



Cultural Resources ... and Your Conservation Plan

What Are They?



Cultural resources are fragile traces of the past that help us piece together the story of humankind. They include buildings, objects made or used by people (artifacts), locations, and less tangible resources such as dance forms, stories, and holiday traditions.

Cultural resources are non-renewable. There is no way to “grow” a new archaeological site or historic house once it has been destroyed.

Why Does NRCS Care About Them?

Resource Conservation:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) considers cultural resources in its conservation planning for the same reason it protects the soil, water, air, plants and animals on your property. Keeping natural resources in balance is the basis for a healthy and profitable farm environment. It also helps us to understand our human past.

It’s the Law:

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) established a national policy for protecting our important cultural resources. The NHPA requires Federal agencies to consider cultural resources in its activities and determine if significant historic properties will be adversely affected by those activities.

Non-structural archaeological sites are the most common historic property and often extend below the soil surface. NRCS has established procedures for training its field personnel and Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) partners to recognize cultural resources during conservation planning and protect them from earth-disturbing conservation activities.

How Do We Protect Them?

Virginia landowners must follow these NRCS procedures for any practice that involves federal technical assistance, receives federal funding, or requires a federal or state permit:

Step 1: Decide whether the proposed conservation activity is a ground disturbing undertaking. Common ground disturbing conservation practices include:

- Watering Troughs
- Pipelines
- Heavy Use Area Protection
- Firebreaks
- Diversions
- Water Storage Facilities
- Grassed Waterways
- Grade Stabilization Structures
- Wetland Restorations

Step 2: Determine the entire area that will be altered during construction of conservation practices.

Step 3: Look over the area for evidence of cultural resources. Your trained NRCS/SWCD conservationist will perform this step free of charge.

Step 4: Avoid the cultural resource, if one is present. This may involve moving the location of the practice or selecting a different, non-ground disturbing conservation practice.

Step 5: If you cannot avoid the cultural resource, a Phase I Cultural Resources Survey may be required. A trained professional archaeologist or historian must complete this survey to fully evaluate the importance of the cultural resource.

NRCS may assist with hiring and contracting for Phase I surveys if resources are available. Otherwise, the landowner will be responsible for these costs. If a more detailed Phase II survey is required, the landowner will be responsible for those costs and will not receive NRCS cost-share funds to offset the expense.

Step 6: If this determination identifies the cultural resource as non-significant, you and NRCS may proceed with the conservation practice. However, if the resource is significant and an alternative practice cannot be agreed upon, the cultural resource must be “mitigated.”

Mitigation is an action that reduces the harmful impact, and may consist of :

- Moving a historic building out of harm’s way or documenting its architecture before destruction

- Excavation of an archaeological site or
- Building a protective barrier around the historic property.

You may choose to disturb a historic property but cannot receive federal assistance to do so.

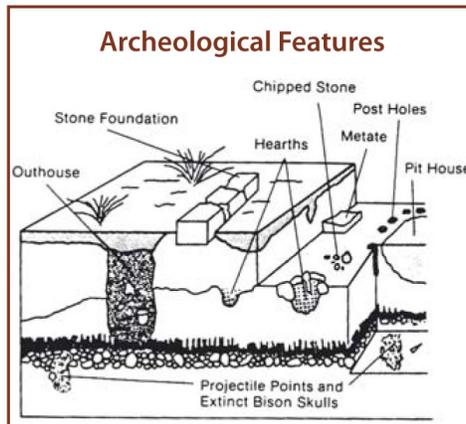
If you choose not to pay for site evaluation or mitigation and no alternative conservation plan can be implemented, NRCS will withdraw assistance on the conservation activity at that site. You may proceed with the conservation practice only at your own expense.

What Should You Do If You Find Them?

If you uncover artifacts or building foundations during construction, you must instruct the contractor to stop work and contact NRCS. The NRCS conservationist will take steps to protect the site until it can be evaluated for significance (see Steps 5 and 6).

Can You Keep Them?

If you own the land, artifacts from archaeological sites and historic buildings on the property belong to you.



What Rules Apply to Human Remains?

If you encounter human remains or associated artifacts, contact local or State Police immediately and notify NRCS. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources can provide further guidance on state burial protection laws and archaeological recovery procedures. More details are available online at www.dhr.virginia.gov/review/orcLawsRegs.html#BurialLaw.

Want to Learn More?



If you need more information about Cultural Resources, contact:

Jeffrey Jones,
Cultural Resources Coordinator
USDA-NRCS
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229
PH: 804-287-1636
Email: jeffray.jones@va.usda.gov

You can also contact NRCS at your local USDA Service Center (listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture) or your local SWCD. Information is also available online at: www.va.nrcs.usda.gov/technical.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers. If you believe you experienced discrimination when obtaining services from USDA, participating in a USDA program, or participating in a program that receives financial assistance from USDA, you may file a complaint with USDA. Information about how to file a discrimination complaint is available from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.

USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex (including gender identity and expression), marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

To file a complaint of discrimination, complete, sign and mail a program discrimination complaint form, available at any USDA office location or online at www.ascr.usda.gov, or write to: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

Or call toll free at (866) 632-9992 (voice) to obtain additional information, the appropriate office or to request documents. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).