

Join Us in Preserving the Past

Users of the Middle Fork and Main Salmon River set the standard for low impact use. However, it is possible to hone those skills to provide extra protection for archaeological and historical sites.

The first step is learning to recognize archaeological materials and features. Information in newsletters provided to river users will help, as will other materials made available by the Salmon-Challis and Payette National Forests.

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 may be located; instead stay on the lower sandy beaches. Some areas will be closed to camping and the checkers at Boundary Creek and Corn Creek can tell you where those camps are located. When you set up your tent or kitchen please do not make 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 site's story.

Be sure to use porta-potties and fire pans and dispose of gray water appropriately. Human waste, food waste, gray water, and charcoal can contaminate archaeological sites by contaminating the wood, charcoal and site sediments in archaeological deposits. This will cause false radiocarbon dates. In addition, these materials can provide false readings when artifacts are analyzed for protein residues such as deer, sheep, and fish blood. Please pack out your food waste and broadcast gray water above the high water mark and far away from camp.

Please feel free to photograph, draw, and handle any artifacts you find on the ground surface, but then *place them back where you found them*. Their location on the site, in relation to other artifacts and features, tells us 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 much of their meaning. If you find something of special significance please let the river patrol or the Heritage Team know where you found it.

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, felony, and/or civil penalties for disturbing archaeological sites or for the collection of archaeological materials. Under ARPA, it is illegal to damage an archaeological site. A person who damages or excavates an archaeological site or collects artifacts without authorization, is subject to fines, loss of property, and prison time. The surface collection of artifacts is also prohibited under ARPA. Please help preserve the Native American and historic sites of the Salmon and Middle Fork Rivers so that future boaters can enjoy them too.

The Central Idaho Heritage Team welcomes any comments, concerns or information you may have concerning the archaeological resources of the Salmon and Middle Fork River area. If you would like 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 resources. Contact one of the Heritage Specialists listed below for information on upcoming opportunities in the area.

Salmon-Challis National Forest

Salmon Office: Tim Canaday (208) 756-5100; North Fork Office: Cammie Sayer (208) 865-2700;
Challis Office: John Rose (208) 879-4121

Payette National Forest

McCall Office: Larry Kingsbury (208) 634-0700

Passport in Time (PIT) Clearing House (800) 281-9176