

Rock Art Recording Projects

Recording Guide

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General Principles

- Recording is a multi-step, formal descriptive procedure that includes drawing, photographing and mapping.
- The most efficient recording involves a 2- or 3-person team: recorder-artist, mapper, and photographer.
- Large rock art clusters are most efficiently documented by being subdivided into recording units (called “proveniences”) such that different teams may record multiple proveniences simultaneously.
- The ideal recording is an objective, systematic record of what was seen. It is detailed enough to allow other investigators to do preliminary analyses before a site visit and to locate panel(s) on-site.

Recording Process

- Drawings supplement the photographic record, especially when images are faint and difficult to photograph. Both are made from the same viewing position. Drawings should include only enough detail to clarify the observed human-made marks. They should not fill in missing portions or “prettify” an image.
- Measurements are metric in meters and centimeters. Measurements of rock art panels are of those parts that have human-made design elements rather than of the entire rock.
- Tools and Definitions (see Glossary of RARP Specialized Terminology).
- Photo Mug board for each provenience has site, provenience, photo numbers, and the date.
- A Locus is assigned to each panel, boulder, or other recording unit that is separately photographed and recorded on the Photo Data Sheet and Mapper’s Notes Sheet. A locus with two or more faces or one that is too large and complex to be photographed as a single unit is shown only once on a map. Each photograph of the locus is recorded and numbered sequentially as a discrete portion of a multi-faceted locus subdivided into units that are all identified by the same Locus letter modified by a sequential number (for example K-1, K-2, K-3 etc.). See Figure 1, Locus Definitions.
- Photo Numbers are consecutive for each provenience.
- Condition statements include notes on qualities of patination, method of manufacture, depth of line (for petroglyphs), quality and condition of paint (for pictographs), and condition of the rock surface.
- Image categories should be recorded in writing and with category numbers as shown on the chart.

Photography

- The best archival quality is obtained with black-on-white prints made from negatives. The archival life of stored digital images is unknown and always dependent upon availability of equipment to read the image. Color slides and prints generally have an archival life of less than 50 years. Best results are usually obtained with a moderately fast (ASA 400) black-on-white film. The most efficient field cameras are 35mm SLRs with manual over-ride and zoom lenses in the range of 28-105. We supplement b/w film images with a digital picture taken from the same position. A polarizing filter, lens-shade, and umbrella are indispensable.
- When dealing with bright sunlight and high contrasts use an umbrella or polarizer to create even light conditions on the rock art that may be most visible when shaded. Take meter

readings only from the part of the rock that has rock art images on it; do not let the meter read other dark or light areas. When surfaces are part-sunny/part-shady, shade the entire panel with an umbrella and meter the area with the shaded images only. When in doubt take two or more different exposures using the same mug board photo number. The best-exposed photo will be used.

- When more than one day is needed to record a site or provenience, Photo Mug boards should show a change of date but continue numerical sequences from the number used for the last recorded photograph.

Mapping

- Enough mapping information should be recorded to allow a future investigator to find each provenience in a site and each locus in a provenience. In the absence of GPS technology, measuring and recording metric distances and compass directions from an existing mapped datum point or by measuring at right angles from a base line already located on a map can be used to locate a panel.
- Using UTM coordinates, the final map locates the site, proveniences and all datum points, base lines and loci on the appropriate USGS map.

Rock Art Recording Forms

The main product of the recording effort is the black and white photographs and the completed forms. The ArcView file and digital photos are ancillary. It is critical that the paper work be completed in the field and completed as a collaborative effort of the team.

To assist in the consistent identification and coding of design elements there are two Design Element Keys. The simplest one is a page that lists the Category and Subcategory of each design element. These are used to provide a unique identifier to each design element that can then be sorted. The more complex version contains that same information but augmented with an illustration.

Photo Data Sheet Key

Photo Data Sheets, Figures 4 and 5, record all the information used to identify location, size, and design element descriptions.

Definitions

- Panel is a collection of design elements that are recorded as a group.
- Locus (see Figure 1, Locus Definitions)
- A design element is a single pictorial unit in the judgment of the recording team. Use Category 11 for multiple design element compositions.
- Prehistoric is the period of time before 1540.
- Historic period is between 1550 and 1956 (50 years before the present).
- Recent period is between today and 50 years ago.

General Comments

- Place the Photo Data sheets in sequential order by the Photo Number.
- If it is necessary to switch from the Single Panel to the Double Panel Photo Data Sheet put a line through the unused section.
- Before going to the next panel verify that the Photo Data Sheet and Mapper's Notes are in agreement (Photo Number, Locus, UTM, etc.).
- Avoid agonizing over categories. It is the clearly identifiable design elements that are of the most interest. Put doubtful design elements in Category 12, Miscellaneous (Assumed Prehistoric) Elements.
- Use the **z** subcategory in the appropriate numbered Category to add an unlisted repeated element. Provide a definition on the Photo Data Sheet.
- Use Category 13 (Historic) for elements that are European in origin: horses, trains, guns, etc.
- Use Category 14 (Recent Graffiti and Human-Caused Damage (not directly impacting Rock Art)) unless there is reason to believe the element is more than 50 years old.
- Count each design element once.
- If you choose to add information to the forms beyond what is requested please use the notes. For example, if in your judgment the abrasion is medium use a ✓ or X and add medium abrasion in the notes. Keep in mind that you may know the meaning of M but others may not. For example, if you use an arrow with a number to indicate the location of a nearby photo/locus it would be clearer to others to use "Loc of Photo ____"

The following discusses each field on the Photo Data Sheet and how to fill it out:

Date	The date in the form of MM/DD/YYYY that the work is being done. This is also the date on the Mug Board.
LA No.	The LA Number is site number assigned by Archaeological Records Management System (ARMS).
NMCRIS	The New Mexico Cultural Resources Inventory System (NMCRIS) number assigned by ARMS
Prov. No.	Provenience Number. This should agree with the Mug Board.
Recorder	Enter the Name and initials of the Recorder. On subsequent pages the initials are all that is needed.
Photo	Enter the name and initials of the Photographer. On subsequent pages the initials are all that is needed.
Map/GPS	Enter the name and initials of the Mapper/GPS. On subsequent pages the initials are all that is needed.
Sheet	The current sheet number. The sheets are numbered sequentially for each provenience. When finished the final sheet number will be added to all the sheets.
Photo No.	The number assigned to this photo. This is the same number that is on the Mug Board. All photos are assigned numbers starting with 1 and continuing in sequence until the provenience is completed.
Locus	<p>A sequential identifier assigned to the panel or boulder being recorded. The locus identifiers are assigned letters starting with A.</p> <p>In the event that more than one area is to be photographed and recorded on the same panel or boulder each is assigned number sub identifiers, C1, C2, C3 for the three different areas for Locus C.</p> <p>If the end of the alphabet is reached the start the next series as AA, AB, ... AZ, the next as BA, BB, BC, ... BZ, and so on as needed. See Figure 1, Locus Definition</p>
Facing	This is the general direction that the panel faces. It is easier and more accurate to face the panel squarely and read the back sight at the bottom of the compass. N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW, and UP are the expected values. UP is used only when the panel is more flat than vertical.

Easting	The easting UTM coordinates from the GPS.
Northing	The northing UTM coordinates from the GPS.
H	Height of the panel in 1/100 meter. Measured to match the sketch and photo.
W	Width of the panel in 1/100 meter. Measured to match the sketch and photo.
AGL	Above Ground Level measurement. Measured in 1/100 meter from the Photographer's and Recorder's feet to the bottom of the panel.
Position	Position in the provenience relative to the northern boundary. This helps to relocate the panel. TD = Top of dike/cliff MD = Middle of dike/cliff BD = Bottom of dike/cliff TS = Top of slope MS = Middle of slope, an area between TS and BS BS = Bottom of slope See Figure 2, Position on Slope
Distance from Last Locus	The distance in Meters and direction (N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW) from the last locus.
(Design Element Inventory)	On the lines below the "Distance from the Last Locus" identify each individual design element in the sketch using the terms in the Design Element Inventory sheets.
DE	Design element number is a reference between the sketch and the Inventory description.
Description	Description of the design element.
Repatination	This is a subjective indication of the relative age of the design element based upon the level repatination. O = None, looks like a fresh break in the rock L = Light M = Medium H = Heavy T = Total, looks dark like the natural rock surface
Pecking	Pecking is a measure of the effort made to produce the design element. S = Sparse, pecks are widely separated M = Medium, pecking is between SPARCE and DENSE

D = Dense, pecks have no space between them

R = Relief, pecks are deep such that a piece of paper folds in pushed into the pecked area

Abraded	If the design element was created by rubbing to form a smooth surface, use a check (✓ or X). Otherwise leave blank.
Scratched	If design element was created using a sharp object to scratch through the surface patination and form a thin line use a check (✓ or X). Otherwise leave blank.
Incised	If design element was created by scratching a wider and deeper line, use a check (✓ or X). Otherwise leave blank.
Category	This is the category code from the Design Element Sheet.
Multiple	The total number of design elements that would be classified the same as this one.
Additional	These are items from Categories D, N, and S, Defacement of rock art elements, Natural Deterioration affecting rock art panel, or Special Features such as rock incorporation, superimposition, etc.
Sketch	This area of the form is for a sketch of the panel from the same angle as the photo was taken. The sketch shows all the design elements, notes spalls or other deterioration, and superimposition. NOTE: For large or complex panels use the Single Panel Photo Data Sheet.
Notes	The recorder should describe any unusual, natural, or manmade features of the panel. The notes should also be used to provide additional information that the Recorder feels is necessary.

Recorder Tips

- Discuss the approach that will be used to record the panel.
- What is the Photo Number?
- What is the Locus?
- Agree with the Photographer about where to take the photo.
- When finished, discuss the recording and make sure all data is on the form.
- Make sure there is Repatination, Method of Manufacture (pecked, scratched, ...), Category/Subcategory for each design element.
- On the bottom of the last sheet for the provenience, add an "End of Provenience" note.