

Cultural Resources

Background

Because of the 7,500 years of continuous human occupation, the planning area is known for its rich archeological record with over one thousand registered Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS) sites, and many more are being discovered each year. The archeological record chronicles Native people's use of the region's productive marine environment and preserves the history of the area much of which is not captured in written records of only the last 200 years. Dense prehistoric populations left much cultural debris reflected in large sites still being studied today. Due to the climatic conditions of the area, the sites have resisted decay and remain fairly intact. The sites are primarily concentrated along coastal areas. The area's archeological sites are numerous and reflect five major cultural traditions: Ocean Bay (7,500 B.P. to 3800 B.P.), Kachemak (3800 B.P. to 600 B.P.), Koniag (600 B.P. to 200 B.P.), Russian (200 B.P. to 130 B.P.), and American (130 B.P. to the present).

Goal

Cultural Resources. The Alaska Historic Preservation Act establishes the state's basic goal: to preserve, protect, and interpret the historic, prehistoric, and archaeological resources of Alaska so that the scientific, historic, and cultural heritage values embodied in these resources may pass undiminished to future generations.

Management Guidelines

A. Cultural Resources Identification. Identify and determine the significance of cultural resources on state land through the following actions:

1. Cultural resources surveys conducted by qualified personnel;
2. Research about cultural resources on state land by qualified individuals and organizations; and
3. Cooperative efforts for planned surveys and inventories between state, federal, and local or Native groups.

B. Cultural Resources Protection. Protect significant cultural resources through the following actions:

1. The Office of History and Archeology (OHA) within DPOR reviews authorizations, construction projects or land uses for potential conflict with cultural resources. The office determines if there may be an adverse effect on heritage resources and makes recommendations to mitigate these effects.

2. Cooperating with concerned government agencies, Native corporations, statewide or local groups, and individuals to develop guidelines and recommendations on how to avoid or mitigate identified or potential conflict.

C. Cultural Resource Surveys Prior to Land Offerings. If determined by OHA during an agency review of a proposed land disposal that a cultural survey may be required, further coordination between OHA and DMLW prior to the land disposal is warranted. Cultural surveys should be considered where OHA reported sites exist or where there is a high potential for such sites to exist. The extent and type of the cultural survey within the area of the proposed land disposal shall be determined by OHA in consultation with DMLW. Because of the high density of cultural resources in the Kodiak Archipelago, it is likely that cultural resource surveys may be necessary for land disposals under consideration by DNR in this planning area

D. Cultural Resources in Timber Management Areas. The Office of History and Archaeology will review proposals for timber management activities through the interagency review process for the Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales and Forest Land Use Plans for individual sales and provide comments and information about areas of concern within the review deadline. OHA will recommend archaeological surveys in timber sale areas with a high potential for cultural resources. Areas of reported historic, archaeological, or paleontological sites that retain historic integrity should not be disturbed. Timber operations shall not occur within 300 feet of the boundaries of known sites unless the OHA determines, in consultation with the Division of Forestry, that certain activities can occur without significant adverse impacts to the cultural resource. The OHA shall assess the extent and significance of the cultural resource and work with Division of Forestry to develop site-specific mitigation measures to protect the cultural sites while allowing timber management.

E. Cultural Resources Adjacent to Recreation Facilities. Recreation facilities that might subject cultural sites to vandalism because of the increased public use should not be placed adjacent to the cultural sites.

F. Heritage sites should be reported when found. The Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS) is an inventory of all reported historic and prehistoric sites within the State of Alaska and is maintained by the Office of History and Archaeology (OHA). The AHRS is used to protect cultural resource sites from unwanted destruction. By knowing of possible cultural remains prior to construction, efforts can be made to avoid project delays and prevent unnecessary destruction of cultural sites. While over 22,000 sites have been reported within Alaska, this is probably only a very small percentage of the sites which may actually exist but are as yet unreported. The AHRS is not complete or static, so heritage sites, when found, should be reported to the OHA.

G. Other Guidelines Affecting Cultural Resources. Other guidelines will affect cultural resources. See in particular the following sections of this chapter:

Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Harvest Areas

Forestry

Recreation, Tourism, and Scenic Resources

Shorelines, Stream Corridors and Coastal Areas

Public Access Easements, Neighborhood Trails, and Public Access