
6.3 Hanford Cultural Resources Laboratory

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The Hanford Cultural Resources Laboratory was established by the Richland Operations Office in 1987 as part of Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. The Hanford Cultural Resources Laboratory provides support for managing the archaeological, historical, and traditional cultural resources of the Hanford Site in a manner consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act.

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, cultural resource reviews must be conducted before each proposed ground disturbance or building alteration/demolition project on the Hanford Site. During calendar year 1995, Hanford contractors requested 290 such reviews, 10 of which required archaeological surveys. The surveys covered a total of 2.4 km² (0.9 mi²) and resulted in the discovery of 5 archaeological sites and 2 isolated finds. Three hundred thirty-three buildings and/or structures were also inventoried and added to the Hanford Cultural Resources Laboratory database. Compliance activities falling under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act included the acquisition and curation of cultural materials and completion of a Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act inventory report.

Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires that federal agencies undertake a program to identify, evaluate, and nominate historic properties, and consider the use and re-use of historic properties. Agencies are also required to maintain and manage historic properties in a way that considers preservation of their values and ensures that preservation-related activities are completed in consultation with other agencies, Indian tribes, and the private sector. Two survey projects, the 100 Area Block Survey and the 300 Area Survey, were conducted as a result of Section 110 requirements.

These surveys covered a total of 83.1 km² (33.2 mi²) and resulted in the discovery of 220 archaeological sites and 73 isolated finds. The sites recorded were predominately historic in nature and contained information ranging from lifeways of early settlers in the Hanford area to military installations of the 1950s. An Historic American Engineering Record documentation process was completed for a multibuilding complex and one additional building. Twenty-seven individual buildings were determined eligible and 28 buildings were determined not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places during 1995.

Historic properties that are listed or are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places are provided management protection. To assist with the evaluation of historic properties, four historic contexts were drafted as part of the National Register Multiple Property Documentation process. These contexts will be used to determine National Register eligibility for sites and buildings on the Hanford Site associated with the prehistoric period, the contact period between early explorers and native peoples, the pre-1943 Euroamerican settlement period, and the Manhattan Project/Cold War periods.

Educational activities associated with the cultural resources program included presenting lectures to groups ranging from primary school rock hounds to civic groups and professional societies. The Hanford Cultural Resources Laboratory participated in the Associated Western Universities, Inc., Northwest Division and the Student Research Apprenticeship Programs by hosting two student interns who were involved in field and laboratory work with Hanford Cultural Resources Laboratory staff.

Research activities were continued as part of compliance work. Research in the field of archaeology and history focused on several general areas of interest: archaeological site preservation and protection, the pre-1943 settlement of the Hanford Site, and the manmade environment of the Manhattan Project and the Cold War periods.