

Heritage Southwest: Program Summary

The Center for Desert Archaeology's Heritage Southwest program is building a network that spans the American Southwest, Mexican Northwest, and beyond to promote creative new research directions, to increase public awareness of and involvement in archaeology, and to significantly expand archaeological preservation. The Heritage Southwest program is two tiered. The master program operates on the scale of the American Southwest/Mexican Northwest and also pursues national and international links. Beneath this umbrella program, an expanding series of projects and partnerships is integrated. These projects implement a community-based archaeology that promotes a commitment to stewardship that is broad, deep, and long-term.

The driving premise of Heritage Southwest is that the archaeological record has value to diverse communities. These human values are not always obvious in the material remains of the past, and active research that includes open dialogue between multiple interested parties is essential. Furthermore, preservation of the fragile, nonrenewable archaeological record is an urgent priority. Understanding the archaeological record is accomplished gradually and is always incomplete. Planning now so that there is a large reservoir of preserved sites to visit and revisit in the future is crucial. Extensive educational efforts are needed to ensure that an archaeological preservation ethic continues to gain adherents.

This document presents a concise overview of Heritage Southwest. It will be updated as the program develops.

The American Southwest and Mexican Northwest: A Diverse Unity

There is a long-term unity to this broad region that makes it an appropriate unit of study. For nearly 4,000 years, and perhaps slightly longer, the populations living in the Greater Southwest/Northwest were directly involved in maize farming or were in contact with such farmers. It is recognized that there is great environmental and cultural diversity within this area, but Heritage Southwest researchers believe that a holistic perspective that seeks synthesis on a very large spatial scale will lead to major new insights into the past. Furthermore, modern population growth is affecting this area in dramatic ways that make a broad regional approach to preservation a necessity.

The Program Planning Process

Over the course of two years a series of meetings were held with an advisory team comprised of Lynne Sebastian, Shereen Lerner, and David Wilcox. William Doelle and Linda Pierce represented the Center at these meetings. Lynne Sebastian organized two-day planning seminars on the topics of Preservation Strategies and Public Involvement Strategies and has prepared brief white papers that summarize the results of those seminars. David Wilcox has prepared a white paper regarding Research Strategies. These planning documents are available for review, and key elements of them have been incorporated into this document.

The Heritage Southwest Network

The intent is to create a network that is inclusive and is continually expanding. The network incorporates the state-level historic preservation system, particularly the state plans that have been prepared by the State Historic Preservation offices in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah. Integration with INAH's programs in the Mexican states of Sonora and Chihuahua is also planned. (INAH is the initials of the Spanish abbreviation for the National Institute of Anthropology and History, the federal government agency responsible for heritage in Mexico.) Partnerships with many other federal, state, and local agencies are also well underway.

Community-based archaeology is central to the Heritage Southwest approach. Frequently Center personnel encounter community members in San Pedro Valley and elsewhere who have a strong awareness of the local archaeology. Many of them express dissatisfaction with archaeologists who descend on an area, carry out excavations, and then leave with the local materials in hand. Direct connections must be forged between archaeologists and local community members as a first step in cultivating responsible stewardship among community members. We must develop opportunities for local participation, and we must take responsibility for bringing the results of research back to the local community. This is the kind of community-based archaeology that the Center seeks to build through its programs.

The Heritage Southwest Master Program

Heritage Southwest has three major conceptual components: research, public outreach, and preservation. The integration of these components is critical to program success.

Research and Information Management

Active research is essential to keep learning from the archaeological record. Thus research and information management are at the core of the Heritage Southwest program. Center researchers are currently compiling information for inclusion in multiple layers of a geographic information system (GIS). This GIS data base is a computer-based system for maintaining high precision inventories of diverse kinds of information that are important for the management and protection of archaeological sites and for synthetic research.

Because resources for developing the Heritage Southwest inventory of archaeological properties are limited we have established two priority elements: 1) the period from roughly A.D. 1200 to 1700, and 2) the Early Agricultural period (ca. 2000 B.C. to A.D. 50).

The Heritage Southwest gives priority to compiling an inventory of sites that date between A.D. 1200 and 1700 across the entire American Southwest and Mexican Northwest. Furthermore we are pursuing a research program that seeks to resolve some very basic research issues regarding this time period. A prime research concern is exploring the links between modern tribal groups and archaeological sites that date to this interval. Despite the fact that this time period is relatively close to the present, there are significant gaps in knowledge. During much of this interval populations lived in large, nucleated villages. Because there were fewer residential locations in the past, today there are fewer archaeological sites from this time interval. The fact that these large settlements are highly visible has made them particularly vulnerable to vandalism over the past century. During the Protohistoric period (ca. A.D. 1450 to 1700), the non-puebloan populations of the American Southwest and Mexican Northwest tended to live in settlements that have very low archaeological visibility. As a result, the inventory of those sites is very inadequate. Thus, the archaeological record for the period A.D. 1200 to 1700 has high cultural value, high research value, and much of it is particularly threatened.

Heritage Southwest is also pursuing research into the arrival of agriculture to the American Southwest and Mexican Northwest. Agriculture has been an element of human survival in the Greater Southwest/Northwest for approximately 4,000 years, and it has been critical to that survival for about 2,000 years. Understanding where and how agriculture became established in the American Southwest and Mexican Northwest is a critical research question. The Center will contribute to addressing this question by implementing an inventory and field research program in the upper half of the Gila River drainage basin.

For other time periods, the Center will be somewhat opportunistic in data compilation for the near term. For example, other researchers have already compiled inventories of certain classes of sites such as Hohokam ballcourts, sites with great kivas, Chacoan great houses, or Paleoindian sites. Where available, such inventories will be incorporated into the Center's GIS system. Priorities for regional inventory will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Public Education and Public Involvement

A wider base of support is essential to achieving the goals of Heritage Southwest. Therefore this program incorporates public education efforts and provides opportunities for public involvement in archaeological research and preservation activities. The Center's quarterly publication, *Archaeology Southwest*, is the primary medium for region-wide outreach. This publication delivers high quality, up-to-date information to readers in a very readable format. It also provides an opportunity to discuss the Center's mission through a regular column titled "Back Sight."

Center membership by state is currently as follows: Arizona – 414, Colorado – 34, New Mexico – 40, Utah – 14, Other US states – 202, International – 7. The dominance of Arizona among the states of the American Southwest is a reflection of the Arizona roots of the organization. Expanded membership is being vigorously pursued to increase membership outside Arizona.

The Center has funding for an exhibit of aerial photographs by Adriel Heisey. These will be selected so that they highlight the complex relationships between archaeological sites and modern landscapes. A published catalog will facilitate more in-depth treatment of the content of the photographs. Also a traveling form of the exhibit will be developed for display in local community venues across the American Southwest.

The Center is expanding its website and plans to become a major source of high quality information content for the general public as well as professionals. New computer software is providing opportunities to create high quality three-dimensional renderings of archaeological information. A realistic image, based on the best available scientific information and depicting how an archaeological feature or site may have looked when it was in use, is a particularly effective way to communicate with broad audiences.

Preservation

An aggressive and diverse program to preserve archaeological sites as well as information already in museums is under development. Heritage Southwest seeks preservation on the large scale of entire valleys if possible. That means that site ownership cannot be thought of as the only tool that can achieve our preservation goals. Outright ownership on such a large scale is prohibitively expensive and unrealistic. Thus, we see site acquisition and conservation easements as tools that can be used strategically to ensure protection of high priority sites. Ultimately, site steward programs and greatly increased community-based stewardship of local archaeological resources are essential if large-scale protection is to succeed.

The Center is already working in partnership with the Archaeological Conservancy on the scale of the Southwest. For the San Pedro and Santa Cruz valleys, the Center is interested in actually owning and managing key archaeological sites. The Center is also pursuing conservation easements in this same area. The Center's Preservation Fund has received initial grant funding and begins operation in 2002.

Program Integration

Site steward programs are an effective way to integrate multiple goals. Public involvement in site preservation can achieve high impact at relatively low cost. The Center is seeking ways to encourage the spread of such programs and to develop more effective preservation tools for site stewards. A new training program in cultural resource law for state and local law enforcement personnel has been developed and will be offered in Arizona in 2002. This program has the potential to be adapted readily to other states in the future.

One reason that the Center has chosen to focus on the time period from A.D. 1200 to 1700 is the potential for integrating multiple goals. The opportunity to integrate modern tribes into this research process is also a major motivation. This partnership component of Heritage Southwest will require a major investment of time and resources. The critical importance of cultivating shared research interests and direct communication channels between tribes and archaeologists fully justifies such investment.

The San Pedro Program as a Model

The Heritage Southwest program derives from the Center's work in the San Pedro River Valley of southeastern Arizona and northern Sonora. Work on the San Pedro began with an archaeological survey of 75 miles of the river margins using volunteers. Later limited excavations and site mapping were conducted at 28 Classic period sites (A.D. 1200-1450). A National Science Foundation grant is providing a baseline for the study of ceramic production and exchange on the scale of the entire drainage basin. Furthermore, a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities is allowing the incorporation of Native American perspectives regarding the history of the San Pedro valley. We are also working with the current landowners and managers of the valley, both individually and through the Natural Resource Conservation Districts (NRCDs). NRCDs represent the relevant land use communities for the area along the San Pedro, which is lightly populated in most areas. A Center employee is serving as regional coordinator for the Arizona Site Steward program. Finally, two new Center Preservation Fellows are beginning projects on the San Pedro.

The San Pedro program incorporates in a limited geographic area most of the elements that we seek to implement more widely across the Southwest. As such it often serves as a model for Heritage Southwest. It allows testing of methods in an area that we know well before they are attempted on a larger scale. Increasingly, ideas from other Heritage Southwest projects are feeding back to be utilized in the San Pedro Program as well.

The Heritage Southwest Five-Year Plan

Preservation Priorities

- ?? Incorporate all known residential sites of the American Southwest with 13 or more rooms and dating to A.D. 1200-1700 into a GIS system by December 2002. Expand this coverage to northern Mexico by December 2003. Develop a priority site acquisition list on a regional scale and consult with the Archaeological Conservancy or other appropriate partners regarding acquisition strategies.
- ?? Organize regional reconnaissance research teams to revisit and assess known archaeological sites and to use local information and rapid reconnaissance to check for new sites. Add this information into the regional data base. Develop annual plans beginning in 2002.
- ?? Develop a priority site acquisition list and work with the Arizona Open Land Trust to purchase at least two sites by December 2002. Update this list annually.
- ?? Prepare a management plan to ensure preservation and to allow controlled public access to sites under Center ownership. Complete the initial plan by December 2002. Update this plan annually.

Research Priorities

- ?? Using the regional data base, complete a preliminary assessment of the political geography of the American Southwest and Mexican Northwest by December 2003. Convene a research conference in May 2004. Publish the conference results by December

- 2005 and a major public oriented synthesis of late prehistoric to early historic times by June 2006.
- ?? Conduct an intensive regional study of early agriculture in the Gila River drainage basin with supplementary research at key locations across the American Southwest. A research design will be developed by June 2002, with initial fieldwork in October-November 2002. Develop ties with an academic-based partner and seek NSF or other grant funding in 2003. Field seasons will continue in 2003, 2004, 2005. A conference will be held in 2005 with a publication in 2006. Final project publication scheduled for 2007.

Public Outreach Priorities

Some public outreach goals can be expressed quantitatively:

- ?? Increase paid circulation of *Archaeology Southwest* by 15% per year
- ?? Increase Center website hits by 20% per year
- ?? Reach 10,000 persons via the “Ancient Human Imprints” exhibit over two years and sell 2,000 copies of the exhibit catalog.

Two elements of our public outreach goals are related to the development of new programs or communication methods.

- ?? Explore ways to integrate existing community-based organizations into the Heritage Southwest network. Key organizations present even in small communities across the Southwest are: libraries, community college branch campuses, and historical or archaeological museums. Use of the capabilities of the Internet for distance learning programs delivered through such institutions will be explored during 2002.
- ?? Develop a volunteer program that makes volunteer opportunities available to the public by giving them training with the expectation that they will provide a level of volunteer service over at least a two-year period.