

Archaeological Survey Guidelines

Project Types

Archaeological survey is conducted in phases that are designed to address general questions about the proposed project area followed by more specific questions about an identified resource. Phases can vary somewhat in their definition depending on what information is needed for an initial assessment.

Phase 0 Assessment consists of an initial investigation of the landform on which a project is proposed and its potential to contain an archaeological site. Tasks include checking the MHPC's site inventory for the presence of known archaeological sites, checking historic maps and other documentary sources for indications of historic occupation, and visually inspecting the proposed project area by a walkover or pedestrian survey to document observable natural and cultural surface features indicative of human occupation. No subsurface excavation is conducted during this phase. In situations where subsurface investigation is anticipated to be needed, surveys commence with Phase I. A formal report of findings and recommendations is submitted to the MHPC for review.

Phase I Reconnaissance Surveys are designed to determine whether or not archaeological sites exist on a particular piece of land as noted above. Required tasks for this phase are the same as for Phase 0 with the addition of subsurface testing in areas of high probability. Testing generally consists of the excavation of 50cm x 50 cm shovel test pits (STPs) arranged in transects at intervals of 5, 10 or 20 meters as determined to be appropriate. Individual judgmental tests are also used. A formal report of findings and recommendations is submitted to the MHPC for review. Phase II Intensive Surveys are designed to further investigate previously identified archaeological sites through additional subsurface fieldwork and for historic sites, additional documentary research to determine past ownership, function and period of occupation. Goals of the Phase II include determination of site limits site content and site condition. Information from Phase II survey work is used to determine site significance and eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Subsurface testing is performed by the excavation of additional STPs and opening of larger units (generally 1m x 1m) or blocks of units. In some cases a combined Phase I/Phase II will be conducted to satisfy the needs of a particular project. A formal report of findings and recommendations is submitted to the MHPC for review.

Phase III Data Recovery or Mitigation is the final phase of archaeological investigation with the goal of documenting as much of a National Register eligible site as possible prior to construction and associated removal of a portion or all of the site. A final report of all findings is submitted to the MHPC for review and inclusion in its permanent archive. , This should go under Review, but need to see overall review section first to know how this will fit and how to be written. In responding to a project review submission, the MHPC may issue a letter specifying which type of archaeological survey is needed (prehistoric, historic or both) and at what level (Phase 0, I, II, or III). Often the response letter contains further information, such as the suspected presence of an historic site of a certain age, or a statement that only a portion of the project parcel in question is sensitive for prehistoric sites and only that portion needs archaeological survey.

Once the project applicant has one or more scopes of work (proposals) from appropriate archaeologists (see below), the applicant should submit their preferred proposal (without attached financial information or bid total) to the MHPC for approval. MHPC will not comment upon cost, but will comment on the appropriateness of the scale and scope of the work. An approval from MHPC of the scope of work is the applicant's guarantee that, if the field and laboratory work are done according to the scope, and appropriately described in writing, the results will be accepted by MHPC.

The final written report on the project must also be submitted to MHPC for review and comment.

Finding an Archaeologist

At the time that MHPC issues a letter requesting an archaeological survey MHPC will also provide a list of archaeological contractors who are approved to perform the requested work. Level 1 archaeologists are restricted to doing Phase I surveys, and certain planning projects for municipal governments. Archaeologists on the Level 2 Approved Lists can do projects of any level, including Phase I archaeological survey projects.