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NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name N/A
other names/site number Beaver Creek Rockshelter 39CU779

2. Location

street & number ☐ not for publication
city, town Pringle ☒ vicinity
state South Dakota code SD county Custer code 033 zip code 57773

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
☐ private	☐ building(s)		buildings
☐ public-local	☐ district		sites
☐ public-State	☒ site	1	structures
☒ public-Federal	☐ structure		objects
	☐ object		Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official — Date 8/3/93

South Dakota SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date 9/13/93

Chief, Midwest National Park Service
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☑ entered in the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet. — Janet E. Summerhill — 10-25-93
☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: campsite

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture:
Outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation
walls
roof
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

[x] See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☑ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☒ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Archeology: Prehistoric Archeology	6,700 - 1,750 B.P.	N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Late Archaic: No specific culture
Middle Archaic: McKean Culture
Early Archaic: No specific culture

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

[x] See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- [ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- [ ] previously listed in the National Register
- [ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register
- [ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:
- [ ] State historic preservation office
- [x] Other State agency
- [x] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property [redacted]

UTM References

A [redacted]

	Zone	Easting	Northing
B			
C			
D			

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

[x] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

[x] See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Betty J. LeFree and Robert Alex, late South Dakota State Archeologist

organization National Park Service date _____

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★U.S.GPO:1988-0-223-918

BEAVER CREEK ROCKSHELTER
(39CU779)

INTRODUCTION

The Beaver Creek Shelter archeological site is [redacted] in Wind Cave National Park, South Dakota. The rock-shelter consists of a 23 meter long undercut section of the valley wall. The protective overhang projects out a maximum of 8 meters beyond the base of the bluff (Figure 1).

[redacted] (Alex 1991). A substantial portion of the sediments in the rock-shelter appear to have been the result of overbank alluvial deposition or at least modified by flowing water. A 3-meter section of deposits currently exists above the original stream channel. The age of these sediments indicates that near the end of the Pleistocene, the stream had downcut to at least the level of the present stream. At that time, the period of downcutting ceased and deposition of Holocene sediments began. The stream deposited silty sand layers across the valley floor. The silty sand sediments preserved in the site are a remnant of these materials. Sometime after 1,700 B.P. (the uppermost dated Horizon at the site), the stream began to down cut the valley again. Occasional flooding under present environmental conditions is removing the shelter sediments through erosion. This erosion, in the western portion of the site, is responsible for exposing the layers of charcoal and bone that led to the discovery in 1985 by Wind Cave National Park research biologist, Richard Klukas.

Paleontologist, James E. Martin, and personnel from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology tested the site in the summer of 1985 and discovered evidence of human activity. Robert A. Alex, South Dakota State Archaeologist, was enlisted to help with the excavation. Eleven cultural and natural horizons were identified during this time. In 1986, 3 units were excavated to a depth of 4.77 meters, and 23 cultural features were uncovered within 22 stratigraphic horizons (Figure 2).

Major goals in the 1987 excavation were 1) to extend the depth of the excavation to determine if the deposition in the shelter included early Holocene sediments, 2) to collect uncontaminated sediment samples, and 3) to date the intensive human occupation of the site (Alex 1991). These goals were attained. Information

obtained during the 3-year excavation revealed that Beaver Creek exhibited a complex stratigraphy due to the effects of natural and cultural events. The 22 horizons identified were not continuous across the area of the site tested nor were they uniform in thickness (Figure 2).

Over most of the western portion of the site, Horizons 1-10 had been removed by erosion except in a small erosional remnant along the south wall at the rear of the rock shelter where human activity would have been restricted. The presence of minor amounts of lithic debris in most of the horizons from Horizon 1 to 10 suggest that elsewhere in the shelter, where living conditions were more suitable, evidence of more intensive cultural activity may well exist. This is particularly true of Horizon 7, which consists of a very distinctive band of charcoal dating from the Late Archaic period. This charcoal layer is nearly continuous, not only in the erosional remnant along the south wall but also along the eroded edge of the well preserved portion of the shelter to the east.

The most intensive period of human occupation (Early and Middle Archaic) was revealed in Horizons 11-16. Horizon 11 is the uppermost level in the western part of the rock shelter that contains substantial amounts of cultural debris and features with abundant charcoal dated at 3,870 $\pm$ 70 B.P.

Horizon 13 appears to represent the most intensive human occupation that occurred in the Beaver Creek Shelter. In a few areas it was represented by a 10- to 15-centimeter thick layer of charcoal and ash and nearly everywhere it contained at least 5 centimeters of ash, charcoal and cultural debris. The Middle Archaic Horizon, which dates between 4,000 and 4,700 years, is separated from the more recent Middle Archaic materials of Horizon 11 by a thick gravel layer designated Horizon 12. Middle Archaic materials are represented by McKean Complex projectile points (Alex 1991).

Horizon 14 is also an important but very complex stratigraphic unit. It appears to represent several episodes of flooding that deposited thick layers of gravel in the shelter. Cultural features appear to originate at various levels in the gravel and there also appears to have been considerable cultural mixing and churning of the gravel. A concentration of charcoal originating at the interface between Horizons 13 and 14 and intruding into Horizon 14 produced a radiocarbon date of 4,710 years B.P. All radiocarbon dates from below Horizon 14 have produced dates older than 5,000 years. These dates are significant in that they suggest this horizon separates the Early Archaic cultural horizons below from the Middle Archaic cultural horizons above.

Horizon 15 and 16 contain considerable amounts of charcoal, ash, lithic debitage, hearths, and roasting pits dating to the Early Archaic Period.

Horizon 17 is similar to several red silt layers that exist below it, but from an archeological perspective is more important. This red silt layer was the surface upon which the initial, intensive human occupation of the shelter took place. Horizon 17 is not a cultural horizon, but the earliest dated cultural features are dug into it. In the southern-most excavated grid unit, a piece of charred wood which was encountered at the interface of Horizons 16 and 17 and extending into Horizon 17, produced a date of 6,720 ± 100 B.P.

The top of the buried talus slope is covered by finely interbedded layers of red silt and mica sand that was the designated Horizon 18. Downslope, to the north, Horizon 18 subdivides into well defined layers of mica and sand and red silt which have been separated into Horizons 18a-18c. These horizons and the substrata do not contain more than a few isolated pieces of cultural material, however, they do contain important paleoenvironmental data.

Horizons 19, 20 and 21 contain alternate red silt and mica sand layers with a few isolated pieces of cultural materials. None of these units completely cover the ancient rock fall.

The lowest stratigraphic horizon reached during the excavation consisted of an ancient rock fall or buried talus slope designated Horizon 22. Horizon 22 is composed of fragments and slabs of limestone, presumably derived from the ceiling of the shelter. Micaceous sand, probably carried into the talus slope by the creek, fills the spaces between the limestone slabs and fragments, although the mica sand contains little evidence of human remains. Charcoal encountered 60 centimeters above the lowest part of the excavation into the rock fall produced a date of 9,380 ± 300 years B.P., the earliest at the site. While the bedrock floor of the shelter was not reached for safety purposes, Alex (1987) believed that the strata below this horizon did not contain evidence of human occupation.

The eastern portion of the site has not been subjected to the erosion that exposed the cultural deposits in the western portion. The eastern half of the site is well preserved and protected by a substantial layer of rock fall. It is this portion of the site that contains the information on nearly 6,000 years of human history and 10,000 years of environmental history of the southern Black Hills. Equally important deposits may be present under the talus slope farther to the east.

PRESENT INTEGRITY OF BEAVER CREEK ROCKSHELTER

The excavation area on the west side of the site was back filled in 1987 with cement blocks and soil to retard erosion. This has stablized. Some minor erosion on the slope just east of the excavation has been caused by ungulate traffic. Park personnel are monitoring the rockshelter, and if further erosion occurs, they will cover it with loose rocks, which is the usual method to deter bison traffic. The east side of the site is in pristine condition. No vandalism has occurred. Few people know of the site, and it is not visible to the general public. The integrity of the site remains intact.

Testing at the Beaver Creek Rock Shelter revealed stratified deposits spanning nearly 9,000 years. Twenty-two stratigraphic horizons were defined, many containing anthropogenic materials, and produced a sequence of 12 radiocarbon dates covering most of the Holocene. The archeological specimens, the stratification, and the radiocarbon dates indicate the shelter has the potential of providing information on the transition from the Early to the Middle Archaic periods, a poorly known interval on the northern Great Plains, elucidating the interrelationship between climatic trends and human prehistory throughout the Holocene. The Beaver Creek site includes a sequence of occupations that represent multiple components from successive time periods as well as a series of reoccupations by both Early and Middle Archaic residents. At least 17 stratified horizons containing human cultural remains dating between 2,000 and 6,000 years ago are present. Although Middle Archaic sites are relatively common in western South Dakota, this is not the case with Early Archaic sites. This is the most complete paleoenvironmental record for the Holocene in the Black Hills on record.

The most intense occupation as evidenced by features and superimposed living areas occurred during the Middle Archaic. Middle Archaic materials are represented by diagnostic McKean projectile points and associated lithics, features and ecofactural data which were found in Horizons 11 to 14. Radiocarbon dates this complex between 3870 and 4,710 B.P., the earliest of these aligns with the earliest McKean dates from the Bighorn Mountains (Frison 1978), and is earlier than others reported from North and South Dakota (Keyser and Davis 1985). Such chronological information taken within the context of a stratified sequence has the potential to aid in understanding the local McKean cultural development.

The McKean occupation as known from Beaver Creek reflects one aspect of a broader subsistence-settlement system. The limited number of activities, the tentative evidence for a seasonal occupation, and the emphasis on immediate raw materials for lithic utilization, would indicate the site was repeatedly (and possibly frequently) inhabited by McKean residents who left evidence of other aspects of their cultural system at Black Hill sites elsewhere. Given the prevalence of McKean sites in the Black Hills and the greater level of chronological control derived from the increasing number of dated sites, it would now seem possible to conduct detailed comparisons between McKean collections with the goal of defining local traditions, and delineating the nature of specific aspects of the cultural systems. Toward these goals the Beaver Creek Shelter could serve as an important baseline (Alex 1991).

The highest density of lithic remains is associated with Early Archaic levels. The Early Archaic seems to be documented by lithics, features and ecofactual materials and Carbon-14 dates associated with Horizons 14 to 17. The presence of

a major Early Archaic component is, in itself, enough to make the site significant. Few Early Archaic archeological sites are known to exist in South Dakota. None of them contain the wealth of cultural and environmental data that are present at the Beaver Creek Shelter.

[redacted], there are Early Archaic sites known as the Hawkens sites (Frison 1978). The Hawkens sites are Early Archaic bison trapping and processing sites rather than the intensively occupied campsite represented at the Beaver Creek Shelter. For Beaver Creek, a broader range of resources including deer, small mammals, possibly fish and plants are in evidence. No bison bone was noted in the Early Archaic component in the test excavation. It appears that the Beaver Creek Shelter site had a very different function and subsistance base than at the Hawkens sites. This may support the theory that two separate subsistence patterns occurred within the western complex of Archaic sites during this early period. However, the similarity in projectile points between Beaver Creek and Hawkens sites may indicate these sites represent seasonal locations of related populations. There does not seem to be any known site in South Dakota or the Black Hills region that contains comparable data to that found in the Early Archaic component at the Beaver Creek Shelter.

The presence of a series of Middle Archaic horizons superimposed on Early Archaic horizons should allow for a cultural comparison between the two time periods. The Middle Archaic horizons suggest a continuation in the way of life established during the Early Archaic (Alex 1991). Preliminary analysis of ecofactual data and archeological evidence points to warm season occupations by people engaged in activities related to hunting and food processing. The large number of features and superimposed living areas are also similar to those documented in the Early Archaic horizons, and suggest fairly intense occupations. Perhaps the greatest difference between the two time periods is simply a change in artifact styles (Figure 3). The stratified succession of sediments at the site provides an excellent opportunity to address this and other questions of culture change during the Archaic periods.

It has been suggested by Plains archeologists (Sundstrom 1989) that sites found in a mountain-foothills ecotone on the eastern slopes of the Rockies and its outliers, such as the Black Hills and Bighorns, form a western Archaic complex. One pattern in this complex is represented by sites frequently situated on stream terraces or in rockshelters that produce subsistence evidence suggesting varied activities conducted on a seasonal basis. Such sites are believed to have developed out of later Paleo-Indian subsistence patterns occurring in high altitude areas. The

simultaneous existence of a communal bison hunting/broad spectrum foraging pattern is suggested at sites elsewhere. The preliminary data from Beaver Creek would support this theory and add to the scientific information in this area.

The higher density of Early Archaic sites in the mountain-foothills ecotone and the virtual absence of similar sites on the open Plains may reinforce the sugggestion that the latter area was abandoned during the Altithermal. At the same time, it may be that deposits containing Early Archaic evidence on the Plains have eroded. The paleoclimatic information from Beaver Creek has a direct bearing on this question and has the potential to establish the nature of the Altithermal in the southern Black Hills.

Not only does the site contain information on cultural change but it also contains a wealth of information on environmental conditions throughout most of the Holocene. Stratified sediments ranging from levels older than 9,000 years B.P. to levels dating less than 1,750 years B.P. contain noncultural bones of birds, fish, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles, the shells of gastropods and pelecypods, and charred floral material. The various species of animals and plants represented in the various horizons reflect the environmental conditions that were present during the deposition of those stratigraphic units. No major time periods seem to be missing from a relatively continuous stratified succession of sediments. Since the site appears to offer a comparison of environmental data spanning most of the Holocene, it should permit the evaluation of existing concepts of past environments, particularly the concept of the Altithermal, which some researchers believe was a hot, dry climatic episode on the northwestern Plains beginning about 7,500 years ago and lasting until about 5,000 years ago.

In summary, the Beaver Creek Shelter has the potential to yield important information on the prehistoric cultures of the southern Black Hills over a period of nearly 5,000 years and the environment of the area for almost the entire Holocene. Although the western part of the site has been subjected to erosion, the eastern portion of the site is undisturbed and contains an unique sequence of stratified sediments for future research. The eastern area is in pristine condition and stabilized by natural rock fall from the top of the shelter.

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Frison, George
1978 Prehistoric Hunters of the High Plains. Academic Press, New York.

Keyser, James D., and Carl M. Davis
1985 Lightening Spring and Red Fox: McKean Research in the Grand River Drainage. In McKean Middle Archaic: Current Research, edited by Marcel Kornfeld and Lawrence C. Todd, pp. 123-136. Occasional Papers on Wyoming Archaeology, No. 4. Laramie.

Martin, J.E., R.A. Alex, and R.C. Benton
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Sundstrom, Linea
1989 Cultural History of the Black Hills with Reference to Adjacent Areas of the Northern Great Plains. Reprints in Anthropology 40. J.& L. Reprint, Lincoln.

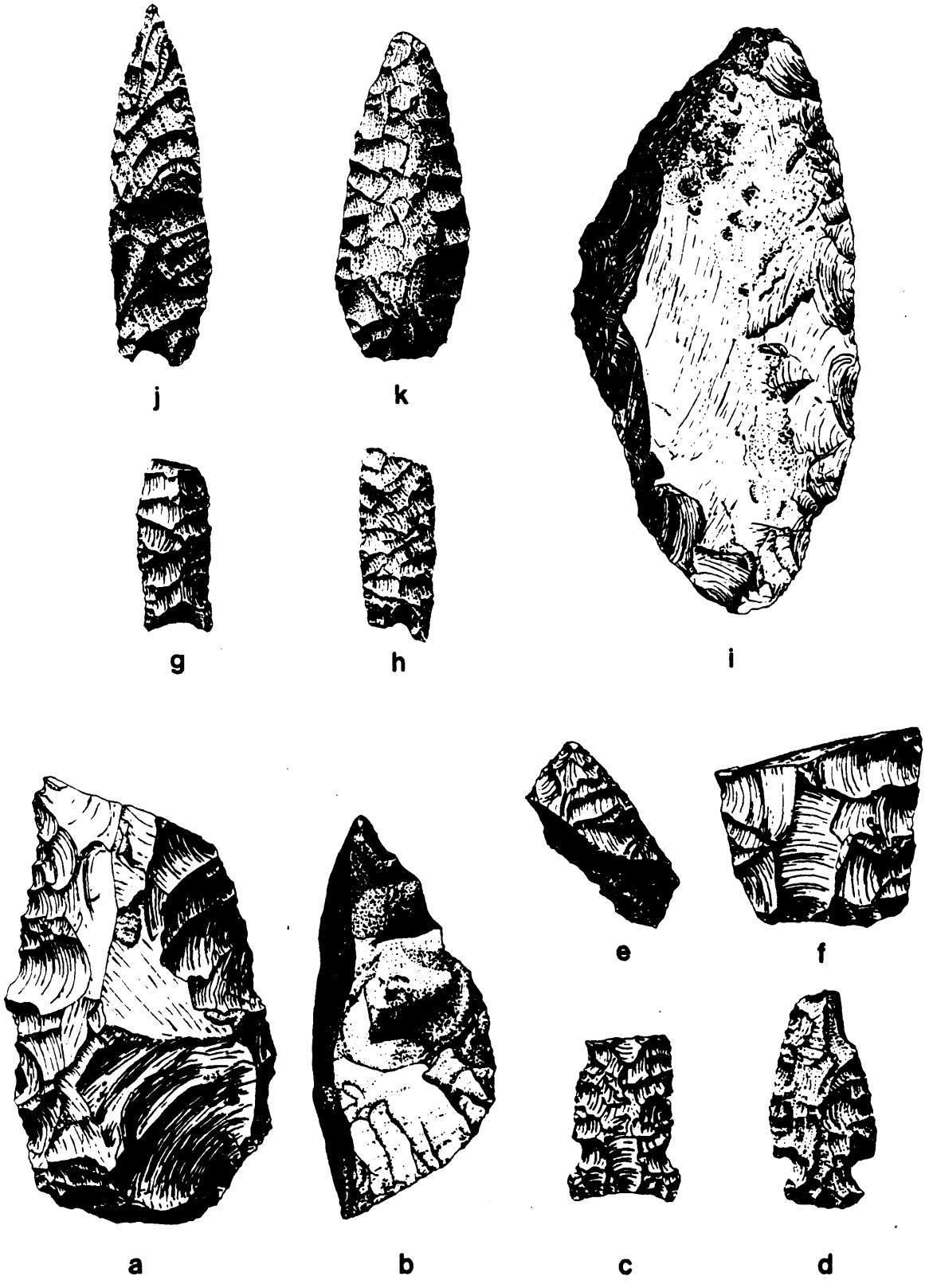

Figure 3. Chipped stone artifacts recovered from the excavations: (a) Catalog 46 (WICA-1334), (b) Catalog 22 (WICA-1303), (c) Catalog 1 (WICA-1296), (d) Catalog 3 (WICA-1297), (e) Catalog 44 (WICA-1305), (f) Catalog 28 (WICA-1304), (g) Catalog 5 (WICA-1299), (h) Catalog 4 (WICA-1298), (i) Catalog 7 (WICA-1301), (j) Catalog 8 (WICA-1302), (h) Catalog 6 (WICA-1300).