

STATE OF VERMONT  
DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
STEWARDSHIP AND BEST PRACTICES GUIDE  
FOR  
HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES  
ON FOREST LAND



Vermont Division for Historic Preservation  
1 National Life, 6th Floor Davis Building  
Montpelier, VT 05620-1201

For More Information, Please Contact:  
Jess Robinson, State Archaeologist  
[jess.robinson@vermont.gov](mailto:jess.robinson@vermont.gov)

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## **Why is Vermont's Historic Heritage Important and Worth Preserving?**

Spanning nearly 13,000 years, Vermont's historic and Precontact cultural resources represent important connections to our recent and distant past. Historic buildings, structures, ruins, landscapes, and archaeological sites are tangible links to the rich cultural, religious, social, economic and technological traditions of past generations of Vermonters. These resources can help us understand little known chapters of Vermont's history. Precontact archaeological sites, in particular, are often the only tangible sources of information about the thousands of years of human history before European contact. Historic and archaeological resources are educational and recreational assets to communities and certain sites in State and Federal forest land can be important attractions to locals and to tourists.

This guide outlines what the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP) considers the best practices foresters and loggers can undertake to protect cultural resources. Unless logging and related forestry operations are occurring on State or Federal land or under a permit where archaeological review is a component of the approval process, the following practices are not required. Nevertheless, VDHP hopes that they will be followed whenever possible to ensure the protection of cultural sites. Because evaluating the ultimate importance or significance of historic and archaeological sites requires professional assessment, treating all these resources as important is often the most efficient management strategy.

## **What Kinds of Historic and Archeological Resources Exist in Vermont's Woodlands?**

Five categories of historic and archaeological resources merit consideration and protection when planning and carrying out logging operations and related forestry activities:

- **Historic Standing Structures**

Historic standing structures must at a minimum be more than 50 years old. Structures are obviously easy to identify.

- **Historic Archaeological Sites**

Historic archaeological sites can often be identified if one is actively looking for them. The remnants of early settlement sites, such as homesteads, barns, farm enclosures, etc. can often be identified by foundations and rock wall alignments. Military sites and historic-era Native American sites, however, can be harder to identify.

- **Historic Landscapes**

Landscapes that have been shaped by humans in the historic past can also be identified fairly easily. Old roads, berms, trenches, channels, etc. are often still visible on the ground.

- **Precontact Native American Archaeological Sites**

Most precontact Native American sites are not readily identifiable without professional excavation. Exceptions include large aboriginal quarry sites or rare above-ground native sites. Nevertheless, certain areas are more likely than others to contain Precontact Native American archaeological sites. The attributes of these areas are discussed in the next section.

- **Native American Sacred and Traditional Sites**

Native American sacred and traditional sites are also not easy to identify. These areas are unique to specific tribal histories and cosmologies. Certain landscape features like waterfalls, however, are commonly associated with Native spirituality.

### **If Precontact Native American sites are hard to identify, how can we protect them?**

Some areas have a high potential for containing Precontact archaeological sites. The archaeologically sensitive areas highlighted here contain or contained a combination of environmental characteristics, such as food and water resources, that Native American or early Euroamerican peoples required to survive. Of course, certain areas have or had spiritual, cultural or social importance to Native Americans as well, but these are difficult to identify without ethnohistoric documentation or tribal input. Archaeologically sensitive lands likely to contain Precontact archaeological sites will generally have less than 8 % - 15% slopes and are often:

- 200 feet or less from a river, stream, lake, pond, wetland, spring, or relict (i.e. now dry) drainage
- adjacent to a confluence of rivers or streams
- adjacent to falls or rapids
- on a floodplain or on a river terrace
- on an elevated knoll within a floodplain or wetland
- on a level area at the head of a drainage
- on a natural portage route between two watersheds or through a mountain divide
- adjacent to chert, quartz or quartzite outcrops and/or
- on a postglacial (or “paleo”) land form such as a former shoreline of the Champlain Sea

These are generalizations. Soil characteristics such as good drainage, exposure to sunlight, and protection from wind are also key factors in Precontact site locations but their importance probably varied during different seasons of the year. Winter habitation sites are more likely to be located on south-facing, sheltered terraces along valley edges. Summer planting fields, meanwhile, may be located on sunny floodplains. One easy way to think about Precontact archaeological sensitivity is to recognize places that look like good spots to camp for a few days.

### **Are there basic standards for protecting historic and archaeological resources?**

Yes, logging activities can be structured to protect cultural resources and avoid damaging them. The best strategy is to identify the resource or archaeologically sensitive area, designate and mark a “not-to-be-disturbed” buffer zone around the resource and avoid it. Another strategy is to create a special management area in which harvesting can be conducted in a manner that maximizes the protection of a site or archaeologically sensitive area. For example, cutting within the special management area can be done in winter, by hand, with the goal of not felling trees on top of an archeological site or structure and not using the site area for tops or brush storage.

### **What size “Not-to-Be-Disturbed” Buffer Zone or Special Management Area is recommended?**

A two hundred-foot (200') buffer area around any of the historic resources mentioned in these guidelines can usually provide reasonable protection. To understand why such a wide management zone (or protection zone) is recommended, it helps to visualize an average 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century farm. A typical farm would have had a farm house, well and water system, dumps or refuse pits, outbuildings (such as one or more barns), roads, drives, stone walls, animal pounds, and possibly even grave sites for family members. What remains on the surface of today’s forest are only the *visible* remains of that farm. The house or barn cellar hole is often the most, or only, noticeable part of that original farmstead. Most of the farm site’s important archeological deposits, however, are found outside the cellar hole. Searching for these features during an initial visit to the site can help create an adequately sized “buffer zone” or special management area early in the project.

### **Recommended Logging Best Practices to Protect Historic and Archaeological Resources:**

- Know what’s there: conduct reconnaissance of the areas to be logged to locate and document standing historic resources, archaeological sites, or archaeologically sensitive lands.

*(Note: locate and flag vulnerable cultural features before snow covers the ground so that snow-covered stone walls, cellar holes, and other surface remains are not accidentally destroyed during operations.)*

- Create a “not-to-be-disturbed” buffer zone or special management area around the resource. Flag the area to make loggers aware of the area and how it should be treated during harvesting.
- Flag historic trees or landscapes and avoid or manage appropriately.
- Create a “not-to-be-disturbed” buffer zones or special management areas around

streams, wetlands, springs, lakes and ponds, caves and rockshelters, other archaeologically sensitive areas, and/or special landforms or natural areas.

- Place landings/yards, skid trails, and access roads outside of buffer zones or special management areas.
- Use pre-existing skid trails whenever possible.
- If stone walls must be crossed, cross in as few places as possible, make clean careful cuts, and store the removed stones next to wall for possible future restoration.
- If streams must be crossed in archaeologically sensitive areas, disturb the minimal amount of land as possible.
- Harvest special management areas in winter over frozen and snow-covered ground if possible.
- Hand cut trees within special management areas. Avoid skidder use in special management areas. Don't build roads in such areas.
- Don't use cellar holes or site areas as slash dumps.
- Use the "full line" technique to prevent damage to specific resources or sensitive areas.
- Consider using fabric mats or other ground buffers if activities must be carried out in unfrozen/snowless conditions within a buffer zone or special management area.

### **Should Historic and Archeological Resources be Reported to Anyone?**

It's not required that archaeological sites be reported to VDHP, but we would certainly appreciate it. VDHP maintains both the Vermont Archeological Inventory and the Historic Sites and Structures Survey for buildings and structures. VDHP welcomes any information on historic and archeological resources that you may learn about or encounter in the forest. We are also more than happy to offer information on cultural resources in your area and how to preserve and protect them. Please feel free to contact the Vermont State Archaeologist at:

Jess Robinson, PhD  
Vermont Division for Historic Preservation  
1 National Life  
Davis Building, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Montpelier, Vermont, 05620  
802-272-2509  
[jess.robinson@vermont.gov](mailto:jess.robinson@vermont.gov)

Thank You!

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