

# Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program

## SECTION 1

### INTRODUCTION

The Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program (The Nevada Program or NASSP) is an organization of volunteers sponsored by federal land managing agencies, who share a commitment to the preservation of archaeological resources. Archaeological resources include not just prehistoric sites but also historic sites. The Nevada Program provides an opportunity for concerned citizens to volunteer as site stewards for the federal land management agencies to monitor the condition of at-risk archaeological sites for signs of natural or man-made damage. The regular presence of site stewards at archaeological sites discourages looting and vandalism and aids in the education of the public. Monitoring the changing conditions of archaeological sites provides information so that the federal agencies can manage their lands more effectively.

Because vandalism, theft, visitation and natural deterioration are impacting the cultural and scientific values of Nevada's archaeological resources, site stewards are a valued source of protection of our shared heritage. Since the State of Nevada is one of the fastest growing states in the nation, damage to archaeological resources has dramatically increased. In many cases the destruction of archaeological resources continues because of a lack of understanding by the public of the true value of archaeological resources and a lack of regular surveillance of the sites. Federal agency archaeologists simply do not have time to visit all the sites in their assigned regions. This is where the Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program fits in. The Nevada Program provides the necessary work force of volunteers needed to help protect the archaeological resources from additional harm.



Figure 1.1. Vandalism to a Northern Nevada site in 2006.

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## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The chief objective of the Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program is to report to the land manager changes to the condition of archaeological resources including the destruction, vandalism or other natural deterioration of sites in Nevada through regularly scheduled site visits.

In recognition of the fact that prehistoric and historic archaeological resources are irreplaceable national resources, the volunteer site stewards participating in the Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program work towards the following goals:

- ❑ To preserve prehistoric and historic archaeological resources for the purposes of conservation, scientific study and interpretation.
- ❑ To increase public awareness of the significance and value of archaeological resources and the existing state and federal laws enacted for historical preservation.
- ❑ To discourage site vandalism and theft.
- ❑ To promote understanding, cooperation and partnerships between the participating federal agencies, Native Americans and concerned citizens and to encourage respect and conservation of traditional lands and archaeological resources.



Figure 1.2. Vehicle damage to a site at Wilson Canyon, Nevada 2006.

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## **THE NEVADA PROGRAM**

Why and how? Exploring our own past.

The Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program was modeled after the Arizona Site Steward Program and borrows much of the content from its successful manual. But, Nevada is not Arizona. Nevada has its own unique and varied past as well as its own sense of freedom and independence. We have vast rural lands and the fastest growing cities in the nation. Over 86% of the land, more than 60 million acres, in Nevada is managed by various federal agencies. Rapidly expanding populations are venturing out to explore these public lands. Federally managed public lands present vast opportunities for experiencing the outdoors and pose a huge challenge to those charged with caring for their natural and archaeological resources.

In the beginning, the site stewardship program was based on the willingness of volunteers and managers to seek solutions to immediate threats. In 2000 archaeology groups began discussing the creation of a site steward program for Nevada. Archaeology advocates Helen Mortenson and her husband, Assemblyman Harry Mortenson, created legislation for a program. The bill was proposed and defeated in the Nevada legislature in 2001 and 2003. Because there was still an immediate need, citizens and federal land managers began training stewards with special funding from the BLM. Mark Henderson, Ely District BLM, and volunteers Darrell and Terri Wade joined with others to create a training manual and program. The Wades began recruiting and training stewards and placing them in the field. The Nevada Archaeological Association (NAA) provides support through funding stewardship activities within the state.

Working with federal land managers in Clark County and under the Southern Nevada Public Lands Act (SNPLMA), the Outside Las Vegas group was able to obtain funding to hire a program manager for the county site stewardship program. The Interagency Cultural Site Stewardship Team (ICSST), a group of federal agency archaeologists and concerned citizens, oversees the program that is managed through the Public Lands Institute at University of Nevada Las Vegas.

In 2005 the Nevada Legislature approved Nevada Revised Statute 383.075 presented by Assemblyman Harry Mortenson (See Appendix I). Signed by the governor in 2005, the measure authorized creation of a statewide site steward program and provided funding to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to hire a program coordinator to oversee the Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program.

The Nevada State Historic Preservation Office maintains an office and funding for the site stewardship program coordinator. Since the archaeological site stewardship effort in Nevada is a cooperative venture, and the program coordinator works closely with the Nevada Archaeological Association, Nevada Rock Art Foundation, the Interagency Cultural Site Stewardship Team, the federal land managing agencies, and concerned citizens. The duties of the project coordinator include standardization of training, reporting, and a database to track stewardship activities. Also, the coordinator assists the federal agencies in maintaining a list of priority sites that would benefit from the Nevada Program, and supports volunteer appreciation and award efforts throughout the state.

## Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program

The Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program continues to be a volunteer based effort. Stewards and trainers are recruited from concerned citizens who enjoy the outdoors and are willing to share their time and talents to protect the cultural and historic places of Nevada. Professional archaeologists volunteer time to monitor sites and assist with training. The Nevada Archaeology Association continues to support volunteers and trainers with workshops and provides the means for volunteer educators to travel to training locations across the state.



Figure 1.3. Recruiting stewards at the Howard Hughes Sponsored Earth Day Festival Las Vegas, Nevada April 2006.