

Field Notes

Mill Creek Climbing Site, 16-BR-01-03

May 13, 2016

Mary Williams

Met Stevensville Ranger Tami Sabol and acting CSKT Tribal Preservation Officer Katie McDonald at the SO at 0830. We proceeded to Cow Creek and the starting point of the user-created trail up the north side of Mill Creek Canyon. Arrived at the proposed climbing area @1000. Weather was cool and partly cloudy with occasional light winds. The area below the rock face is steep, with a handful of level or nearly level benches. Katie and I investigated these, and while climbing from one bench to another, I discovered a brown or tan chalcedony point base, possibly heat treated. It appears that the base may have been reworked as a small scraper after the point broke off. The base measures 32mm x 37.8mm. It was found amid gravel and moss on a steep incline between two level areas. We also investigated several rock crevices and overhangs in the climbing wall. In the largest of these, Katie discovered a worked flake, 32.8mm x 33.8mm, a fine-grained gray quartzite. The flake was lodged in a rock fissure along the north edge of a deep overhang. While the overhang could certainly serve as a rock shelter, there was no evidence of smoke-staining or rock hearth. Both artifacts were collected. We searched for the items photographed by members of the public on March 12. These included a small stacked rock pile, golden eagle wings/feathers, a cache of climbing paraphernalia, a treated wood block with rebar attached, and two pink-and-white apparently chalcedony flakes, one reportedly worked. Only the treated wood block and rebar were relocated. We found no evidence of the chalcedony flakes visible in the March 12 photographs. From the photos, both flakes appeared to be of the same material, and were in plain site on surface. From its appearance in the photo, the stacked rock structure could have served as a hunting blind, but it does not appear to have been of great age, based on the lack of encroached vegetation, absence of lichen on the rock surface, etc. We did observe several pieces and chunks of a toilet that had been thrown from the top of the cliff, reportedly by local teenagers. After examining every rock outcrop and half-way level area, we returned down the trail, stopping to examine rock outcrops, etc. Katie and I agreed that the two flakes we found were consistent with hunting use of the area, but that there was nothing to indicate seasonal occupation or other cultural activities.