NRCS Policy
1. NRCS recognizes that cultural resources are an important part of our natural heritage. Protection of cultural resources requires careful consideration in NRCS assistance programs.
2. NRCS will identify, record, and protect cultural resources early in the planning and environmental evaluation phase of all assistance activities.
3. NRCS policy is to protect cultural resources in their original place to the fullest extent practicable.
4. NRCS will provide information and training to field personnel and other interested parties to ensure maximum consideration of cultural resources.

Landowner Responsibility
During the planning stages of your project, show NRCS personnel any artifacts, such as arrowheads or tin cans, or other cultural resources in the project area. Show NRCS personnel any historic buildings, such as barns or cabins, in the project area.

Avoid disturbing cultural resources. Your NRCS planner and the NRCS archaeologist—with your assistance—will describe any sites and will plan to move ground disturbing practices away from sites. Examples of ground disturbing practices include installing pipelines, ponds, ditches, and roads.

Landowner Responsibility Continued
Do not begin construction until NRCS has completed the cultural resources review process and the NRCS planner has given you clearance to proceed. The review process includes a survey of the project area, historic properties review, and consultation with NRCS archaeologists. The survey describes the area and any artifacts found. The review examines information to help identify prehistoric or historic resources that might be located in the project area.

If cultural resources are disturbed prior to completion of the review process, the contract is subject to termination. Construction cannot begin on a project until the NRCS completes a cultural resources review and survey.

Contact the NRCS if sites are discovered during practice installation. If you or an independent contractor begin construction and discover cultural resources, the landowner is responsible for stopping all activities and contacting the NRCS. Construction will not continue until a viable alternative is agreed upon that either protects the cultural resource or mitigates the damage.

The NRCS will not spend federal money or provide technical assistance if a project will disturb a significant cultural resource that cannot be avoided and/or adverse effects mitigated. Be aware that if you refuse to avoid disturbing significant cultural resources or do not follow NRCS mitigations, the NRCS will remove all assistance.

During practice installation, immediately notify the county coroner and sheriff if human remains are discovered.
The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) considers and protects cultural resources as national policy. These resources are nonrenewable and they provide information about the past. Disturbing a site or removing artifacts can destroy a cultural resource. Archaeological sites are important because they provide a window into how people lived in the past. The United States Congress passed laws to protect cultural resources, since these resources have unique value. The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 and its amendments established a national policy for protecting some of the most important cultural resources.

The NRCS is a federal agency that provides assistance to private landowners in order to promote the conservation of natural resources on private land. Some conservation practices affect cultural resources, which are protected by federal and state laws. Furthermore, the NRCS is required by law to protect cultural resources.

What is a ‘Cultural Resource’?

A cultural resource is 50 years old or older. Artifacts include arrowheads, pottery, tin cans, and glass bottles. A cultural resource can also be a tipi ring, cabins, rock art, peeled trees, ditches, headgates, and fencelines. A cultural resource includes any site, building, structure, or artifact that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places or could be eligible to be listed on the Register.

A Brief History of Colorado

Hunter-gatherers may have crossed into Colorado as early as 10,000 BC, following big game, such as mammoths. How people lived on the landscape largely depended on their environment and if it was suitable for farming. The Ancestral Puebloans, and Fremont cultures grew corn, beans, and squash, and constructed large permanent settlements. Corn and squash were probably farmed in places like Mesa Verde before 400 BC! The Ute may have arrived in Colorado as early as 1100 AD. Other groups, such as the Jicarilla Apache, began moving into Colorado around 1400 AD.

There were numerous indigenous groups practicing different kinds of lifeways throughout Colorado. The Ute lived in the mountains, the Cheyenne and Arapahoe lived on the plains between the Arkansas and Platte rivers, and the Kiowas and Comanches lived south of the Arkansas River. The first Euroamericans arrived in Colorado during the 1541 Coronado Expedition, when Spanish explorers crossed the southeastern corner of the state. Later, fur traders and adventurers explored Colorado and helped establish forts during the early to mid 1800s. Interest in the area peaked with the discovery of gold and the construction of the railroad. In 1861, Congress established the Colorado Territory; Colorado became a state in 1876. The remains of the past are still visible in the form of collapsed pueblos, tipi rings, log cabins, cowboy camps, and artifacts dotting the landscape.

The NRCS provides assistance to private landowners to protect cultural resources.