

Contexts and NR Eligibility Standards

Prehistoric Archaeology and the National Register

National Register of Historic Places eligibility (or "significance") is used to decide which sites require protection and/or excavation and which do not. Prehistoric archaeological sites are nominated to the National Register under Criterion D, "potential to provide important information about prehistory or history." We have subdivided prehistoric or Native American archaeology into eleven time periods and named cultural units. Seven of these eleven contexts have written summaries and explicit National Register eligibility criteria. The remaining four use eligibility criteria for similar contexts. The heart of each context is a discussion of existing archaeological knowledge about the time period or cultural group, organized around twelve research significance themes. These twelve research significance themes allow organized discussion of on-going research trends and make clear which areas have been under-researched or have little applicable data. Furthermore, they help to clarify the site preservation attributes which can be used to judge what sites might "provide important information about prehistory or history" and, therefore, separate eligible from non-eligible sites or components. It is a policy of the Commission that any site which contains an eligible component is eligible in its entirety with the exception that some physical portion of that site (e.g., plowzone, or a heavily disturbed portion) might be specifically excluded as non-contributing in the National Register nomination document. Many well preserved, multi-component sites have more than one prehistoric component which meets the eligibility criteria of one or more research significance themes.

Table 3. Comprehensive Planning Archaeological Contexts

Time Period	Study Unit
11,500 - 10,000 B.P.	Fluted Point Paleoindian
10,000 - 8,000 B.P.	Late Paleoindian
10,500 - 6,000 B.P.	Early and Middle Archaic
6,000 - 4,200 B.P.	Late Archaic: Laurentian Tradition
6,000 - 4,200 B.P.	Late Archaic: Small-stemmed Point
4,200 - 3,800 B.P.	Late Archaic: Moorehead Phase
3,800 - 3,000 B.P.	Late Archaic: Susquehanna Tradition
3,000 B.P. - A.D. 1500	Ceramic Period
1500 - AD 1675	Early Contact
1675 - A.D. 1760	Later Contact and Colonization
1760 - A.D. 1940	Integration with Euro-American Life

Note: B.P. equals years Before Present; A.D. equals calendar years. All dates are estimates. Source: Spiess (1990:104).

Table 4. Archaeological Research Significance Themes	
Research Significance Theme	Description
1. Cultural History	Elucidating archaeological cultural chronologies and tracing ethnohistory and ancestry of Native American groups
2. Settlement Patterns	Studying distribution of sites across state, in relation to specific land forms, and with respect to intrasite patterning
3. Subsistence Patterns	Studying faunal and floral remains for interpreting intrasite and intersite variation in food acquisition and use
4. Mortuary Practices	Studying burial remains including single graves and cemeteries to develop interpretations of various aspects of social organization and religious beliefs
5. Transportation, Travel, Trade, and Commerce	Investigating quarrying activities and movement of lithic materials and other goods across the landscape. It also includes studying the scale of regional cultural contacts that occurred among people and the identification of reasons for such contacts
6. Social and Political Organization	Examining sites or groups of sites to investigate sociopolitical organization, especially of groups organized into units larger than the band
7. Laboratory and Field Techniques	Investigating sites where the situation allows for the application of field and laboratory techniques not currently used or the testing of new techniques
8. Anthropological Archaeology	Investigating anthropological issues that are associated with the study of "New Archaeology"
9. Human Biology	Studying human skeletal remains for the purpose of learning about demographics, general health, disease, and diet of prehistoric peoples
10. Environmental Studies	Covering topics directly related to understanding the paleoenvironmental contexts of sites that have significance in relation to other themes

11. Non-Mortuary Practices	Including the study of special purpose sites such as petroglyphs that can contribute to understanding non-material aspects of past cultures
12. Cultural Boundaries	Studying sites that contribute information on location and changes in location of cultural boundaries through time and across state

Table 5. Summary of National Register Eligibility Criteria

Note 1: This is a summary table only. The language contained in the text version of the eligibility criteria is controlling.

Note 2: A site that can make an extraordinary contribution to any Research Significance Theme for any of the following Contexts is eligible for listing in the National Register.

CONTEXT (Cultural period)	National Register Eligibility Criteria
Fluted Point Paleoindian Tradition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At least one diagnostic Paleoindian artifact or a suite of diagnostic lithic materials must be present (i.e., an assemblage of high quality lithic materials utilized by later inhabitants; AND there must be evidence that the site was utilized either for habitation or one or more "specialized" activities (i.e., not just a "find spot"). 2. The site need not display primary context, BUT if artifacts from more recent contexts or cultures are present, they must be easily segregated from the Paleoindian component. 3. The presence of features, caches, post molds, floral and/or faunal remains, charcoal, and spatial separation of artifacts meaningful to the reconstruction of behavioral patterns are not necessary, but will enhance site eligibility
Late Paleoindian Period	Same criteria as the Fluted Point Tradition context, except for the presence of diagnostic lithic materials (there are none).
Early and Middle Archaic Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A site must contain at least one component containing stone tools, debitage, features, floral subsistence, and/or faunal remains that can be confidently identified as Early and/or Middle Archaic. Because the Gulf of Maine Archaic minimized use of stone bifaces, component identification may also be based upon other diagnostic material culture (which include ground stone or quartz uniface tool types and/or a suite of lithic raw material as evidenced by debitage) AND a chronological date based upon association with a radiocarbon dated feature or a relative date on a stratum in a sealed alluvial context. 2. The component must be separable from other components on the basis of horizontal patterning or vertical stratigraphy.
Cultural Study Unit	National Register Eligibility Criteria

Laurentian Tradition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The site must have a separable component (vertical and/or horizontally) from material of other cultures; AND 2. diagnostic artifacts must be associated with one or more of the following: a) features, b) calcined or non-calcined faunal remains, c) charred plants remains, and/or d) human remains.
Small Stemmed Point	Same criteria as the Laurentian Tradition.
Moorehead Phase	Same criteria as the Laurentian Tradition.
Susquehanna Tradition	Same criteria as the Laurentian Tradition.
Ceramic Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A site must contain at least one Ceramic period component that must be separable by horizontal distribution or vertical stratigraphy, or some combination of the above and typological or raw material analysis; AND 2. the component must contain ceramics, lithic and /or bone artifacts that are diagnostic to some subdivision of the Ceramic Period (either one or several CP1-7 units or Early/Middle/Late division as commonly understood); AND 3. the component must at least in part remain in intact context or site matrix, mostly undisturbed by manmade or natural forces such that there is a close association between diagnostic elements of material culture and one of the following: a) one or more features, such as a hearth or a living floor, b) a fossil soil surface, and/or 3) a refuse deposit; AND 4. the component must also contain one or more in addition to stone tools: radiocarbon dateable charcoal, charred plant remains and faunal remains, human remains, and/or mortuary goods or personal adornment.
Early Contact Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A site must contain a datable component that can be demonstrated by the presence of certain European manufactured goods and/or Native American "remanufactured" items from European materials; AND 2. some or the entire component must be separable (horizontally or vertically) from preceding or later admixture. 3. Note: The presence of features house or village plans, floral and/or faunal materials, and ability to associate site with an ethnohistoric text are not necessary, but will enhance site eligibility.

Paleoindian Context

National Register Eligibility Criteria

The following criteria are necessary for a site with a Paleoindian component to be eligible for the National Register in Maine. The site will be firmly identified as Paleoindian by the presence of at least one morphologically diagnostic artifact, or any a suite of high quality lithic materials that were not utilized by later inhabitants of Maine. There must be evidence that the site was utilized either for habitation or for specialized activity. Findspots of isolated tools are not eligible unless there is unequivocal evidence that the locality was more than the site of random discard or loss of a tool. The site will display integrity of the Paleoindian assemblage. The site will lack contamination of the lithic assemblage by later habitation, or the materials of later habitation must be easily segregated on the basis of vertical or horizontal separation of components, or at the least, by raw material.

Late Paleoindian

National Register Eligibility Criteria

The following criteria delineate the minimum requirements for National Register listing of Late Paleoindian sites: The site will be identified as Late Paleoindian by the presence of at least one morphologically diagnostic artifact; and there must be evidence that the site was utilized either for habitation or for "specialized" activity, including tool maintenance and production, kill and butchery of an animal, etc. Findspots of isolated tools are not eligible unless there is unequivocal evidence that the locality was more than the location of random discard or loss of a tool. The site need not display uneroded or undisturbed primary archaeological context. However, the site will lack contamination of the lithic assemblage by later habitation, or the materials of later habitation must be easily segregated on the basis of raw material, and/or vertical and/or horizontal separation. Any site with a Late Paleoindian component that is demonstrably able to make an extraordinary contribution to any of the Research Significance Themes presented above is significant.

Early and Middle Archaic

National Register Eligibility Criteria

For a site to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because of one or more significant Early and Middle Archaic component(s), it must contain at least one component containing stone tools, debitage, features, floral subsistence, and/or faunal remains that can be certainly identified as deriving from the Early and Middle Archaic. That identification may be based upon a diagnostic biface type, which is the traditional method of identifying "culture" in Northeastern prehistory. However, because the Gulf of Maine Archaic minimized use of stone bifaces, component identification may also be based upon other material culture attributes (which include ground stone or quartz uniface tool types and/or a suite of lithic raw material as evidenced by debitage) and a chronological date based upon association with a radiocarbon dated feature or a relative date on a stratum in a sealed alluvial context. The component identified as Early and Middle Archaic must be clearly separable from other components on the basis of horizontal patterning or vertical stratigraphy. Mortuary components clearly identifiable to the period are eligible under the same criteria. Moreover, any site with an Early and Middle Archaic component that is demonstrably able to make an extraordinary contribution to any of the Research Significance Themes presented above is significant. Because of the general scarcity of

diagnostic bifaces for the Early and Middle Archaic, the primary factor in judging National Register eligibility must be component purity and component identification to the Early and Middle Archaic.

Late Archaic: Laurentian Tradition

National Register Eligibility

To be National Register eligible the following criteria for significance based upon a Laurentian Tradition component must be met, except as in paragraph 2. The component must be separable from other prehistoric artifactual material on the basis of horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphic separation or clustering, and diagnostic lithic tools must be associated with one or more of the following types of data: 1) features, 2) calcined or non-calcined vertebrate faunal remains and/or invertebrate faunal remains, 3) charred plant remains, and/or 4) human biological remains. The association of Laurentian Tradition material with features may be assumed if the site yields a reasonable density of Laurentian Tradition lithic material separable from other prehistoric material, if the context of preservation is not disturbed extensively, and if features are present and spatially congruent with the Laurentian Tradition component and/or are radiocarbon dated between 6000 B.P. and 4500 B.P.

Any site with a Laurentian Tradition component that can make an extraordinary contribution to any of the Research Significance Themes is significant. Moreover, because Laurentian sites are rare, the first site with a demonstrable Laurentian Tradition component in a given management unit (watershed) is significant if it will likely yield a large sample of Laurentian Tradition artifacts.

Susquehanna Tradition

National Register Eligibility Criteria

A site must exhibit the following criteria based upon a Susquehanna Tradition component for National Register eligibility, except as in the second paragraph below. The component must be separable from other prehistoric artifactual material on the basis of horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphic separation or clustering, and it must be clearly associated with one or more of the following types of data:

1. features,
2. calcined or non-calcined vertebrate faunal remains and/or invertebrate faunal remains,
3. charred plant remains, and/or
4. human biological remains.

The association of Susquehanna Tradition material with features may be assumed if the site yields a reasonable density of Susquehanna Tradition lithic material separable from other prehistoric material, if the context of preservation is not disturbed extensively, and if some evidence of feature preservation is present.

Any site with a Susquehanna Tradition component that can make an extraordinary contribution to any of the Research Significance Themes is significant. Moreover, the first

site with a demonstrable Susquehanna Tradition component in a given management unit (watershed) is significant if it will likely yield a large sample of Susquehanna Tradition artifacts

Ceramic Period

National Register Eligibility Criteria

For a Maine site to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because of one (or more) Ceramic Period component(s), that (those) component(s) must: (a) be clearly separable from other components on the basis of horizontal distribution or vertical stratigraphy, or some combination of the above and typological or raw material analysis; and (b) contain ceramics, lithic and/or bone tools which are diagnostic and can be assigned to some subdivision of the Ceramic Period, either one or several of CP1-7 (of Petersen and Sanger 1989) or an Early/Middle/Late division of the Ceramic Period as commonly understood; and (c) at least in part remain in intact context or site matrix, mostly undisturbed by manmade or natural forces such that there is a close association between diagnostic elements of material culture and one of the following: one or more features such as a fire hearth, a living floor or major portion thereof, a fossil soil surface, and/or a refuse deposit. The feature, living floor, soil surface or refuse deposit must contain one or more of the following in addition to stone tools: charcoal suitable for radiocarbon dating the occupation, charred plant food remains, faunal remains, human remains, and/or mortuary goods or personal adornment. Moreover, any site with a Ceramic Period component that can make an extraordinary contribution to any of the Research Significance Themes is significant.

Early Contact Period

National Register Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for National Register listing under the Early Contact context, a Maine site must contain a component clearly datable to the Early Contact Period. Such dating is most easy to demonstrate by the presence of certain types of European-manufactured goods (certain bead types, clay tobacco pipe types, European ceramics). Early Contact period sites also are apparently marked by evidence of Native American remanufacture of European materials (such as copper, brass, glass, or ballast flint), into Native American cognate items (such as endscrapers made of bottle glass or flint, or copper triangular points). These "remanufactured" items should exist without evidence that the site dates from after 1676, if they are to be used to date the site to the Early Contact Period. Therefore, National Register eligibility of a site, based upon its Early Contact component, is minimally dependent only upon the archaeologist's ability to demonstrate that some or all of the Early Contact component is either a "pure" component or that it can be clearly separated (material culture assemblage) from preceding or later admixture. National Register eligibility is enhanced by the presence of features, house or village plans, and/or floral or faunal remains that can be securely associated with the Early Contact component. A plausible association of the archaeological site with a site mentioned in an ethnohistoric text also enhances National Register eligibility, but a textual association cannot by itself be used to "prove" an Early Contact date for a site in the absence of material culture or other confirmation. Moreover, any site with an Early Contact period component that can make an extraordinary contribution to any of the Research Significance Themes is also eligible.

