

6.1.11 SOP No. 11: Curating Archaeological Collections

NASA is responsible for preservation of all archaeological collections and associated documents and photographs recovered on ARC property. Because ARC does not have an existing curation facility, it may be necessary to establish a curation facility or enter into an agreement with an existing curation facility. Collections may be the result of contracted and in-house compliance activity and inadvertent discovery on ARC. NPR 8510.1 requires an SOP for curating archaeological collections and records of historic properties. This SOP outlines guidelines and instructions to be followed by private consulting firms for the preparation of archaeological materials and associated documents, maps, and photographs.

Applicable Laws/Regulations/Procedural Requirements

- National Historic Preservation Act
- Curation of Federally Owned and Administered Archaeological Collections (36 CFR Part 79)
- NASA Procedural Requirement 8510.1

Policy

- Per NPR 8510.1, Centers and Component Facilities will “serve as the Federal Agency Official, as defined in 36 CFR Part 79, with management authority over the Center or Component Facility's archaeological collections” (NPR 8510.1.3e).
- The Center or Component Facility is responsible for ensuring that “funding is available to coordinate the disposition of archaeological collections and associated records in curation facilities that comply with the requirements in 36 CFR Part 79, NHPA, ARPA, and other applicable regulations” (NPR 8510.1.3f).
- All archaeological materials recovered from ARC will be curated in accordance with 36 CFR Part 79.
- All archaeological materials recovered from ARC will be curated at a repository that has the curatorial capabilities outlined in 36 CFR Part 79 (available online at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/archeology/tools/36cfr79.htm>).
- All archaeological materials will be prepared in accordance with this SOP prior to being sent to a curation facility.
- All archaeological contracts that may result in materials to be curated will contain requirements and provide funds in the contract that the contractor will prepare all archaeological materials according to the procedures in this SOP and will pay for and deliver the archaeological materials to the curation facility.

Procedure

EMD will ensure that all contracts for archaeological services include the following:

- I. All artifacts should be cleaned and stabilized prior to shipment to the repository, except in instances where an uncleaned condition may facilitate a particular form of analysis (e.g., charcoal for C14). In such cases, appropriate documentation of the artifact's condition and the proposed analysis should be included in the artifact inventory and laboratory methods section in a technical report of the discovery.

A. Cleaning:

1. For material collected on ARC, use a plain water rinse with a little soft brushing as necessary.
2. Pottery sherds should be treated with particular care during brushing to prevent any abrasion of the surface by the brush.
3. Sherds should not be cleaned at all if any soot-like material remains on the exterior or interior surfaces.
4. Metal artifacts should not be washed but merely dry brushed as needed.

- B. Stabilization: Items requiring specialized conservation measures should be stabilized on a case-by-case basis and further documented in the artifact inventory and laboratory methods section in a technical report of the discovery.

C. Sorting:

1. For Phase I Surveys, the collections are to be sorted by site number, project name, provenience, and number of artifacts.
2. If there are 100 or more artifacts such as in Phase II or Phase III testing, sort artifacts by artifact category (e.g., lithic, prehistoric ceramic, historic ceramic, metal, glass, other historic, ethnobotanical, or faunal).
3. All artifacts are put in 4-mil resealable plastic bags.
4. All bags are to be labeled with permanent ink, with the site number, project name, provenience, a count of the artifacts, and the field specimen number. Metal artifacts, prehistoric pottery, and any faunal material will be separated into separate individual smaller bags and placed inside the larger artifact bag.
5. Place acid-free tags labeled with the same information in the bags.
6. Place bagged material that has been organized by site and provenience in cardboard artifact boxes.
7. Make a catalog of the content of each box. On a sheet of paper, list the field specimen numbers for each bag.

8. Number each box (see D below) and enclose a box catalog (packing list or inventory control document) in the box.
9. Store all field and lab documentation in acid-free file folders.
10. Label all photographic material with acid-free permanent ink and place in archival-quality polypropylene sleeves.
11. Make a master box catalog that will list the project name, all artifacts recovered, their site number and provenience, and the contents of each bag in the box.

D. Boxes:

1. Site bags will be placed in numeric order in a standard, acid-free storage box (10 inches high, 12.5 inches wide, and 15 inches long).
2. Box labels must be placed on the “width” end (below handle hole) of each sealed box.
 - a) Labels include the site numbers and/or other relevant additional information.
 - b) Labels should be typed or handwritten in large font and bold letters for easy reading.
 - c) Box labels must be self-adhesive or securely attached to boxes with adhesive tape.
 - d) The minimum label size for the standard storage box is 3 × 5 inches.
 - e) Multiple boxes for each site or project collection should be marked on the label with sequential box numbers (Box 1 of 4, Box 2 of 4, etc.). Such numbers must be applied to all boxes, containers, or other packaged artifacts, samples, documents, records, etc., and cross-referenced to packing lists or similar inventory control documents.

E. Special Packaging

1. Particularly delicate items, such as ethnobotanical and faunal samples, should be wrapped in aluminum foil and placed in a solid-side container such as a small acid-free box or plastic film canister before packaging with the rest of the site collection.
2. Oversized artifacts must be securely tagged with appropriate information on acid-free poster board, and Mylar or Tyvek tags.
3. Soil samples should be completely dry before sealing in a 4-mil-thick bag and packed separately from the site collection.

F. Shipping

1. To pack artifacts for shipping, place Styrofoam peanuts at the bottom of the box to act as a buffer and reduce excess volume. Do not use newspaper.
2. Place materials in position, then fill the remaining volume with Styrofoam peanuts to keep the materials in an upright or stable position within the exterior storage box. The weight of boxed collections should be distributed as evenly as possible.
3. Standard acid-free storage boxes are suitable for shipping if the contents are appropriately packed.
4. Ship the boxes to the curation facility and pay the facility in accordance with their current collection management services fees.