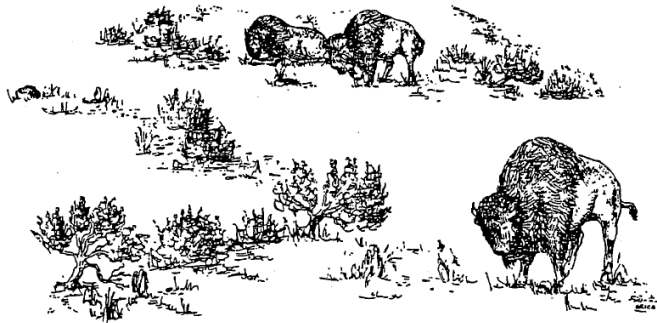


Evidence of Bison in Adams County

Idaho USDA Payette National Forest
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Updated by Kelly Martin 2022

In March 2001, a sample of stone tools from a Native American occupation located east of Indian Valley on the Payette National Forest (PNF) was sent to Archaeological Investigations Northwest, Inc. for testing ancient blood residue proteins. The action was part of mitigation, results from an Archaeological Resource Protection Act (ARPA) violation. Five obsidian tools yielded positive results for having bovine ant-serum. This was the first scientific evidence suggesting the presence of bison on the PNF.



At another ARPA investigated Native American occupation located adjacent to Crooked River, a tributary of the Snake River Canyon, Eastern Washington University (EWU) in October 2001 uncovered what they thought were domestic cow bones. The bones were found in buried archaeological context directly associated with several late period arrow points and other stone tools. EWU archaeologist Stan

Grough suspected that the bones were bison and had one bone radiocarbon dated in March 2003. The bone dated to 335 +/- 35 before present (BP) or 300 to 370 calibrated years BP or 1580 to 1650 A.D. Native Americans at this time did not have horses and hunted bison on foot. The horse did not appear among the Nez Perce people until circa 1740. This is the first-time bison bones have ever been found in a dated archaeological context on the PNF.

Analysis of ancient blood proteins and radiometric dating are indispensable archaeological techniques in demonstrating that bison were once present on the PNF. Civil penalties under ARPA provided or encouraged the funding for mitigating damage to these archaeological sites.