work in Ohio and do not preclude alternative or experimental strategies. Early consultation with the SHPO and other consulting parties is highly recommended. Research designs falling short of these minimum standards run the risk of delayed review or rejection of the archaeological report.

Also included are three supplements, which were used in part to develop their respective minimum standards in the Archaeology Guidelines. The supplements provide further details not covered in the Archaeology Guidelines. As technologies and archaeological approaches evolve, these supplements will be revised or replaced accordingly.

Supplement A provides an expanded overview and detailed recommendations for applying geophysics to all phases of archaeological investigations in Ohio.

Supplement B offers guidance for submerged/underwater archaeological investigations that can be used in lieu of a research design prepared for a specific submerged/underwater context when the potential presence of a submerged archaeological resource is unknown.

Supplement C provides a discussion of current photogrammetry techniques? and its applicability to archaeology.

SHPO welcomes and encourages the introduction of new and novel technologies when they can be demonstrably shown to facilitate the gathering of the highest quality data possible in the field, as well as obtaining the best possible information for determining the potential for archaeological significance. SHPO also encourages

early and frequent consultation especially for large-scale and complex projects, as well as projects with a high potential to affect historic properties including but not limited to prehistoric earthworks and places of burial.

A major goal of the SHPO is to keep cultural resource surveys cost effective and to ensure that the quality of the information remains as high as possible within reasonable time constraints. Enacting a project-specific pre-approval process is very useful towards achieving this goal, particularly in situations where the archaeologist has questions regarding research design and/or methodology.

The information potential of archaeological resources is conditioned by their contexts with understanding and expectations generally modified by experience gained through fieldwork and analysis, and from keeping current with recent developments and new approaches. Archaeology should be recognized as a developing scientific discipline with inherent uncertainty involved in selecting the most appropriate research and sampling techniques. Continued coordination with the SHPO is required as the very nature of archaeology precludes rigidly static mechanical approaches to the identification, evaluation, or protection of archaeological resources.

Philosophy of Documenting Archaeological Resources

Many historic properties are archaeological in nature. The SHPO has adapted the definition of an archaeological resource from Section 3(1) of the [Archaeological Resource Protection Act](#) (ARPA). Equally, many archaeological resources are also contributing elements to other types of historic properties such as historic buildings, historic structures, historic objects, historic landscapes, and/or traditional cultural properties.

Qualified cultural resources professionals planning on conducting research or cultural resources investigations in Ohio should also apply for access to the SHPO's [Online Mapping System](#). This GIS web application system provides instant access to SHPO data including but not limited to archaeological resources, historical buildings, objects, or structures, as well as historic landscapes, known cemetery locations, maps of previously surveyed areas, and the locations of all National Register listed properties. This ever-growing database is an essential tool for gathering background cultural resources information and should always be consulted prior to the initiation of any cultural resources survey including archaeological surveys.

The SHPO requires the use of the [Ohio Archaeological Inventory](#) (OAI) form to record all archaeological resources encountered. I-Form is an internet-based application developed to facilitate the online completion and submission of [Ohio Historic Inventory](#) (OHI) and OAI forms.

The OAI form documents the material remains (artifacts and features) and their locations to the extent that the contextual relationships amongst them can be recognized and described. The OAI form provides standardization enabling comparison, both written and electronic, of the data contained within and between archaeological resources. There are several ways to delineate an archaeological resource. The method chosen must be justified by the investigator in the research design. Consultation with the SHPO about this is strongly encouraged.

Archaeological resources may also require preparation of an OHI in addition to OAI form. The OHI is useful in documenting destroyed or damaged buildings, or structures of architectural and/or historic interest when there is sufficient documentation (i.e., photographs, architectural drawings, insurance maps, etc.) to complete the minimum level of information requested.

Relevant Preservation Laws

Federal and State Regulations

The following laws pertain to the protection of archaeological resources on federal and state lands or that may be directly relevant to archaeological investigations.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of projects they carry out, assist, fund, permit, license, or approve (i.e., undertakings) on any districts, archaeological sites, buildings, structures, or objects that are eligible for or listed in the National Register of Historic Places (i.e., historic properties) and to provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) with a reasonable opportunity to comment.

The SHPO reflects the interests of the state and its citizens in the preservation of their heritage. SHPO plays a key role in coordinating the state's participation in the Section 106 review process. The SHPO's role is to consult with and assist the federal agency in identifying historic properties, assessing effects upon them, and considering alternatives to avoid or mitigate those effects. For further information on the Section 106 review process, please consult, [36 CFR Part 800 Protection of Historic Properties](#).

Federal Land

A permit for archaeological investigations on federal lands is typically required, under the [Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 \(ARPA\)](#). To obtain permission to conduct archaeological investigations on federal lands, contact the appropriate federal agency with jurisdiction over that land.

State Land

Under [Section 149.53](#) of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC), all departments, agencies, units, instrumentalities, and political subdivisions of the State of Ohio shall cooperate with the Ohio History Connection (OHC) and the Ohio Historic Site Preservation Advisory Board in the preservation of archaeological and historic sites and in recovery of scientific information from such sites; and, whenever practical, by contract or otherwise provide for archaeological and historic survey and salvage work during the planning phase before work on a public improvement begins or at other appropriate times. This requires contractors performing work on public improvements to cooperate with archaeological and historic survey and salvage efforts and to notify the OHC about discoveries of archaeological resources. The director of the OHC has the exclusive authority to determine the disposition of artifacts and skeletal remains discovered on state lands.

Submerged Land of Ohio

Archaeological investigations within Lake Erie requires a permit from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). ODNR consults with the OHC prior to the issuance of such permits pursuant to [Section 1506.32](#) of the ORC.

Title to abandoned shipwrecks within Lake Erie are transferred from the federal government to the state through the [Abandoned Shipwreck Act of 1987](#). The State of Ohio reaffirms ownership of submerged abandoned property in Lake Erie through ORC Section [1506.30](#) and [1506.33](#) and expands the definition of abandoned property to include submerged materials resulting from Native American activities. All United States military craft, including shipwrecks and downed aircraft, regardless of their age, are protected under the [Sunken Military Craft Act of 2004](#); protections may also be extended to foreign military vessels.

The [Submerged Lands Act, 43 U.S.C. § 1301](#) et seq., defines coastal waters for states bordering the Great Lakes, including Ohio, as extending from shore to the international maritime boundary with Canada. This definition is reaffirmed in the ORC, Title 15, Conservation of Natural Resources, Chapter [1506.01](#) and [1506.10](#). The waters of the Ohio River along the state's southern border are not Ohio state waters, following the U.S. Supreme Court decision regarding the matter of OHIO v.

KENTUCKY (1980), which upheld Kentucky's claim it's their northern border extended to the low-water line along the northern bank of the Ohio River as it existed in 1792.

Safety and Health

All archaeological investigations must be conducted safely and, when applicable, comply with federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) general industry standards. Some states have their own OSHA-approved state plan; Ohio does not. OSHA requires that every workplace, including remote workplaces, i.e., places where archaeological fieldwork is conducted, have an emergency action plan.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also provides important health and wellness information to help protect from recognized occupational threats. The working environments of archaeologists, particularly when conducting field investigations, contain numerous recognized health hazards which must not be disregarded. The Ohio Department of Health also has useful information.

Call Before You Dig

Ohio law (ORC 3781.30) requires that all excavators contact OHIO811 at least 48 hours but no more than 10 workdays (excluding weekends and legal holidays) before excavating to acquire one or more dig tickets. Dig Tickets can be acquired over the telephone or Internet. For additional details, please see website at <https://www.oups.org/>