

ARCHAEOLOGICAL STANDARDS

Technical Guidance for Archaeologists in the State of Michigan



Guide 2 | www.michigan.gov/archaeology/

Reporting Standards Brief Fact Sheet

Draft revised: February 2026

General:

- Reports must be submitted as a single, searchable PDF file.
- Reports must adhere to SHPO [Data Confidentiality Standards for Archaeology](#). A confidentiality clause must be present in the front matter, to ensure that the report will not be circulated beyond the intended audience.
- Use the SHPO [Management Summary Form](#) behind the title page of your report to ensure that you include all required information in the correct order. This aids our office with required NPS reporting.
- Due to differing levels of confidentiality and accessibility, Archaeology Reports should be stand-alone documents separate from Above Ground Historic Properties reporting.
- Reports must include a table of contents, list of illustrations, and list of tables.
- We encourage you to utilize our [Short Report Form](#) for small, simple projects. The Short Report Form can be used for projects meeting the following conditions:
 - ☐ Project is in a rural setting, not within a city or village boundary
 - ☐ Project is a Phase I survey, such as a Cell Tower Survey, with a survey area of 5 acres or less
 - ☐ No sites were identified, or if sites were identified, they are isolated finds or small artifact scatters not eligible for NRHP listing.

Contexts & Methods Reporting:

- The cultural contexts section of your reports must reflect the current, regional understanding of Michigan pre- and post-contact history. Cultural contexts should be reflective of the scale and scope of the project and be appropriate for the specific Project Area and surrounding area/region. Overly generalized, state-wide, or outdated contexts will not be accepted.
 - ◆ All sources, including archival maps, must be cited in the references.
- The environmental context section should reflect the scale and scope of the project being reported. At a minimum the physiography, soils, and pre-settlement vegetation of the Project Area and surrounding area must be discussed.
- SHPO expects that environmental and cultural contexts will be synthesized into a narrative that discusses the archaeological sensitivity of the Project Area and surrounding region.
- If field conditions, such as disturbed soils, wet areas, or steep slopes are encountered, we expect demonstrated evidence of these conditions, including:
 - ◆ Photographs of all field conditions.
 - ◆ Photographs of disturbed soil profiles.
 - ◆ Descriptive text summarizing soils and/or conditions encountered in the field.
 - ◆ Mapping that indicates the areas of disturbance, low and wet areas, and steeply sloped areas.
- Provide summary tables for all shovel tests, excavation units, and/or trenches excavated. Tables should include a summary of soils, size, depths, and artifact content.
- Please Note: SHPO will not accept reports prepared using AI large language models.

Site Reporting:

- The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility and criteria for significance must be clearly addressed for each site identified or investigated.
- State-issued trinomial site numbers must be included in reports, including existing and newly discovered sites. For projects on federal land, federal site numbers also must be included in addition to state trinomials.
- Contact **Kate Frederick**, frederickk1@michigan.gov for new site trinomials.
- Complete [Michigan Terrestrial Archaeological Site Forms](#) are required with report submissions for both newly identified sites and revisited/updated sites.

Figures & Photographs:

- All figures, images, and maps must be numbered, captioned, *and* referenced in text.
- Photographs of the conditions present in the project area *at the time of the survey* must be included. The photographs should include general overviews as well as pictures of individual sites and specific parts of the project area if site conditions vary across it.
 - ◆ Online screenshots extracted from the internet (e.g., Google Maps Street View, Bing Maps Streetside, and other online roadway image equivalents) are not acceptable.
- Photographs of representative soil profiles (including disturbed soils) must be included for shovel test surveys, test unit excavations, or trenching/mechanical excavations.
- Photographs of diagnostic artifacts and any other noteworthy artifacts are required. Artifact photographs should be clear, in focus, and include a scale.
- Mapping standards are covered in [Standards Guide 3](#).

Artifacts & Curation:

- When artifacts are encountered, we expect that they are fully analyzed in the report.
 - ◆ Include artifact catalogs as tables with counts and weights of all artifacts.
 - ◆ Photograph all diagnostic materials/artifact typologies or categories and any other noteworthy artifacts.
 - ◆ Label all artifact photographs with the object number and description.
- The curation plan for artifacts recovered during fieldwork must be stated in the report if it is somewhere other than with the landowner.
- Artifacts from State-owned land must be curated with the State of Michigan following a project unless a loan agreement for research or exhibition is executed. Contact DNR Archaeologist Stacy Tchorzynski, tchorzynskis@michigan.gov for more information regarding curation from state land.