

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES GUIDELINES FOR GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING

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Types of Resources

Two types of archaeological sites need consideration during Growth Management Planning: prehistoric archaeological sites (Native American, before European arrival) and historic archaeological sites (mostly European-American, after written historic records about 1600 A.D.). Prehistoric sites include camp or village locations, rock quarries and work shops, and petroglyphs or rock carvings. Historic archaeological sites may include cellar holes from houses, foundations for farm buildings, mills, wharves and boat yards, as well as shipwrecks.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) is the central repository in the state for archaeological information. Our survey files include computer files, map sets, paper data forms, field notes, detailed unpublished reports, photographic archives, and published works. Archaeological files are exempt from "right-to-know" legislation, and are accessible only with permission to protect sensitive archaeological sites and landowners' privacy. Summaries of sensitive archaeological information are made available for Growth Management planning.

What MHPC Provides

During the Growth Management planning process, the Commission will provide each community with a list of known historic and prehistoric archaeological sites in the municipality (if any), and summary information about site location and significance. The Commission will also provide a map of archaeologically sensitive areas for prehistoric sites, and an indication whether historic sites are known from documentary sources only or have been located by survey work.

Historic archaeological sites can be predicted most often by a review of historic records, maps and deeds. Settlement often focused on transportation corridors, first rivers, then roads as they were built. Archaeological sites from the first wave of European settlement in any town are likely to be significant (National Register eligible).

Prehistoric archaeological site sensitivity maps are based on the current understanding of Native American settlement patterns (known site locations and professionally surveyed areas) within the portion of the state where the municipality is located. Most commonly, prehistoric archaeological sites are located within 50 m of canoe-navigable water, on relatively well-drained, level landforms. Some of the most ancient sites (>10,000 years old) are located on sandy soils within 200 m of small (not canoe-navigable) streams. Where professional archaeological survey is not complete, archaeological sensitivity maps are based on water shoreline, surficial geology, and landform.

Standard of Historic Significance

The standard of what makes an archaeological site worthy of preservation should normally be eligibility for, or listing in, the National Register of Historic Places. Because the National Register program accommodates sites of national, state and local significance, it can include local values. Because of physical damage to a site and/or recent site age, some sites are not significant.

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Goal of Growth Management

The municipality should establish a mechanism for review of all construction or other ground disturbing activity within prehistoric archaeologically sensitive and historic archaeologically sensitive areas, or including known archaeological sites. This mechanism might include contacting MHPC for an opinion, and/or review of the construction area by an MHPC-approved archaeologist.

Maine's subdivisions statute (30-A MRSA 4401-4407) recommends review of impact on "historic sites" (Section 4404(8)), which includes both National Register listed and eligible buildings and archaeological sites. Maine's Shoreland Zoning statute (38 MRSA 435-449) includes, as one of its purposes, "protect archaeological and historic resources" (Section 435). Growth management planning should consider archaeological site protection for both of these statutes.

Subdivision or other construction review ordinances might contain language indicating applicability and subdivision plan requirements similar to the following:

“Archaeological sites within or adjacent to the proposed subdivision which are either listed in or eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, or within or adjacent to an area designated as archaeologically sensitive or potentially containing such sites, as determined by the municipality or the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. An appropriate archaeological survey shall be conducted .”

“If one or more National Register eligible or listed archaeological sites will suffer adverse impact, appropriate mitigation measures shall be proposed in the subdivision plan, and submitted for comment to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission at least 20 days prior to action being scheduled by the Planning Board.”

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