



## Archeological Site Condition Assessment

### Introduction

The Saguaro National Park Cultural Resource Program manages archeological sites located within the park in accordance with legislative, regulatory, and policy requirements.

Fundamental responsibilities of the Cultural Resource Program at SNP include: identifying, studying, documenting, preserving, and protecting archeological sites (both historic and prehistoric); providing for their enjoyment by visitors; and, ensuring that archeological site values are unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. With these objectives in mind, the Cultural Resource Program (1) undertakes investigations to locate, identify, and document sites; (2) records and maintains information about the sites in the Archeological Sites Management Information System (ASMIS) inventory; (3) studies and interprets these sites for the public; and, (4) applies treatments and takes other actions to prevent impairment of sites.

### Condition Assessments

Archeological sites in ASMIS include all “archeological resources” subject to the Antiquities Act and Archaeological Resources Protection Act, and all archeological sites that are determined eligible through consensus determination or are formally listed historic properties under the National Historic Preservation Act.

Good management requires that site documentation and data recorded in ASMIS is complete, accurate, and reliable. Documenting the condition of archeological sites on a regular basis and ensuring that the condition information is up-to-date are particularly important. A current condition assessment is critical for making decisions about treatments that are necessary for the long term preservation and protection of sites. Archeological sites are monitored and their condition assessed on a periodic basis

In order to develop a monitoring program and an inspection schedule for a site, the site must first be visited and assessed to establish a baseline condition. The first condition assessment must be done by a professional



**Figure 1. Petroglyph panel at SNP. The condition of features such as this petroglyph panel are routinely assessed and recorded in the park's ASMIS database.**

archeologist who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards and is familiar with NPS guidance on site assessment and inspection, categories used to record site characteristics, and ASMIS.

Field procedures for assessing site condition include a walkover of the entire site with coverage sufficient to ensure that any physical disturbances are detected. These disturbances may include erosion caused by water runoff, man-made holes, recent animal or vegetation disturbances, and even park service developments such as trails and roads. Careful notes as well as documentation photographs are taken. Photographs are of particular use since side-by-side comparison of recent photographs with older photographs can convey a lot of information on the changing condition of a site. All field documentation is entered into ASMIS.

### Case Study

In 2014 while monitoring the condition of archeological sites at SNP, it was noted that water run-off along an old two-track dirt road was causing substantial soil erosion within a large prehistoric Hohokam site (Figure 2). The soil erosion was not only exposing prehistoric pottery (Figure 3) and chipped stone fragments, but also dislodging the material and washing it off site. Because

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this site had been monitored, and condition assessments made on a regular basis, the Cultural Resource staff could document the amount of ongoing soil erosion and propose an erosion control project to mitigate the problem. With this documentation and proposed mitigation plan in hand a request for project funds was made.

Funds were allocated, and the project was completed in the summer of 2015. To slow the water runoff and help retain soil Excelsior waddles and jute matting (Figure 4) was laid over the erosion cut. The site will be monitored to determine if further erosion control measures are needed.



**Figure 4.** Jute matting (foreground) has just been placed over the erosion channel. Cultural resource staff is preparing to install excelsior waddles (background).



**Figure 2.** Soil erosion within an old road bed is impacting the condition of an archeological site at SNP. The degree of disturbance at this archeological site warranted mitigation.



**Figure 3.** Prehistoric pottery eroding from the road cut.

# Resource Brief

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