

This brochure was developed by the National Park Service Alaska Region, Archaeological Assistance Program.

Sponsoring Organizations:

Alaska Anthropological Association

Alutiiq Heritage Foundation

Bristol Bay Native Corporation

Keepers of the Treasures: Cultural Council of American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians

National Park Service

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Smithsonian Institution, Arctic Studies Center

Society for American Archaeology

Society for Historical Archaeology

Cover Art: Harpoon foreshaft of the Old Bering Sea Culture. This type was in use around 2500 years ago.

Winged Object of the Punuk Culture, used to counterbalance a harpoon. This style dates to between 900 and 1200 years ago.

Excavations at Dry Creek National Historic Landmark. The Dry Creek site is over 11,000 years old. Excavations here provide us with evidence of humans associated with extinct Ice Age animals.



### COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Q. Which lands does the Archaeological Resources Protection Act apply to?
- A. All federal public lands. The act also applies to non-federal lands when an archaeological resource is taken in violation of state or local law and is then transported in interstate or foreign commerce.
- Q. Who can remove archaeological ivory and bone from federal public lands?
- A. Researchers with the proper permits. (This is also true for mammoth and mastodon ivory and prehistoric animal bone.)
- Q. What happens to archaeological material excavated on federal public lands by researchers?
- A. It remains government property and is permanently curated in a museum along with all records and information about the research. The preserved information and collections are used for exhibits, educational programs, and further research.
- Q. How can you tell new from old ivory?
- A. New ivory is relatively white, whereas old or "fossil" ivory has usually taken on a brownish tint or some other darker color. However, some people stain new ivory to make it look old.
- Q. Is it okay to collect artifacts from the ground surface on federal public lands?
- A. It is okay to appreciate their beauty, ponder their function, and photograph them. But please do not disturb or remove them. Surface artifacts are part of archaeological sites and are protected by law.



### WHERE YOU CAN LEARN MORE

For more information contact:

Regional Archaeologist  
National Park Service  
Cultural Resources Division  
2525 Gambell Street, Room 107  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-2892

State Archaeologist  
Office of History and Archaeology  
Alaska Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 107001  
Anchorage, Alaska 99510-7001

Regional Archaeologist  
U.S.D.A.-Forest Service  
Recreation, Cultural, and Wilderness Resources  
P.O. Box 21628  
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1628



### SUGGESTED READING

**Ancient Men of the Arctic.** J. Louis Giddings, University of Washington Press, Seattle. 1985 (originally published 1967). A delightful personal narrative of an archaeologist's expeditions to Alaska from 1939 to 1954 and his view of Alaska Eskimo prehistory.

**Ancient North America: The Archaeology of a Continent.** Brian M. Fagan, Thames and Hudson, New York. 1991. A well-illustrated, enjoyable, introduction to North American archaeology.

**Archaeological Resource Protection.** Sherry Hutt, Elwood W. Jones, and Martin E. McAllister, The Preservation Press, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C. 1992. An essential reference for archaeologists and law enforcement officials on the protection of our nation's archaeological heritage.

**Archaeology,** a popular magazine, is published monthly by the Archaeological Institute of America, 675 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215.

Regional Archaeologist  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1011 East Tudor Road  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

State Archaeologist  
Bureau of Land Management  
222 W. 7th Avenue, #13  
Anchorage, Alaska 99513



### PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

There are numerous local and national organizations devoted to the preservation of archaeological and historical sites. A few of these organizations are listed below:

Alaska Anthropological Association  
P.O. Box 230032  
Anchorage, Alaska 99523-0032

Alaska Historical Society  
P.O. Box 100299  
Anchorage, Alaska 99510-0299

Keepers of the Treasures-Alaska  
P.O. Box 211132  
Anchorage, Alaska 99521-1132

Museums Alaska  
8916 Gloralee Street  
Anchorage, Alaska 99502

National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Western Regional Office  
One Sutter Street, Suite 707  
San Francisco, California 94104

Society for American Archaeology  
Department 0123  
Washington, D.C. 20073-0123

Society for Historical Archaeology  
P.O. Box 30446  
Tucson, Arizona 85711



Children learn about Alaska's past during Alaska Archaeology Week.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

You can become a good steward of Alaska's finite and irreplaceable archaeological legacy. Because the past is our common destiny, please help us prevent the destruction of the human record in Alaska.

- ▶ Become an advocate for the protection of our nation's archaeological heritage. Tell your children and friends about the scientific and heritage values of archaeological sites. Give your support to local and national efforts to preserve the remnants of our past.
- ▶ Leave any archaeological sites or fossil ivory that you find on public lands in place and report the location to the nearest state or federal agency office.
- ▶ Be aware of suspicious activity near known sites on public lands. Report digging for artifacts to the Archaeological Resources Crime Hotline, 800-478-2724.
- ▶ Report illegal trade in artifacts or archaeological ivory and bone to the hotline number.

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES CRIME HOTLINE:  
800-478-2724**



### OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE

**Alaska Archaeology Week**-Alaska Archaeology Week is celebrated every spring throughout the state. Lectures, open houses where you can meet archaeologists, hands-on programs for children, laboratory classes for adults, and site tours offer the chance to learn about Alaska archaeology. For more information contact:

National Park Service  
Alaska Archaeology Week  
2525 Gambell Street, Room 107  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-2892  
(907) 257-2657

**Alutiiq Museum**-The Alutiiq Museum conducts archaeological surveys and excavations in the Kodiak area every summer. If you are interested in volunteering to do field work or to work in the laboratory, contact the Director, Rick Knecht, as early as possible before the field season begins at:

Alutiiq Museum  
c/o Kodiak Area Native Association  
402 Center Street  
Kodiak, Alaska 99615  
(907) 486-1992

**U.S.D.A.-Forest Service Passport in Time**-This volunteer program invites the public to participate in heritage projects on national forests all across the country including archaeological excavation, site mapping, collecting oral histories, restoring historic buildings, and library archival research. For more information contact the Regional Archaeologist in Juneau or:

Passport in Time Clearinghouse  
CEHP  
P.O. Box 18634  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 293-0922

**The Archaeological Institute of America**-The AIA produces the Archaeological Fieldwork Opportunities Bulletin every year which lists information (dates, application deadlines, contacts) for hundreds of excavations and field school programs around the world. There is a fee for the bulletin. For more information contact:

Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company  
P.O. Box 1840  
Dubuque, Iowa 52004-1840  
(800) 228-0810  
(800) 772-9165 (Fax)



*Save Alaska's Heritage*

**A DISAPPEARING TREASURE**

**Archaeological Resource Protection**

**Artifacts, Fossil Ivory, and Bone**



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES ON PUBLIC LANDS ARE PROTECTED BY LAW

There are thousands of archaeological sites on federal public lands in Alaska. These sites represent every period in Alaska's history and prehistory—from the first Alaskans 11,500 years ago who hunted large ice age animals that are now extinct, to early whaling peoples, to nomadic caribou hunters, to Russian Americans and gold miners.

Archaeological sites are time capsules from the past. They contain the keys to understanding old and sometimes forgotten cultures. Working together, archaeologists, the descendants of the people that left these remains behind, and the public can learn a tremendous amount from the scientific excavation and analysis of these sites.

That is why archaeological sites, when they are found on federal public lands, are protected by law. The **Archaeological Resources Protection Act** makes it illegal to excavate, damage, remove, sell, or transport any archaeological resource located on federal public lands. This law also applies to material taken from non-federal lands in violation of state or local law and put into interstate or foreign commerce. Illegal activity resulting in over \$500 worth of damage to an archaeological site is a felony, a major crime. Convicted felons lose the right to vote and possess firearms.

There is a growing market for the sale of artifacts and fossil ivory and bone from Alaskan archaeological sites. Removing material from archaeological sites on private land with the permission of the land owner is legal. However, when the material is taken from federal public lands, then the activity becomes illegal.

Archaeological sites on federal public lands and the heritage values they contain are part of our national heritage. It is our collective responsibility to protect this heritage, whether it be Native American sites, Russian-American sites, or historic mining sites.

*This ivory figurine came from a scientifically excavated archaeological site in Southwest Alaska. Because of careful recording techniques used by the excavators, and laboratory analysis of the figurine and other artifacts found in association with it, we know that it was made by a member of the Norton Culture, around 100 AD. The Norton People were the first culture to take full advantage of Alaska's marine resources. Markings on the smaller face demonstrate that tattooing has been practiced in Alaska for almost 2,000 years.*



## WHAT IS ARCHAEOLOGY?

Archaeology is the study of past human cultures. Excavation is one of the archaeologist's fundamental means of learning about the past. This is actually more complicated than it sounds. Archaeological field methods are complex, and a considerable amount of training and supervision is necessary before excavation can be carried out effectively. It is important that the untrained person not attempt to perform his or her own excavation.

Even archaeologists cannot excavate at will on federal lands. They must obtain a permit and conduct work in accordance with the law. Special rules and standards must be met to obtain such a permit.

The process of excavation physically destroys a site. Detailed records, therefore, are kept of any archaeological research project. The records are extremely important and must provide a thorough history of the investigations.

Scientific excavation involves more than the recovery of buried artifacts. Of more importance than the artifacts themselves is their **association** or **context**. These terms refer to the artifacts' location or placement in relation to other nearby signs of human activities such as living structures, burials, storage pits, hearths, or work areas. These are the relationships which yield the real treasure, the story of past lifeways.

Once excavation is completed, all of the artifacts are cleaned, labeled, inventoried, cataloged, and conserved or treated in order to preserve them. This process takes a much larger investment of time and effort than excavation. Analysis and interpretation of the data collected require skill and training.

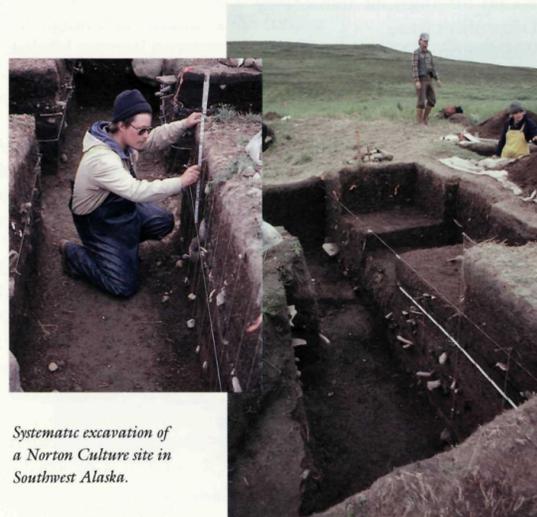


A report is then published so that other archaeologists and the public can read and study it. Proper excavation, analysis, and reporting provide new information on the lifeway of an earlier culture. The information is preserved for the public, the scientific community, and the descendants of the people who left the clues to their story behind.



## WHAT ARE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES?

Archaeological resources protected by the Archaeological Resources Protection Act include the material remains of human existence that are at least 100 years old. This includes physical evidence of human occupation, use, or activity, including the location or context in which such evidence is found. Archaeological resources less than 100 years old are protected by other laws including theft and destruction of government property statutes.



*Systematic excavation of a Norton Culture site in Southwest Alaska.*

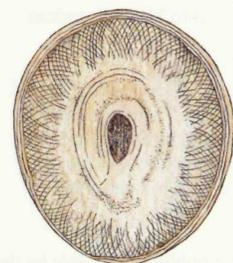
*An assortment of common Alaskan artifacts.*



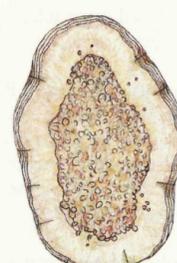
## EXAMPLES OF PROTECTED RESOURCES

- ▶ The remains of surface or subsurface houses and other structures, including ceremonial structures, fortifications, rock cairns (man-made rock piles), fire hearths, kilns, and trash deposits.
- ▶ Whole or fragmentary tools; containers; weapons and projectiles; clothing; ornaments; pottery and other ceramics; glass trade beads; cordage; basketry and other weaving; bottles and other glassware; bone; ivory; shell; metal; wood; hide; feathers; pigments; and flaked, ground, or pecked stone.
- ▶ Rock art carvings (petroglyphs) and paintings (pictographs), all portions of shipwrecks, and graves including human remains and associated grave goods.

Mammoth Ivory



Walrus Ivory



*Cross-sections of a mammoth tusk and walrus tusk reveal differences in internal structure. Mammoth tusks have cross-hatchings called Shreger lines. Walrus tusks have an internal core that is marbled, or looks like oatmeal, and is surrounded by rings.*



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL IVORY AND BONE

The hunt for artifacts damages archaeological sites on federal public lands. In some cases, the sites are also being mined to obtain old walrus ivory and whale and walrus bone. This ivory and bone sometimes serves as raw material for making jewelry, scrimshaw, and carvings.

Although they are not actually fossilized, buried walrus ivory and whale and walrus bone that have taken on a brownish or other color are commonly referred to as "fossil". Archaeological sites are a major source of this material in Alaska.

Fossil ivory may be in the form of artifacts, unworked chunks, or tusks that were carried into archaeological sites by the people who occupied the site. Old walrus ivory and bone not found in archaeological sites is found on beaches and in underwater areas in non-archaeological contexts.

Removing material from archaeological sites on private land **with the permission of the land owner** is legal. However, the collection of old walrus ivory and old sea mammal bone from archaeological sites **on federal public lands is illegal**. This activity is prohibited by the Archaeological Resources Protection Act and several other laws.

## PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES Mammoth and Mastodon Ivory

Sources of fossil ivory in Alaska that do not come from archaeological sites include the tusks from prehistoric members of the elephant family, mammoths and mastodons. It is illegal to remove mammoth and mastodon ivory or other prehistoric animal remains from federal public lands. These resources are protected by theft and destruction of government property statutes. Private lands, including patented mining claims, are a legal source of this material.



## THIEVES OF TIME

Good intentions are no substitute for scientific procedures in the excavation of an archaeological site. Once an artifact is removed from its context or relationship with surrounding artifacts and structures, most information about it is lost.

There is a common misconception that archaeological material, if left in the ground, will decompose. Some people think they are saving it by digging it up. It is true some decomposition takes place. However, the bulk of the material has been in the ground for hundreds or thousands of years. Most of it has reached a state of balance with the surrounding soil, and is safe from further destruction. Improper excavation of artifacts destroys the context and the story of what happened at that archaeological site, and can even speed-up the deterioration process of some items collected or disturbed and left behind.

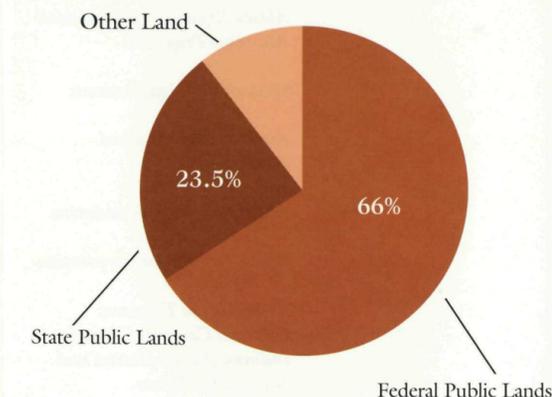
Commercial harvesting of artifacts is particularly destructive of archaeological values. In order to obtain one artifact with commercial value, such as a figurine or a harpoon head, many artifacts with no commercial worth are disturbed. Even though they may have no commercial value, their scientific and heritage significance has been destroyed.

Less than three percent of the land in Alaska has been examined to any degree by archaeologists. However, archaeologists and law enforcement personnel have documented damage caused by unscientific digging at over two hundred and fifty sites on federal public lands. In some cases, important sites on federal public lands have been damaged before archaeologists ever get a chance to see them.



*A looted archaeological site in Bering Land Bridge National Preserve. Sea mammal bone is scattered on the surface.*

## Land Ownership In Alaska



## FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

### Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA)

The Archaeological Resources Protection Act makes it illegal to excavate, damage, remove, sell, or transport any archaeological resource over 100 years old located on federal public lands. Violations of ARPA may be punishable with fines of up to \$250,000 and five years in jail, and seizure of all archaeological resources in the possession of a person who is discovered violating the law. Tools, equipment, or vehicles used in the commission of the offense may also be seized. Rewards of up to \$500 may be awarded for information leading to a civil or criminal ARPA conviction.

### Alaska Historic Preservation Act

This act makes it illegal to appropriate, excavate, remove, injure, or destroy any historic, prehistoric or archaeological resources on state lands and provides both criminal and civil penalties. This act also covers mammoth and mastodon ivory and prehistoric animal bone. Each violation is punishable by up to \$100,000 in fines under civil provisions. This act applies to all land owned or controlled by the state, including tidal and submerged lands.

### Local Laws

Some municipalities and Native corporations also have ordinances that protect archaeological sites on their lands.