

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING CULTURAL PROPERTIES

Idaho State Historic Preservation Office and Archaeological Survey of Idaho

All cultural properties identified during archaeological and historical survey in Idaho must be evaluated for historical significance in order to be entered into the state inventory. Significance is evaluated by applying the criteria for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and by considering the site's integrity and cultural context. Evaluation of each cultural property must be documented on the Determination of Eligibility (DOE) form and submitted to the SHPO office for review *only if requested by the SHPO in cases where there is an insufficient eligibility statement in the report and on the site record.*

National Register Criteria

As defined in the regulations (36 CFR 60.4), a property is eligible for the National Register if it:

1. is at least 50 years old;
2. retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association;
and
3. meets one or more of the following National Register criteria:
 - A. association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
 - B. association with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
 - C. embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
 - D. has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

Most archaeological properties are evaluated for eligibility under Criterion D. However, all of the criteria should be applied. For example, sites containing petroglyphs or pictographs can be eligible under Criterion C as well as D. Historic sites are often eligible under Criteria A and D. Traditional cultural properties may be eligible under all criteria.

Generally, prehistoric sites eligible under Criterion D must be datable and exhibit both stratigraphic integrity and a sufficient quantity of archaeological materials. Datable material can include temporally diagnostic artifacts, charcoal or other organic material for radiocarbon dating, or undisturbed burned soil for archaeo-magnetic dating. Obsidian for hydration will be considered acceptable in instances where other datable material is not present. Other dating methods may also be applicable. Stratigraphic integrity, whether vertical or horizontal, can be suggested by the presence of intact features and/or activity areas, or the presence of a limited range of projectile point styles or other temporally diagnostic artifact types. A sufficient quantity of archaeological materials varies depending upon the site location and setting. Regional research problems should be considered to arrive at the requisite number of artifacts.

To be eligible under Criterion D, historic sites must retain integrity and have the potential to provide information beyond that which is available in written documentation or oral histories. The presence of datable artifacts does not necessarily qualify a historic site for listing because approximate or specific dates of occupation for a local area may already be documented through other sources.

Cultural Contexts

Eligibility determinations are also made with reference to regional contexts addressing significant and relevant research questions. Generally, cultural or historic contexts included in the State Historic Preservation Plan are used as a framework for evaluating the significance of a cultural property. A "context," in this sense, is a body of knowledge in the form of one or more written documents which is defined by (a) a specific theme or topic, (b) a specific geographical area, and (c) a specific time period. All contexts and context studies are resource based, that is, they must relate to identifiable prehistoric or historic sites. This, in turn, establishes a specific property's eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places.

In accordance with Idaho's State Historic Preservation Plan, the following guidelines will be used for site evaluation.

1. Three general contexts are appropriate for archaeological and traditional cultural properties:
 - a. Prehistoric archaeology
 - b. Historical archaeology
 - c. Ethnic/Native American Traditions

2. Data from Idaho's prehistoric and historic archaeological deposits and ruins have not been synthesized. In many regions of the state, either a chronology has not been developed or it has not reached common acceptance. Only very limited literature reviews and interviews have been conducted with contemporary ethnic and Native American populations that address traditional cultural properties.

3. Therefore, each archaeological site/ruin will be considered eligible to the National Register until it is demonstrated that no information remains to be gleaned from its deposits or surface features. A

potential traditional use location will be regarded as eligible until its significance is invalidated through interviews with appropriate traditional communities.

4. Finally, isolated finds will be considered ineligible if there is no evidence of possible associated subsurface materials.

Determination of Eligibility Form

National Register eligibility of each cultural property must be documented on a Determination of Eligibility (DOE) form. For Section 106-related surveys, evaluation is a crucial step in the 106 Review process and needs to be well documented. Cultural properties recorded during general archaeological research must be evaluated to be added to Idaho's state inventory.

If sufficient data is not available to evaluate a cultural property, the site form and survey report should contain a statement of insufficient information. This statement should be followed by recommendations for further investigations that would provide the data necessary for evaluation.

Sections 1 and 2 of the DOE form elicit information relevant to the appropriate cultural theme or context and to the integrity of the site. Section 3 provides for recommendations of significance in terms of two categories:

1. The site is eligible to the NRHP under Criteria A, B, C, and/or D with an explicit statement of why the site fits the specific criteria; or
2. The site is not eligible to the NRHP under Criteria A, B, C, and/or D and why the site does not fit the specific criteria.

It is important to give both categories equal consideration. That is, if a site is determined to be not eligible, adequate justification must be given. A DOE form does not have to be completed for isolates that are not eligible. Rather a statement of non-significance should be provided on the isolate form.

Information provided on the DOE form should be viewed as a summary of evaluation statements routinely provided on the site form and in the survey report. After review by SHPO, the DOE form will not be returned to the researcher, agency, or contractor. For purposes of 106, SHPO concurrence or comments on evaluation will be found in the review letter or form returned to the agency.

This form is required only when requested by the SHPO due to the lack of a clear statement in the report and on the site record of why a site is eligible—or not eligible.