

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES IN SEATTLE AND KING COUNTY

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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

King County has a rich cultural history. The ancestors of today's Duwamish, Muckleshoot, Puyallup, Snoqualmie, Stillaguamish, Suquamish, and Tulalip tribes left archaeological evidence that provide a record dating back over 12,000 years. Archaeological resources are material remains of past human life that are 50 years old or older. *Precontact* archaeological sites pre-date pioneer settlement and include artifacts of stone, shell, wood, human remains, and grave goods. Buried human remains are purposeful burials or any part of a human body. *Historical* archaeological sites post-date pioneer settlement, which began in 1850 in King County; these sites come from historical occupation and use by native people as well as Euro-Americans and other non-natives.

Archaeological sites tell us about history and prehistory but can also inform us about past fish and animal populations, climate, and how people responded to changes to them.

Known archaeological sites are documented and have been verified by a professional archaeologist or other related professional. Today, significant archaeological resources remain and are frequently discovered during excavation for foundations, utilities, septic systems, etc. Because archaeological sites are often vandalized and destroyed by artifact collectors or curious visitors, site locations are not made public. Property owners and agencies with a need to know can be told about site locations on their property. The Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and the King County Historic Preservation Program (KCHPP) maintain archaeological site databases and can share site location information with appropriate parties.

## PRESENCE OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

***How can the presence of an archaeological site affect a proposed project?*** Archaeological sites, both known and undiscovered, are protected by State, County, and City regulations. If a site will be affected by a project, DAHP may require investigation by a professional archaeologist.

State, County, and City laws provide specific protections for archaeological sites. These laws require review of projects for their potential to disturb archaeological sites. Often the extent and boundaries of a site aren't fully known. In such cases (and when archaeological materials are discovered during construction or other ground-disturbing activities) a professional archaeological survey is usually required before any decisions can be made.

## SEATTLE PUBLIC UTILITIES AND KING COUNTY'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Activities such as trenching, foundation excavation, grading, channel clearing, vegetation removal, silt fence installation, tree planting, landscaping involve some amount of ground disturbance and could potentially destroy archaeological materials.

If your property is located within Seattle City limits, contact SPU Permitting or if your property is located within King County limits, contact KCHPP to determine if there is a known site in your project area. This should be done in the planning stage, because the presence of an archaeological site could affect your project design and cost.

### **PROPERTY WITH A KNOWN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE**

If there is a known site in your project area, contact DAHP during your planning process. Any ground disturbance within the boundaries of an archaeological site requires approval and a permit from DAHP. If ground disturbance will be **entirely within previously disturbed areas**, DAHP may or may not require a permit, but in some cases may require having a professional archaeologist monitor the ground disturbance and having a monitoring plan in place. If the archaeological site is particularly important or sensitive, DAHP may require an archaeological survey of the project area and/or an excavation permit. SPU Permitting and KCHPP can provide advice and assistance with this process.

### **PROPERTY WITHOUT A KNOWN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE**

Most archaeological sites have not been recorded or even discovered, so even if there is no known site in your project area, it is still possible that your project will affect an unknown archaeological site.

If all ground disturbance will be within previously disturbed areas, the risk of encountering undisturbed archaeological materials is reduced. Even so, it is important that all equipment operators and other personnel be on the lookout for indications of an archaeological site (see below).

### **WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR DURING GROUND DISTURBING ACTIVITIES?**

Archaeological resources include artifacts and features (such as hearths). These features are most obvious as changes in soil color and texture. It is important to remain alert to unusual things, since every situation is unique. Photographs of typical archaeological resources are shown on the last two pages.

#### **Precontact Archaeological Resources**

- Arrowheads or other stone tools, such as flakes of fine-grained stone (basalt, jasper, obsidian, petrified wood)
- Fragments of basketry, cordage, nets, or traps made of wood or bark
- Dark, slightly greasy layers of soil, perhaps with charcoal and/or broken rocks
- Soil with fragments of bone (fish, bird, mammal) and/or shell (freshwater or marine)
- Fire-darkened or -reddened rock, usually broken, and/or fire-reddened layers of soil

#### **Historical Archaeological Resources**

- Glass, especially glass that is thicker and/or of different colors than modern beverage bottles
- Metal, especially enameled metal
- Brick
- Ceramic/pottery
- Timber pavement from early roadways
- Constructed grades
- Dumps/sanitary landfills that do not contain plastic

### **WHAT IF ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATERIALS ARE ENCOUNTERED UNEXPECTEDLY DURING GROUND-DISTURBING ACTIVITIES?**

If archaeological materials are discovered, the contractor must immediately stop ground disturbance in the immediate vicinity, secure the area, and contact DAHP to make sure that the project doesn't destroy the archaeological materials. If possible, send a digital image of the find to DAHP. A professional archaeologist must evaluate the discoveries and consult with SPU and/or KCHPP, DAHP, and relevant tribes about further work.

### **WHAT IF HUMAN REMAINS ARE FOUND?**

If ground disturbing activities encounter human skeletal remains during construction, then all activity must cease that may cause further disturbance to those remains. The area of the find must be secured and protected from further disturbance until the State provides notice to proceed. Report the finding of human skeletal remains to the county medical examiner/coroner and local law enforcement in the most expeditious manner possible. The remains must not be touched, moved, or further disturbed. The county medical examiner/coroner will assume jurisdiction over the human skeletal remains and make a determination of whether those remains are forensic or non-forensic. If the county medical examiner/coroner determines the remains are non-forensic, then they will report that finding to the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), who will then take jurisdiction over the remains. The DAHP will notify any appropriate cemeteries and all affected tribes of the find. The State Physical Anthropologist will make a determination of whether the remains are Indian or Non-Indian and report that finding to any appropriate cemeteries and the affected tribes. The DAHP will then handle all consultation with the affected parties as to the future preservation, excavation, and disposition of the remains.

### **CONTACTS**

Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP): Rob Whitlam, State Archaeologist, (360) 586-3080; or Lance Wollwage, Assistant State Archaeologist, (360) 586-3536 (O).

King County Medical Examiner: (206) 731-3232.

King County Sheriff: (206) 296-4155.

Seattle Police Department: (206) 625-5011.

King County Historic Preservation Program: Philippe LeTourneau, Archaeologist, (206) 477-4529, [philippe.letourneau@kingcounty.gov](mailto:philippe.letourneau@kingcounty.gov).

Seattle Public Utilities Permitting and Environmental Review: Heather Walker, Cultural Resources Coordinator, (206) 233-3711, [heather.walker@seattle.gov](mailto:heather.walker@seattle.gov).



Precontact stone tools



Precontact basketry<sup>1</sup>



Precontact hearth (profile view)<sup>2</sup>



Precontact hearth with fire-cracked rock (plan view)



Historical landfill<sup>3</sup>



Constructed grade of the Seattle, Lake Shore & Eastern Railroad

Photo credits:

- 1 Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum, catalog number 45SN100-7b
- 2 Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum, catalog number 45KI9B-4-25-70
- 3 ICF International