

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL STANDARDS

Technical Guidance for Archaeologists in the State of Michigan



Guide 1 | [www.michigan.gov/archaeology/](http://www.michigan.gov/archaeology/)

## Methodological Standards Brief Fact Sheet

Draft revised: September 18, 2023

This guidance document is for archaeologists conducting Federal compliance work in the State of Michigan. The standards provided here are also relevant for academic and non-compliance research.

### General:

- Follow SHPO guidance to ensure that your work will be accepted. If you need to deviate from our guidance, contact SHPO *prior to fieldwork*.
- Seek SHPO consultation for large-scale, complex or potentially culturally sensitive, and/ or controversial projects prior to fieldwork.
- The Principal Investigator (PI) and Project Manager (PM) for all archaeological projects shall meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for Archaeology as set forth in 48 FR 44716 (Sept. 1983) and published in the Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR Part 61.
- Seek qualified specialists whenever expertise is not present within your organization. This may include urban archaeology specialists, geoarchaeologists, geophysical specialists, historic archaeologists faunal specialists, or biological anthropologist/osteologists, etc. Evidence of demonstrated expertise, including training, experience, and completion of reporting, is required for specialists.
- [Permits](#) are required for archaeology on state-owned land, bottomland, and where the state retains antiquity rights, and are obtained through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR).
  - ◆ Permits may take up to 45 days to process and cannot be expedited unless for an emergency response or salvage operation.

## Pre-Field Assessment:

- Prior to fieldwork, an archaeological assessment must be conducted. At a minimum, this includes researching the State Archaeological Site File (SASF) at SHPO, but should include all relevant background research.
- For urban or other complex contexts, such as underwater settings or areas with potential for deeply buried deposits, additional archival, ethnographic, & mapped resources must be consulted.

## Field Methods:

- Pedestrian survey and shovel test transects must be no larger than 15 m intervals, without pre-approval from SHPO. Survey transect intervals may be shortened in particularly sensitive areas.
  - ◆ Site stratigraphy at surface scatters must be verified with shovel tests, as appropriate.
  - ◆ Judgmental shovel tests may also be used in addition to systematic transects, where warranted.
- Shovel testing is required in areas with less than 25% surface visibility unless obvious and substantial ground disturbance can be documented. Documentation of a soil core or excavated shovel test is required to demonstrate soil disturbance or fill and the spatial extent of disturbance.
  - ◆ Shovel tests should be about 40 cm in diameter. Round shovel tests are acceptable.
  - ◆ Shovel tests must penetrate at least 10 cm into the subsoil or culturally sterile horizons.
  - ◆ Screening through 1/4 inch mesh or smaller is required.
  - ◆ Radial shovel tests shall be excavated 5 m intervals or less (as warranted). Excavation of radial shovel tests should emphasize the delineation of site boundaries and internal artifact concentrations as indicated by the primary shovel tests. Radial shovel tests should be excavated both parallel and perpendicular to the transect orientation until at least two sequentially negative shovel tests are excavated.
- All artifacts shall be collected in the field. Exemptions can include nondiagnostic items recorded and discarded in the field such as brick, mortar, clinker, etc. provided that these are summarized in the report. At a minimum, count and weights must be collected on non-field collected artifacts.
- Fieldwork conducted in snow-covered or frozen ground is not acceptable, unless the work is classified as an emergency response or salvage operation and consultation with SHPO occurs in advance of fieldwork.
- Geophysical standards are covered in [Standards Guide 4](#).

## Burials & Human Remains:

- In Michigan, cemeteries, burials, and human remains are regulated by several laws and administrative rules.
  - ◆ [Act 251 of 1968 is the Cemetery Regulation Act](#)
  - ◆ [Michigan Administrative Code Rule 325.8051](#)
  - ◆ [Michigan Attorney General Opinion No. 6585 Cemeteries and Dead Bodies](#)
- *When an unanticipated discovery of human remains occurs, local law enforcement must be contacted immediately and all work at the discovery site shall cease.*
- If human remains are discovered on private land or during the course of Section 106 projects, contact SHPO Senior Archaeologist Sarah Surface-Evans, [surfaceevanss1@michigan.gov](mailto:surfaceevanss1@michigan.gov). If human remains are discovered on state lands or bottomlands, contact DNR Archaeologist Stacy Tchorzynski, [tchorzynskis@michigan.gov](mailto:tchorzynskis@michigan.gov), 517-388-4657.
- SHPO recommends preparing an Unanticipated Discoveries Plan (UDP) prior to fieldwork. Contact SHPO for template UDP that can be adapted for your project.

## Underwater Surveys:

- For Section 106 projects, research designs for underwater surveys must be approved by SHPO in advance of fieldwork. If your project area corresponds to a lake, river, or dam impoundment, please contact SHPO to initiate early consultation and to discuss our expectations for level of effort for identification.
  - ◆ An underwater assessment is requested to illustrate the nature and character of the submerged area for purposes of addressing the potential for historic resources that may be underwater. The data used for an assessment may include existing environmental assessment of the bottom substrates, photographs, historical records and mapping, current and historic nautical charts, and documents related to the intrusion of fill and/or dredging or soil boring.
- Underwater archaeological research must be conducted by a qualified marine archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for Archeology (48 FR 44738- 44739) and with demonstrated experience in Great Lakes marine archaeology.