The Monitoring, Recording, and Surveying of Archaeological Sites

Modoc National Forest

Image: Modoc War Fort

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Modoc National Forest's Heritage program aims to protect and preserve the prehistoric, historic, and dual component sites that are frequently found all over the Modoc National Forest. All the sites found in this forest are protected by the federal law. Acts such as the Federal Antiquities Act of 1906 and the Archaeological Resources Program Act of 1979 give protection to artifacts and archaeological sites that are present on public lands. The artifacts located on public lands may not be taken for personal keepsake. The location of archaeological sites found on the

Modoc National Forest are not to be disclosed to the public. Archeological site locations are exempt from the Freedom of Information Act.

The purpose of this project is to continue to preserve and protect archaeological sites and to ensure that no site is disturbed or destroyed by human activities. Separate areas of the forest were either surveyed, monitored, and/or recorded to establish new sites, to make sure the sites had not grown outside its previous boundary, or to document any disturbance that has taken place in the site or survey area. There are two categories of artifacts that are found on the Modoc National Forest and consist of 1) prehistoric artifacts and cultural features and 2) historic cultural features.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the completed project was to aid the archaeology field crew in collecting important data from the surveys, monitors, and recordings that had taken place on the Modoc National Forest during my internship. The protection and preservation of archaeological resources on the Modoc National Forest begins with a specific project that will take place in a specific location on the Forest, such as a timber sale. Before the project can take place, the archeology crew must survey the specific area to make sure that no cultural resources are damaged or destroyed during the project's course. The identification of each artifact and feature is important while surveying since these artifacts and features are what is being protected. Once in the survey area, the archaeology crew will then conduct intensive surveys where each crew member walks parallel to each other with a 20-meter distance from each person. If a site in the survey area is found, then it must be documented on a record form. The documented data is then sent to the archaeology department's data entry technician to be inputted onto a GIS platform and to be typed up into a report.

As a student pursuing a degree in Geography at California State University, Fresno, my original goal at the beginning of this internship was to utilize what I have learned in my courses in college to prepare me in comprehending most of the processes that take place in the field. This internship has made it possible for me to make an impact on the Modoc National Forest by allowing me to help preserve and protect the many cultural resources that are found in this national forest. The large quantity of cultural resources found on the Modoc National Forest has made this internship a special experience that many do not encounter. During the course of my internship, my original goal did change slightly in a positive manner. My goal changed because I feel that I learned many things that I did not learn in college. The specific project tasks I had originally set out was going into the field and identifying artifact which is what I did with this internship. I anticipate to take what I have learned and incorporate it with my style of learning for the remainder of my college career and beyond.

PROJECT APPROACH

The steps I took in achieving my goals and tasks over the course of my internship included getting familiar with the processes that take place when surveying, recording, and monitoring areas of the forest that contain prehistoric or historic artifacts and or features. Before I had gone out to the field at the start of my internship, I had been shown the types of artifacts that I would be looking for when out in the field. I was shown the different material types used to make prehistoric tools, such as an entire projectile point or biface fragment (image 6, for images refer to appendix). The main types of materials that were found either in flake form or as a prehistoric artifact, were made from obsidian. Other more commonly found prehistoric artifacts we looked for were manos (image 2), metates (image 4), portable bowls (image 3), and basket hopper mortars (image 1). Prehistoric

features that we encountered were rock rings, and rock art. The historical cultural features that we came across in the field were mainly old can scatters (image 5). The next step I took was getting familiar with the GPS so that when out surveying in the field, I could record my tracks so that they could be inputted into a GIS program or to mark a waypoint to indicate that there is a site. Once I learned how to identify what is considered an artifact or feature, I was able to begin assisting in conducting survey. In one survey area, the proposed project for that area of the forest was to eradicate Juniper trees to increase the water table. Survey of the specific area of the forest was needed so that when the trees were cut down no sites were to be destroyed. Flagging was put up so that the identification of a site would be known and not to be disturbed. In order for a prehistoric site to be declared, there must either be at least 10 unmodified and or utilized flakes within 30 squares meters, or one formed tool or fragment with 5 unmodified and or unutilized flakes within 30 square meters. For a historic site to be declared there be at least 10 historic era artifacts such as cans, bottles, or other trash that are pre-1960. During my time in the field, many photographs of the marked tree indicating a site were taken and of the surrounding features. When an artifact was found, such as a projectile point, it was taken back to the office to be identified, measured, and weighed. The location of the site was then recorded using UTMs so that surveys in the same area years later are able to be located. Existing sites that were recorded in previous years were also monitored during my time in the field so that any disturbance could be noted or to see if the boundary of the site had expanded.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

The task of monitoring, recording, and surveying resulted in sites expanding due to weather related causes from a few months ago, such as heavy rain, which causes artifacts and obsidian flakes to

surface. Another result was that some locations on the forest had been pot hunted which means that people had taken artifacts off a site. It is difficult to stop people from pothunting since we are not aware as to when the artifact was taken from a certain location. One thing that I have learned during this internship is that it is important to protect and preserve the history of the nation which makes the job of an archaeologist on the Modoc National Forest a central job in keeping historic and prehistoric artifacts and features protected from certain human activities. Before starting this internship, I had no idea what an archaeologist did, but know that I have become familiar with the documentation and field work that is done, I have a major respect for archaeologists working for a national forest.

CONCLUSION

During my time in the Modoc National Forest, I learned a vast amount of information that pertains to the protection and preservation of artifacts and features through the archaeology staff. The importance of the work that is done also helps keep native american tribes in touch with their past along with that of the entire nation that allows them to better understand historical events that had taken place on this forest. I do not believe that I would make any changes to the field work that I completed during my internship.

This internship has helped me explore a career that I wouldn't have considered choosing in the past, but after my time completing my internship with the Forest Service, archeology is at the top of my list of possible careers I will pursue after I graduate from Fresno State. Overall, I would like to work for the Forest Service in the near future and aid in preserving the cultural resources found on national forest land.

Appendix

Image1: Basket Hopper Mortar

Image 2: Mano

Image 3: Portable Bowl Fragment

Image 4: Metate

Image 5: Old Juice Can

Image 6: Biface Fragment