



Protecting Cultural and Historic Sites

Preserving Our Heritage

Overview

Forest landowners and users may have opportunities to discover cultural and historic sites. You can help protect them by identifying likely sites and following the laws that protect them.

Background

Oregon's rich cultural and historic sites and artifacts, called cultural resources, help explain how cultures used the land. The public owns many of them and private landowners can help preserve the rest.



Fishing net weights

Cultural resources are irreplaceable. They include prehistoric and historic objects and features like:

- Native American villages and cairns (stacked rocks)
- Stone tools and rock images
- Ceramics, cans, bottles, and metal
- Wagon roads, and railroad grades
- Logging, mining, and railroad camps

Age and other factors determine if a site or object is a protected cultural resource. The cultural resource age threshold on federal land is 50 years and 75 on non-federal land.

Cultural resources can be found anywhere. Likely places include:

- Ridgelines and saddles
- Flat areas near confluence of streams
- Natural openings in forests
- Springs and old wells
- Extractable mineral sources



Railroad grade

Protecting cultural resources

The laws generally prohibit excavating, destroying, and altering cultural resources. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

administers the cultural resource protection regulations coordinated with the State Police and Indian tribes.



Cedar bark strips used to make baskets

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) works with SHPO and tribes to protect cultural resources in forests. ODF helps landowners recognize and preserve these resources.



Protecting Cultural and Historic Sites

Forest Operations

Caring for and protecting cultural resources requires planning. ODF encourages forest owners to survey the land for cultural resources before starting forest work.

If the work notified for is near a known SHPO site, ODF will contact you. SHPO can tell you if your operation may impact a protected cultural resource site. Cultural resource sites are confidential, so only an archaeologist can review the data with you.



Grinding stones

Accidental Discovery

If you find cultural resources, SHPO staff can help find solutions to protect and preserve the past while balancing landowner management needs. Avoid sites or minimize impacts by:

- Re-using landings, roads, and skid trails
- Constructing roads around sites
- Using full suspension logging systems
- Using ground-based logging on snow and frozen ground to limit ground disturbance.

Forest work can reveal artifacts or cultural sites. Inadvertent discoveries do not violate the law, but further disturbance does.

Artifacts: If you find artifacts, stop working in that area and contact SHPO.

Bones: If you suspect or discover human remains, call the State Police, SHPO, and the Legislative Commission on Indian Services immediately.

After emergency forest work

If emergency responses impact cultural resources, the landowner should contact SHPO to assess the site to prevent further damage.



Homestead foundations found after a fire

Property rights and responsibilities

Landowners maintain control and access to their lands even when cultural resources are discovered. Usually, you may keep the artifacts found on your land, except sacred or culturally important tribal objects.

More information and help

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

(503) 986-0690 • www.oregon.gov/orpd/hcd/SHPO

Legislative Commission on Indian Services

(503) 986-1067 • www.oregonlegislature.gov/cis

Oregon State Police

(800) 452-7888 • www.oregon.gov/OSP

Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF)

(503) 945-7200 • www.oregon.gov/ODF



Ceramic and bottle artifacts