



Office of History & Archaeology

Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Rec.

Mining and Cultural Resources Guidance

What is the Office of History and Archaeology/State Historic Preservation Office?

The Alaska Office of History and Archaeology (OHA) and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) provide historic preservation programs to encourage the preservation and protection of the historic, prehistoric, and archaeological resources of Alaska.

We do this through:

- Review & Compliance (State / Federal)
- National Register of Historic Places
- Historic Preservation Planning
- Certified Local Government Program
- Rehabilitation Tax Credit Reviews
- Education, Outreach, and Interpretation
- Statewide Site Inventory (AHRIS Database)
- Archaeological Survey Unit
- State Archaeology Permits
- Alaska Historical Commission



It is the policy of the State to preserve the historic, prehistoric, and archaeological resources of Alaska from loss, desecration, and destruction so that the scientific, historic, and cultural heritage embodied in these resources may pass undiminished to future generations (A.S. 41.35.010).

Applicable Laws and Statutes

State law requires all activities requiring licensing or permitting from the State of Alaska to comply with the Alaska Historic Preservation Act (AS 41.35), which prohibits the removal or destruction of cultural resources (historic, prehistoric [including paleontological], and archaeological sites, locations, remains, or objects) on land owned or controlled by the State. This includes reporting historic and archaeological sites on lands covered under contract with or licensed by the State or governmental agency of the State.

If there is Federal involvement in the project (financial assistance, permit, license, or approval) it is the statutory obligation of the lead Federal agency to comply with Section 106 (36 CFR § 800) of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which requires the Federal agency to take into account the effects that their undertaking may have on historic properties.

What does this mean for my mining operation?

The APMA you submit to the Division of Mining, Land and Water (DMLW) gets sent to multiple agencies for review, OHA/SHPO included. If we see there is federal involvement, we may contact the lead federal agency to ensure that they have reviewed it under Section 106 of the NHPA. If the State is the only authorizing agency, we review the application under the Alaska Historic Preservation Act (AS 41.35). We begin this review by checking our statewide cultural resource database, the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRs) inventory, for potential impacts your work may have on reported cultural resources. We then send our comments to DMLW. Important things to know about this are:

- We might not comment at all.
- If there is a site within or in the vicinity of the claims that does not mean your mining operation will be shut down.
- DMLW might decline to authorize the permit until certain stipulations are met, if deemed necessary. Our office does not have the authority to shut down a mining operation.
- The majority of the time we will only request that you avoid alteration or disturbance to the cultural resource. We will provide you with a general geographic area and description of the resource to help you adhere to this.
- Reporting cultural resource sites in your claim area will not impede your operation unless you are planning to alter or disturb them, in which case, we will assist you – in consultation with DMLW – in finding ways to avoid or minimize impacts within the area of concern.



What Can I Do to Minimize the Potential for Damaging Cultural Resources?

1. Keep records of the information we provide you on the location and description of cultural resource sites in or near your claims. Create buffer zones around these localities to prevent inadvertent damage. You do not necessarily have to avoid the areas completely, but everyone on crew should be aware of the potential presence of cultural resources.
2. Inform crew members of the laws and statutes regarding cultural resources [See pg. 1].
3. If you find a cultural resource please contact our office and provide photographs, a description, and location information (GPS coordinates or a notation on a topographic map is sufficient).
4. If possible, locate camps and storage areas in locations that are previously disturbed.
5. Minimize construction of new access roads. If you are planning to construct a sizable access road it may be appropriate to hire a qualified professional archaeologist to survey the proposed route.
6. Consider creating 100m (~300ft.) buffers from water bodies (anadromous streams, rivers, lakes, springs) for ground disturbing activities. Areas adjacent to water bodies have high potential for cultural resource sites.
7. Visually inspect an area prior to its disturbance to see if you can identify any possible cultural features. Keep your eyes open for anything out of the ordinary during the project.
8. Try to avoid terraces, ridges, and overlooks for trenching and stripping; these are areas of high potential for cultural resources.
9. Be familiar with the history of human occupation/use in your mining area. This information can provide detail on the types of cultural resources you may encounter.
10. When in doubt, contact our office.

How Do I Know if I Have Encountered a Cultural Resource?

Our office understands that cultural resource site identification is not likely your area of expertise. Generally we consider something to be potentially historic when it is at least 45-50 years old. Prehistoric resources are physical remains of human use and occupation prior to the historic record (written documentation). Paleontological resources are fossilized remains of life forms. Some things you may encounter include:

- Historic cabins (standing, collapsed, or just imprints/berms), and equipment (hydraulic monitors, steam boilers, dredges, sluice boxes etc.)
- Historic trails/routes
- Prehistoric tools/artifacts (points, knives, blades, worked wood, worked antler, worked bone, etc.)
- Cemeteries/Graves/Burials (There are specific and very important protocols regarding the discovery of human remains, see AS 12.65.5, AS 11.46.482[a][3], and AS 18.50.250)
- Petroglyphs (symbols/pictures/art made from “pecking” the rock or carving)
- Pictographs (symbols/pictures/art painted on rock)
- Depressions (a depression with an unnatural symmetry or configuration is potentially cultural)
- Fossilized plants, bones, teeth, tusks, footprints etc.

Thank you for your consideration of these guidelines. Please report any cultural resources encountered during your work. We rely on the many individuals mining in Alaska to help us manage important heritage sites. To contact our office:

Department of Natural Resources

Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation

Office of History and Archaeology

550 W. 7th Ave., Suite 1310

Anchorage, AK 99501-3565

907-269-8721 (Ask to speak to a Review and Compliance Staff Member)

