

Project Completion Report Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (RM-CESU)

Project Title: Shovel Test Grand Loop Road Corridor Bisecting National Register Eligible Precontact Archeology Site 48YE406

Project Code: UWY – 66, J1580070234

Type of Project: RESEARCH

Funding Agency: National Park Service

Partner University: The University of Wyoming

NPS Agreements Technical Representative:

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Start Date of Project: May 15, 2007

End Date of Project: September 30, 2010

Funding Amount: \$60,000

Number of Students Involved, and Type of Student (Undergraduate, Graduate, Post Doctorate): 1 Undergraduate, 1 Graduate, 1 Post Doctorate

Project Summary, including descriptions of project deliverables, any changes made during the life of the project, work accomplished and/or major results. If the information is restricted (e.g. location of endangered species or cultural resources), indicate the title and location of the final report.

The final report will be restricted and not available to the public but a copy is on file at the YNP Archeology Laboratory at the Heritage Resource Center in Yellowstone NP and with the Wyoming Historical Preservation Office. This agreement was for only the shovel tests and test excavations of the site. The production of the report is under another RM-CESU agreement.

The initial field work in 2007 was the first excavation in a three-year project to complete data recovery of a National Register eligible archeological site 48YE406, northwest of the Norris campground area. The site extends 6-meters northwest-southeast and is currently bisected through the center portion by the Norris to Mammoth segment of the Grand Loop Road. Proposed widening and rehabilitation of this segment of road will impact the site. The site and the roadway are situated within thermal areas of the Norris thermal basin. In an effort not to impact more thermal areas, the roadway will be widened in its existing location. The area of potential effect (APE) extends 10 meters (33 feet) from the edge of the existing road disturbance on each side of the roadway. A Data Recovery Plan was devised and the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with the plan in 2004.

Shovel tests were conducted at 5 meter intervals along both sides of the roadway to identify areas with buried cultural deposits. The 30-40 cm diameter shovel tests were excavated in 10 cm levels to establish if buried cultural deposits and in-tact stratigraphy are present within the APE. The excavated material was screened through ¼ inch metal screen, collected on a tarp and after the cultural items were bagged, the soils and sediments were returned to the excavated hole.

Two areas were identified, one in thermal soils on the west side of the south end of the road segment and the other on a gradual slope on the east side of the south end of the road. 1x1 meter units were excavated in both areas with a concentration of buried materials. Possible Middle Archaic, Late Archaic Pelican Lake –like projectile points, and probable Late Prehistoric point types were recovered from the excavations. The excavations were completed late in the fall of 2007 field season and the collected artifacts are in the process of analysis, description, and recoding into the ANCS+ database. No datable carbon was recovered. The final report for this project is under production under another RM-CESU agreement. This agreement was for shovel tests and test excavations only.

The work was funded by the Federal Highway Administration program to widen and rehabilitate this portion of the Grand Loop Road. The total funding for FY2007 was \$60,000, all of which was obligated to the Office of the Wyoming State Archeologist (OWSA), Paul Sanders, Assistant Director of Archeological Survey serving as Crew Chief. The excavation crew consisted of OWSA staff and students from the University of Wyoming and Elaine Skinner Hale, YNP Archeologist. The project was contracted through the Rocky Mountain Cooperative Ecosystem Study Unit in Missoula, Montana.

Currently the recovered artifacts are being processed at the OWSA laboratory in Laramie, Wyoming. The data and the excavation is being assessed as to whether additional work is needed, if geophysical testing or geoarcheological analysis of the excavation would be productive. FHWA road design engineers will evaluate if the site features can be avoided through road design, which looks likely at present. Analysis indicated that additional funds will not be requested for additional testing at this site.

On-going tribal consultation with the affiliated tribes has yet to identify any traditional cultural properties or ethnographic resources in the site area other than the general thermal features which have vague (non-specific) significance when viewed as a whole thermal landscape. Continued consultation with the WYSHPO will identify if further archeological excavations need to be

conducted in this area. After that decision is made, plans for a draft data recovery plan report will evolve. The archeological project at 48YE406 began in May, 2007 and has, site excavation has been completed.