

Middle Fork Heritage Times

March 2006

Special Edition

This special edition of the Middle Fork Heritage Times is dedicated to preserving the history of the Middle Fork River within the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. The Heritage Staff on the Salmon-Challis and Payette National Forests invite you to help us preserve the archaeological and Native American Traditional sites of the area. The articles in this newsletter should provide insight into the history of the area and things you can do to protect and preserve these important sites.

The Mountain Sheepwater People

Native People lived along the banks of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River (Middle Fork River) and in the surrounding mountains for many thousands of years before they were removed to reservations. The artifacts left behind in their camp sites help tell their story.

The Native People of the area were referred to as the

The "Mountain Sheepwater People" have inhabited the area for thousands of years and wish it to be respected.



Stemmed Indented Base dart points like this one were used at Dagger Falls over 3000 years ago. They tipped long arrow-like projectiles launched from "spear throwers".

"Mountain Sheepwater People" by their Indian neighbors. This was because they relied on bighorn sheep for much of their food, clothing, and the

much prized sheep horn bows that they made.

It is not exactly known when the Mountain Sheepwater People arrived in the Middle Fork canyon. Archaeologists have dated artifacts, charcoal from early camp fires, and river mussel shells found in ancient camp sites. Dates from Dagger Falls, located near Boundary Creek on the Middle Fork, suggest the Mountain Sheepwater People lived there off and on for over 3000 years. However, there are

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Join Us in Preserving the Past

The Middle Fork River Outfitters and public river users set the standard for low impact use. However, it is possible to hone those skills to provide extra protection for Middle Fork archaeological and historical sites.

The first step is learning to recognize archaeological

materials and features. Information in this newsletter will help, as will other materials made available by the Salmon-Challis and Payette National Forests (see page 6 for names and phone numbers).

The next step is placing your camp in an

appropriate place. For instance, do not set up your tent or kitchen on the upper terraces where pithouses are located, instead try to stay on the lower sandy beaches where possible. Some areas will be closed to camping and the checkers at Boundary

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Preserving Native American Traditional Sites

The Middle Fork River was home to the Mountain Sheepeater people for thousands of years and their descendants would like you to respect the area as they would. During the late 19th Century, the Mountain Sheepeater people were removed from the Middle Fork River to reservations. Their descendants can be found at the Shoshone-Bannock, Shoshone-Paiute and Nez Perce Reservations and each Tribe wishes these sites be protected.

The special camping procedures that have are a part of river user etiquette help to preserve most sites, however, some activities and cultural concerns are relatively

unknown to most people. For instance, pictographs or "Indian Picture Writing" as it is sometimes known, has a very important sacred meaning to American Indians. It is believed that these rock pictures were painted by religious shaman. Traditional American Indians today believe you should not visit these sites except with the proper ceremonies and you should certainly not deface or disturb the pictographs.

Many other sites contain the remains of American Indian ancestors. Pithouses, talus slopes, and rockshelters may all contain human burials and should not be disturbed. These areas are sacred

to American Indians, just as our cemeteries are sacred to us.

There are other places where large stone circles, alignments, or stacks can be found that may be the remains of ceremonial lodges or sacred sites. Isolated terraces along the river and higher elevation ridge tops may have been used for sacred ceremonies and should be avoided when ever possible.

Please help us preserve American Indian traditional and religious sites by being respectful of these areas. You may visit these sites, but act as you would in a church, synagogue, or other place of worship.

Mountain Sheepeater People (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

probably earlier sites that have not been found.

The Mountain Sheepeater People lived a nomadic existence. During the fall to spring seasons they hunted fish, river mussels, bighorn sheep, other large and small game, water and land fowl, and local plants found along the Middle Fork River. In the late spring they moved into the upper valleys and ridges of the surrounding area. During this season they collected roots, berries, nuts and took upland game as they followed ripening food resources.

It appears that bighorn sheep were a major food source for Native People. They may have been hunted from stacked talus rock hunting blinds as they came down to drink at the river. Single hunters lying in wait near travel

ways or favorite watering areas could have taken sheep fairly regularly. It is also possible that groups of hunters drove the animals up steep slopes into ambushes or into corrals.

Other big and small game possibly taken in the Middle Fork River include deer, elk, bear, marmot, chipmunk, gopher, bobcat, wolverine, squirrel, porcupine, wolf, and skunk. Most of these animals were probably hunted singly or in small groups along the river or adjoining stream terraces.

While no evidence of salmon or steelhead bones have been found in local archaeological sites, river mussel shell is abundant. It is very likely that the Mountain Sheepeater People did use fish, however, they may have ritually returned the

remains to the river to make sure that the fish came back. River mussels were raked from the bottom of the river and steamed in ovens. The shells were discarded in midden heaps. These shell middens are one of the most common features of Middle Fork archaeological sites.

Bird remains found in archaeological sites include golden eagle, red-tailed hawk, and grouse.

Few plant remains have been recovered by archaeologists. They include burned nuts and seeds, elderberry, a few leafy plants, bur-reed, and a member of the rose family. However, other nuts, berries, seeds and roots were probably sought by the Mountain Sheepeater People.



**Corner-Notched
dart point from
Dagger Falls.**



**Side-notched and basal-notched
arrow points from Dagger Falls.**

Summary of Previous Preservation Accomplishments

The summers of 1999-2005 were eventful years for the Heritage Team on the Middle Fork.

In 1999, work focused on archaeological excavations, inventory and interpretation. Excavations at Pungo Creek (see following story) helped to document an intact house pit in undisturbed areas and a camper impacted house pit in a kitchen area. The Shoshone-Bannock interpreter program was also begun this year in which tribal members provided interpretive talks at Boundary Creek and Indian Creek launches. This was also the year that Passport in Time (PIT) volunteers helped

archaeologists record and monitor archaeological sites on the lower section of the river.

In 2000 restoration work was undertaken at Pungo. Logs and rocks were used to outline appropriate use areas and protect sensitive house pits. There was sufficient vegetation on the sites so that our restoration activities may not be obvious, which is what we prefer. Future work, such as at Hospital Bar, may require more obvious restoration work to bring back the highly compacted kitchen and camp areas.

Throughout the past several summers the River Patrol inspected float camp sites while

Archaeologists monitored camp conditions during high, moderate and low river levels. This monitoring work was developed to establish baseline information regarding camp conditions so that future trends could be better understood.

In 2005 we updated the nearly 20 year old management plan. The Heritage programs on the four wilderness Forests, and Shoshone-Bannock and Nez Perce Tribes worked together to define the procedures that will be used in the next six years to locate, update records, interpret and protect our Middle Fork cultural heritage.

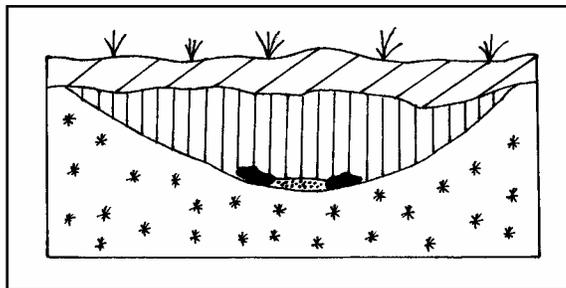
Pungo Creek Archaeological Excavations Provide Clues to the Past and Present

Understanding Native American history and effects of float camps on archaeological sites took a major leap forward in 1999. Excavations at Pungo Creek documented the presence of ancient Native American houses and provided clues to understanding how float camps affect these important sites.

While not the first archaeological excavation on the Middle Fork River, this work is clearing up some of the confusion about the mysterious depressions found along river terraces. The depressions commonly found along the river have been thought to be "house pits" (see story on page 6), prospect holes, elk wallows, or "tree throw", (i.e., blown-down trees leave depressions where roots once were). Excavations not only clearly showed that the depressions are the remains of American Indian houses, but that filled in house pits under disturbed ground with no associated surface depression

exist.

Two places were chosen for excavation at Pungo. One was in a surface depression that was readily visible and the other was in a kitchen area that had no visible depression. In the first case the



Simplified cross-sectional view of excavated house pit. Top layer is disturbed zone over dish shaped house pit depression. Central fire hearth is shown as rock and charcoal at bottom of house depression.

depression was verified as a house pit by the presence of a central fire pit and by a concentration of artifacts on the floor of the living surface. In the second case the same dish shaped

depression and features were found below obviously disturbed top soils.

The archaeologists also looked at soil layers and the position of artifacts to determine if floater use was impacting the house pits.

Unlike the perfectly preserved house pit in the undisturbed area, the upper portion of the buried house in the kitchen area had a disturbed zone or layer of soil resulting in the destruction of the upper house layers. While the intact house had only 5 inches of disturbed soil and a single historic bullet, numerous non-Indian artifacts were found within the top 5-15 inches of the disturbed house. Many of these artifacts date to the 1950s-1980s. While the majority of disturbance certainly was not caused by present day floater use, the lack of vegetation and highly churned nature of the sandy soils suggests continued floater use on top of these features will eventually cause their destruction.

Taking Care of Our Archaeological Heritage

The past several seasons saw the Salmon-Challis NF River Patrol, archaeologists, and volunteers working together to monitor float and Native American camp sites. Monitoring trips added to our knowledge base helping to develop condition trends and recommendations to protect affected archaeological sites.

Monitoring Activities

The River Patrol worked on their regular schedule of monitoring activities, while in most years the Forest Service Heritage Team took multiple trips over the course of the entire float season. This effort has led to a better understanding of the various impact agents that may harm our archaeological heritage.

The River Patrol visits almost every camp each time they float the river looking at overall camp condition. The results of this monitoring and any new impacts are reported to the Heritage Team.

Several times each summer the Heritage Team inspects each camp listed in the table above for condition, writing descriptions of camp conditions on a monitoring form, taking representative photographs and mapping disturbance areas.

Monitoring Results

In general, relatively wetter camp sites seemed to fair better than relatively drier camp sites. Sites with lots of brushy vegetation tended to have compact kitchen areas that are highly disturbed and single paths that lead to individual tent sites. Vegetation effectively screens individual tent locations and the kitchen area from each other where use is relatively low. In high use sites camps are more barren. Dry sites, even with less than 10 parties a year, had widespread kitchen and tent areas that were almost completely bare.

<i>Site Name</i>	<i>Site Type</i>	<i>Proposed Treatment</i>
Sheepsteater Hot Springs	Dry with heavy use	Camp Naturalization
Pungo Cr.	Wet with heavy use	Camp Naturalization
Lower Jackass Cr.	Wet with heavy use	Upper terrace closed
Cameron Cr.	Dry with light use	Closed
Rock Island	Wet with heavy use	Camp Naturalization
Pebble Beach	Dry with light use	Closed
White Creek	Dry with heavy use	Upper terrace closed
Cow Creek	Wet with heavy use	Camp Naturalization
Hospital Bar	Dry with heavy use	Camp Naturalization
Wilson Cr.	Wet with heavy use	Camp Naturalization
Woolard Cr.	Dry with heavy use	Camp Naturalization
Survey Cr.	Dry with heavy use	Camp Naturalization
Tumble Cr.	Dry with heavy use	Camp Naturalization
Stoddard Cr.	Dry with heavy use	Camp Naturalization

Fourteen float camps with archaeological sites were identified as having significant archaeological deposits that were severely impacted wild game, float and horse users. During monitoring visits numerous instances of site damage by boaters and non-boaters, alike were documented. In several instances campers pitched their tents in closed areas and the people were politely asked to move. Tent platforms were dug into the sandy lower terrace at Cow Creek which damaged near surface archaeological features. At Rock Island one or more horses were tethered in the site leading to significant house pit damage. At Survey Creek rocks placed to protect house pits were rearranged outside of the houses in interesting circular and star patterns.

Site Preservation Activities

The Forest Service is using three ways of protecting archaeological sites that are used by the public: 1) complete closure; 2) partial closure; and 3) camp naturalization.

Complete closure has occurred

at two sites. Pebble Beach looked excellent with bunch grasses and shrubs coming back after a short time. Cameron Creek is not recovering well due to the dry nature of the site. It will be temporarily closed to camping, while pictograph viewing and use as a lunch stop are still allowed.

The upper terraces at Lower Jackass and White Creek are still being camped on even though they are closed. Please help us protect these precious sites by placing your tents on the lower sandy beaches. When you visit the upper terraces stay on existing trails and do not collect artifacts.

The remainder of the sites will undergo camp naturalization. This means appropriate kitchen, trail, and tent areas will be designated where they do not affect archaeological features. Vegetation will be encouraged between the use areas. Natural materials will be used to block access to sensitive areas. The remaining kitchen areas, trails and tent areas can be used as before.

Summer of 2006 Activities

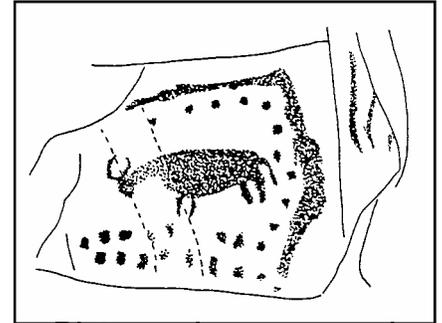
This coming summer The River Patrol and Heritage Team plan to continue monitoring activities, naturalize float camp sites, and provide American Indian Interpreters at Boundary and Indian Creek boat launches. The success of these projects depends on funding, work load and your help.

The Bitterroot, Nez Perce, Payette and Salmon-Challis National Forests, Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Shoshone-Bannock and Nez Perce Tribes will be working on completing an update of the 1986 Wilderness Cultural Resources

Overview, a comprehensive Heritage Management Plan, and other protection and interpretive activities. If you see us on the river give a shout and we would be happy to discuss the planning efforts and our monitoring program with you.

Restoration programs will take place in the spring and early summer and focus on those sites most in danger.

The response to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribal member interpretive talks at Boundary and Indian Creek have been very positive. The Salmon-Challis NF will continue its commitment to this program and expand it as funding and tribal members are available.



Pictographs are sacred to Native Americans. Please respect their wishes to preserve these fragile sites by not touching them and taking only photos.

Monitoring Land Based Users

The Forest Service recognizes that river users are not the only ones camping in archaeological sites along the Middle Fork River. This summer we will start a program of monitoring and educating land based users.

At this time there are no land based permits or designated camps in the Middle Fork River canyon. Thus, it is

difficult to monitor and regulate land based use as easily as river use.

The first objective will be to get information to land based users about sensitive sites and appropriate camping etiquette.

Informational signs and brochures will be placed at wilderness portals. Where heavy horse use is affecting a site an interdisciplinary Forest Service team will

develop a restoration plan.

We will also start a program of monitoring off season use, as funding and time allows, in order to identify users and problem areas.

If you see or hear of land based use that might be affecting these sensitive sites please report the information to the nearest Forest Service employee.

Join Us in Preserving the Past (cont.)

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Creek can tell you where those camps are located. When you set up your tent or kitchen please do not level platforms or dig rain trenches around the edge of the area. Disturbance of the site destroys the information archaeologists rely on to tell the story of the site.

Be sure to use portapotties, fire pans, and dispose of gray water appropriately. Human waste, food waste, gray water, and charcoal can contaminate archaeological

sites. The food materials in the water can provide false radiocarbon dates recovered from wood and charcoal. In addition, these materials can provide false positives when artifacts are analyzed for protein residues, such as deer, sheep, and fish blood. Please pack out your food waste and sprinkle gray water from washing on vegetated or talus slopes above or away from camp in designated areas.

Please photograph, draw, and handle any artifacts you find on the

soil surface. Then place them back where you found them. Their location on the site in relation to other artifacts and features tells archaeologists much about their age and use. A stone point, can tell archaeologists the site's age, tribe it was made by, and the kind of activities taking place on the site. However, once removed from the site artifacts lose their meaning. If you find something of special significance please let the river patrol or the Heritage Team member know where you found it.

Archaeological Sites of the Middle Fork River

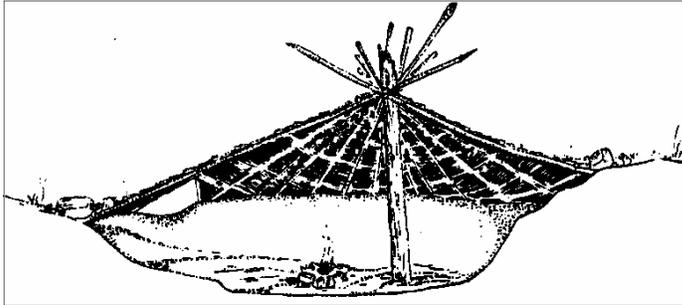
There are four major archaeological site types recognized in the Middle Fork Canyon: pithouse villages, rockshelters, open camps, and pictographs.

Rattlesnake Cave is an example of a rockshelter. It consists of a large overhanging rock face in the steep canyon. It may have had a structure of branches that leaned against the wall for protection from the elements.

Pithouse villages can be found at Rock Island and White Creek. These sites are found on the larger terraces and consist of groups of small circular depressions that were covered by tipi-like structures made of willow branches and brush, reed mats,

pine bark, or skins.

Open camps like Dagger Falls are found on many terraces. It is not known what kind of houses were



This pithouse reconstruction from northern Washington may be like those on the Middle Fork River (after David Chance et al.).

used on these sites, but they may have been small tipi-like shelters

made of brush or skins.

Pictograph sites are not overly abundant in the canyon, however, they may be found on sheer rock faces and at rockshelters. It is not completely clear what the pictographs mean, however, they may record shaman's visions, hunting magic, or reminders of past history.

American Indians consider all of these sites sacred and suggest that they should be visited with great care and respect.

Please help them protect an irreplaceable legacy.

For more information on these sites, see the river guide books, the Middle Fork Ranger District or a Heritage Team member.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act

Under the 1979 Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) all materials of archaeological significance over 100 years old located on Federal Lands are protected by law. The law provides for misdemeanor and felony penalties for the destruction of archaeological sites and collection of archaeological

materials

Under ARPA, the destruction of an archaeological site to collect and sell artifacts is prohibited. A person who excavates an archaeological site without authorization, for the purpose of collecting or selling artifacts, is subject to fines, loss of property, and prison time.

The surface collection of artifacts is also prohibited under ARPA. There are no criminal penalties for the collection of arrow points, however, the artifacts can be confiscated. Anyone caught collecting any other artifacts will have the materials confiscated and may be subject to fines and loss of personal property.

Other Resources

The Central Idaho Heritage Team welcomes any comments, concerns or information you may have about the archaeological resources of the Middle Fork area. If you want to get involved in archaeological projects, the Forest Service's Passport in Time (PIT) program provides volunteers a chance to work with archaeologists in the inventory, excavation, and

preservation of archaeological and historical resources. For more information on the history of the Frank Church—River of No Return Wilderness a large selection of monographs are also available. Please check with local Heritage Specialists listed to the right for monographs, any updated information or upcoming archaeological projects in the area.

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